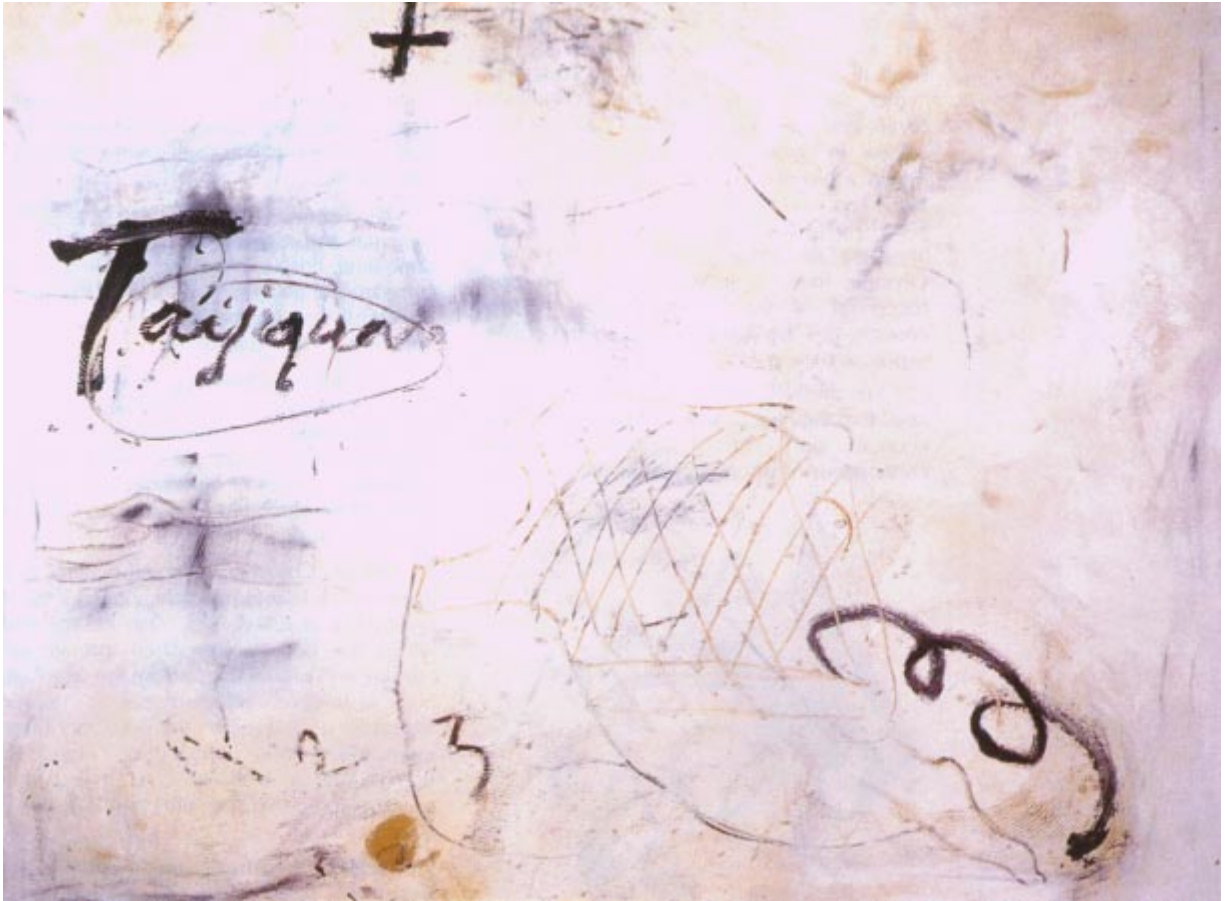


# “TAIJIQUAN”



*Taijiquan, the work of Antonio Tapies that the IOC has just acquired.*

Recently, the IOC commissioned from Antoni Tàpies a picture for the future Museum in Lausanne. Antoni Tàpies i Puig (Barcelona 1923) is doubtless the Catalan painter best known internationally in the field of modern art. His works, characterized by mixed techniques, different media and a variety of unconventional materials, show an unmistakable aesthetic approach. He often incorporates into his paintings signs and words which reinforce the thematic message.

***By Ramon Balius Juli***

**T**apiés has flirted with sport on few occasions. He has done it only to produce posters for major sports events such as the Football World Cup, in Spain in 1982, the "Volta de Catalunya" (Tour of Catalonia) (1986) and the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. In connection with this last, he designed a promotion poster for the Games in 1982 and one of the four official posters in 1992. The first of these two works, which features the Barcelona coat of arms and the Olympic rings, is, in my opinion, the most successful of his poster designs. Oddly enough, this work was not given the public exposure it deserved.

For the IOC's commission, it was stipulated that the picture should make some reference to sport. The artist, who is a great connoisseur of oriental culture, met the con-



*The promotional poster of the Games in Barcelona by Tapiés, which did not get all the success it deserved.*

dition by creating a work inspired by T'ai Chi Ch'uan, a name which appears in the picture "Taijiquan" written in the characteristic Epics style.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan or, more simply, Tai Chi Chuan, is a type of gymnastics which men and women in China practise in the early morning in the open air, in streets and squares, before going to work. The thousands of exponents seem to be boxing with shadows ("shadow boxing"), as T'ai Chi Chuan consists

of a series of movements, slow, gentle and fluid, controlled by the mind and coordinated by the breathing, based on observation of animals and natural phenomena. With Tai Chi Chuan, the individual relaxes, becomes calm, learns to breathe properly, to find harmony, to think and feel, gaining self-control and inner energy (chi).

Nevertheless, Tai Chi Chuan is more than a mental and physical fitness routine. At the same time, it is a form of therapy - it has been compared to acupuncture through movement - a useful form of self-defence and a philosophy that invites to meditation.

The ultimate purpose of Tai Chi is to achieve long life, as it teaches people to control their respiration, keeps the spine supple, regularizes the circulation of the blood and improves the flow of blood back through the veins, all of which has a positive and decisive impact on health.

Tai Chi Chuan is also a self-defence technique which is automatically applied if the individual is attacked. The inner energy (chi), which has been accumulated through self-control, will ensure that, before the attack, the body instinctively adopts the most appropriate positions and makes the necessary movements to knock the opponent off balance and hit him (chuan means "fist" or "boxing") with exquisite precision, but only if it is really indispensable.

Finally, Tai Chi Chuan is a philosophy based on serenity, silence and slowness, which induces and facilitates meditation.

Although it is difficult for a Westerner to understand, it seems plain that there are a number of aspects in Tai Chi Chuan which are worthy of consideration and appreciation, all of them derived from good use of the individual's own inner energy (chi). Espies picture represents much more than a sports anecdote, as it conceals all the conceptual diversity and oriental profundity of Tai Chi Chuan, which, according to Chinese tradition, confers on those who practise it the suppleness of a child, the strength of a woodman and the wisdom of a sage.

R. B. J.