

CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRE

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JOAN MIRÓ

SCULPTURES
1928-1982



20 march
2 september

CENTRO BOTÍN PRESENTS:

'JOAN MIRÓ: SCULPTURES 1928-1982'

- Exhibition from 20 March to 2 September 2018 at Centro Botín in Santander.
- This is the first international exhibition to examine Miró's creative process in sculpture. It gathers over one hundred sculptures, original objects and plasters, many of them never seen before, which were used by the artist to assemble and create his work, as well as preparatory drawings, photographs and videos.
- Curated by: María José Salazar, member of Fundación Botín's Visual Arts Advisory Committee and an expert in the work of Joan Miró; Joan Punyet Miró, grandson of the artist and public head of Successió Miró.
- Centro Botín
Muelle de Albareda, s/n
39004 Santander SPAIN
www.centrobotin.org
- Opening hours:
Winter (Oct-May): Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 8pm.
Summer (Jun-Sep): Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 9pm.

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Santander, 29 January 2018.- This coming 20 March, the Centro Botín in Santander shall open its doors on a unique survey taking a close look at Joan Miró's (Barcelona, 1893 – Palma, 1983) most outstanding sculptures and his original creative process, removed from conventional canons. The exhibition will gather for the first time more than one hundred sculptures from all Miro's various artistic periods, as well as drawings, preparatory sketches for his works, photographs of the artist, videos showing the process of casting, and the objects used to create his works, many of them previously unseen and expressly restored for this exhibition.

The assembly of materials which Joan Miró collected himself on his strolls in the countryside, and the transformation of everyday objects into artworks, are the signature marks of the artist's sculptural work, for whom freedom and poetry were the true essence of all his creations. As Joan Miró explained with regard to his creative process, "I feel attracted to an object by a magnetic force, without the slightest premeditation, and then I feel myself being drawn towards another object which is added to the first, and in combination they create a poetic shock, preceded by that visual and physical revelation which makes poetry truly moving, and without which it would be completely ineffective."

Conceived solely and exclusively for Centro Botín, *Joan Miró: Sculptures 1928-1982* will be on view to the public at Fundación Botín's new art centre in Santander from 20 March to 2 September 2018. The exhibition has benefited from the selfless collaboration of Obra Social "la Caixa".

This survey exhibition marks a turning point in our vision of Miró's work in sculpture. **For the first time, the artist's creative process can be fully appreciated through a display of original objects and the variety of materials he used in his creations; his work in a number of different foundries; the projects he created to be turned into monuments; his ideas rendered in sketches; and his choice of materials prior to becoming part of the piece he was creating.**

Curated by María José Salazar, a member of Fundación Botín's Visual Arts Advisory Committee and an expert in the work of Joan Miró, and Joan Punyet Miró, grandson of the artist and public head of Successió Miró, the selection of works ranges from his first piece, created in 1928, to his last one in 1982. Also on view are all the materials used by the artist in his work: iron, bronze, wood, paint, fibreglass, polyurethane, or synthetic resins. Also included in the show is a selection of the private collection of small odd objects that Miró treasured – once kept on the shelves of his library, they somehow represent the basis of his sculptural vision, and have now been generously lent by his family. In the artist's own words, "I want to make huge sculptures. I prepare myself by accumulating things in my studio." And, as María José Salazar argues, the artist certainly "used them to create a phantasmagorical, ironic, playful world [...] It may sometimes seem that the sculpture is formed from an implausible conjunction of objects obtained at random, but nothing could be further from the truth. Miró sensed and looked for forms."

Most pieces come from the private collection of the Miró family, Fundació Miró of Barcelona and Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró of Mallorca. Others have been ceded by international institutions, with particular mention to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation in New York, Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, and Galerie Lelong in París; and also, in Spain, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Fundación “La Caixa” and the Government of the Balearic Islands.

The exhibition is laid out in five sections, following a chronological order. Generally speaking, one could say that “Joan Miro: Sculptures 1928-1982” displays a selection of the artist’s best constructions, assemblages and monumental sculptures, rounded off by a variety of images of his creative process, taken by major photographers like Joaquim Gomis, Josep Planas Montanyà and Francesc Catalá-Roca; sketches that speak of his restless dedication and quest for forms; and very particularly, the original materials he used to conceive his pieces in the solitude of his studio.

The show will include iconic works like *Danseuse Espagnole* (1928), the first in his enduring exploration of the third dimension, and the construction *Painting –Object* (1931). Equally noteworthy is the body of work which the artist referred to as *Femme*, with which he created his earliest bronzes in 1949, and which he would return to one year later with a combination of bone, stone and iron. His painted sculptures from 1967, like *Femme et oiseau*, *Personnage* or *Jeune fille s’évadant*; monumental sculptures, like *Femme Monument* (1970), *Personnage* and *Porte I*, both from 1974, *L’Oeil attire les diamants* (1974), in which he restarted experimental works, or *Souvenir de la Tour Eiffel* (1977), a three-metre high sculpture, conceived with assembled objects.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that this exhibition will be accompanied by a book, published expressly for the occasion, with essays on Miró’s creative process written by María José Salazar and by Joan Punyet Miró and Emilio Fernández Miró, grandsons of the artist, who contribute their personal insights and have taken part in the organisation of this show, in preparation for several years. Apart from a timeline of his work in sculpture, the catalogue will feature for the first time photographic reproductions of all the works on display, together with the cataloguing and reproduction of images of the objects and materials that make up the work or were used to create them.

Walkthrough of the Exhibition

Visitors to the show are welcomed by the sculpture *Personnage* (1974), a piece that could be viewed as a summary of Miró’s process of assembly of different objects, which he would finally render in painted synthetic resin. On show here will be the first pieces by Miró, many of them unknown, in small formats and highly delicate, as well as the first two sculptures made by the Catalan artist in bronze, together with his earliest monumental piece: *Oiseau solaire* (1966).

Next to this space, there is a didactic section taking a look at Miró’s creative process. To this end, several works will be on display alongside the original materials collected by the artist on his walks in the countryside

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to be later used in his sculptures. That is the case of *Tête de taureau* (1970), which arose from the roots of an ancient olive tree.

Miró also used mundane objects, like soaps, a turkey from a Christmas nativity scene, or a small whistle, that can be seen next to the final sculpture; or the preparatory plaster casts for the pieces, retouched and occasionally painted by the artist himself, without forgetting his direct works, like when he used his own footprints in search of new forms. The purpose of this space is to show how Miró, rather than search or select, merely found what his boundless imagination made him see, endowing his sculpture, whose unity rested on the poetics of construction, with an identity of its own.

A third section exhibits truly unique pieces, sculptures made with different textures; works resulting from the use of everyday objects, like his grandson's highchair, and others in which he went back to experimentation and to his origins, with a special mention for pieces never exhibited before, like the only three original and complete pieces that have been kept of the assemblages Miró developed prior to rendering them in bronze.

A fourth area will allow us to look at his monumental projects or his filiform sculptures, light and powerful all at once. Here we will find *Porte I* (1974) next to a video showing the casting process of this piece, created expressly for his exhibition at the Paris Grand Palais in 1974.

The exhibition will be brought to a close with the artist's large-format colour pieces. In them Miró used a specific palette, defined by pure green, blue, red, yellow and black tones that are translations of the earth, the light and the sun, and which demonstrate his predilection for the intense and bright colours of the Romanesque as well as his admiration for Antoni Gaudí's work.

Chronologically arranged throughout all these rooms we see monumental pieces measuring over 3 metres high, illustrating his desire to create large-format sculptures for urban spaces that would reach wider audiences.

MIRÓ'S ARTISTIC PERIODS

The beginning of his sculpture in Paris

A tireless and innovative creator, Miró started the construction of his own particular three-dimensional language in 1928 in Paris. Even though he began his process in a traditional painterly format, he gradually evolved towards more synthetic forms to give shape to a new discourse in the development of contemporary sculpture. In that sense, his earliest creations were works closely related with the avant-garde, but particularly personal and free in the sense that they inform a world of his own that has sometimes been termed as *Mironian*. In the painterly space Miró combined wood, string, boards and metal, replacing forms with elements such as sandpaper or cork, and symbols with real objects like a set square or a pen, which undoubtedly opened up the way for sculpture.

This period accounts for very few but highly significant works, of which only a limited number of examples have survived, perhaps owing to the frailty of the materials.

Return to sculpture

In the 1940s, confronted with the harsh reality of war and exile, Miró sought refuge in an unreal world of dreams. His loneliness and his isolation from the art scene were the seed for his dedication to sculpture, which he returned to after his collaboration with the ceramicist Josep Llorens Artigas. This moment marks the actual birth of Miró as a sculptor, and his works between 1946 and 1956 were closely related to ceramics.

Miró's freedom, poetics and creative imagination were subject to Artigas' control. The collaboration between the two creators was intensified even further when Miró was commissioned with two large mural works for the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

It was in this period when he created his earliest bronzes, for which he conceived an iconographic figure of his own by assembling everyday objects which he endowed with a poetic vision; he titled them generically, *Femme*, thus alluding, not to a female in particular, but to a universal notion of the woman. María José Salazar explains, "It was undoubtedly his favourite subject matter, to which he kept returning throughout his whole career, along with birds and stars; combining them in certain ways made any transgression possible for him, while identifying him with a distinctive cosmic language of his own."

New workshops and maturity of his work

Another cycle began in 1956, when a new period opened up in the artist's life and art, following his move to Palma de Mallorca, where he would settle definitively. Josep Lluís Sert designed and built a studio for him, providing him with new and isolated spaces where he could finally turn his old yearning to have his own atelier into a reality. Besides this space he also had an 18th century country house, where he worked with his sculpture, even sketching them on the walls of the old building.

The artist's long-held desire "to build a large atelier for myself, packed with sculptures, one that gives you the strong impression of being in a new world" was finally fulfilled. Unlike the paintings that were turned against the wall or the images made on a flat surface, "the sculptures should look like living monsters peopling the atelier."

He then entered a new phase of voluntary reflection and silence, after which, in 1962, he returned again to sculpture, which opened the artist's most fertile and personal period.

In this period he used discarded materials that he then took to new heights thanks to the irregular patina of bronze. "As if it were a Greek, Etruscan or Roman relic found in a wreck. That was what my father wanted" María Dolores, Miró's daughter, clarifies. "To leave a referent of the singularity of the objects used in his constructions, preserving the container but adding a symbolic and metaphorical content."

"Through his poetic/sculptural assemblages, Miró holds in check the existence of the outside world, an outside world captured in the spider's web of his dreams and transformed into something very different, that leads us into the reality of our own cosmic landscape," adds Joan Punyet Miró. "His daily walks in the countryside, on

the beach and around his house supplied him with unsuspected objects and materials.” For the artist’s grandson, the work of his grandfather is charged with reflection, but also with intuition, for “it is at once committed and playful, and always open to experimentation.”

In the late 1960s, he was deeply committed to sculpture, but he undertook it in a freer and more assured way. Thus, from 1966 through 1971, Miró created 191 imaginary figures through assembling and transforming materials, in a process in which the importance lies not only in the new spaces he has at his disposal and to which he takes his most unusual findings, but also the collaborations he engaged in with a number of international founders.

“His studios gradually filled up with them, and there they lay, leaning against the walls, resting on the floor or the table’s waiting for chance or contemplation to reveal the combinations at the right moment. Miró’s hand reacted instantly,” points out his grandson, Joan Punyet before adding that “his intuitive eye foresaw which were the ones that could be unmasked, interrogated by his surrealist spirit, to try to find their personality in their hidden face.”

It was also in that period when he began to conceive monumental pieces and to open up an interesting path with colour sculptures, as seen in the final exhibition space.

He created figures that were balanced in their own poetic forms, and which he brought closer to our imagination through their suggestive titles, further cementing the unique personal world he had been searching for over the years.

Miró did not limit himself to sending the materials to the workshops or to visiting them occasionally to ascertain or follow the state of the works. He frequented them regularly and personally witnessed the process of casting. According to his grandson, Joan Punyet Miró, “Miró prepared everything in advance in his studios in Palma, where he drew the presentation of the objects that were to make up the resulting sculptures. Soon afterwards he arrived at the foundry with his folders of preparatory drawings with detailed explanations of how all the objects had to be positioned.”

Those works began to be exhibited in conjunction with his paintings in the major international shows of his works. *Miró escultor*, the first monograph on the artist, was published in 1972, with an essay by Jacques Dupin and photographs by Català-Roca. One year later, Maeght published *Miró sculpteur*, written by Alain Jouffroy and Joan Teixidor, a work wisely completed by his grandson, Emilio Fernández Miró, who with Pilar Ortega published in 2006 *Joan Miró. Sculptures. Catalogue raisonné 1928-1982*.

In his final years, Miró received highly important commissions for public sculptures, something he was very fond of, for he always tried to go beyond the walls of the workshops and exhibition venues to become part of an urban environment that could compete with nature and thus reach a wider public, always searching for interaction with the beholders with whom he wished to engage in poetic and free dialogue.

Timeline of the artist

1893. Joan Miró i Ferrà was born in Barcelona on 20 April

1910. Finished his studies in commerce and began to work as an accountant

1911. Contracts typhoid fever and convalesces in Mont-roig, where he dedicates his time to painting

1918. First solo exhibition at Galerías Dalmau in Barcelona

1920. Travels to Paris for the first time

1924. Meets with avant-garde poets and writers at André Masson's studio

1928. Begins his early phase in sculpture with three-dimensional works with little volume

1930. His only daughter, María Dolores, was born in Barcelona,

1946. During a period of ten years he worked on sculptures closely related with his ceramic works. Conceives *Oiseau solaire* and *Oiseau lunaire* as opposing forces

1947. Travels for the first time to the USA, where he was commissioned to create a mural for the Gourmet Room at the Terrace Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati. This is his first private commission

1949. From this moment onwards he dedicated himself intensely to graphic work

1954. He is awarded the International Grand Prize for Engraving at the 27th Venice Biennale

1955. Receives a commission from UNESCO to create two large murals for its headquarters in Paris

1956. He moves to Palma de Mallorca where a house and studio were designed and built for him

1958. Unveiling of the two murals at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris

1962. A time of reflection and introspection when he returned to sculpture, opening a third phase

1966. First trip to Japan for a retrospective at the National Museum of Art in Tokyo

1967. A ceramic mural, made in collaboration with Josep Llorens Artigas, is unveiled at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. He is awarded the Carnegie International Grand Prize in painting

1971. Fundació Joan Miró is set up in Barcelona

1975. Fundació Joan Miró, designed by the architect Josep Lluís Sert, opens its doors in Barcelona

1978. The Generalitat de Catalunya awards him its Gold Medal. He donates the sculpture *Mère Ubu* to the city of Madrid, which is then located in the Open-air Sculpture Museum in Paseo de la Castellana

1980. King Juan Carlos I presents him with the Gold Medal in Fine Arts; this year also sees the unveiling of the mural on the façade of the new Conference Centre in Madrid

1983. A number of exhibitions and tributes are held and books published around the world to coincide with the artist's 90th birthday. Joan Miró dies in Palma de Mallorca on 25 December

Joan Miró: Sculptures 1928-1982

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More information: www.centrobotin.org

“Faced with a Miró sculpture the most important thing, perhaps, is to listen attentively to the whisper of intuition, trying, by doing so, to decode it and be able to penetrate the mystery of its creation.”

- Joan Punyet Miró

Press Images

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Centro Botín

Centro Botín is an arts centre of Fundación Botín: a space for the development of creativity through art and a meeting place focused on art and culture, providing a base from which the Fundación can build on its longstanding support for art and artists, through international exhibitions, workshops and scholarships, and research. Its mission is to awaken people’s creative nature and skills by bringing the arts to the general public and harnessing the huge potential in developing emotional intelligence and creativity. Centro Botín strives to be one of the leading art centres in the international art circuit, spreading the cultural and educational wealth of the arts and offering a warm welcome to all visitors from near and far.

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