

The Museum of Modern Art

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

Joan Miró: Birth of the World

February 24–June 15, 2019

Floor Three, The Edward Steichen Galleries

#JoanMiró

NEW YORK, February 20, 2019—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 June 15, 2019, the exhibition includes approximately 60 paintings, works on paper, prints, illustrated books, collages, objects, and ceramics 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, with Laura Braverman, Curatorial Assistant, 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

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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*, which inspired the exhibition's title. This work, long celebrated as a precursor of post-World War II gestural abstraction in Asia, Europe, and the United States, is a quintessential example of 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). Commissioned for a Harvard University dining room, this frieze measures nearly 20 feet in length and presents calligraphic figures that float, suspended, against the veiled, atmospheric browns and blues of the ground. The exhibition closes with this painting and a selection of ceramics and prints, mediums that Miró began to explore with increased intensity in the 1950s.

SPONSORSHIP:

The exhibition is made possible by the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation.

Major support is provided by Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III.

Additional support is provided by the Annual Exhibition Fund with major contributions from the Estate of Ralph L. Riehle, Alice and Tom Tisch, Mimi and Peter Haas Fund, Brett and Daniel

Sundheim, Karen and Gary Winnick, The Marella and Giovanni Agnelli Fund for Exhibitions, and Oya and Bülent Eczacıbaşı.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

In concert with the exhibition, a series of public programs are being organized and will be announced at a later date.

Gallery Sessions: Stepping into Miró's World

Thursday, March 7, 1:30 p.m. and Tuesday, March 19, 11:30 a.m.

The Museum of Modern Art, Floor 2, Marron Atrium

Discover how a range of influences and approaches to materials combined to influence the development of Miró's poetic vision of the world. This session is led by Elisabeth Bardt-Pellerin. Join us for lively conversations and engaging activities, facilitated by Museum educators, that offer insightful and unusual ways to engage with MoMA's collection and special exhibitions. Gallery Sessions are free for members and Museum admission ticket holders. No registration is required.

Interpreting MoMA: Joan Miró: Birth of the World

Thursday, March 7, 5:30 p.m.

The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building, 4 West 54 Street

We are pleased to invite you to join us for Interpreting MoMA, our bimonthly program for deaf adults. Each month's program will begin with a wine and cheese reception, followed by a sign language-interpreted private gallery talk focusing on one of MoMA's special exhibitions.

Interpreting MoMA is free of charge. Space is limited and preregistration is required. For more information or to register, please call Access Programs at (212) 408-6447 or (212) 247-1230 (TTY), or email accessprograms@moma.org.

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

For downloadable high-resolution images, register at moma.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, moma.org. Hours: Daily, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00–8:00 p.m. No service charge for tickets ordered on moma.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current ID. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA membership within 30 days.