

Joan Miró

(Spanish, 1893 - 1983)

Joan Miró was Spanish painter, sculptor, and ceramicist born in Barcelona, who evolved to become the Grand Master of Abstract Surrealism – Salvador Dalí being his counterpart in the field of Figural Surrealism. Earning international acclaim, Miró's work has been called “a sandbox for the subconscious mind, a magical re-creation of the childlike, and a manifestation of surrealist genius.” Like most of the core surrealist masters, Miró expressed contempt for conventional painting methods as a way of supporting bourgeois society! He famously declared that the group should launch an "assassination of painting" to upset the visual elements of established subject, technique, and careerism.

Surrealism, as such, is a tremendously important art movement, based in Paris of the 1920s and '30's. In reaction to the barbarities of WWI – that progressive thinkers and artists of the time blamed on the military-industrial complex of Establishment Europe – the surrealists adopted a manifesto of rebellion in the arts. They sought to prove that traditional art was in bourgeois league with the logicians of the world, who had repaid their power and wealth to the world of common men with a brutal decimation of the Continent.

To be opposite, then, the surrealists – especially Miró – sought out the subconscious as the one ‘true’ source for cosmic inspiration in visual art. The staid art academies of the time were spurned, and the surrealists invented their own ‘art world’ – replete with exhibitions, ‘happenings,’ protests, activities of the occult, performances, games of chance, and all variety of unorthodox and experimental aesthetic, intellectual, and mystical pursuits. As the pinnacle of their revolt against tradition, the surrealists sought to harness ‘automatic’ methods in art making. In Miró’s work, once can see evidence of random and rapid mark-making; interior, mind’s eye components of color, abstraction, and fantastical ‘figuration;’ the use of electrified rotors to etch into copper plates; splatter painting, etc. Add to these, that the surrealists tried to paint under the effects of hypnosis, during seances, and in games wherein jumbled bits of colored paper and chits with random words on them were picked from a hat to make spontaneous nonsense poems and extemporaneous works of art.

In addition to being one of the greatest modern artists of all time – in the company of Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, et al. – Miró is one of the foremost printmakers of the 20th century. Like Picasso, he is celebrated for his ability to combine an astounding range of printing techniques into a single sheet. A master of etching, drypoint, aquatint, sugar-lift, etc., Miró is also the ‘co-inventor’ of the carborundum printmaking process, in which weighty but intricate effects of deep texture and layering are accomplished throughout an editioned series.

Finally, Miró’s formal schemas, often immediately recognizable by his use of black as a structural lynchpin; his tendency to sharp deployment of the primary and secondary colors; and his use of tertiaries and quaternaries in faint orbs, makes his style so unforgettable and autograph, even Spain herself has adopted one of his images to represent the national pride!

A museum dedicated to his work, the *Fundació Joan Miró*, was established in his native city of Barcelona in 1975, and another, the *Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró*, was established in his adoptive city of Palma de Mallorca in 1981.

Today, Miró's paintings sell for between US\$250,000 and US\$26 million: US\$17 million at an auction for *La Caresse des étoiles* (1938) on 6 May 2008, at the time, the highest amount paid for one of his works. In 2012, *Painting-Poem ("le corps de ma brune puisque je l'aime comme ma chatte habillée en vert salade comme de la grêle c'est pareil,"* 1925) was sold at Christie's London for \$26.6 million. Later that year at Sotheby's in London, *Peinture (Etoile Bleue,* 1927) brought nearly 23.6 million pounds (\$36 million in 2015 US\$) with fees – more than twice what it had sold for at a Paris auction in 2007, and a record price for the artist at auction.

EXHIBITIONS & COMMISSIONS

- Premier Solo Exhibition, 1918, Barcelona, Spain
Paris Exhibition, mural, "The Reaper," Spanish Republican Pavilion, 1937
Sculptures and Ceramics, Maeght Foundation, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, 1964
World Trade Center, New York City, Tapestry, 1974 *
National Gallery, Washington, D.C., Tapestry, 1977
The Sun, Moon and One Star (Miró's Chicago), monumental mixed-media sculpture, The Loop, 1981
Milwaukee Art Museum, *The Sun, the Moon and One Star*, bronze maquette, 1967
Mosaic, Las Ramblas, Barcelona

* Miró's *World Trade Center Tapestry* was displayed for many years at the World Trade Center building. It was one of the most expensive works of art lost during the September 11 attacks.

MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVES (SOLO)

- New York City, NY, 1972
London, England, 1972
Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, 1973
Madrid, Spain, 1978, 1993 (Centennial Solo Exhibition)
Barcelona, Spain, 1993
NYC, NY, 1993
London, 2011
Washington, D.C., 2013
Barcelona, 2013 (Printmaking)
Vienna, Austria, 2014
Tokyo, Japan, 2014
Denver, CO, 2015

PRIZES, HONORS & AWARDS

- University of Barcelona, Doctor of Fine Arts *honoris causa*, 1979, Spain
Palma City Council (Majorca, Spain), establishment the *Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca*, 1981
Guggenheim International Award, NYC, 1958
Venice Biennale, "Printmaking Prize," 1954, Italy

SELECTED MUSEUMS

- Fundació Joan Miró*, Barcelona
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca
Tate Modern, London
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Albertina Museum, Vienna
National Art Center, Tokyo
Denver Art Museum
Hakone Museum, Japan