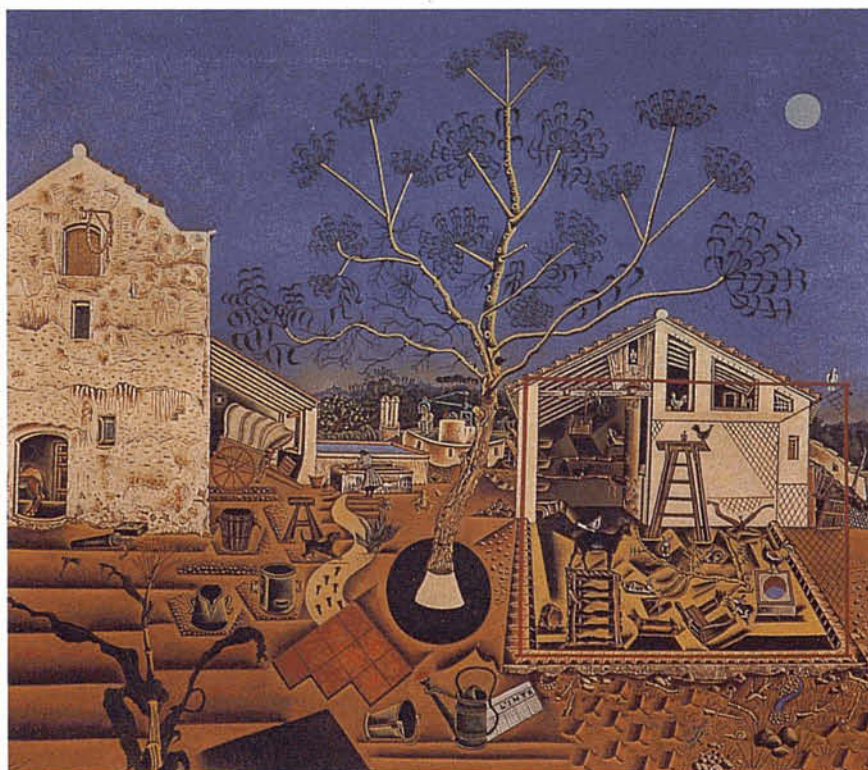


JOAN MIRÓ 1893-1993, A CENTENARY EXHIBITION



LA MASIA, 1921-1922

TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENARY OF JOAN MIRÓ'S BIRTH, THE FOUNDATION CREATED BY THE ARTIST IS PRESENTING THIS EXTENSIVE EXHIBITION WITH THE OBJECT OF BRINGING MIRÓ'S WORK WITHIN REACH OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THE EXHIBITION OFFERS A SELECTION OF WORKS THAT ILLUSTRATE HIS ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND AN EXHAUSTIVE COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS THAT SPEAK FOR THE REFLEXIVE AND CRITICAL ATTITUDE MIRÓ MAINTAINED DURING THE CREATIVE PROCESS.

ROSA MARIA MALET DIRECTOR OF THE FUNDACIÓ JOAN MIRÓ IN BARCELONA
AND CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION "JOAN MIRÓ 1893-1993"



CARNIVAL D'ARLEQUÍ, 1924-1925

2 0 April of this year marks the one hundredth anniversary of Joan Miró's birth in the Passatge del Crèdit in Barcelona. People everywhere have wanted to join in the celebration of the occasion. In Barcelona, Catalonia and many other places around the world, preparations are under way to ensure the date does not pass unnoticed.

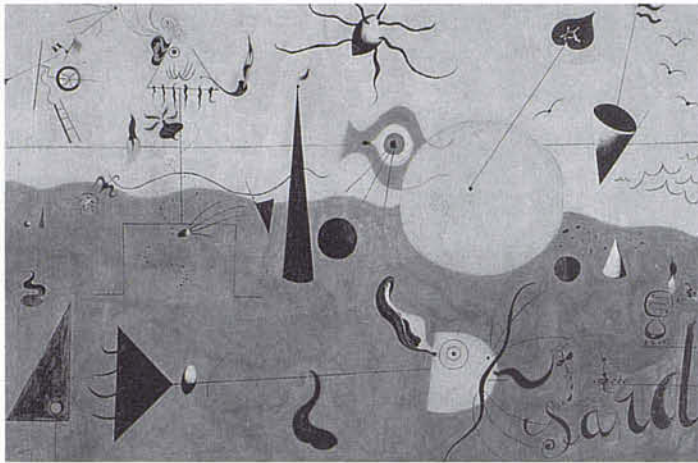
Those of us who, through our work and, especially, our vocation, feel close to Joan Miró are overjoyed at this enthusiasm for two reasons: first of all, of course, because of the recognition of Joan Miró that this implies, and sec-

ondly, because of the opportunity it provides to add to people's knowledge of this artist, a spectator of and central figure in the development of twentieth century art. Because... is Joan Miró really understood?

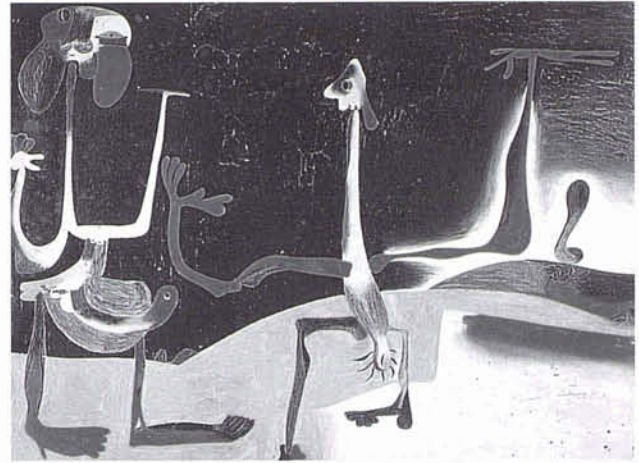
People often say that Miró's painting is childlike, that his work is very simple and that the colours are the main attraction. Doesn't this suggest that Miró is only superficially understood, in spite of his being an artist we recognize instantly (something which no-one would question)?

We at the Foundation are determined, within the limits of our possibilities, to

do our utmost to provide as much information as possible so as to make the work of our founder easily and genuinely accessible to the public. This approach has materialized in the exhibition "Joan Miró, 1893-1993", with which the foundation created by the artist is celebrating the centenary of his birth. The structure of the exhibition hinges on two main elements: a significant selection of work which accurately reflects Miró's artistic development, and an exhaustive collection of documents which speak for the reflexive and critical attitude Miró maintained during the creative process.



PAISATGE CATALÀ (EL CAÇADOR), 1923-1924



HOME I DONA DAVANT UN MUNT D'EXCREMENTS, 1935

As regards the selection of work on show, in the eyes of the curator there is always something missing. This is inevitable. But what I can say is that there is no period, no moment, no series on which Miró worked that is not represented.

We can follow Miró from his figurative beginnings, from the moment when he expressed his concern for form and colour in his paintings from nature of the Tarragona countryside and his portraits of friends to the culmination of his figurative period in *La masia* (1921-1922). In *Terra llaurada* (1923-1924) and *Paisatge català (El caçador)* (1923-1924), we see how Miró moves away from the real-life model to start on a process of introspection which was to lead him to paint reality not as his eyes saw it, but as the inner model showed itself to him. *El carnaval de l'Arlequí* (1924-1925), on which Miró was working when Breton published the first Surrealist manifesto, is evidence of the ground he had covered to create his signic vocabulary, which grew out of his imagination rather than from any external dictate.

The irresistible appeal of the void of which Miró speaks (as Denis Chevalier says, quoted by Margit Rowell in *Joan*

Miró: selected writings and interviews) is clear from the subtle blue and ochre canvases of 1925. In contrast, the five *Paisatges imaginaris* of 1926-1927 (*Personatge llançant una pedra a un ocell*, *Mà atrapant un ocell*, *Gos bordant a la lluna*, *Paisatge (La llagosta)* and *Paisatge (de la serp)*) mark the return to a balance between the imaginary and reality.

1928 and 1929 have given us Miró's interpretations of the work of earlier masters and also speak for his renewed preoccupation for painting from life. Examples from these years are *Interior holandès I* and the imaginary portraits *Retrat de Mrs. Mills el 1750* and *La Reina Lluïsa de Prússia*.

His drawings, collages, assembled objects, etc. are first-hand evidence of the rebellion against painting as experienced by Miró at the end of the twenties and beginning of the thirties, and the metaphoric desire to murder it that this engendered in him.

The crisis of "the assassination of painting" was followed by another of an altogether different nature. The general atmosphere of unease during the build-up to the Spanish Civil War and the war itself led Miró to represent the drama in

his work with the tortured figures and acid colours which reflect the tragedy in paintings like *Home i dona davant un mur d'excrements* (1935), *Personatges asseguts* (1936) and *Personatges i muntanyes* (1936). After this drama comes the mystery concealed in almost cryptic works, like the series *Signes i figures* (1936), or the aggressiveness—not in the forms, so much as in the materials used—of the series *Pintures damunt masonite* (1936), before coming to the most representative work of this period, *Natura morta del sabatot* (1937).

Gradually, the air of drama disperses and is replaced by a new discourse. The repulsion Miró felt for the warring atmosphere around him he showed through escape. Rather than let himself be beaten, he set out to search for new and freer, less contaminated worlds. Music now took the place occupied by poetry in the twenties, and very soon his signic vocabulary reached new heights in works like *Autoretrat II* (1938), *Une étoile caresse le sein d'une négresse* (1938), *Retrat II* (1938) and *Retrat IV* (1938). The *Constel·lacions* series (1940-1941) represents the culminating point of this period.



LA REINA LLUISA DE PRÚSSIA, 1929



UNE ÉTOILE CARESSE LE SEIN D'UNE NÈGRESSE, 1938

From that moment on, Miró's formal vocabulary was defined and consolidated. Miró said, "As I work, the shapes become real for me. To put it another way, rather than setting down to paint something, I start to paint, and as I paint, the picture begins to take on an existence of its own, or to suggest itself through the brush. The shape becomes a hint of a woman or a bird as I work on it" (James Johnson Sweeney, "Joan Miró: comment and interview", in *Partisan Review*, February 1948).

Gradually, the vocabulary of the *Constel·lacions* gave way to a spontaneous approach to work which contrasted with the painstaking approach that can be seen in the work of the forties. Gesture began to take on more importance during the fifties and eventually predominated.

The 1962 exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris made a powerful impact on the press. Miró had taken on large-format pictures. Unlike his work of the twenties, the large empty spaces were striking not only on account of their power of suggestion, but also for their tension, for the silence they evoked. A testimony of that period is the triptych *Blau I, II, III* (1961), of

which Miró said, "It took me a long time to do them. Not to paint them, but to meditate them. It needed a great effort, a great interior tension to achieve the nakedness I wanted" (quoted by Rosamond Bernier in "Propos de Joan Miró": *L'Oeil*, July-August 1961). With the same asceticism, Miró painted the triptych *Pintura mural per a un temple I, II, III* (1962), of which he said, "By limiting myself to a few lines, I tried to give the gesture such an individual quality as to be almost anonymous –like a universal act." (Denis Chevalier, quoted by Margit Rowell, *Op. cit.*).

Of a more obviously dramatic nature is the *Triptic de l'esperança d'un condemnat a mort I, II, III* (1974), in which the interrupted line is an allusion to a broken life, in the same way that in the untitled and undated canvas which closes the exhibition and which was painted by Miró shortly before his death (who knows if in memory of his former master, Modest Urgell?) the strong horizontal line and the black dot on an immaculate and mysterious white background seem to be an allusion to the infinite, the unknown, nothingness.

I have already said that one of the es-

sential aims of the project we are presenting has been to offer the visitor an in-depth reading of Miró's work. Our initial premiss is that the works we have chosen will speak eloquently for themselves. Nevertheless, since the Fundació Miró owns a unique collection –the only one of its kind in the world– of preparatory sketches for paintings, note-books, plans, notes, outlines, etc. donated by the artist to the institution he created, we have felt it was vital to present this material to the public along with the final work of art. We have done this in the conviction that this artist, who is all too often described as ingenuous, spontaneous and childlike, and who is only superficially known to the public, will become Joan Miró, the reflexive artist, painstaking, critical and responsible, who was born one hundred years ago in Barcelona, and who was firmly convinced that "the artist is someone who, in the midst of others' silence, uses his voice to say something, and whose duty is that it should not be something useless, but something of service to mankind". (Speech by Joan Miró on the occasion of his appointment as Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Barcelona, 2 October 1979). ■