

An abstract painting by Joan Miró. The background is a light, off-white color. A large, vibrant red circle dominates the right side of the composition. Several solid black circles of varying sizes are scattered across the white background. In the bottom left corner, there are curved, brushstreak-like shapes in blue and orange-red. The overall style is characteristic of Miró's spontaneous and gestural abstract work.

ESPACIO MIRÓ

Fundación **MAPFRE**

E **SPACIO MIRÓ** has been part of Fundación MAPFRE's exhibition programme as a permanent collection since 2016. This new installation, however, marks its final presentation to the public. The collection, divided between this gallery and the building's first basement level, comprises 51 works by Joan Miró and 4 sculptures and an oil by Alexander Calder (Lawnton, Pennsylvania, 1898 - New York, 1976), with whom Miró enjoyed a close friendship and a special artistic affinity. These works offer a wide-ranging survey of Miró's late output, a period that has recently been re-evaluated as one characterised by a fruitful re-elaboration of the artist's early languages.

During the 1960s Miró embarked on a period of self-analysis as he reformulated his painting. Seemingly scrutinising himself, he repeatedly returned to themes and motifs that had been central throughout his career. He now reinterpreted them and gave them fuller meaning in what can be seen as a type of reflection in which painting seems to withdraw into itself.

This selection introduces us to a mature artist and one capable of reinventing his themes in order to open them up to the future; themes replete with enthusiasm but also with doubt and reflection.

MIRÓ & CALDER



Joan Miró and the American sculptor Alexander Calder met in Paris in December 1928. The friendship they formed at that point would last throughout their lives to the extent that Miró's two-dimensional forms became associated with the sculptures of Calder, who seemed to write in space in order to defy it. A parallel can be established between the former's attempts to break down the limits of painting and the latter's project to liberate sculpture from its inherently static nature and locate it in space in an unprecedented manner. Starting in 1930, Calder produced a series of wire portraits including the one of Miró exhibited here. Through his use of this material, which he twisted to achieve the desired form, he added the three-dimensional presence of sculpture to the dynamic of continuous drawing. In a similar way and at various moments in his career Miró applied a comparable process of reduction to his paintings and drawings, creating motifs that recall Calder's wire and which seem to suggest that the pictorial plane is expanding and opening out into space like the sculptor's mobiles and stabiles.

SIGN AND GESTURE



The year 1941 was a crucial one for Miró. He held his first, successful exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and following a five-year absence returned to Montroig in Tarragona where he had developed most of his artistic vocabulary during the early decades of his career.

Much of Miró's mature language emerged with the *Constellations* (1939-41), a series that initiated a new approach to arranging a group of interconnected forms on the paper or canvas which had a notable influence on the work of the American Abstract Expressionists. At the same time the use of different materials such as sackcloth, on which he worked directly without a preparatory layer, and his torn canvases reveal an artist constantly alert to what was happening around him as here he was looking back to the Informalist ideas emerging in Europe in the late 1940s.

Having temporarily abandoned painting between 1955 and 1959 in order to focus on printmaking and sculpture, Miró returned to it with an emphasis on the unexpected but also on meditation. The motifs were not new - women, birds and stars - but the artist gave them new life and used them as a pretext to study painting itself and gesturalism. He worked with arabesques created with black brushstrokes that suggest Japanese ideograms as well as street graffiti. Miró visited Japan various times in the 1970s and was particularly interested in its culture, frequently employing motifs of this kind in his late work.

HEADS



In the 1960s Miró began to refine the motifs in his works, as he had already done in the mid-1920s, in a type of paring down which reduced the elements in his compositions. This is evident in the numerous heads on display in this gallery.

Personnages is the French term that best describes his monsters. Strange creatures, at times mischievous and at others lyrical, in which human attributes can be discerned. As with almost all of Miró's work these heads emerge through metamorphosis; the woman who becomes a bird, the sun transformed into a mouth, the snail that turns into an eye. Fantastical, chimerical creatures made up of unconnected parts which, seen in their entirety, cannot be identified as a specific species or gender or even as a real being. Solitary heads that appear unexpectedly and scrutinise the viewer with an ironic gaze.

CHALLENGING PAINTING



“Painting has been in decline since the days of the cavemen” Miró declared to the newspaper *L’Intransigeant* on 7 April 1930. We now encounter a desire for confrontation, rupture and “murder”, in his own words, which is widely evident in his output of 1929 and 1930 and for which he made use of the Dada concepts that so notably influenced his work. This was a denial and a rejection of traditional artistic values and Miró called into question his own work of prior to that moment. Mistrusting his painting, he now turned to collage, *papier collé* and sculpture.

Years later that challenge reappeared. The selection presented here includes works which can be understood from this viewpoint. Anti-painting is associated with the use of new materials - zinc plates, hardboard, plywood, industrial quality panels - and the way in which they are employed: crackled, perforated and burned. In parallel to this, Miró “murdered painting” in other ways, intervening on works by anonymous painters. For the latter and in order to once again question the history of art, he added his own contribution to a series of genre scenes and landscapes by academic or decorative artists which he found in flea markets. The result was compositions created by two artists. The first paintings of this type date from the 1950s but Miró devoted himself more assiduously to them from 1960 onwards. Over the course of his career he produced ten of these interventions of which four are on display in this gallery.