

Exhibition texts



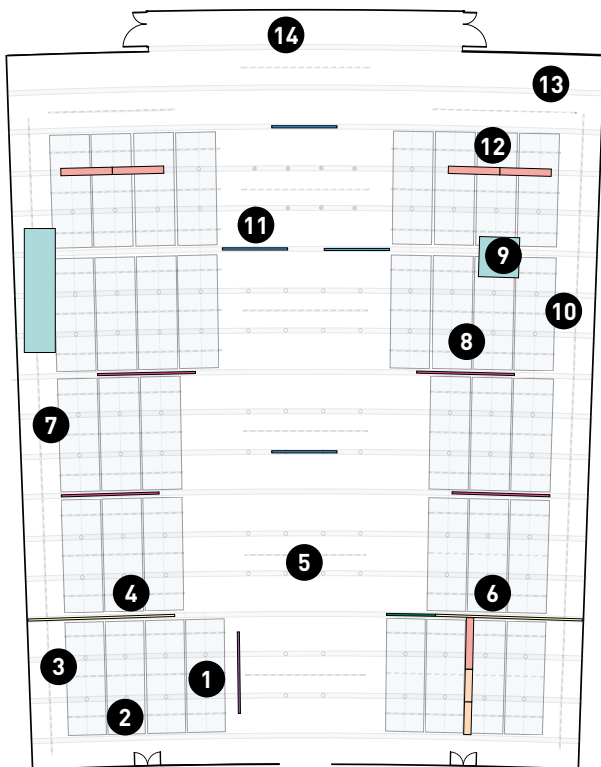
Founded by
Maurice E. and Martha Müller
and the heirs of Paul Klee

Zentrum Paul Klee
Bern

Joan Miró New Beginnings

28.1. – 7.5.23

Floor plan



Introduction

Joan Miró (1893–1983) is primarily known for his colorful dream worlds: richly symbolic works created within the Surrealist circle and delicate constellations of stars, as well as his early figurative pieces. These images were soon commercialized, and their political urgency was downplayed. By contrast, Miró was an artist who began to question traditional painting early on. His desire “to murder painting” became increasingly urgent in his work. This attitude culminated in a body of late work in which Miró explored and expanded the boundaries of painting.

In 1956, he moved to a spacious studio in Palma. Overwhelmed by the great emptiness of his new studio, he did not create any new paintings for several years. Miró mainly focused on ceramics and prints. Settling into his new environment, he critically evaluated his previous work. When he began painting again in 1959, he produced mainly abstract, often large-format paintings that became increasingly gestural and sparse.

Travels to the United States (1947, 1959) and Japan (1966) affirmed his new artistic aims. The large format and gestural working methods of the Abstract Expressionists in the United States intrigued him. So too did the calligraphy as well as the emptiness and concentration in Japanese culture. Later, he said that he relearned how to use a brush from Japanese calligraphers. As he simplified his vocabulary, the lines and planes of the images conveyed forces and currents of energy, and the meaning of the symbols and figures in his playful pictorial world become less important. He experimented with collages and

textiles, painted with his hands, and worked with scissors, fire, and water. Open to interpretation, the new paintings simultaneously strive for an elemental universality that is accessible to all. In sculpture, he worked with found objects and striking colors reminiscent of Pop art.

This exhibition, realized in collaboration with the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, focuses on Miró's late work, which is as contemporary as it is daring. By pushing painting to its limits in his search for new forms of expression, he expanded the concept of painting in ways previously unknown. As part of this continual search, he engaged with current issues and incessantly questioned his own oeuvre.

In this exhibition, we invite you to discover an experimental, raw side of Miró.

Revision

"In the new studio I had enough space for the first time. I was able to unpack crates of works that went back years and years. I had not seen these things since leaving Paris before the war. When I finally unpacked them in Mallorca, I went through a process of self-examination."

In 1956, Joan Miró moved into his spacious new studio in Palma. He had numerous works from the previous twenty years transported to the new studio, among them many unfinished pieces. Instead of beginning to paint immediately, Miró revisited his existing work. In this painting, Miró painted over a copy of a preparatory drawing for a 1937 painting. This pencil drawing is a self-portrait in which he drew his upper body and face surrounded by flames and star-like shapes. In 1960, the artist painted over the drawing with a figure made of a few brush strokes and some coloured dabs. With the overpainting, Miró juxtaposed the earlier drawing style, which is detailed and representational, with a simplified, gestural visual language. The latter exemplifies the new artistic attitude he would continue to develop in his late work.

Working Method

“Everything takes time. My vocabulary of forms, for example, did not come to me all at once. It formulated itself almost in spite of me.”

This painting from 1933 shows Joan Miró's well-known visual language: bright colours – mostly primary colours – as well as black and white and organic shapes. These forms resemble bodies and figures, and occasionally incorporate small faces. This style contributed to Miró's success and was quickly commercialized. The artist developed the composition for this painting with the help of a preparatory collage, which is exhibited next to it. He cut out pictures of machines, apparatuses, everyday objects, and household items from newspapers and magazines. Then, he glued them together to form a composition. In the next step, Miró transferred the forms from the collage into a painting. The original objects are practically unrecognizable. Through this approach, Miró aimed to break away from the conventional working methods of painting. While transferring the collage to painting, spontaneity was interrupted by a conscious thought process.

Overpaintings

In the 1960s, Miró began to buy cheap pictures of landscapes and genre scenes at flea markets. In the studio, he painted over these found images using his own visual language: lines and dots in black or in primary colours. Miró did not simply paint over the images, but instead augmented them. For example, he added figures to deserted landscapes. He contrasted the accurate detail of the purchased images with reduced lines and planes. The overpaintings demonstrate Miró's artistic attitude: By the early 1920s, he was no longer concerned with representing an external reality. Instead, he created a universal visual language in a simplified, gestural painting style.

Collage

Early in his career, Joan Miró used collage to dismantle the conventional process for making art. In his late period, collage is the final result and not merely a part of the artistic process. He used materials in his work that were foreign to painting, such as sandpaper, pieces of wood, nails, and everyday objects. At the same time, the process of creation remains visible: The hooks and nails with which the materials are attached can be seen, as well as the canvas upon which everything is affixed. Miró combined these elements of collage with painting.

Works for public spaces

This large-format sculpture group is the model for a public sculpture in Paris. The work has stood in La Défense, Paris's finance and business district, since 1978. The figures, which are over ten meters high, greet people outside of a department store. Miró's two colourful, childlike figures contrast with the district's modern steel, glass, and concrete high-rises. They mediate between human dimensions and the enormous scale of the architecture. Miró designed the figures as a pair. Facing one another, their shapes and forms are complimentary. In his late period, Miró regularly designed works for public spaces. According to Miró, art should not be an elite exhibition object for museums and galleries, but rather a part of society and everyday life.

Abstract Expressionism

Joan Miró travelled to the United States for the first time in 1947 for a mural commission in Cincinnati. During the several months he spent there and in New York, he discovered the work of the Abstract Expressionists. Miró was fascinated by the large-scale paintings, with their gestural style and dynamic, energetic effect. In 1952, he saw works by Jackson Pollock again in a Paris exhibition. On another visit to the United States in 1959, he was once more impressed by young American artists. Miró later recalled: "It showed me the liberties we can take, and how far we can go, beyond the limits. In a sense, it freed me." This liberation became increasingly clear in his late work: Miró turned to larger formats; he splashed and poured paint directly onto the canvas, letting it run in long drips, and worked with hand and shoe prints.

Signs

“My figures have undergone the same simplification as my colours. Simplified as they are, they are more human and more alive than if they were represented with all the details. Because showing them in all their details would deprive them of that imaginary life that enlarges everything.”

By the 1930s, Joan Miró had already developed his own language of signs. He crystallized them in the 1940s, and they became a kind of trademark. Women, birds, insects, and stars as well as the sun and moon appear in his paintings. These signs are concentrated and simplified, often to the extent that they are hardly recognizable. They convey fundamental ideas: Women stand for fertility and life, symbolizing Mother Earth or mother goddesses. Birds represent freedom and flying itself. The stars signify the cosmic and are opposed to the earthly. In his late work, these forms became independent. No longer stand-ins for their real-world counterparts, they became part of their own painterly reality and took on an imaginative power.

Textiles

In 1970, Joan Miró met the artist and weaver Josep Royo. Together with Royo, Miró then began to explore textile works – the so-called “Sobreteixisms.” Originally, the term referred to the decorative double weaves found in Catalan folk art, in which additional pieces of fabric are affixed to a woven backing. Miró took up this tradition and developed it further. Alongside pieces of fabric, he added objects such as ropes and umbrellas. The artist worked on the weaving, setting it on fire and painting over it with daubs of colour and lines. In his late period, Miró increasingly collaborated with other artists, weavers, printers, and potters. Through this teamwork, the conventional working methods of painting could be ruptured, and Miró himself could step back as an artist, gaining a certain anonymity. At the same time, he was interested in bringing art into society. This closeness to society was furthered by his engagement with craft traditions such as weaving and ceramics.

Painted sculptures in bronze

The sculptures by Joan Miró exhibited here recall Surrealist objects. In their sculptures, the Surrealists worked with everyday objects and made them strange, for example, by combining them with other objects. Robbed of their original function, the objects took on new meaning. During the 1920s, Miró moved in Surrealist circles. In his sculptures from the year 1967, he also used everyday objects, which resemble figures when combined with other items. Cast in bronze and colourfully painted, Miró's sculptures have a painterly effect. Miró, too, freed objects from their function and created a new reality.

Burnt Canvases

In 1973, Joan Miró made five works that he named “Burnt Canvases.” He actually used fire to create these paintings: Miró poured gasoline on parts of the canvas, lit it, and then put out the fire. This made holes in the canvas that revealed the construction of the stretcher underneath. Miró handled burning like any other method – such as pouring paint or the use of shoeprints, splotches of paint, or drips. He deliberately departed from traditional painting and explored its limits. Miró had already said that he wanted “to murder painting” in the 1930s. During this period, he turned away from representational painting toward a more abstract visual language. In his late work, this approach intensified: With overpaintings, collages, textile works, and burnt canvases, he abandoned traditional painting and broke through its rules and conventions. From then on, Miró spoke of anti-painting.

Calligraphy

In the years 1966 and 1969, Joan Miró travelled to Japan to open exhibitions of his work or to make murals. While there, he became acquainted with the tradition and technique of calligraphy. Afterward, Miró's forms became increasingly abstract, character-like, and reduced. In the process, they came to resemble calligraphy. Forms that were originally representations of figures, birds, or stars lost their connection to reality. Instead, they became ciphers for general, fundamental meanings and thereby acquired a universal character. Miró developed a language that he alone could write but that everyone could understand. Some of his forms even resemble specific calligraphic characters.

Emptiness

“It took an enormous effort on my part, a very great inner tension to reach the emptiness I wanted.”

As early as the 1920s and above all in his late work, Joan Miró dealt with the concept of emptiness. In Western art, emptiness has little meaning. The artist learned about a different conception of emptiness through his engagement with Japanese culture, particularly Zen spirituality and the tradition of meditation as well as pictorial composition. Emptiness has just as much of a presence and meaning as any representation of an object or figure. It can be used to change or even enhance the presence and effect of specific pictorial elements – as does the blurry blue dot in this painting.

Printmaking

Joan Miró's engagement with printmaking techniques went back to the 1930s. In the beginning, he only used printmaking to combine text and image. Miró was interested in literature. Over the decades, he illustrated numerous texts by Surrealist authors as well as his favourite Catalan writers. Practically every printmaking technique is found in his work, which testifies to his love of experimentation. In order to realize his pictorial ideas, Miró collaborated with various printers and set up his own studio in Palma. He appreciated the printers' expertise and collaboration as well as the mutual inspiration and exchange that took place during the process. At the same time, he was able to reach a wide public with affordable prints, bringing art closer to society.

Studio Photograph

"I work like a gardener [...] Things come slowly [...] Things follow their natural course. They grow, they ripen. Ripening goes on in my mind."

Josep Lluís Sert, the studio's architect, was a childhood friend of Joan Miró. In designing the space, he responded to Miró's wishes. Miró wanted to be able to put up paintings he had begun, so he could view them up close and from a distance. Often, he worked on numerous pieces at once. He would repeatedly stop working on a painting in order to wait for further inspiration. Miró adhered to a strict daily routine, which he described as follows: "I rise each day at eight a.m. I bathe and I come down here to the Sert studio, where I work until breakfast. Then I continue until two o'clock. I eat, have a twenty-minute rest, and immediately return here, to work. In the afternoon I check over what I have done in the morning, and I prepare the next day's work. But the hour in which I work most is very early, at about four in the morning. I work without working. In bed. Between four and seven I completely surrender myself to my task. Afterward I go back to sleep, between seven and eight. It is almost always like that. [...] It is a great spiritual tension."

Biography

- 1893** Joan Miró i Ferrà is born in Barcelona on April 20.
- 1907** Following his parent's wishes, Miró enrolls in a business school in Barcelona, but he also attends art classes at the Escola Superior d'Arts Industrials i Belles Arts.
- 1912** He decides to devote himself entirely to painting and enrolls at the art school run by Francesc Galí in Barcelona.
- 1920** Miró travels to Paris for the first time. The upcoming years he spends alternating between Paris, Barcelona and his parents' farmhouse in Mont-roig. In Paris he socialises with poets and artists of Dadaism and Surrealism.
- 1929** He marries the Majorcan Pilar Juncosa. Their daughter Maria Dolors is born one year later in Barcelona.
- 1936** The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War forces the Miró family to stay in Paris.
- 1940** The Germans bomb Normandy, where the family lives since 1939. As a consequence they return to Spain.
- 1942–1956** Miró is based in Barcelona, spends summers working in Mont-roig and visits Paris frequently

after the Second World War. He adds ceramics and sculptures to his artistic repertoire.

- 1947** Miró's first journey to the United States lasts several months. It takes him to New York and Cincinnati, where he executes a mural.
- 1956** He moves into his new large studio in Palma, designed by Josep Lluís Sert. Later he acquires Son Boter, an adjoining plot with old buildings, where he sets up a second studio. Mallorca becomes his permanent residence.
- 1959** During his second stay in New York he finds his own development confirmed in Abstract Expressionism.
- 1966** In Japan, Miró acquaints himself particularly with calligraphy.
- 1971** He collaborates with Josep Royo and develops textile works – *Sobreteixims*.
- 1973** He works on a series of partially burned canvases – *Toiles brûlées*.
- 1978** The monumental sculpture *Pair of Lovers Playing with Almond Blossoms* is installed in Paris.
- 1983** Joan Miró dies in Palma on December 25.

Katalog

Joan Miró. Neue Horizonte/New Beginnings, DE/EN, Snoeck Verlag,
Köln, CHF 38

Führungen und Begleitprogramm

Samstags 15:00

Sonntags 13:30

Öffentliche Führungen

Dienstags 12:30 – 13:00

Kunst am Mittag

Jede 2. Woche, siehe www.zpk.org

Fremdsprachige Führungen

English: **5 February / 16 April 2023**, 15:00

Français: **26 février / 19 mars 2023**, 15:00

Italiano: **12 febbraio / 23 aprile 2023**, 15:00

Audioguide

In Deutsch, Französisch, Italienisch und Englisch erhältlich

Begleitprogramm

Samedi, **28 janvier 2023**, 14:00

ABGESAGT/ANNULÉ

Rencontre avec Joan Punyet Miró

Fabienne Eggelhöfer (commissaire d'exposition) s'entretient avec le
petit-fils de l'artiste

Samstag, **1. April 2023**, 18:00

Matthias Tschopp Quartet plays Miró

Konzert mit Matthias Tschopp, Yves Theiler, Silvan Jeger, Alex Huber
Vorverkauf: zpk.kulturticket.ch

Digitale Angebote

Mittwoch, **15. Februar 2023**, 17:30

Kunst am Abend

Zoom-Führung live aus der Ausstellung mit Dominik Imhof (Leiter Kunstvermittlung)

Dienstag, **4. April 2023**, 17:00

Kunst und ich

Zoom-Präsentation im Dialog mit den Teilnehmer:innen rund um ausgewählte Werke der Ausstellung. Mit Ramona Unterberg, Kunstvermittlerin, die Ihre Entdeckungen in einen historischen Kontext setzt. Ohne kunsthistorisches Vorwissen! Dieses Angebot ist keine klassische Führung aus der Ausstellung!

Führungen

Mittwoch, **1. Februar 2023**, 14:00

Einführung für Lehrpersonen

Mit Dominik Imhof (Leiter Kunstvermittlung)

Samstag, **18. Februar 2023**, 10:30 – 12:00

Samstag, **29. April 2023**, 10:30 – 12:00

Bilderclub

Entdecken Sie gemeinsam mit anderen Besucher:innen ein Werk der Ausstellung

Donnerstag, **23. Februar 2023**, 18:00

Freundeskreis ZPK

Führung für die Mitglieder «Freundeskreis ZPK» mit Fabienne Eggelhöfer (Kuratorin) und Expert:innen des Hauses
Ausschliesslich für Mitglieder Freundeskreis ZPK

Sonntag, **12. März 2023**, 15:00

Kunst und Religion im Dialog

André Flury (Katholische Kirche Region Bern) im Dialog mit Andreas Jahn (Zentrum Paul Klee)

Samstag, **22. April 2023**, 13:00

Sinn-Reich

Eine alle Sinne ansprechende Führung für Gäste mit und ohne Behinderung. Mit Gebärdensprachdolmetscher:in und induktiver Höranlage

Kunstvermittlung für Familien

DI-Fr 14:00 & 16:00, SA-SO 12:00, 14:00 & 16:00 Uhr

Offenes Atelier

Einstündiger Gestaltungsworkshop zu einem monatlich wechselnden Thema in Verbindung zu den aktuellen Ausstellungen im ZPK. Für Kinder ab 4 Jahren (bis 8 Jahren in Begleitung eines Erwachsenen), Jugendliche, Erwachsene und die ganze Familie

Dienstag – Sonntag 10:00 – 17:00 | 3.2. – 7.5.2023

Interaktive Ausstellung «La pintura. Wir sind Farbe»

Interaktive Stationen zum eigenständigen Gestalten in Anlehnung an die ZPK-Ausstellung «Joan Miró. Neue Horizonte». Für Kinder ab 4 Jahren, Jugendliche, Erwachsene und die ganze Familie

Sonntags 10:15 – 11:30

29.1. – 30.4.2023

Familienmorgen

Nach einer interaktiven Führung in der Ausstellung nehmen Gross und Klein an einem gestalterischen Workshop im Atelier teil
Für Familien mit Kindern ab 4 Jahren, bis 16 Jahre kostenlos

Samstags (ausser während der Berner Schulferien) 9:30 – 11:45

Kinderforum – samstags im Labor

Kunstlabor zum Erforschen, Gestalten und Experimentieren mit Gestaltungstechniken in Anlehnung an die aktuellen Ausstellungen im ZPK. Quartalskurs für Kinder ab 7 Jahren

Dienstag – Sonntag 10:00 – 17:00

Fünfliber-Werkstatt

Einfache Anleitungen zum selbstständigen Gestalten monatlich wechselnder Themen und Techniken

Für Kinder ab 4 Jahren, Jugendliche, Erwachsene und die ganze Familie

Samstag – Sonntag, 11. – 12.2.2023, 9:00 – 16:00

Schnecke, Frau, Blume & Stern

Ein plastischer Exkurs in die Symbolwelten des Künstlers Joan Miró mit Ralf Assmann. Gestaltungskurs für Erwachsene im Atelier

Samstag – Sonntag, 18.–19.2.2023, 9:00 – 16:00

Joan Miró

Ein Wochenendkurs zur Entdeckungsreise der surrealistischen Bildwelten Joan Mirós und zum Kreieren eigener farbintensiver Bilder mit Franz Brühlhart. Gestaltungskurs für Erwachsene im Atelier

Donnerstag, **2. März 2023**, 18:00 – 21:00

Skulpturenworkshop zu Joan Miró «Ich bin eine Pflanze»

Inspiriert von den Motiven des Künstlers entstehen mit Bonita Straub in diesem Abendkurs Skulpturen aus Gips. Gestaltungskurs für Erwachsene im Atelier

Mittwoch, **22. März 2023**, 14:00 – 21:00

Traumtrauss – Miró gestalten und tanzen

Eine Verbindung von Tanz und Malerei im Atelier mit Belinda Göllner, Katja Lang und Regula Nyffeler. Eine Kooperation von Creaviva und PHBern (Anmeldung www.phbern.ch)

Änderungen vorbehalten

With the support of



Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne

SWISSLOS
Kultur Kanton Bern



Burgergemeinde
Bern



URSULA WIRZ-STIFTUNG

RUTH & ARTHUR SCHERBARTH STIFTUNG



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office of Culture FOC

Swiss Confederation



Zentrum Paul Klee

Monument im Fruchtländ 3
3006 Bern
Tel +41 (0)31 359 01 01
info@zpk.org
www.zpk.org

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10:00 – 17:00

You find us on



**Zentrum Paul Klee
Bern**

Founded by
Maurice E. and Martha Müller
and the heirs of Paul Klee