

The Museum of Modern Art

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JOAN MIRO

Fifty Recent Prints

Fifty etchings executed by the Spanish artist Joan Miró in the three years preceding his seventy-fifth birthday in 1968 will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art in the Paul J. Sachs Galleries from March 10 through April 26. The exhibition, organized by Riva Castleman, Assistant Curator in charge of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum, has been drawn from the archive of the Galerie Maeght in Paris.

The prints in the exhibition were made during 1965-1968, the three years preceding Miro's seventy-fifth birthday. In addition to anticipating this important anniversary, Miró was further inspired by his first visit to Japan in 1966, where his distinct Oriental affinities were reinforced and revitalized. 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. A number of prints utilize a new etching technique, and seven of these are being exhibited for the first time. An illustrated checklist accompanies the show.

"Even to the most casual admirer," states Miss Castleman, "the work of 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."

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In this exhibition are found Miró's ever-present birds combined with new musical forms, and the well-known abbreviated motifs interwoven with his calligraphy. Music of the country-side, graffiti on cave walls, Japanese places and people, and characters evocative of contemporary social upheaval are included in Miró's most recent work. 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.

Three prints in the Pair of Birds series illustrate his technique, first used in the late 1930's, of producing variations on a single subject by printing on the same plates with different colors and using various methods of printing to change the mood of the composition. In the series Drawn on the Wall and Day in the Country, a basic set of line etchings was used, but the addition of other elements created a prevalent atmosphere for each print and greatly transformed the linear structure. This sort of metamorphosis takes a more humorous direction in Polyphemus and Sumehpylop in which Miró has inverted the title as well as the key plate.

These etchings reveal the effects on Miró of 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.

The prints in this exhibition were executed in workshop set up on the grounds of the Maeght Foundation at Saint-Paul de Vence in the South of France, and 27 were included in the enormous retrospective of the artist's work at the Foundation in 1968.

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The Museum of Modern Art has presented numerous exhibitions including the work of Joan Miró. Its first Miró retrospective in 1941 was later shown at several universities and museums in the United States. The current exhibition of prints is scheduled to tour the country for two years.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York, 10019. (212) 956-7501.