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Joan Miró's Work Examined in Landmark Exhibition, a First at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, Sole U.S. Venue



Joan Miró's triptych *Mural Painting I–III* (1962), on loan from a private collection, installed on the East Building Mezzanine—seven months in advance of the opening of *Joan Miró: The Ladder of Escape*. Photo © 2011 National Gallery of Art, Washington. Photo by Rob Shelley

Washington, DC (updated September 30, 2011)—Joan Miró's (1893–1983) affection for his native Catalonia and his passionate response to one of the most turbulent periods in European history will be examined in the first exhibition of the artist's work at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. On view in the East Building from May 6 to August 12, 2012, ***Joan Miró: The Ladder of Escape*** will bring together some 80 paintings, works on paper, and sculptures drawn from his entire career.

The exhibition was organized by Tate Modern, London, where it was on view April 14 through September 11, 2011, in collaboration with Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, which will present it from October 14, 2011, to March 25, 2012, and in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Immediately following its London showing, the triptych *Mural Painting I–III* (1962), on loan from a private collection, was installed in the East Building in September 29, 2011—seven months in advance of the exhibition opening.

Two works central to the exhibition tour are from the Gallery's collection: *The Farm*, (1921–1922), a gift of Mary Hemingway, and *Head of a Catalan Peasant* (1924), a gift of the Collectors Committee.

“Telling the story of Miró's life and the times that he witnessed reveals a dark intensity to many of his works. Behind the engaging innocence of his style lie a profound concern for humanity and a sense of personal and national identity,” said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art, Washington. “The Gallery is honored to be the only U.S. venue for this landmark exhibition, and we are grateful to the many lenders, both public and private, who made the exhibition possible.”

Exhibition Support

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation.

Additional support is provided by Buffy and William Cafritz.

The Exhibition

Counted among the most important modern artists, Joan Miró used a language of symbols and a range of techniques that reflect his personal vision, sense of freedom, and boundless energy. *Joan Miró: The Ladder of Escape* will explore his immersion in issues of Catalan identity and anarchism, which appeared in his work early on as a response to contemporary events and remained with him throughout his life.

The exhibition will present these themes through three principal periods: the defining of Catalan identity, 1920s; the response to the Spanish Civil War and the fall of France, 1936–1941; and the demise of Franco's regime, 1968–1975.

Miró's early paintings of his parents' farmhouse in the village of Montroig establish his view of Catalan identity. This landscape was a continual source of inspiration. Critical works from this period include *Vegetable Garden with Donkey* (1918) and *The Farm*, a painting that Miró came to regard as a key work in his career.

Though not of the peasantry, Miró identified the peasant as emblematic of Catalan nationalism. In the painting series *Head of a Catalan Peasant* (1924–1925), Miró

rendered the face and body of the figure as symbols (including the peasant's *barretina*). His self-identification with this figure is key to understanding the position that he adopted both locally and internationally in the 1920s and that resonated in the political turmoil of the following decade. The exhibition in Washington will bring together several canvases in the series.

Working in Barcelona and Paris, Miró was well aware of the tumult surrounding the Spanish Civil War and the first months of World War II. The exhibition will showcase extraordinary works from this period—including the series *Constellations*, one of which is *The Escape Ladder* (1940), and the print series *Barcelona* (1942–1944)—which draw upon political caricature as a form of resistance.

Under the political restrictions of Franco's Spain, Miró remained a symbol of international culture but was unable to make explicit his political views. Miró's grand abstract paintings of the late 1960s and early 1970s became a mark of resistance and integrity in the final years of the regime, which were a period of intense self-examination for Miró.

Curators and Catalogue

The exhibition is curated by Marko Daniel and Matthew Gale, Tate Modern, in collaboration with Teresa Montaner, curator, Fundació Joan Miró. It is coordinated at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, by Harry Cooper, curator and head, modern and contemporary art.

Published by Tate Publishing, the exhibition catalogue includes essays by Daniel, Gale, and Montaner, with contributions by Christopher Green and Robert S. Lubar. The 240-page catalogue will be available for purchase in the Gallery Shops in hardcover and softcover in early 2012. To order, please visit our website at shop.nga.gov; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the

public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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Biography

Harry Cooper Curator and Head of Modern and Contemporary Art National Gallery of Art, Washington



Harry Cooper, curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, is the organizing curator of The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works.

Harry Cooper is curator and head of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Since joining the Gallery in February 2008, he has organized The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection: Selected Works and initiated a series of focus exhibitions in the Tower Gallery of the East Building on such artists as Philip Guston, Mark Rothko, and Nam June Paik.

Before joining the Gallery in February 2008, Cooper served for ten years as the curator of modern art at the Harvard University Art Museums. There he organized a dozen exhibitions, including *Frank Stella 1958* (2006), *Medardo Rosso: Second Impressions* (2003), and *Mondrian: The Transatlantic Paintings* (2001). Cooper lectured in Harvard's art history department on a wide variety of topics, from Paul Cézanne to abstract expressionism. He has also taught at Johns Hopkins University,

Baltimore, and Columbia University, New York,

A native of Bethesda, Maryland, Cooper began his career as a researcher at the Wilson Quarterly of the Smithsonian Institution. From 1985 to 1990 he taught adolescents with learning disabilities in the Washington, DC, region. From 1993 to 1995 Cooper worked as an exhibition specialist on the Piet Mondrian retrospective at the National Gallery of Art. He has published numerous articles as well as book reviews and criticism. His most recent essay, "Braque's Ovals," appears in the catalogue of the Cubism exhibition opening this month at the Kimbell Art Museum.

Cooper received a PhD in 1997 from Harvard University, an MA in 1992 from Johns Hopkins University, and an AB in American history and literature in 1981 from Harvard University. Cooper also holds a certificate in drawing and painting from the Corcoran Museum School of Art, Washington, DC.

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