Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983) – Artist Resources



Miró, 1936
Photograph: Man Ray

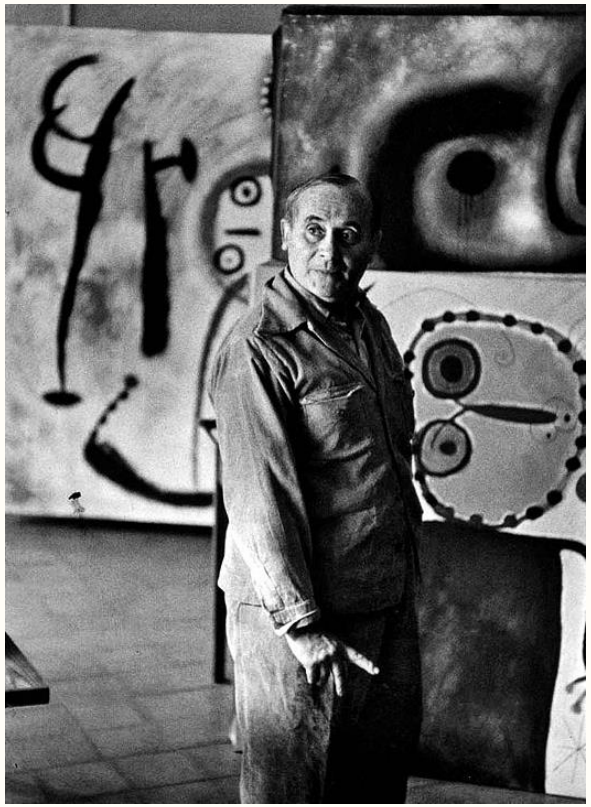
Fundació Joan Miró, the Joan Miro Foundation, Barcelona: center for study, art collection; biography, artwork, publications.

In 1994, MoMA produced the most comprehensive retrospective yet seen in the U.S. *Joan Miró* honored the artist's 100th birthday with over 400 works exploring the chronological development and myriad of mediums in which the artist worked. The monumental exhibition was hosted in conjunction with *Miró Prints and Books from New York Collections*, which celebrates Miró's innovation in print, avant-garde publications, and illustration.

The Tate Modern hosted the first major display of Miró's oeuvre in Britain in over 50 years, exhibiting key works from the artist's oeuvre and tracing his political engagement in *Miró: The Ladder of Escape*.

In 2016, the Schirn Gallery explored Miró's infamous goal "to assassinate painting" in *Miró: Painting Walls, Painting Worlds*.

Miró returned to MoMA in 2019 for *The Birth of the World*, titled after the artist's seminal 1925 painting, which explored hisburgeoning interest in the relationship between poetry and visual art.



Miró in his atelier, ca. 1980
Photograph: Henri Cartier-Bresson

Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
The Firebird, 1927
Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2026:75.4

Joan Miró was born and raised in Barcelona, where he studied art from a young age and became inspired by the growing Fauve, Cubist, and Surrealist movements in France. In 1927, he famously declared: “I want to assassinate painting!” **The Firebird** is part of his pursuit, when he began limiting paint and using raw, unprimed canvas as part of the composition. He would later begin incorporating collage and other mixed media in his work, challenging the definition of “painting” itself.

On view October 21, 2026 – February 15, 2027





Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
Portrait of Ramon Sunyer (L'Orfévre), 1918
Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2026:64.2

"Even in my portraits, where I tried to capture the immobility of presence… I tried to get the vibration of the creative spirit into my work." – Joan Miró

Miró was born and raised in Barcelona, where he studied art from a young age and graduated from the Galí Escola d'Art in 1915. Two years later, he began painting portraits of his friends who were part of a growing avant-garde circle of artists. **Portrait of Ramon Sunyer (L'Orfévre)** depicts the jeweler and goldsmith Sunyer in front of brightly colored wallpaper and a *llibre de pasantia,* or a drawing of a jewelry design made to demonstrate mastery of the craft. Sunyer took over his family workshop in 1925 and received a Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from Pope John XXIII for his contributions to religious art in 1960.

On view September 28, 2026 – January 24, 2027

Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
La chanteuse mélancolique, 1955
Oil on board

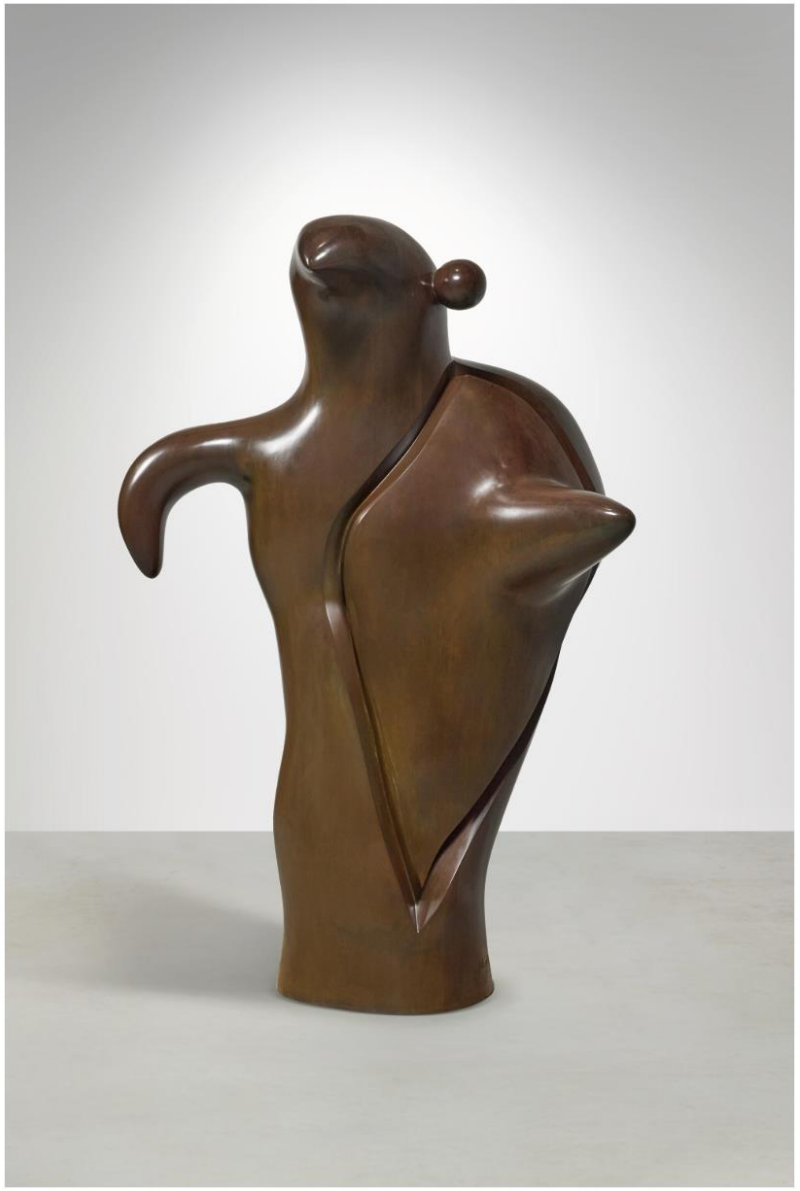
Private Collection; L2026:41.2

“When I give a title, it becomes even more alive. I find my titles in the process of working, as one thing leads to another on my canvas. When I have found the title, I live in its atmosphere. The title then becomes completely real for me.” – Joan Miró

Born and raised in Barcelona, Joan Miró studied art from a young age and was inspired by the emerging modernist movements in France. He joined the Surrealist group in the 1920s and developed his own style of dream-like lines and organic forms. **La chanteuse mélancolique (The Melancholy Singer)** was painted when Miró was building a new studio on the island of Mallorca. During this time, he turned back towards using poetic phrases as his titles, allowing them to compliment the elusiveness of his imagery.

On view May 20 – August 23, 2026





Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
Le Mère Ubu, 1975, cast c. 1977 by Susse Fondeur
Bronze

The Bluff Collection; L2025:110.1

Joan Miró was a Catalan Spanish artist who made major contributions to Surrealism, Fauvism, and other modern art movements throughout the 20th century. Though he became interested in sculpture as a student, Miró did not pursue the medium until later in his career. **La Mère Ubu** imagines a character in *Ubu Roi* (King Ubu), a play by Alfred Jarry (1896-1907) that was infamous for its crass obscenity and baffling humor. In the play, Mère Ubu convinces her husband to incite revolution and becomes increasingly power hungry. Miró's version complicates the character, depicting her in an abstracted mother and child pose.

On view January 28 – May 3, 2026

Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
Le Père Ubu, 1974
Bronze, dark brown patina

Private Collection; L2025:45.3

Joan Miró was a Catalan Spanish artist who made major contributions to Surrealism, Fauvism, and other modern art movements throughout the 20th century. Though he became interested in sculpture as a student in Barcelona, Miró did not pursue the medium until the 1940s, when he started casting hand-molded clay in bronze. **Le Père Ubu (Father Ubu)** is a homage to *Ubu Roi* (King Ubu), a play by Alfred Jarry (1896-1907) that was infamous for its crass obscenity and baffling humor. Though the play was only performed once in public, it was widely influential for later modernist movements of Dada, Surrealism, and the Theatre of the Absurd.

On view May 28 – September 28, 2025





Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
Femme Chien, 1969
Bronze

Private Collection; L2020:59.1

Joan Miró's interest in sculpture was sparked at the age of nineteen during his studies in Barcelona, but he did not return to the medium until the 1940s, when he began casting hand-molded clay in bronze. Late in his career, between 1966 and his death in 1983, Miró created over three hundred casts. In these last works, which he called *personnages*, Miró introduced found objects such as rocks, paint cans, cobbler's shoe molds, and wooden crates. These sculptures embody the Surrealist principle of releasing the creative forces of the unconscious mind from the shackles of reason and logic, reflecting Miró's lifelong delight in working outside the traditional constraints of artistic mediums. The ambiguous forms of **Femme Chien** (Dog Woman) demonstrate the artist's affinity for merging the real and fantastic, transforming flights of whimsy into tangible objects. As he reflected, "it is in sculpture that I will create a truly phantasmagoric world of living monsters."

On view June 17 – September 20, 2020

Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893-1983)
Hommage à Nusch Eluard, 1937
Oil on board, metal coat hook with painted wooden knob, painted wooden mallet

Private Collection; L2019:156.1



Joan Miró's playful yet meticulous compositions evolved from a tension between his poetic impulses and his sensitivity toward the ruthless realities of war-torn Europe. Though he found affinity with Surrealism's devotion to the subconscious, and is considered a critical member of the broader avant garde inter-war movement, Miró resisted labels throughout his experimental, multi-media career. Typical for the Catalan artist, the initial impression of abstraction in **Hommage à Nusch Eluard** quickly fades to reveal fanciful human and natural forms. The two figures on the left are poet Paul Éluard, one of the founders of Surrealism, and his wife, Nush Éluard. Nusch was also an artist, and frequently modeled for her husband's friends. The backdrop of celestial symbols and the avian creature flying beside the couple are recurring motifs in Miró's oeuvre. Many artists associated with Surrealism embraced birds as symbolic transitory beings with the ability to move between the earthly and heavenly realms, the real and the fantastic. The intriguing addition of a grafted metal coat hook with wooden knob and mallet exemplifies Miró's delight in working beyond the expected norms of artistic medium.

On view February 5 – May 10, 2020

Extra Resources

The Guardian reviewed the 2010 publication of Chantal Vieuille's biography of Nusch Eluard, *Portrait d'une muse du Surréalisme*.

2015 *Vogue* profile of Nusch Eluard with archival photographs.