



# VILADECANS POSTERS

# VILADECANS POSTERS

Posters, book and magazine covers, newspaper front pages: the work of Joan-Pere Viladecans (Barcelona, 1948) has been constantly present in the streets of Catalonia. Ever since the late 1960s, he has created a personal language – objects, symbols, geometric shapes, algebraic formulae – and given it a collective dimension. From the films of Pere Portabella to the Terrassa Blues Festival, from the Congress of Catalan Culture to Ràdio 4, from the Olesa Passion Play to the April Fair, Viladecans' posters have been a call, a cry of protest and a celebration. This exhibition brings together all of Viladecans' posters to show how his language has evolved: his pictorial beginnings, his fascination with objects, his approach to conceptual art and his search for new forms of expression in touch with nature.

## Room 1

The first two collaborations between Viladecans and the world of culture refer to the night: *Nocturn 29* (1969), a film by Pere Portabella, and *Nocturn per a acordió* (1975), a show by the Dagoll Dagom group. Two initiatives associated with the avant-garde and two generations that complement each other. It was the night \*of Francoism and also the private, protected space where Joan Salvat-Papasseit spoke on behalf of the country's disinherited. The major figures of Catalan culture during the 1960s and 1970s – Joan Miró, Salvador Espriu, Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán – celebrated the appearance of this young bright artist, who understood art as a collective event. Viladecans' exhibitions in Barcelona, Mataró, Palma, Valencia, Cologne and Gothenburg were accompanied by posters that established a dialogue between colour and gesture during his initial phase.

## Room 1

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“His beam is beautiful and devastating.  
His intensity, internal and explosive.”

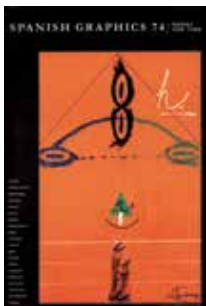
Joan Brossa, 1968

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Censored exhibition.

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“I would like it to reach everyone,  
without any kind of discrimination.  
I paint because I haven't lost the hope  
of very modestly serving the people around me.”

Joan-Pere Viladecans. 1971

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“Viladecans, like anyone with half a brain  
in the Catalan Countries, urgently poses the problem  
of identity from the individual that he is to the human group  
in which he was born. That is why he finds words on walls.”

Raimon, 1973

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Dagoll Dagom's first show  
based on texts by Salvat-Papasseit.

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## Room 2

Viladecans' posters for organisations and associations defend the Catalan language and the state's multiculturalism, human rights, popular national art. They do so with a personal language: a coloured background on which geometric shapes, signs, symbols and letters are drawn. A shape reminiscent of a crossbow, a diagonal running across the picture from top to bottom, all conveying the idea of upward momentum. A white square, a centred capital A, an R resting on an angle conveying solidity and resistance. A plaster or spray paint circle evoking the need for a centre. A small red line, a black arrow, a dotted line introducing reflection, contradiction and invention. Culture arises from individual experience – training and instinct – and it becomes a collective experience in the shared space of the poster.

## Room 2

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Meeting of Galician, Basque and Catalan writers that recovered the spirit of the political pacts of 1923 and 1941.

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“We call brightness projected into space that other which, emerging from an invisible place, crosses the darkness to form either the luminous cone of an ordinary projector or the bright cylinder of a parabolic reflector.”

Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, 1975

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“Isn't any painting similar to a board of feelings?”

Joan-Pere Viladecans. 2018

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In his book *Viladecans. Un assaig de lectura* [Viladecans: A Reading Essay] (1975), Alexandre Cirici Pellicer set out to classify and study the symbols appearing in Viladecans' work: geometric shapes (triangle, circle, ring), objects (cup, button, scissors, pipe), signs (comma, parenthesis, folded ribbon), animals (duck's head, fish, worm), parts of the body (a hand's shadow, the sole of a foot, phallus, hair). We wanted to return to the idea of a large board on which Viladecans' symbols are offered to the reader's understanding without losing their mystery.

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### Room 3

In the 1970s, poetry experienced a moment of exceptional vitality with the proliferation of groups, publishers, festivals and meetings that Viladecans joins as another poet. His creations, tied to visual poetry, object poems and Lettrism, approach poetry through non-written means. Viladecans' posters and the covers of the poetry series books from the Llibres del Mall collection distil the collective impulse of poetry from the perspective of the "Catalan Countries". They unravel the inner, individual and non-transferable world of each poet, connecting it to a higher dimension of ideas, concepts and myths. Like young poets combining abstraction, formalism and popular culture, Viladecans is particularly tied to the masters Joan Brossa, Salvador Espriu and Miquel Martí i Pol.

## Room 3

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NIGHT  
“Arrazoik ez dugu  
gutxi garelako.  
We are not right  
because we are few.”  
Ramon Pinyol, 1978

“Viladecans’ covers lend specificity  
and bestow referential character to Llibres del Mall. They act  
not only aesthetically, but also deictically, in that they tell us  
hic et nunc, now and here: this is a Mall book.”

Jaume Pont, 1981

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Eight editions were published  
of the book *Estimada Marta* [Dear Marta].

“Each painting by Viladecans is or tries to be a poetic act,  
whatever poetry may be, for I do not know.”

Salvador Espriu, 1983

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Andrés Sánchez Robayna  
also translated Salvador Espriu.

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## Room 4

An exhibition represents the opportunity for an artist to share work produced over months or years in the solitude of a studio. The artist reveals his or her work and creates a space for communication with the public. To celebrate this moment – which for a writer equates to the publication of a book, for a singer the release of an album, for a theatre group the premiere of a show – Viladecans creates a work that exists only on a poster. It is hung in art galleries and sometimes in the streets. It becomes a collector's item and, over time, it is the main thread that allows us to follow the evolution of his art: from the “dance of abysmal lights and phosphorescence”, as Juan-Eduardo Cirlot described his first paintings, to the consolidation of a symbolic language.

## Room 4

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“Those precise, subtle, inexorable, almost maniacal lines serve as a base for scrap or playful objects or for those objects that belong to the country of one’s own memory, associated with the most fleeting significance.”

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, 1980

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“In recent times, I have been going through a process of simplification and radicalisation of means, attempting to give maximum intensity with a minimum of elements. There is a constant concern to give a poetic meaning to our immediate things: acts, objects, work schedules and a presence of the animal world.”

Joan-Pere Viladecans, 1980

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“Viladecans’ painting has from the outset known the task of a kind of redeployment, a reordering of the real. The mark of this intent of painting is paradox: decoding the world in order to recode it, in order to re-symbolise it in new signs, in a new imagination-initiation.”

Andrés Sánchez-Robayna, 1980.

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Following the death of his father, Viladecans produced a series of black and white paintings.

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“He has chosen (who really chooses?) to arrive at abstraction through minute realities; to reach serenity through ardour.”

Antonio Gala, 1984

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## Room 5

Viladecans understands art – and posters – as a puzzle. He never addresses the viewer with a programmed message, slogan or motto. He creates an open space of communication in which everyone can read, project and understand. This common space assumed a vengeful or controversial dimension in the 1970s – due more to the political and social climate than to the artist's explicit will – while in the 1980s the sign of communication changed to celebrate centenaries and events. Viladecans breathes life into official commemorations, conveying an idea of continuity and permanence that the poster expresses with bold lines and jubilant colours. Other works utilise layers of colour, alluding to the passage of time and the importance of the inner world hidden behind the appearance of things.

## Room 5

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“Ideas of heritage and memory emerge on a large number of occasions usually related to the culture of a country, but here Viladecans alludes, above all, to the concept of life, as something that is common to all living beings and that must be preserved through memory.”

Lourdes Cirlot, 2008

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A street poster by the artist to announce a music festival.

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“Let us recall grandparents or parents who are perhaps no longer beside us, preserved in ash or bones – the bones that Joan-Pere Viladecans paints to evoke our ancestors –”

Carmen Riera, 2008

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## **Joan-Pere Viladecans**

### **Self-taught painter and engraver**

He has had many solo and group exhibitions in Spain and abroad since 1967.

He exhibited for the first time in 1969 at the Sala Gaspar with a work influenced by Surrealism and Informalism, poetry and music.

He simplified his language in the 1970s. His work is organised according to elementary constructive schemes that integrate symbols, words, letters and numbers.

He intensified his chromatic scale in the 1980s and became interested in the contours of forms. At the same time, he began to be concerned with and condemned the degradation of nature through a flexible, dynamic language.

He currently incorporates elements from the organic world, memory and medicine to address questions of human existence.

He was made Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (1996) of the French Republic and was awarded the Catalan National Culture Prize (2023) from the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CoNCA) and the Cross of Saint George (2023) from the Government of Catalonia.

## Room 6

Sala Gaspar in Barcelona has regularly hosted exhibitions by Viladecans since the late 1960s. Successive posters reflect new interests, reflections and discoveries. One of the characteristic elements of the 1990s was the incorporation of natural forms, which occupy the foreground of many of his compositions. Bird and snail. The leaf acting as a messenger between the two worlds – air and land. At times like the tip of a spear, with well-marked ribs. At other times a fallen, trampled leaf, wet, frayed and transparent, beginning to be confused with the path. Viladecans' art becomes organic while retaining its symbolism. Human action – art, culture – is integrated into an eternal reality.

## Room 6

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The exhibition *Sequence of a Natural History* (1988) introduced a new symbolic language.

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“Abandoned forms on paper, cruelly disordered as if they were the remains of a shipwreck... Will the artist want to recover them and save them again one day?”

Josep M. Benet i Jornet, 1996

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“Origins are origins.”

Joan-Pere Viladecans, 2016

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## Room 7

Viladecans is an avid reader, a friend of poets and writers – such as Robert Saladrigas or Jaume Cabré – and he is also a writer. What the poster, book cover and graphic work have in common is the desire to reach the public outside the system of art galleries, exhibitions and museums. Artist books are an opportunity for him to combine his pictorial world with texts by his favourite authors – Salvador Espriu and Miquel Martí i Pol – as well as to collaborate with his poet friend – Josep-Ramon Bach – questioning human life from a biological, anthropological, philosophical and moral perspective. In the illustrated edition of Edgar Allan Poe's stories, Viladecans tackles the writer's visions and intuitions in a work of impressive power and graphic variety.



## Room 7

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“Today’s ex-voto, without being exactly precise in its classic definition, is also part of a secular ritual. An offering. A relic, a spontaneous allegory forever associated with an event or misfortune, with one or many losses.”

Joan-Pere Viladecans, 2017

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“Viladecans represents special moments of people suffering from diseases or changes in their inner world. The colours at times indicate the passing of the years and the figures, the fact and situation.”

Miquel Vilardell i Tarrés, doctor, 2018

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“Viladecans calls for a permanent dialogue with someone to listen, converse, understand and accept fragility and uncertainty.”

Jaume Padrós Selma, doctor, 2018

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The Olesa Passion Play once again, thirty-six years later.

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His most recent poster.

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## Room 8

Viladecans' work in recent years has included schematic figures: a globe, a letter, a book, a horseshoe, the two sides of the brain. He has treated reality through reduction since the beginning of his career, creating synthetic models that speak of inner life, the complexity of the world and the language of art. His signs now become icons. At the same time, Viladecans works pictorially with texture and transparency. Many of his works utilise layers of colour, alluding to the passage of time, depositing layers of meaning onto the reality of the world and the importance of the inner world hidden behind the appearance of things. Objects and symbols emerge from black or coloured backgrounds, and at times a linked calligraphic text that is both text and drawing.

# VILADECANSCARTELLS

MUSEU D'HISTÒRIA DE CATALUNYA 16.05 – 01.09.2024

## ORGANISED BY

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**Agència Catalana del Patrimoni Cultural**  
**Museu d'Història de Catalunya**

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Museum project and graphic image

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**Àgora Serveis Culturals**

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Frames

**Acutangle**

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**Adrià Costa**

**Pedro Madueño**

© photos of the artist's studio

**Julià Guillamon**

**Dani Rovira**

© photos of Salvador Espriu

and Joan-Pere Viladecans

**Antonio Orzáez**

## AUDIOVISUAL

Interview of the artist

**Joan-Pere Viladecans**

conducted by **Julià Guillamon**

Direction and camera

**Morrosko Vila-San-Juan**

Second camera

**Enric Juste**

Recorded at Joan-Pere Viladecans' studio in Barcelona on 14 March 2024.

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