

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES FOCUSED EXHIBITION ON JOAN MIRÓ AND HIS MASTERPIECE *THE BIRTH OF THE WORLD*, FEATURING WORKS FROM THE MUSEUM'S EXCEPTIONAL MIRÓ COLLECTION

NEW YORK, November 14, 2018—The Museum of Modern Art presents *Joan Miró: Birth of the World*, an exhibition that explores the development of Miró's pictorial universe, with particular emphasis on his intense engagement with poetry, the creative process, material experimentation, and the seen and unseen world. This focused exhibition, drawn from MoMA's unrivalled Miró collection and augmented by several key loans, situates his monumental painting, *The Birth of the World* (1925), in relation to other key works by the artist, which are rarely shown together. On view from February 24 through July 6, 2019, the exhibition includes approximately 60 paintings, works on paper, prints, illustrated books, collages, and objects primarily made between 1920, the year of Miró's first catalytic trip to Paris, and the early 1950s, when his unique visual language gained international acclaim. *Joan Miró: Birth of the World* is organized by Anne Umland, The Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Senior Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

The Museum of Modern Art's collection of Miró's works constitutes one of the finest and most comprehensive in the world. In 1941, MoMA organized the first major museum retrospective of Miró's work, followed by others in 1959 and 1993, the centennial of the artist's birth. The Museum has also presented focused exhibitions, most recently *Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting 1927–1937* (2008), which explored a single, transformative decade in Miró's long career. The present exhibition extends the Museum's commitment to Miró by offering for examination and reassessment an in-depth presentation of his works from the collection.

The Museum acquired Miró's *The Birth of the World* in 1972, in part as a gift from the artist. Since then, it has been on regular display in the Museum's collection galleries, and is widely acknowledged as one of the artist's greatest works. Miró covered the ground of his oversized canvas by applying paint in an astonishing variety of ways that recall poetic chance procedures. He then added a series of pictographic signs that seem less painted than drawn, transforming the broken syntax, constellated space, and dreamlike imagery of avant-garde poetry into a radiantly imaginative and highly experimental form of painting.

Organized chronologically, the exhibition begins with Miró's *Portrait of Enric Cristòfol Ricart* (1917), displayed at the Museum for the first time since 2000. This painting-cum-collage announces Miró's ambition to be an "International Catalan," with its local subject (Miró's Barcelona studio mate, E. C. Ricart), bright, French Fauve-inspired palette, and pasted-in Japanese print. A few years later Miró experienced what he once described as the "jolt" of his first trip to Paris in 1920. There he became close friends with a group of young avant-garde poets and painters who had a decisive impact on his work.

With *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* (1923–24), on view in the exhibition, Miró went, as he later said, “beyond painting” to create a visionary, fantastical landscape filled with schematic symbols and signs. The Surrealist poet André Breton acquired this work in 1925. During the summer of that same year, Miró—buoyed by the encouragement of Breton and other Surrealists—painted *The Birth of the World*, the exhibition’s focal point. This work, long celebrated as a precursor of post–World War II gestural abstraction in Asia, Europe, and the United States, demonstrates how, in Miró’s pictorial universe, visionary and cosmic elements are inextricably intertwined with the earthly and mundane.

The exhibition continues with works from the 1920s and 1930s created after *The Birth of the World*, including what are often referred to as Miró’s “savage paintings,” which respond to the rising political tensions in Spain in the years leading up to the Spanish Civil War. One such work included in the exhibition, *Rope and People, I* (1935), combines a crude hank of coiled rope with bright colors and grotesque figuration to produce an aggressive physicality.

Miró was forced into exile in France late in 1936 due to his Republican sympathies; at the onset of World War II he moved his family to Varengeville, on the coast of Normandy, where he thought they would be safe. There, during a time of isolation and great personal anxiety, he began a series of small gouache and oil washes on paper collectively known as the Constellations. These works have a sense of immensity, despite their small size. They include *The Escape Ladder* (1940) and *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers* (1941), which are featured together in the exhibition.

By the end of the War, Miró had established the magical, pictographic imagery of wiry figures, birds, stars, and sexual symbols for which he was to become renowned. A testament to his growing international recognition, from the late 1940s on, he was involved in a number of public commissions, including *Mural Painting* (1950–51), which, commissioned for a Harvard University dining room, measures nearly 20 feet in length. The exhibition closes with this frieze of calligraphic figures that float, suspended, against the veiled, atmospheric browns and blues of the ground.

SPONSORSHIP:

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Press Contacts: Olivia Oramas, olivia_oramas@moma.org
MoMA Press Office, pressoffice@moma.org

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