

***Joan Miró. Women, Birds, Stars***

Exhibition organised by the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, in collaboration with the Museum of Art Pudong, Shanghai.

Curated by Jordi Joan Clavero, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona.

8 July 2021 – 7 November 2021

Museum of Art Pudong, Shanghai

**Press Release**

**The Fundació Joan Miró presents *Joan Miró. Women, Birds, Stars*, a major exhibition of Miró's work at the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai.**

**The Museum of Art Pudong, in Shanghai, a showcase for modern and contemporary art in China in the new building designed by Jean Nouvel Architects, will focus its inaugural exhibition on Joan Miró, one of the leading artists of the twentieth century.**

**The exhibition, organised by the Fundació Joan Miró in collaboration with the Museum of Art Pudong, is the first show conceived and organised by the Fundació Joan Miró for China and the most important to be held on the artist's work in Asia since 2014. It will be open to the public from 8 July to 7 November 2021.**

**Curated by Jordi Joan Clavero, Head of Public Programming and Education at the Fundació Joan Miró, the exhibition *Joan Miró. Women, Birds, Stars* includes sixty-nine paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints by the artist belonging to the foundation's permanent collection and two private collections, plus a series of photographs by Joaquim Gomis, video material, and a public and educational program specially designed for this project.**

**In the works on display, visitors will discover Miró's imagination and his unique language of signs, as well as the way the artist experimented with a variety of techniques and materials and the new life he gave to everyday objects.**

**Barcelona, 23 June 2021.** The depth of meaning in Joan Miró's work springs from a desire to capture the essence of human existence. On a personal level, this desire also implied an affirmation of identity that arose from Miró's strong connection with the land – with the medieval town of Mont-roig del Camp, in the Catalan countryside, where his family had a house and which was the original source of his creativity. Paradoxically, he could only achieve this aim by breaking boundaries and constantly reconsidering his

own creative effort, which he was finally able to materialise in the context of the Paris avant-garde and in a century marked by cruel conflicts. The artist's wish thus acquired a dimension that moved beyond the realm of the individual to become universal. Miró aspired to achieve a collective, anonymous form of art, and this explains the multidisciplinary nature of his work and his quest for collaborations. Through painting, he created a complete universe of signs and symbols. Inspired by Zen spirituality and Far Eastern art, Miró had a powerful influence on subsequent generations of artists such as the American abstract expressionists, among many others; his art has become, rather than a movement, a language that continues to be alive and appeal to all audiences today.

To celebrate the opening of the new building for the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai, the Fundació Joan Miró presents the project *Joan Miró. Women, Birds, Stars*. The title of the exhibition refers to a theme that Joan Miró addressed over some forty years of his career, reaching its zenith in his later works. This period of maturity was probably the time the artist enjoyed the most, for several reasons. Having overcome his financial difficulties, as well as the uncertainties of the Spanish Civil War – when he lived in exile in Paris – and the Second World War – when he first moved to the coast of Normandy and then to Palma de Mallorca – he settled permanently on the island in 1956. There he finally had access to a spacious studio designed by his friend Josep Lluís Sert, the architect who created the Fundació Joan Miró building twenty years later together with the artist. That studio allowed Miró to work on large-format pieces and diversify his output by experimenting with sculpture, printmaking and textiles.

As the years passed, Miró defined his own style, systematically reduced his colours to an elementary range, and consolidated a formal vocabulary composed of a clearly defined group of figures, women, birds, the moon, the sun and the constellations, the ladder of escape, and motifs that refer to more general concepts – the land and the sky, the connection between them, and the search for an ideal harmony.

*Joan Miró. Women, Birds, Stars* offers an insight into Miró's language at the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai. The Fundació Joan Miró has selected thirty-one paintings, ten drawings, twelve lithographs, seven engravings and nine sculptures, most of them from its permanent collection. The show is divided into an introduction and four sections. In the first part, *A Vocabulary of Signs* introduces visitors to the artist's vocabulary through his prints, and shows the more poetic concepts developed by Miró throughout his artistic career: the sky, the stars, birds and women.

In the 1950s, in the new studio designed by Josep Lluís Sert, Miró was able to delve fully into new materials and formats. The section *The Sign In Freedom* shows the artist's technical experimentation with a variety of materials, and his use of signs in a more open way, enabling them to transform and reinvent themselves, even to the point of dematerialising.

The third section, *The Object*, focuses on sculpture, ceramics and textiles as objects. For Miró, objects are the equivalent of signs in painting, where the real becomes symbolic. Their presence and practical reality remain evident, but the way Miró uses and combines objects is translated into a new personality and form that go beyond their practical function: 'A piece of thread can unleash a world', Miró told the artist Yvon Taillandier in 1959. The last section, *Black Figures*, includes paintings, etchings and lithographs. One of Miró's distinguishing features was his constant curiosity, which led him to experiment with a wide variety of materials and techniques such as drawing, painting and printmaking.

In addition to the works by Joan Miró, the exhibition includes photographs by Joaquim Gomis, a friend of Miró and the first president of the Fundació's Board of Trustees. In these images, we see the artist in the print shop, at the foundry, and in his own studio. The Joaquim Gomis collection, managed by the Fundació, gives us context and a better understanding of Miró's creative processes. Video material and an educational program about techniques, colour, texture, form, volume and symbolism, specially designed for this project, complete a unique experience of the Fundació Joan Miró at the new Museum of Art Pudong, in Shanghai.

## **Joan Miró**

### **A man rooted in his land, an artist of international reach**

Barcelona, Spain, 1893 – Palma, Spain, 1983

Joan Miró was born in Barcelona in 1893, but the emotional landscapes that shaped him as a person and an artist were principally those of Mont-roig, Paris, and Majorca, and later those of New York and Japan. The small town of Mont-roig in the Baix Camp region of Catalonia was a counterpoint to the intellectual ferment of his life with the surrealist poets in 1920s Paris, and to the stimulus of discovering Abstract Expressionism in New York in the forties. Some time later, in the midst of World War II, Joan Miró returned from exile in France and settled in Palma de Mallorca, which became his refuge and workplace and where his friend Josep Lluís Sert designed the studio of his dreams.

Miró's attachment to the landscape of Mont-roig first and then Majorca was crucial in his work. His connection to the land and his interest in everyday objects and in the natural environment formed the backdrop to some of his technical and formal research. Miró avoided academicism in his constant quest for a pure, global art that could not be classified under any specific movement. Self-contained in his manners and public expressions, it is through art that Joan Miró showed his rebelliousness and a strong sensitivity to the political and social events around him. These conflicting forces led him to create a unique and extremely personal language that makes him one of the most influential artists of the 20th century.

### **The Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona**

The Fundació Joan Miró, Miró Art Museum, located in Barcelona, is a centre for the study and dissemination of Joan Miró's work and contemporary art. Created by Miró himself, at first primarily with works from his own private collection, with a desire to set up an internationally recognised centre in Barcelona for the artist, Fundació Joan Miró offers an overview of the landscapes of Joan Miró's art and life, creating an enriching dialogue with other artists from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Using an interdisciplinary approach, it organises temporary exhibitions as well as academic activities and projects in collaboration with other institutions and organisations. Through its exhibition and educational programs, it explores lines of research linked to Miró's work and to contemporary art. It is located in a building designed by Josep Lluís Sert, making it one of the few museums anywhere in the world in which the affinities between an artist and an architect underpin the dialogue between the works and the space that houses them.

Ever since the Fundació Joan Miró opened its doors in 1975, one of its priorities has been to share the work and legacy of Joan Miró with the world. For over thirty years, the foundation, with the support of public and private organisations, has promoted and developed international projects meant to further advance knowledge of the Fundació Joan Miró and deepen its relationships with other museums and art institutions through the conception, development and management of travelling exhibitions created on the basis of its collections.

### **The Museum of Art Pudong, Shanghai**

The Museum of Art Pudong (MAP) is located in Lujiazui Central Business District in Shanghai and has been designed by [Jean Nouvel Architects](#) (AJN). The museum is funded by Lujiazui Group as a public-private partnership.

MAP aims to establish itself as an international cultural landmark for Shanghai and an important platform for global cultural and art communication. MAP will focus primarily on the presentation and exchange of international arts, supplemented by domestic art exhibitions. It strives to become a destination of choice for artists and visitors from around the world, providing a platform for the presentation of world-class art.

MAP intends to complement the existing art museum community in Shanghai. It will enhance the Pudong New Area by creating new opportunities for public access to culture. The establishment of MAP also builds upon the historical traditions and recent successes of Shanghai and especially of the Pudong New Area.

## Exhibition Sections and wall texts

### **Joan Miró. Women, birds, stars**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

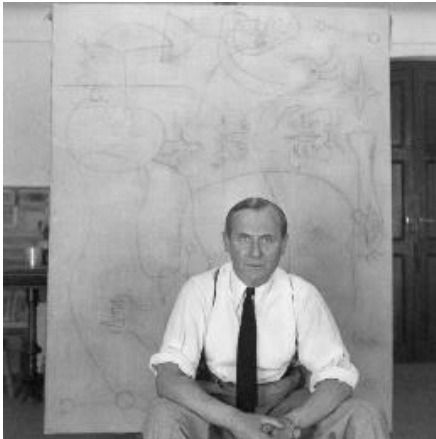


**Joaquim Gomis.** *Joan Miró's studio interior, Palma de Mallorca, c. 1960.*

The title *Joan Miró. Women, Birds, Stars* refers to a series of themes that extended over the course of forty years and prevailed in the latest stage of the artist's production. Miró's mature years were, without a doubt, the most peaceful period for the artist, for a variety of reasons: having overcome the financial difficulties, the uncertainty and the anguish brought on by the Spanish Civil War followed by World War II, Miró finally settled in Palma de Mallorca in 1956. There, at long last, he had a spacious studio, built by his friend the architect Josep Lluís Sert, who would later design the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona. The new studio allowed Miró to work in large formats,

diversify his production, combine painting with sculpture and printmaking, and venture into textiles. However, over the years he ended up defining a style all of his own; he systematically reduced his range of colours to a basic palette and established a formal vocabulary composed of a series of terms: figure, woman, bird, moon, sun, stars, constellations, the ladder of escape – motifs that refer to broader concepts, such as the earth and the sky, the connection between the two, and the probability of an ideal harmony.

## 2. A VOCABULARY OF SIGNS



**Joaquim Gomis.** *Portrait of Joan Miró with "The Port", 1945, (unfinished), 1944*

In the 1940s, Miró focused his efforts on consolidating a vocabulary of poetic signs with which to express himself. In the following years, those signs began to prevail in most of his compositions. Miró's works offer a cosmogonic vision: they are abbreviated versions of the symbolic union of the earthly and the celestial worlds, with no horizon between them. In this vision, the sun, the moon and the stars are indispensable components, as are the figures, which at times he only reveals partially, and which he distinguishes with eyes, hair, and sexual organs. Other elements appear sporadically – for instance, combinations of black circles and thin lines, or ladders depicted with two

vertical lines segmented by horizontal lines. Dots of colour also abound, as do splatters and a series of expressive and gestural resources used to suggest heavenly bodies or constellations.

## 3. THE SIGN IN FREEDOM



**Joaquim Gomis.** *Miró at Miralles printing house with the "Barcelona Series", 1944*

For Miró, honing down a language of signs as the conceptual framework for his art had a liberating effect, allowing him to concentrate fully on technical experimentation.

At first, in the studio in Palma de Mallorca, he delved primarily into etching, lithography and ceramics. When he eventually went back to painting, there was greater freedom and gesture in his work, with visibly expressive effects: erratic brushstrokes, blurry spots, drops dribbling down the canvas, hand prints, touches of colour applied with his fingers, splatters. Despite an apparent spontaneity, their execution was highly controlled.

Miró experimented with materials and sought results that would surprise him, not only in painting: his printmaking, sculpture, ceramics and textile work reflects the same concerns. Aside from the particularities of each one of these techniques, the artist found a way to translate his style into the different media at his disposal. Over the years, Miró's painting became bolder and more gestural: he laid the canvas on the floor to paint, explored the potential of random occurrences, and left unforeseen accidents in full view.



#### 4. THE OBJECT



**Joaquim Gomis.** *Joan Miró holding a sculpture at Gimeno foundry, 1946*

An everyday object taken out of its usual context and carried over to the realm of art loses its practical function. By setting it alongside other elements, the artist gives it a new, different meaning. After setting himself up in the Palma studio, Miró bought Son Boter, a 17th-century house located nearby. He collected and stored all sorts of objects there, identified relationships between them, and assembled them. Then, in order to capture the outcome and make it more durable, he cast them in bronze using the lost wax technique, which allowed him to make incisions before pouring in the molten metal. In the late 1960s, he introduced colour as well.

The titles refer to Miró's particular language: woman, bird, night, day or escape. His sculptures call upon the same iconography as his paintings, although here he replaces the signs with equivalent objects. Nevertheless, his interest in objects was not limited to sculpture. They also appear printed in some of his etchings, such as the monotypes, and in the *sobreteixims*, either as a support (sacks) or worked into the surface.

#### 5. BLACK FIGURES



**Joaquim Gomis.** *Portrait of Joan Miró at his farmhouse, the Mas Miró, Mont-roig, 1946-1950*

The 1940s were critical in the definition of Miró's personal style. In the course of time, certain aspects were consolidated, while others were pared down or underwent changes. The figures, for example, incorporeal and distinctly outlined at the beginning, became imposing, compact masses.

The colour black gradually acquired prominence – or rather, the blacks, as the artist used a variety of tonal ranges. The colour black performs a constructive function, endows the figures with their materiality and articulates the composition.

The figures are not exactly portraits: their appearance is often ambiguous and their features are unspecific. The eyes, like the three hairs, are the remains of a figure that has undergone a metamorphosis and lost its identifying features.

**Selection of images for media**

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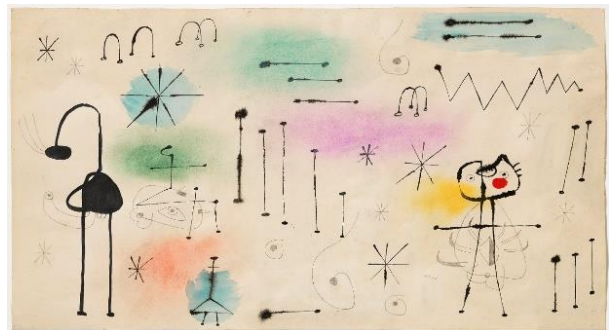
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‘Forms give birth to other forms, constantly changing into something else. They become each other and in this way create the reality of a universe of signs and symbols in which figures pass from one realm to another.’

(Miró to Pierre Volboudt, 1957)



*Figures in the rain* 1942

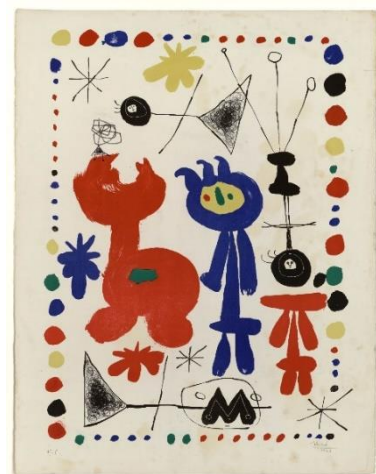
Indian ink, pencil, watercolour and pastel on paper

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. On loan from private collection

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‘Little by little, I came to use only a small number of forms and colours. This is not the first time that painting has been done with a reduced range of colours. The frescoes of the tenth century were painted in this way. For me, these are magnificent things.’

(Miró to Yvon Taillandier, 1959)



*Figure and bird* 1948

Lithograph

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



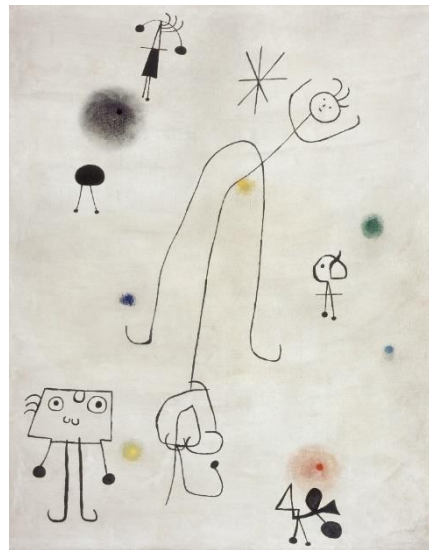
‘Because there is no horizon line or any indication of depth, they shift in depth. They also move across the surface, because a colour or a line inevitably leads to a change in the angle of vision. Inside the large forms there are small forms that move around. And when you look at the painting as a whole, the large forms also become mobile.’

(Miró to Yvon Taillandier, 1959)

*The morning star* 1946

Oil on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. On loan from a private collection



‘What I call woman is not the creature woman, it is a universe.’

(Miró to Georges Raillard, 1977)

*Woman, bird, star* 1978

Acrylic and oil on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



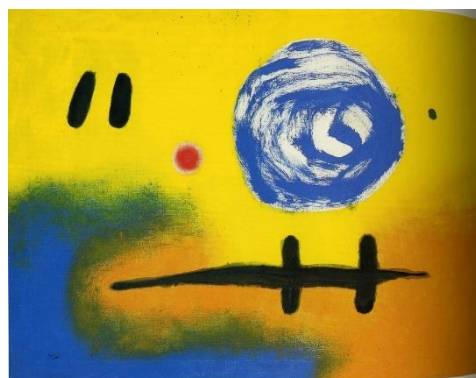
‘Two and two do not make four. Only accountants think that. But that is not enough: a painting must make this clear; it must fertilize the imagination.’

(Miró to Yvon Taillandier, 1959)

*2 + 5 = 7* 1965

Oil on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. On loan from a private collection



‘It is always years between the start of one of my paintings, its mise-en-oeuvre and its execution. I find I very often continue a canvas years and years after having first sketched it. All this time it lies dormant in my studio, until one day I suddenly notice something about it.’  
(Miró to Dora Vallier, 1960)

*Woman and birds in a landscape* 1970 - 1974

Acrylic on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



‘Just as the whole of a body is similar to its parts — an arm, a hand, a foot — everything in a painting must be homogeneous.

In my paintings, there is a kind of circulatory system. If even one form is out of place, the circulation stops; the balance is broken.’

(Miró to Yvon Taillandier, 1959)

*Painting* 1954

Oil on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. Gift of Joan Prats



‘The simplest things give me ideas. A plate that a peasant eats his soup out of is much more interesting to me than the ridiculously rich plates of rich people.

Folk art moves me. In this art there are no tricks, there is no fakery. It goes straight to the heart of things. It surprises, and it is so rich with possibilities.’

(Miró to Yvon Taillandier, 1959)

*Dog woman* 1970

Bronze

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



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‘I feel myself attracted by a magnetic force toward an object, and then I feel myself being drawn toward another object which is added to the first, and their combination creates a poetic shock — not to mention their original formal physical impact — which makes the poetry truly moving, and without which it would have no effect.’

(Miró to Pierre Matisse, 1936)

*Young girl scaping* 1967

Painted bronze

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



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‘A piece of thread, therefore, can unleash a world.’

(Miró to Yvon Taillandier, 1959)

*Sobreteixim 6* 1972

Acrylic, string and wool on wall-hanging woven by Josep Royo

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



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‘I never use the blank canvas that you buy in an art supply store. I provoke accidents, a form, a spot of colour. Any accident is good.

In the beginning, it's a direct thing. It's the material that decides. I prepare the ground — by cleaning my brushes on the canvas, for example. Spilling a little turpentine can also work quite well.’

(Miró to Georges Charbonnier, 1951)

*Figure* 1974

Acrylic and oil on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



‘For me the image of a peasant is something tremendously strong. These are people I know very well because I have lived close to them all my life. I painted the moon because it is a very important and poetic motif in my world of images. Despite what you might think, it is not incongruous for the peasant to be working in the moonlight. Certain things are, in fact, planted at night and at a particular phase of the moon.’

(Miró to Lluís Permanyer, 1978)

*Catalan peasant in the moonlight* 1968

Acrylic on canvas

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona



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