

# Joan Miro. Fifty recent prints

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# JOAN MIRO

Fifty Recent Prints

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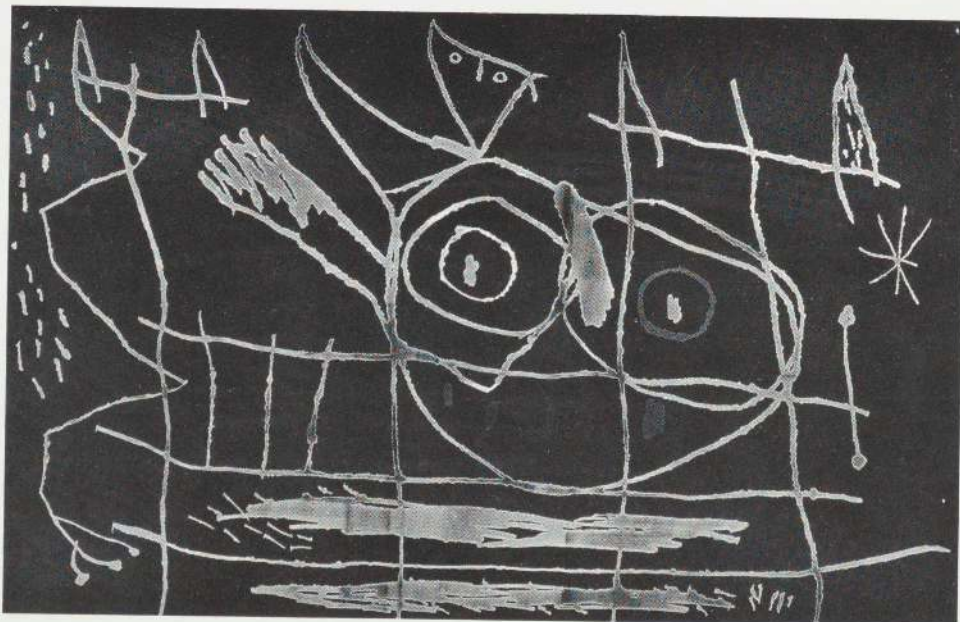
Even to the most casual admirer, the work of the Spanish artist Joan Miró represents the essence of "modern art." His pictorial language appears to be completely abstract, but the lilt of his color and thrust of his line are so beguiling, viewers have long been captivated without being burdened with questions of meaning. His personal idiom has emerged from a symbolism developed during his early association with the Surrealist movement. Birds and stars have become universal signs for Miró, and his compositions are imbued with their entrancing spirit. He has developed a calligraphy of decorative images which appeals to our most primitive yearnings for communication.

The fifty prints in this exhibition are part of a rush of work that took place in the three years preceding Miró's seventy-fifth birthday in 1968. In addition to anticipating this important anniversary, Miró was further inspired by his first visit to Japan in 1966, where, as he says, he found his distinct Oriental affinities reinforced and revitalized. The very heavy and calligraphic black lines in many of his paintings and prints since then confirm this influence. Even in the most static compositions there is a new and remarkable freedom, whether in the brilliant splashes of color or the piercing strokes of line.

Much of the spontaneity in the prints is due to a new etching technique developed by Henri Goetz which utilizes carborundum and synthetic resins. In a letter to Goetz, Miró has written, "I have worked these past days with Dutron at Saint-Paul and have become more and more aware of the richness and new horizons that your process brings to printmaking. Never has one had materials with equal power. As far as I am concerned, I can express myself without a single hindrance, at a single burst of spirit,



*Pair of Birds III*



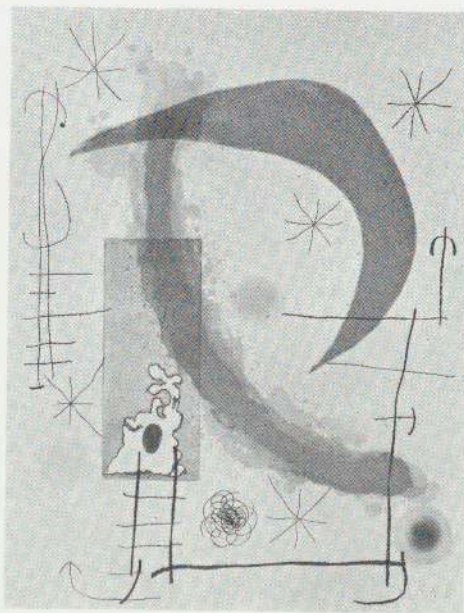
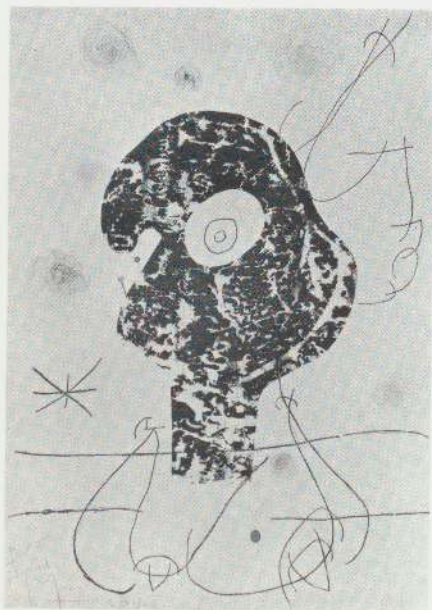


without being paralyzed nor slowed down by an outmoded technique that might risk distorting the free expression, purity and freshness of the final result."

In the workshop set up on the grounds of the Maeght Foundation, at Saint-Paul de Vence in the South of France, Miró and his printer Dutron went through considerable experimentation, often on enormous plates. Spattered, daubed, and impasto areas could all be produced with little difficulty. Exceptionally thin copper made the largest plates, over three and one-half feet in length, easier to manipulate. In some cases areas were built up with plastic that pressed into the paper and created crusty depressions, usually printed in black. In the several *bon à tirer* prints shown (so marked by the artist to indicate his approval of that state of the etching for final printing), the impression of the plastic has ruptured the paper. It should be noted that the *bon à tirer* examples in the exhibition have many indications in Miró's hand, instructing the printers as to color changes and other amendments.

Since 1938 Miró has created series of prints on one subject through variations in printing of the same plates. Three in the series *Pair of Birds* illustrate this type of transformation most clearly. The addition of colors and different manners of printing change the mood of the composition. More extreme are the parallels between the two large series *Drawn on the Wall* and *Day in the Country*. A basic set of line etchings was used in both series. But, by using additional elements, he created the prevalent atmosphere of each of the series and changed the linear structure almost beyond recognition. This sort of metamorphosis takes a more humorous direction in the two monumental prints *Polyphemus* and *Sumehpylop*. Here he has inverted the title as well as the key plate.

*Sumehpylop* (left) *The Climb* (right)



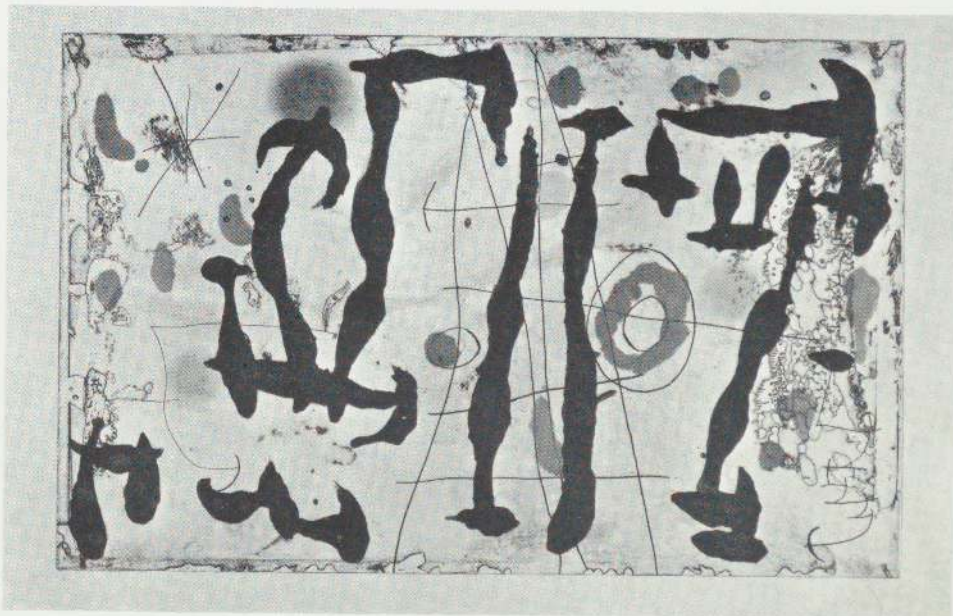
Between 1958 and 1966 Miró had worked in the same meticulous way, producing compositions of spectacular color, often with stunning effects resulting from his experiments. The first sixteen etchings in this exhibition may be called transitional. Together with the expected allusions to birds, musical compositions now appear as subject matter, developing characteristic rhythms through sensitive line on clear white grounds. Architectural references provide an additional, new basis for Miró's calligraphy.

It is in the last thirty-four works that the new subjects and new techniques combine climactically. Music of the countryside, graffiti on cave walls, Japanese places and people, and even characters evocative of contemporary social upheaval are part of the panorama of Miró's current inspiration. In addition, his often expressed wish to make prints with the "dignity of a handsome painting" is fulfilled in the prodigious *Equinox*. In *To the Left* he has even captured the mood of his ceramic walls.

Many of the masters of modern art have performed miraculous feats of creativity in their old age. For them making art is perhaps the one natural function that remains as strong as it was in their youth, if not stronger. Unhampered by the restrictions of life within a society, their spirit is freed. Miró is just embarking on the liberated flight of old age, but already, in these prints, he has begun his inevitable monument. R.C.

This exhibition was directed by Riva Castleman, Assistant Curator for Prints and Illustrated Books, The Museum of Modern Art, 1969.

*Drawn on the Wall IV*





Cover: *Equinox*

*The Great Sorcerer*





Catalog of the Exhibition

These etchings, printed in color, were executed by Joan Miró between 1966 and 1968. Dates given are those of publication. Galerie Maeght, Paris, has generously lent its archive copies for this exhibition. Height precedes width in the dimensions given below.

- 1 *Pair of Birds I* (Couple d'oiseaux I). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{3}{4} \times 36\frac{1}{4}$ "
- 2 *Pair of Birds II* (Couple d'oiseaux II). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{7}{8} \times 36\frac{5}{16}$ "
- 3 *Pair of Birds III* (Couple d'oiseaux III). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{3}{4} \times 36\frac{1}{4}$ "
- 4 *Encircled Prophet* (Le prophète encerclé). 1968. Sheet:  $35\frac{3}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{16}$ "
- 5 *Prophet Night* (Le prophète la nuit). 1968. Plate:  $26\frac{7}{8} \times 20\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 6 *Eagle Owl I* (Grand Duc I). 1968. Sheet:  $35\frac{3}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{16}$ "
- 7 *Eagle Owl II* (Grand Duc II). 1968. Plate:  $26\frac{13}{16} \times 20\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 8 *Owlet Moths* (Noctuelles). 1968. Plate:  $4\frac{3}{8} \times 15\frac{9}{16}$ "
- 9 *Passacaglia* (Passacaille). 1968. Plate:  $11\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ "
- 10 *Sonatina I* (Sonatine I). 1968. Plate:  $12\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ "
- 11 *Sonatina II* (Sonatine II). 1968. Plate:  $12\frac{3}{16} \times 9\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 12 *Sonatina III* (Sonatine III). 1968. Plate:  $12\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 13 *Sonatina IV* (Sonatine IV). 1968. Plate:  $12\frac{3}{16} \times 9\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 14 *Rampart Walk I* (Chemin de ronde I). 1968. Plate:  $13\frac{1}{16} \times 10\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 15 *Rampart Walk II* (Chemin de ronde II). 1968. Plate:  $13\frac{5}{8} \times 10\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 16 *Rampart Walk III* (Chemin de ronde III). 1968. Plate:  $13\frac{9}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{8}$ "
- 17 *Drawn on the Wall I* (Tracé sur la paroi I). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{7}{8} \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 18 *Drawn on the Wall II* (Tracé sur la paroi II). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{7}{8} \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 19 *Drawn on the Wall III* (Tracé sur la paroi III). 1968. Plate:  $23 \times 36\frac{5}{16}$ "
- 20 *Drawn on the Wall IV* (Tracé sur la paroi IV). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{7}{8} \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 21 *Drawn on the Wall V* (Tracé sur la paroi V). 1968. Plate:  $23 \times 36\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 22 *Drawn on the Wall VI* (Tracé sur la paroi VI). 1968. Plate:  $23 \times 36\frac{1}{2}$ "
- 23 *Star of the Marsh* (L'astre du marécage). 1968. Sheet:  $41 \times 28\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 24 *Star of the Labyrinth* (L'astre du labryinthe). 1968. Sheet:  $41 \times 28$ "
- 25 *Stars and Smoke* (Astres et fumée). 1968. Sheet:  $29\frac{7}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{8}$ "
- 26 *Bird Between Two Stars* (L'oiseau entre deux astres). 1968. Sheet:  $27\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{3}{16}$ "
- 27 *Rebel* (Le rebelle). 1968. Plate:  $36\frac{7}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{16}$ "
- 28 *Enatic* (L'enragé). 1968. Sheet:  $34\frac{15}{16} \times 23\frac{1}{16}$ "
- 29 *Equinox* (L'équinoxe). 1968. Sheet:  $41\frac{1}{16} \times 29$ "
- 30 *The Great Sorcerer* (Le grand sorcier). 1968. Sheet:  $35\frac{1}{8} \times 26\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 31 *Little Girl by the Sea* (Petite fille devant la mer). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{7}{8} \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 32 *Day in the Country I* (La partie de campagne I). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{15}{16} \times 36\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 33 *Day in the Country II* (La partie de campagne II). 1968. Plate:  $22\frac{7}{8} \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 34 *Day in the Country III* (La partie de campagne III). 1968. Plate:  $23 \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 35 *Day in the Country IV* (La partie de campagne IV). 1968. Plate:  $23 \times 36\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 36 *Day in the Country V* (La partie de campagne V). 1968. Plate:  $23\frac{1}{16} \times 36\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 37 *Small Fence* (Petite barrière). 1968. Plate:  $10\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ "
- 38 *The Climb* (L'escalade). 1968. Sheet:  $26\frac{1}{16} \times 19\frac{13}{16}$ "
- 39 *To the Left* (Vers la gauche). 1968. Sheet:  $28\frac{13}{16} \times 41$ "
- 40 *Splinters* (Eclats). 1968. Plate:  $18\frac{5}{16} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ "
- 41 *Arrow Head* (Tête-flèche). 1968. Plate:  $15\frac{7}{16} \times 11\frac{1}{16}$ "
- 42 *The Vegetable Kingdom* (Le règne végétal). 1968. Plate:  $18\frac{5}{16} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ "
- 43 *Head Before the Setting Sun* (Tête au soleil couchant). 1968. Plate:  $10\frac{15}{16} \times 14\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 44 *Samurai* (Samourai). 1969. Sheet:  $30\frac{9}{16} \times 22\frac{1}{16}$ "
- 45 *Sumo Wrestler* (Sumo). 1969. Composition:  $18\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{7}{16}$ "
- 46 *In the Moss Garden* (Au jardin de mousse). 1969. Plate (irregular):  $15\frac{5}{8} \times 18\frac{1}{8}$ "
- 47 *"Lady with Jewels"* ("La femme aux bijoux"). 1969. Plate:  $18\frac{3}{8} \times 13\frac{5}{8}$ "
- 48 *Pit Sawyer* (Le scieur de long). 1969. Sheet:  $31\frac{1}{4} \times 23\frac{1}{4}$ "
- 49 *Polyphemus* (Polyphème). 1969. Plate:  $36\frac{13}{16} \times 25\frac{5}{16}$ "
- 50 *Sumehpylop* (Emehpylop). 1969. Sheet:  $41\frac{3}{16} \times 28\frac{13}{16}$ "