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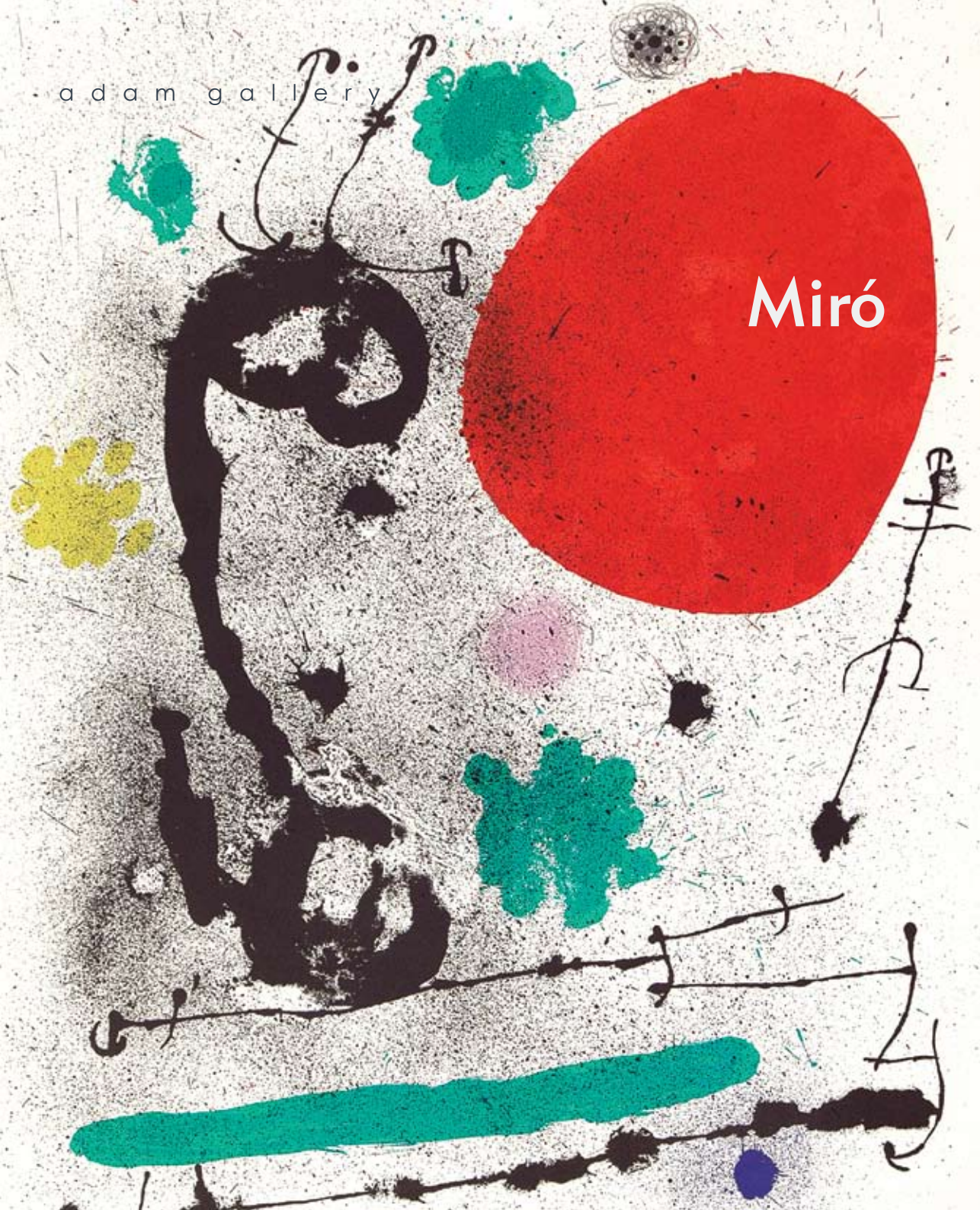
Miró



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Miró

prints

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Joan Miró - *Master Printmaker*

In his art 'Joan Miró was a poet and magician, storyteller and seer' - (*Rosamond Bernier 'Matisse, Picasso, Miró - As I Knew Them')*. By the 1930's when he first started making prints, Miró had already developed his distinctive lyrical style. The whimsical creatures - birds, stars or figures - that populated his paintings translated well to the medium of print. They are both carefully thought-out and free expressions of the subconscious. As Miró explained 'For lithography and engraving, you must dominate chance, but never be dominated by it'. Later he described how he 'engraved (the plates) with a needle or phonographic needle in a totally automatic way, without any sort of control; make a print of this initial state and work on them with various procedures.'

Miró was introduced to printmaking by the painter Louis Marcoussis, who had a printing press in his studio. It became a vital part of his art and he experimented endlessly with a broad variety of techniques, later saying 'it [printmaking] makes my painting richer; it gives me new ideas; it lets me proceed from new bases. Everything is connected.'

Miró explored intaglio techniques at Stanley William Hayter's *Atelier 17* workshop in New York in the 1940's. He then became involved with lithography through the encouragement of his Parisian dealer Aimé Maeght: making individual prints, as well as posters, invitations, catalogue covers, and even postcards.

A major breakthrough for his graphic work arrived through his introduction, by Robert Dutrou, to carborundum (silicon carbide engraving) in 1967. Miró found that by combining this new technique with other etching methods, especially aquatint (a painterly technique of engraving a resin ground on an etching plate rather than the plate itself), he could invent 'images to rival any painting' (see 'Village d'Oiseaux', 1969, cat. no.13).

Throughout his long career, Miró made more than two thousand prints. He was constantly looking for new ways of working. The prints in this exhibition illustrate the development that took place in his work as a whole, from the finely drawn, lyrical figures of 'La Nuit' (1953), (cat. no.1) to the gestural, simplified forms of the later works such as 'Homenatge a Joan Prats' (1971), (cat. no.4).

1. La Nuit

Lithograph in colours on Arches velin paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 12/100 1953
Sheet: 89 x 29 cm

Mourlot 200
Published by Maeght, Paris
Printed by Mourlot, Paris

2. L'Oiseau migrateur

Lithograph in colours on vélin de Rives paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 58/75 1970
Sheet: 66 x 51 cm

Maeght 652
Published by Louis Broder, Paris
Printed by Mourlot, Paris

3. Personnage au-dessus de l'horizon

Lithograph in colours on vélin de Rives paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 15/100 1965
Sheet: 64 x 48.5 cm

Cramer 458a
Published by Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover
Printed by Maeght, Paris

4. Homenatge a Joan Prats

Lithograph in colours on Guarro paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 60/75 1971
Image: 54.5 x 74.5 cm - Sheet: 66 x 86 cm

Maeght 727
Published by Polígrafa, Barcelona
Printed by Polígrafa, Barcelona

un oeillet Rouge, ÉCLATE
sur le bout d'un parapluie porté par
un merlan à queue de perroquet
Couché sur la neige ROSE

'Le Lézard aux plumes d'or' - 'The Lizard with Golden Feathers'

In the album 'Le Lézard aux plumes d'or' Miro combines the images with a 'free form poem'. Taking his inspiration from *Mallarmé* and *Apollinaire*, Miró abolishes the distinction between calligraphy and spontaneity. The title *'Le Lézard aux plumes d'or'* evokes the 'pompous mythological metamorphosis' of reptiles. Miro's lizard lives surreal adventures bringing the sun back into the sky whilst avoiding the crescent moon contained within kabbalistic symbols.

5. Plate IV (from Le Lézard aux plumes d'or)

Lithograph in colours on parchment
Signed in conte crayon and numbered 11/20 1971
Image: 33.6 x 48.1 cm - Sheet: 35.5 x 50 cm

Maeght 794
Published by Louis Broder, Paris
Printed by Mourlot, Paris

Les hirondelles
font un nid sur chaque corde
cette corde
étrangle
une femme
qui fut Belle

6. Plate XIII (from Le Lézard aux plumes d'or)

Lithograph in colours on parchment
Signed in conte and inscribed H.C. 1971
Sheet: 35.5 x 50 cm

Maeght 821
Published by Louis Broder, Paris
Printed by Mourlot, Paris

7. Plate XIV (from Le Lézard aux plumes d'or)

Lithograph in colours on vélin de Rives paper
Signed in pencil and numbered IV/X 1971
Image: 33.6 x 48.1 cm - Sheet: 35.5 x 50 cm

Maeght 824
Published by Louis Broder, Paris
Printed by Mourlot, Paris

8. Grand Duc II

Etching in colours on Arches paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 40/75 1965
Image: 68 x 53 cm - Sheet: 90 x 63.5 cm

Dupin 395
Published by Maeght, Paris
Printed by Maeght Levallois-Perret

'Oda à Joan Miró' - 'Ode to Joan Miró'

Miró counted many poets as close friends and once said 'These poets interested me more than the painters I met in Paris'. Among others, he collaborated with the avant-garde Catalan poet Joan Brossa. Brossa was constantly experimenting with new forms of poetry, pushing this art form to its visual limits, both graphic and scenic. In the 1970's Brossa experimented with new forms of 'visual poems' and worked firstly with Antoni Tàpies on '*Nocturn matinal*', then with Miró on *'Oda à Joan Miró*' published in 1973. Brossa brought to the project his visual poetry, while Miró's contribution was to be, in Brossa's words, 'a kind of parallel music'. The outcome was a series of nine lithographs

9. Plate IV (from Oda à Joan Miró)

Lithograph in colours on Guarro paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 67/75 1973
Sheet: 87.5 x 60 cm

Cramer 906
Published by Polígrafa, Barcelona
Printed by Polígrafa, Barcelona

10. Plate VI (from Oda à Joan Miró)

Lithograph in colours on Guarro paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 44/75 1973
Sheet: 88 x 58.2 cm

Cramer 908
Published by Polígrafa, Barcelona
Printed by Polígrafa, Barcelona

11. Bonjour Max Ernst

Etching and aquatint in colours on Arches paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 40/100 1976
Sheet: 66 x 51 cm

Dupin 936
Published by George Visat, Paris
Printed by Morsang, Paris

12. Ocellaire

Etching and aquatint in colours on vélin de Rives paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 55/75 1972
Image: 29.5 x 47 cm - Sheet: 56 x 76 cm

Dupin 559
Published by Polígrafa, Barcelona
Printed by Maeght, Paris

13. Village d'Oiseaux

Etching in colours with carborundum on Arches paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 24/75 1969
Image: 92.5 x 63.5 cm - Sheet: 105 x 75 cm

Dupin 526
Published by Maeght, Paris
Printed by Maeght, Paris

14. Untitled (from El Pi de Formentor)

Etching and aquatint in colours on Guarro paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 40/75 1976
Image: 88.5 x 74 cm - Sheet: 105 x 90 cm

Dupin 942
Published by Sala Gaspar, Barcelona
Printed by JJ Torralba Rubi, Barcelona

15. Plate XX (from L'Enfance d'Ubu)

Lithograph in colours on Arches paper
Signed in pencil and numbered 8/120 1975
Sheet: 32.5 x 50.5 cm

Cramer 1017
Published by Tériade, Paris
Printed by Mourlot, Paris

'L'Enfance d'Ubu' - 'The Childhood of Ubu'

Miró worked with the art publisher Tériade on two illustrated books depicting the stories of the Ubu character, first on *'Ubu aux Baléares'* in 1971 and then in 1975 on *'L'Enfance d'Ubu'*. The inspiration was taken from an Alfred Jarry theatre piece *'Ubu roi'* which depicted a tyranic and grotesque king. It was considered one of the first pieces of absurd theatre. For Miró the story echoed the Franco dictatorship and was a way to denounce the abuses of the modern dictator. The album 'L'Enfance d'Ubu' comprised 24 lithographs with texts written by Miró. These texts inspired by automatic writing are alongside adventurous images that combined mixed techniques such as paper collage, ink and pastel applied in a child-like and humorous manner. Ubu was drawn as half-man, half-beast and monstrous rhinoceros.

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