

CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION

Antoni Tàpies

Encarnació del peu (Incarnation of the Foot)

1999

Mixed media

86 ½ x 106 ¼ in. (219.7 x 269.9 cm)

Gift of Irma Braman

2002.37.3

Catalan artist Antoni Tàpies is one of Spain's most prominent post-World War II artists. Tàpies was brought up in a cultured, literary family while also experiencing the Spanish civil war and an extended illness. In 1944 he studied law at the Universitat de Barcelona, but by 1945 he had decided to concentrate on art. Influenced by artists such as Jean Dubuffet and Joan Miró, he began his career as a surrealist painter and a graphic artist. Later Tàpies became known for his abstract, thickly impastoed, scratched or scraped paintings that were created with earthy colors and dramatic imagery. He often used sand, plaster, and crushed marble to create a sense of texture and thickness. This emphasis on the exploration of materials aligned him with the practices of the Italian Arte Povera movement, which advocated the use of nontraditional and everyday substances such as soil, cement, twigs, and paper.



Tàpies is interested in the ideals of Zen philosophy and in the idea of the void. He considers himself a kind of shaman and alchemist and believes that art has a lifetransforming potential. *Encarnació del peu* can serve as a metaphor for the journey of life. The most primary and elemental mark impressed on the earth's surface by humans, the footprint suggests humanity's long and evolving history. The various materials of the work, plaster and bits of detritus, earth and stone, suggest decay and the effects of time.