INTRODUCTION

The Collection comprises 65 works by Joan Miró from different sources, in addition to four sculptures and an oil by Alexander Calder which the latter gave to Miró in a reflection of the close friendship and particular artistic proximity between the two.

While most of the works date from the final decades of Miró’s life there are also paintings from other periods, revealing the way in which he continually returned to the same themes, reinventing and reinvigorating them.

The Collection reveals an enthusiastic Miró, happily engaged in his work and deploying a freedom of language as he reflects on his own painting, art in general and the progress of time.
JOAN MIRÓ and the American sculptor Alexander Calder met in Paris in December 1928. That meeting led to a life-long friendship to the point where Calder’s sculptures, which seem to be written in space, came to be identified with Miró’s two-dimensional forms. Starting in 1930, Calder produced wire portraits of many of his friends, including the one of Miró on display. The group of works shown here were gifts from Calder to Miró.
SIGN AND GESTURE

Miró’s Constellations introduced a new way of arranging a series of interconnected forms on the pictorial surface and had a notable influence on most of the American Abstract Expressionist artists, including Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. This was a reciprocal influence, as evident in the gesturalism that characterises Miró’s large-format works. In addition, the use of different materials such as sackcloth and the ripped canvases evoke the context of Informalism, which was emerging in Europe at this date, revealing an artist constantly alert to what was taking place around him.
OVER THE YEARS the vocabulary of visual signs that Miró started to formulate in 1924 underwent numerous revisions, changes and transformations but always maintained the same identity and poetic intensity. The motifs – women-birds-star – are not new but the artist gave them a new life and used them almost as a pretext to study paint itself and gesturalism: the use of black and a hard, aggressive line alternates with arabesques and curved forms “stained” by the drips left by the acrylic on the canvas, almost like a “drip painting”. The artist’s discovery of Oriental calligraphy and street graffiti is again evident and connects different periods of his career while simultaneously allowing him to simplify the motifs.
In the 1960s Miró began to refine the motifs in his paintings in a process of paring-down that left the work almost bare. This is the approach behind the numerous heads on display in this gallery. *Personages* is the French term that best describes Miró’s monsters. These strange creatures, some mischievous and others lyrical, clearly have human attributes. Solitary heads that emerge from the canvas and in some cases look at us inquisitively, provoking a sense of fear in the viewer combined with the humour that all Miró’s work conveys.
CHALLENGING PAINTING was not a new concept for Miró. This final section includes a series of works that are most easily understood by bearing in mind the artist’s celebrated declaration that he wished to “assassinate painting”. This assassination has a dual meaning. Firstly throw-away materials, chipboard, resins and blobs of paint become the principal elements. Secondly, he modified works by unknown artists, purchasing pictures that he found in street markets which he repainted in order to combine his and the other artist’s work. Miró made ten such paintings during his career, of which four are on display in the exhibition.