

JOAN MIRÓ AND THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

Joan Miró's art has been prominent in the exhibition and acquisition program of The Museum of Modern Art almost from the moment the Museum first opened its doors. The Museum has presented more than twenty exhibitions in which a significant number of Miró's works were shown, and, over the course of its history, has mounted six shows exclusively devoted to his art. By now, many institutions the world over have celebrated the artist's achievements, but it was at The Museum of Modern Art in 1941 that Miró first received a major museum retrospective.

When the Museum initially began an active acquisition program in the mid-1930s, Miró's work was one of its first priorities. The Museum's founding director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., saw Miró as one of a tiny handful of masters, including Picasso and Matisse, whose art must be collected in depth in order to achieve a full representation of the art of the twentieth century. From among the works assembled for his pioneering exhibition of 1936-37, *FANTASTIC ART, DADA, AND SURREALISM*, Barr negotiated the purchase of two major paintings, *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* (1923-24) and *Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird* (1926). Thereafter, through the generosity of friends of the Museum and the foresight and commitment of Barr and such later colleagues and successors as James Johnson Sweeney, James Thrall Soby, and William Rubin, the Museum regularly increased its holdings of works by Miró. As a result of

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their policies, the Museum's Miró collection is now the most historically complete representation of the artist's work in public or private hands anywhere in the world.

Miró himself responded generously to the Museum's sustained interest. In 1973, when the Museum celebrated the artist's eightieth birthday with the exhibition MIRÓ IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Miró donated a large painting and an object-sculpture, as well as twelve important drawings and a collage that constitute the preparatory studies for three of the key paintings in the Museum collection. In addition, he contributed substantially toward the acquisition of the monumental bronze *Moonbird* (1966), and himself gave the Museum two works to be sold in order to raise funds for the purchase of that great masterpiece of the 1920s, *The Birth of the World*. Miró's generous interest in the Museum was complemented by that of his life-long American dealer, Pierre Matisse, who, over the years, enriched the Museum's collection with many important gifts.