

BARCELONA PRODUCCIÓ

# JOAN PALLÉ & CAYETANO TRUYOLS

## *Ghost Rider*

14.02 – 21.04.2024

### FAUST AS A CONTEMPORARY TEEN

The play *Faust* by Goethe (1749-1832) opens with a dialogue in which God challenges Mephistopheles – a demon in German folklore regarded as an agent of Satan charged with gathering souls for his master – saying that he cannot corrupt a man named Faust who, despite being extremely erudite, is profoundly unhappy. It happens that just when Faust is bent upon taking his own life because of his deep dissatisfaction, the Easter bells ring and he decides to go for a walk with his disciple, Wagner. It is then that Mephistopheles appears, offering Faust the pleasures of life and a pact in which the man agrees to sell his soul to the Devil in exchange for youth until he dies in a state of absolute bliss:

Faust. *Goethe. Scene of the pact.*

*MEPHISTOPHELES: Join me. During this time, you will delight at the sight of what my arts are. I will give you what no other man has ever seen.*

*FAUST: What will you be able to give me, poor devil? Have any of your kind ever understood the high aspirations of the human soul? What is it you offer? Food that does not satisfy; burning gold that slips like mercury endlessly between one's fingers; a game that can never be won; a wench who, when clasped to my breast, winks her eye and makes a deal with the man standing closest by; the splendid and divine pleasure of honour, which fades like a meteor. Show me fruit that rots before it sets and trees that grow green anew each day.*

*MEPHISTOPHELES: Such a commission holds no fear for me; I can easily furnish you with these*

*treasures. But, dear friend, the time is coming when we will be able to enjoy something good in utter peace.*

*FAUST: If the day comes when I can lie down idly in absolute serenity, I will not care what happens to me; if you succeed then in deceiving me with flattery, making me like myself, that will be my last day. That will be my wager.*

*MEPHISTOPHELES: I accept!*

*FAUST: Let us shake on it! If I ever at any point say, 'Stop, you are so handsome!', you can bind me in chains and I'll gladly sink. Then the death knells can be rung and I will be free to serve you. The clock will have stopped, the hands will have fallen and time will have ended for me.*

Goethe's *Faust* is a lesson on religion, passion, independence, science as dogma, love and adolescence, a term that became socially established in the 1950s, since the concept of the teenager did not exist until after the 1920s because, among other reasons, the Industrial Revolution saw to it that childhood disappeared with the incorporation of minors – naturally from the working class – into the factory workforce. In fact, it is no coincidence that in society's imagination, adolescence is associated with words such as *rebellion*, *disobedience*, *freedom* and *insubordination*, as the idea became popularised with iconic films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), in which James Dean plays the part of a troubled teenager, marking the start of a saga in visual culture that continues to this day. The figure of the teenager is based on suspicion of the adult world due to certain onerous duties that represent the old world, such as family,

work and government, as a result of which young people embrace other lifestyles with a rock and roll backing track and a philosophy that can be summed up as seize the day. The standard social image of teenagers is shaped on the basis of the concept of antiheroism, of vulnerable beings with flaws and imperfections, the paradigm of the modern being, a protagonist who lives according to their own moral compass and who strives to define and build their own values in a changing world, while attempting to understand the society they live in. So can we regard the skateboarder, that individual who represents an exaggeratedly dramatised and stereotyped masculinity typical of a macho culture, as an antihero who has tried to adapt to a scenario that he no longer fits into? What is the legacy that has resulted from the genesis of the recalcitrant, nihilistic teenager who seemed opposed to everything? How has the imaginary of teenagers struggling with moral and ethical problems affected our visual culture? Was it the media that identified them or, in contrast, was it the media that represented that age group about to come into its own?

Daniel Gasol  
Curatorial team