

ÉLUARD «À  
CRAMER TOUTE  
ÉPREUVE»  
MIRO 31.03 –  
02.07.17

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## Press release

### ***Éluard, Cramer, Miró – "À toute épreuve", more than a book***

30 March – 2 July 2017

Curator: Christopher Green

Opening: 30 March 2017, at 7 pm

With the collaboration of Cercle Miró

The Fundació Joan Miró presents *Éluard, Cramer, Miró – "À toute épreuve", more than a book*, an exhibition that reconstructs the history of this collector's edition, considered to be one of the most beautiful and surprising artist's books of the 20th century, and crucial to an understanding of Miró's career.

Christopher Green, curator of the exhibition, has received collaborative support from the Conservation Department of the Fundació Joan Miró for this project, which aims to put the spotlight on how the artist managed to accomplish something he had aspired to for years: the creation of a book-object that went beyond simply illustrating the words of the poet to become something close to a sculpture.

Thanks to works and documents drawn mainly from the Foundation Archive, complemented by others from the Archive Gérald Cramer in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève and the Bibliothèque de Genève and pieces from various private collections, this exhibition gives visitors their very first opportunity to view *À toute épreuve* in its entirety beside five of the six maquettes that have been preserved. The exhibition also includes more than thirty wood blocks, carved by Miró, which were used to print the 80 woodcuts for the book.

The project is rounded off by a wealth of documents which serve to recreate the process by which this book was conceived and produced, the fruit of a remarkable collaboration between the poet Paul Éluard, the artist Joan Miró and the publisher Gérald Cramer over the course of a decade (1948-1958).

This new small show is part of the *Miró Documents* series, which began in 2014 with *From Miró to Barcelona*. With this cycle of exhibitions, publications and symposiums the Joan Miró International Research Group, supported by Cercle Miró, draws on the Fundació Joan Miró Archive to explore new approaches to the artist's work.

***“The important thing is that a book should have all the dignity of a sculpture carved in marble.”***

The collaboration between Joan Miró, the poet Paul Éluard and the publisher G erald Cramer to create *  toute  preuve* in 1958 produced one of the most important of Mir o's artist's books, and indeed one of the most beautiful and surprising books of the 20th century, both in terms of the process behind its conception and production, and the end result.

The collection of poems was the product of events of nearly thirty years earlier that had passed into Surrealist myth: the breakdown of  luard's relationship with Gala, who left him for Salvador Dal . The poems were first published by Andr  Breton's  ditions surr alistes, printed on four folded pages and resembling a leaflet. Working in intense team sessions,  luard, Cramer and Mir o completely re-imagined the collection as an entirely new object, a book as much as a polychromatic sculpture. Unfortunately, having laid the foundations, the poet never saw the finished product.  luard died in 1952, five years before printing was completed.

The edition was the outcome of a meeting between the poet and the Geneva publisher in Paris early in 1947. It was  luard, looking back to St phane Mallarm 's *Un coup de d s jamais n'abolira le hasard*, who suggested re-distributing the lines of his poems across the page so as to leave blank spaces eloquent enough to demand a response from an artist and offer a new reading of his words. It was also  luard's idea to turn to his old Catalan friend to transform his little fold-out booklet. For his part, it was Mir o who, inspired by Paul Gauguin and Japanese print-making, decided to use woodcut, a demanding and labour-intensive technique he had never used before, turning the printing stage into an intense creative process that lasted all of eleven years. As Christopher Green, the curator of the exhibition, notes: "The prize of a book which was a material thing, always in touch with the material that for him was the most natural of all, wood, was so important to him that the very high cost in labour and time was well worth paying."

* luard, Cramer, Mir o – "  toute  preuve"*, more than a book offers visitors the very first opportunity to view the book in its entirety in an enveloping exhibition layout that displays the 80 woodcuts across the length of the octagonal room at the Fundaci  Joan Mir o. This striking frieze of verbal and visual images can be seen alongside revelatory artistic and documentary material that provides an insight into the process of producing the book. First of all, the maquettes created by the artist, the poet and the publisher working together as they imagined the book are of particular note. There is also a good selection of the more than two hundred wood moulds carved by Mir o in collaboration with the Barcelona printer Enric Tormo, from which *  toute  preuve* was printed under the charge of the master printers Jacques Fr laut and Jaime Herrera at the Atelier Lacourierre in Paris.

On some occasions, as many as seven different boxwoods were used to print just one of the woodcuts conceived by Miró. Each of these moulds is itself a relief sculpture, made up of carved pieces of wood fixed to wooden planks to be printed according to the Japanese wood engraving technique. The Fundació Joan Miró has half of these woods, and so at this exhibition visitors can compare the most important original blocks with the resulting woodcuts, while appreciating the material and tactile qualities of this book which aspired to be a sculpture; "an object to be held and touched as well as viewed and read", in the words of the curator.

**"A book must be made with clockwork precision and accuracy."**

Another of the objectives of the exhibition is to show how Miró, Cramer and Éluard conceived *À toute épreuve* together, working *en équipe*, to use Miró's words, and how this intense collaborative activity was built on the foundations of friendship. The correspondence and the drawings and publications with affectionate inscriptions included in the exhibition bear witness to the closeness of Miró, Cramer and Éluard's relationship, which fuelled the project.

In a letter he wrote to Cramer on 2 October 1949, Miró shared his excitement at having finished the maquette phase of the book, which had begun early in 1948, and he voices some of the serious concerns he had had during the process: "a simple comma from the previous page or a dot over an i on the following page could throw off what I'd done independently. A book must be made with clockwork precision and accuracy." This precision, which sought to respond with great meticulousness to each decision made by the team, was continuously fine-tuned through the maquettes. The exhibition seeks to reconstruct this sense of progression, involving the viewer in the working process and stressing the idea that the book is the result of complex collaborative work.

Of the six maquettes of *À toute épreuve* that remain, and of which the Foundation holds three in its archive, five can be viewed at this exhibition. The three Barcelona maquettes are reunited for the first time with two maquettes from the Archive Gérauld Cramer in the Bibliothèque de Genève, which were the first two models of the book to be made. Thus visitors to the exhibition have the opportunity to compare them and gain a greater insight into the different stages of the project.

The first of these maquettes is a small notebook half the size of the final book, in which Éluard proposes an initial division of the verses of his poems and the drawings by Miró are yet to appear. The second maquette, which is preserved in Geneva, is another notebook intended as a first prototype to scale. Here, as well as more precise indications about the distribution of the verses on the page, there are some first studies for the woodcuts. Neither the handwriting nor the drawings are Éluard's or Miró's, and it is thought that Cramer himself or one of his collaborators was responsible for it, carefully copying the drawings provided by Miró to work on a first composition of the pages. The interaction of poems, typography and woodcut ideas

to be observed in this second maquette is developed further in the following two models, preserved in Barcelona, which include the first notations by Éluard and Cramer – texts printed and then stuck to the pages of the notebook – next to copies of Miró's drawings made with tracing paper and charcoal.

The third maquette preserved at the Foundation is a model that is very close to the published book: it has the same size, the coloured drawings and the textural characteristics. This is the maquette that synthesises Miró's entire creative process and from which he began to cut the wood blocks with the help of Enric Tormo, before working with Frélaud and Herrera to print the woodcuts. The studies included are not copies, like those of the other notebooks. Miró himself drew them and painted them, and this was, throughout the process, his own maquette.

According to the curator, what makes Miró's Maquette so special is the way it was constructed. As with the previous two models, Cramer and Éluard had completed the typographical layout of the poems, printed them and stuck them to the pages of the maquette. Then Miró developed his ideas in the spaces reserved for him. First he did so directly on the page and later, as his ideas evolved, he would revise them on *papiers collés*, which he would stick over the pages, one on top of the other, creating layer upon layer. This model is unbound, and so it has been exhibited next to the final book, inviting observation of the differences between the studies drawn and brushed by Miró in his maquette and the material character of the pages printed using the medium of wood.

The artist could only complete this transition from drawing to making with the help of Tormo and the master printers. Thus another kind of teamwork was needed to turn the book imagined *en équipe* by Miró with Cramer and Éluard into a real book. "Artistic production will be purely collective," Miró said in a radio interview with George Charbonnier in 1951, when he was fully engaged in the process of producing *À toute épreuve*. Desiring to move beyond an individualistic view of art, Miró, who already shared the title page with the poet and the publisher, offered some unusually fulsome acknowledgement in the final pages of the book: to Tormo for "his technical collaboration", and to Frélaud and Herrera for "sustaining a marathon printing effort."

**"It is not a question of doing illustrations, like everyone does, but of creating a book, which is not at all easy."**

Writing to Gérald Cramer in June 1948, Joan Miró declared that what he really wanted was "to make a book, not illustrate it." Miró, who thought of himself as essentially a poet like his friend Éluard, sought to produce an inseparable whole, in which, in contrast to conventional illustrated books, the images would not be subordinate to the text, but they would enter into dialogue with it on an equal footing.

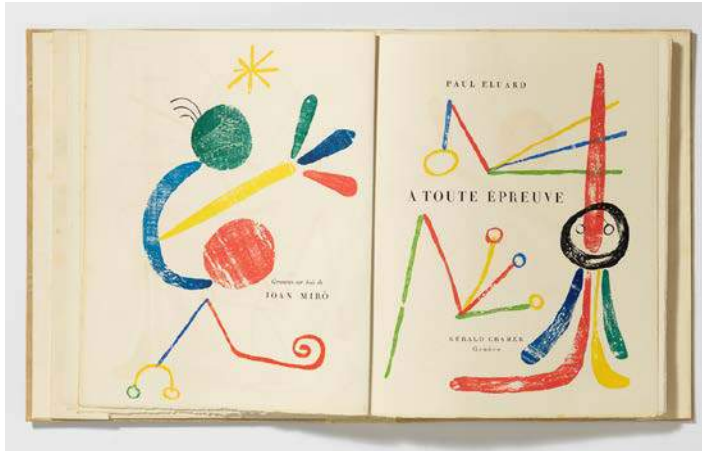
*Éluard, Cramer, Miró – "À toute épreuve", more than a book* also explores this special relationship that is established between the verbal and the visual in the book.

In the preface Douglas Cooper wrote for the catalogue of the exhibition at which the book was launched in 1958, he quoted the artist as saying that "Éluard's imaginary world was so close and familiar to him that he couldn't stop the corresponding pictorial images from gushing out of his brush onto the page." Through the meeting of Éluard and Miró's imaginary worlds, the experience of the book is based on an unambiguous correspondence between poems and woodcuts. Nevertheless, as the exhibition reveals, Miró's woodcuts are not simply a direct response to Éluard's poems. The evolution of the maquettes displayed shows that, as Miró developed his ideas, he also reacted to other stimuli, such as the typographic decisions made and the arrangement of the verses, as well as his own dynamic for the creation of images.

The result is almost a collage in which poems and images intermingle so closely that, in the words of the curator, "viewing and reading become equally insistent options". In Green's opinion, the visual experiences offered by the book do not have to come after the reading experiences it offers: visual appreciation can actually precede these experiences, transforming the meanings of the poems and opening up new readings. By way of example, the importance of the image in *À toute épreuve* is patent in the placing of many of the book's woodcuts on the page. As the curator points out in his essay for the exhibition catalogue, according to the conventional layout of European illustrated books, the left page is reserved for text and illustration is sited thereafter, following the direction in which people read in the western world. In contrast, *À toute épreuve* includes many examples of double pages with a woodcut on the left preceding the text, as may be observed at the exhibition.

"The book alone, presented in its entirety," says the curator, "makes a powerful visual impact, when experienced page opening by page opening. To show it beside the wood blocks brings out its true sculptural character: the origin of the prints in wood as a material is never forgotten. By adding the maquettes, the exhibition invites visitors to make the journey from the beginning of the book's making in 1948 to its final publication ten years later, going back to the intense creative dialogue out of which it grew between the poet, the publisher and the artist." *Éluard, Cramer, Miró – "À toute épreuve", more than a book* brings together, examines and shares key documents, so that visitors are immersed in the adventure of imagining and giving material form to this unique book, with the opportunity to experience it stage by stage, page after page.

## Technical details of *À toute épreuve*, 1958



Paul Éluard and Joan Miró

Book with 27 pages of 322 x 502 mm folded in half to form expanses of 322 x 251 mm, with a paper cover and cardboard chemise and box overlaid with leaves of Japanese wood.  
347 x 271 x 52 mm

*À toute épreuve*, 1958. Cover. Photo: Gasull © Successió Miró, 2017

The spine of the chemise is lined with parchment and bears the title printed in gold. Illustrated with 80 woodcuts by Joan Miró, some of which are heightened with collage.

Publisher: Gérald Cramer, Geneva

Printers: Fequet et Baudier, Paris, for the text and typography

Jacques Frélaut and Jaime Herrera, Atelier Lacourière et Frélaut, Paris, for the woodcuts

The 233 woods used to illustrate the book were carved by Joan Miró with the technical assistance of Enric Tormo.

130 copies were printed on Arches Vellum, comprising:

6 copies, numbered 1 to 6, with a suite on China paper, a suite on pearl Japan paper, the decomposition of the colours of an illustration, the element of an illustration sketched in black and heightened with gouache by the artist and a woodcut used to engrave the book;

20 copies, numbered 7 to 26, with a suite on China paper or on pearl Japan paper and the element of an illustration sketched in black and heightened with gouache by the artist;

80 copies numbered 27 to 106;

24 copies hors commerce, numbered I to XXIV, reserved for collaborators.

All the copies are signed by the artist.



## Curator



Christopher Green, 2017. © Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. Photo. Pere Pratdesaba

Christopher Green is Professor Emeritus of Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and a member of the British Academy. Green has been one of the experts in the Joan Miró International Research Group, part of the Miró Chair, since it was established in 2014.

Since the year 2000, he has organised and co-curated: *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris* (London: Tate Modern, 2005 and Paris: Grand Palais, 2006); *Objectes vius: Figura i natura morta en Picasso* (Barcelona: Museu Picasso, 2008), *Modern Antiquity: Picasso, de Chirico, Léger, Picabia* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011 and Antibes: Musée Picasso, 2011), *Mondrian and Nicholson: In Parallel* (London: Courtauld Gallery, 2012) and *Cubisme i guerra. El cristall dins la flama* (Barcelona: Museu Picasso, 2016).

His key publications include *Cubism and its Enemies: Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art, 1916-1928* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1987), awarded the Mitchell 20th Century Art History Prize; *Art in France, 1900-1940* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000) and *Picasso: Architecture and Vertigo* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2005).

## Selection of works and images

Paul Éluard

**À toute épreuve**, 1930

Book with 4 pages of 110 x 141 mm folded in half to form expanses of 110 x 70 mm, with a dedication in ink from the author to Joan Miró 110 x 70 x 1 mm

Inscriptions: J'espère bien, mon cher Miró, que ce petit livre va effacer ce temps et cette distance qui nous / séparent. / Votre très affectueuse ami, / Paul Éluard / 1947

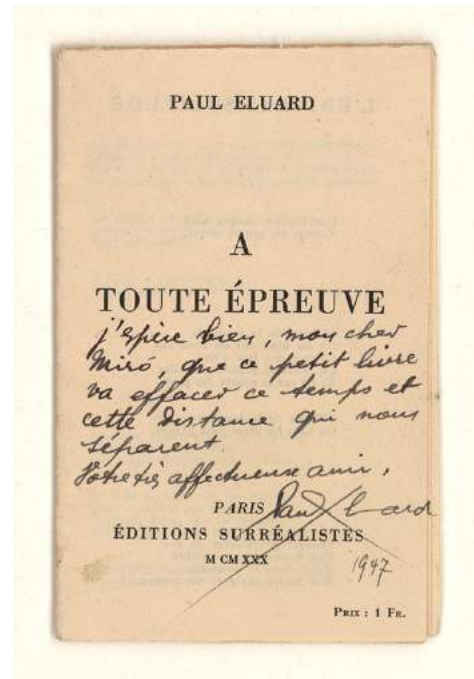
Printer: Ducros et Colas, Paris

Publisher: Éditions Surréalistes, Paris

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

Photograph: Gasull



Joan Miró

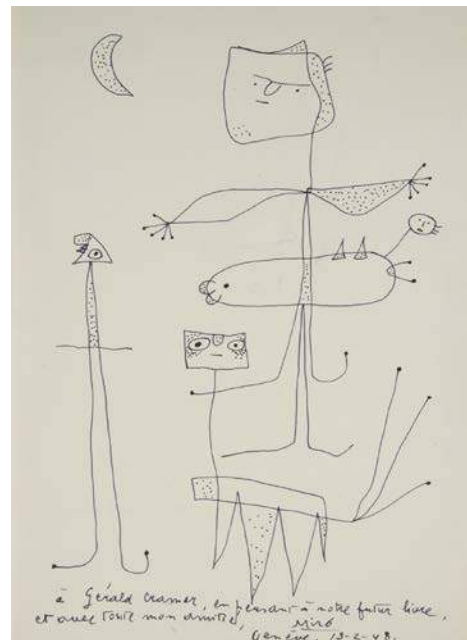
**Drawing**, 1948

Ink on paper

272 x 198 mm

Inscriptions: à Gérald Cramer, en pensant à notre futur livre, / et avec toute mon amitié, Miró / Genève, 13-2-48.

Private collection, Switzerland



Paul Éluard and Joan Miró

**À toute épreuve**, 1958

347 x 271 x 52 mm

Book of 27 pages illustrated with 80 woodcuts by Joan Miró

Publisher: Gérald Cramer, Geneva

Printer: Fequet et Baudier, Paris, for the text and typography; Jacques Frélaud and Jaime Herrera, Atelier Lacourière et Frélaud, Paris, for the woodcuts. Blocks carved by Joan Miró with the technical assistance of Enric Tormo



**À toute épreuve**, 1958. Spine and cover

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

Photograph: Gasull

**À toute épreuve**, 1958

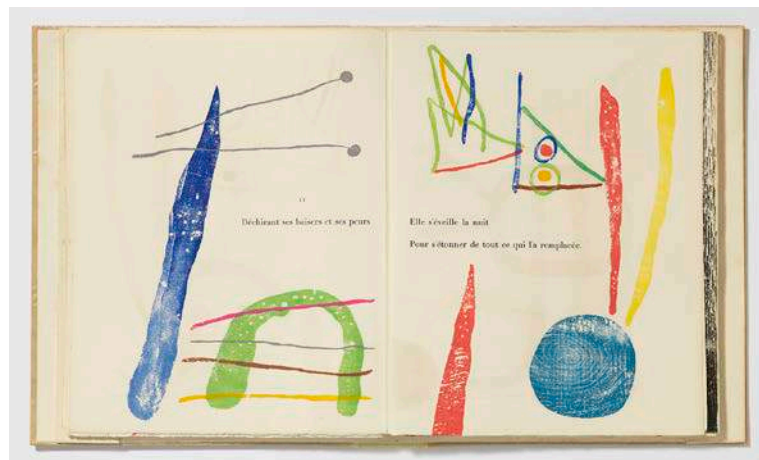
Poem 11

from "L'univers solitude"

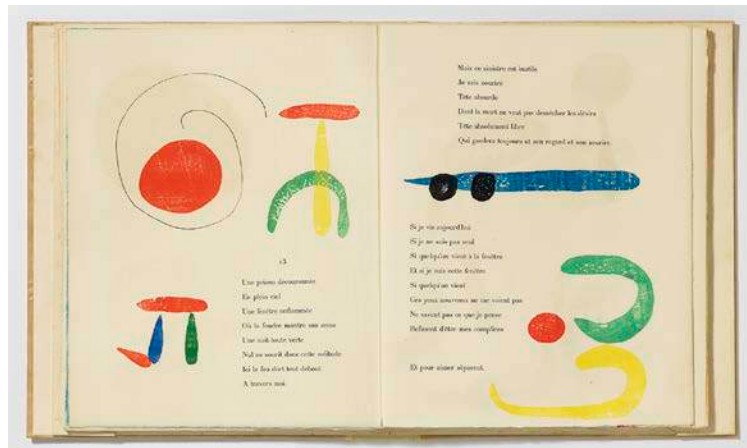
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

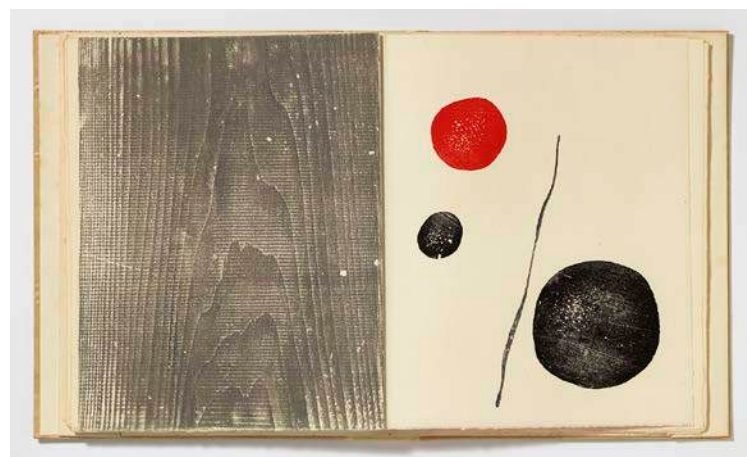
Photograph: Gasull



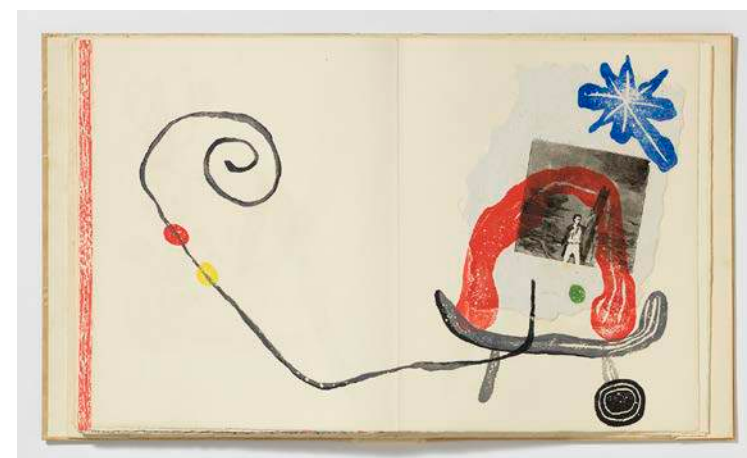
**À toute épreuve**, 1958  
 Poem 13 from  
 "L'univers solitude"  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona  
 © Successió Miró, 2017  
 Photograph: Gasull



**À toute épreuve**, 1958  
 Pages 40-41. Double page before  
 "Amoureuses"  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona  
 © Successió Miró, 2017  
 Photograph: Gasull



**À toute épreuve**, 1958  
 Final double page with the woodcut  
 printed on collage  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona  
 © Successió Miró, 2017  
 Photograph: Gasull



Joan Miró

**Miró Maquette**, 1 October 1949

331 x 250 x 45 mm

Watercolour, gouache, wax pencil, graphite pencil, coloured pencil, India ink, woodcut and collage on paper

86 pages. All the pages contain illustrations by Joan Miró on both sides. A great many corrections have been made on paper cut-outs and glued over the original pages. It includes handwritten notes by Miró and other authors, in addition to the numbering of the colour print run.



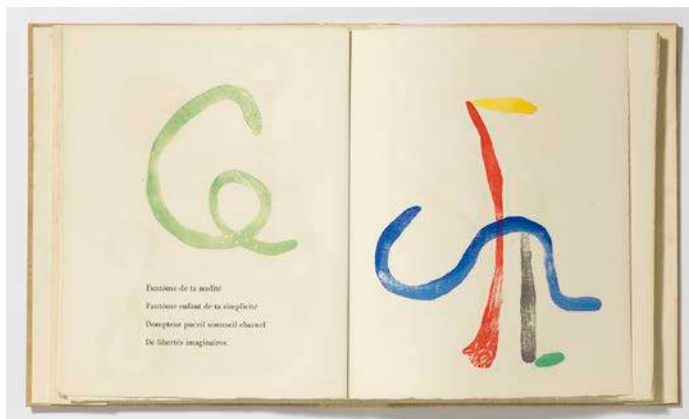
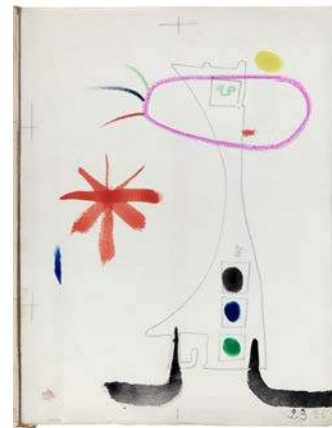
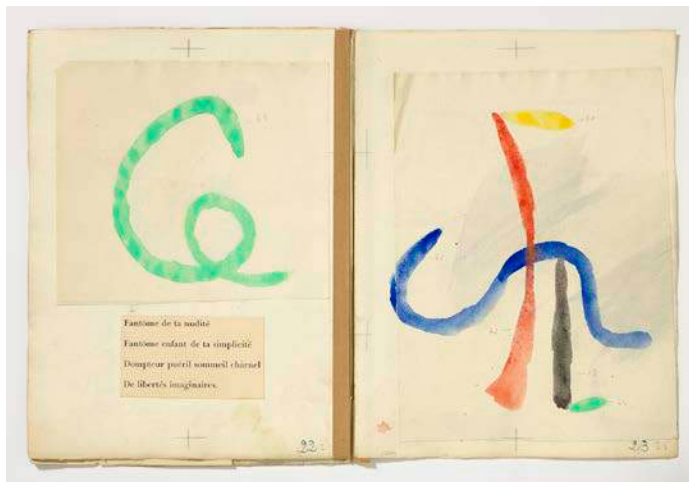
**Miró Maquette**, 1 October 1949.

Cover

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

Photograph: Gasull



**Evolution of a page of À toute épreuve.** Poem 6 from "L'univers solitude"

Corrected Miró Maquette, previous version and final page

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

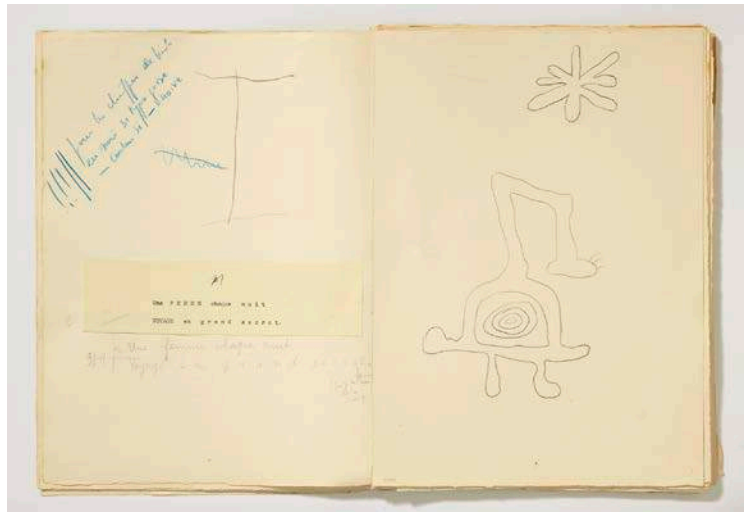
Photograph: Gasull

Photograph: Pere Pratdesaba

**Evolution of a double page of *À toute épreuve*.** Pages 10 and 11. Poem 1 from "L'univers solitude"

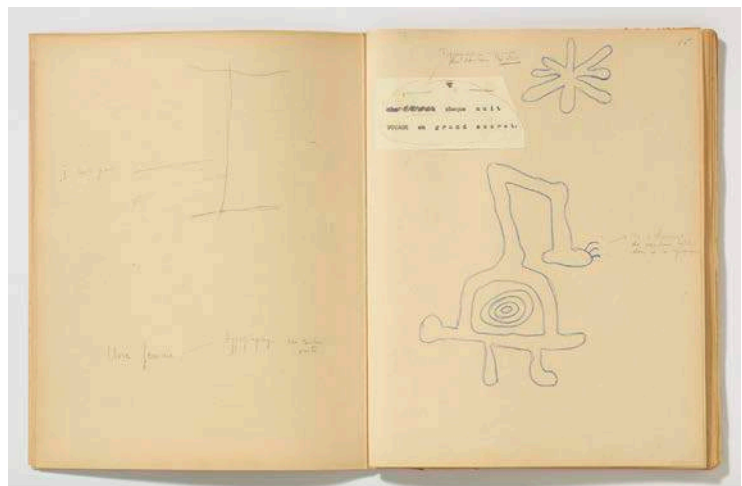
**Maquette** (unnumbered), 1949  
 25 pages of 325 x 500 mm folded  
 in half forming expanses  
 of 325 x 250 mm  
 and 4 loose pages of 325 x 250 mm  
 Without a cover  
 Typewriter ink, tracings,  
 graphite pencil and collage on paper  
 325 x 250 x 15 mm  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

Study for pages 10-11  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona  
 © Successió Miró, 2017  
 Photograph: Gasull

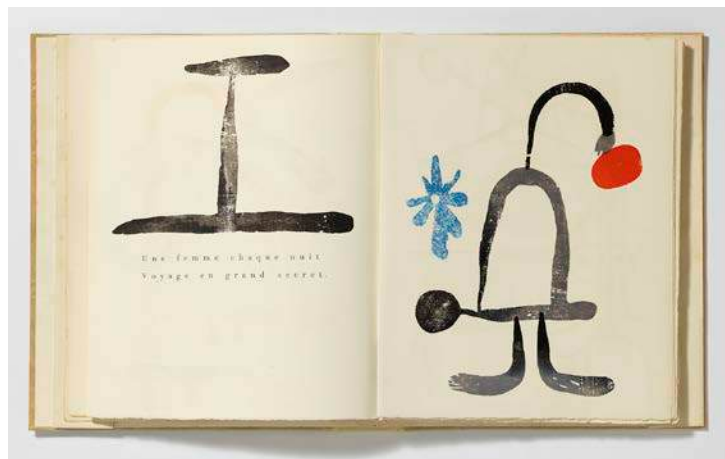


**Maquette V**, 1949  
 22 pages of 340 x 490 mm folded  
 in half forming expanses  
 of 340 x 245 mm  
 and 6 pages of 340 x 250 mm  
 loose or glued to the folds, with a cover  
 Typewriter ink, tracings, graphite pencil,  
 coloured pencil and fountain pen ink  
 on paper  
 340 x 250 x 15 mm  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

Study for pages 10-11  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona  
 © Successió Miró, 2017  
 Photograph: Gasull



***À toute épreuve***, 1958  
 Pages 10-11  
 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona  
 © Successió Miró, 2017  
 Photograph: Gasull



Joan Miró

**Woodcuts for the cover and pages**

11, 13, 32, 34, 52, 54, 59, 61, 63, 74, 79 and 82 of the book, n.d.

Cherry wood, carved and ink-stained, stuck onto a pine block

330 x 250 x 23 mm Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

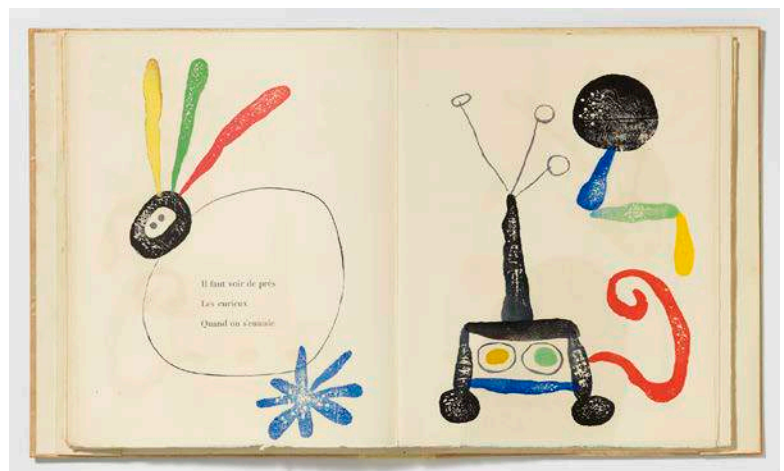


**Woodcut for page 32 of *À toute épreuve***

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

Photograph: Gasull



***À toute épreuve*, 1958.**

Poem 3 from "Confections"

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

Photograph: Gasull



Woodcuts of poem 3

from "Confections"

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

© Successió Miró, 2017

Photograph: Gasull

Joan Miró in Mont-roig, cutting one  
of the woodcuts for *À toute épreuve*  
Photograph: Ernst Scheidegger  
© 2017 Stiftung Ernst Scheidegger-  
Archiv, Zurich

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Joan Miró in Mont-roig  
cutting one of the woodcuts  
for *À toute épreuve*  
Photograph: Ernst Scheidegger  
© 2017 Stiftung Ernst  
Scheidegger-Archiv, Zurich

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Joan Miró at l'Atelier Lacourière  
in Paris with Jacques Frélaut  
Photograph: Ernst Scheidegger  
© 2017 Stiftung Ernst  
Scheidegger-Archiv, Zurich

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## Publication

### **Éluard, Cramer, Miró – "À toute épreuve", more than a book**

ISBN: 978-84-16411-33-7

Single edition in three languages: Catalan, Spanish and English

Fundació Joan Miró

Collection: Miró Documents

Design: Wladimir Marnich

Texts: Rosa Maria Malet and

Christopher Green

176 pages

75 illustrations

Stitched paperback binding

17 x 24 cm



The catalogue for *Éluard, Cramer, Miró – "À toute épreuve", more than a book* includes an introductory text by the director of the Fundació Joan Miró, Rosa Maria Malet, and an extensive essay by the curator Christopher Green, in which he addresses the specific features of the book: its sculptural character linked with the special way in which the wood engraving technique is employed; the intense process of imagining and producing the book, reconstructed through the comparative study of the maquettes preserved, and the special relationship between the verbal and the visual in this *livre d'artiste*. The publication is illustrated with the maquettes of the book and abundant documentary material that is included in the exhibition, such as

correspondence and images of the working process. The publication is completed by a striking series of photographs showing all the pages of the original book.

This is the third volume of *Miró Documents*, a series of publications that first appeared in 2014, which compiles the results of research on the artist conducted by the Miró Chair (Fundació Joan Miró – Universitat Oberta de Catalunya) based on the resources of the Fundació Joan Miró Archive.

The first volume was entitled *De Miró a Barcelona* and it focused on the exhibition of the same name staged at the Foundation in May 2014, which was devoted to the four works that the artist created for the city.

This was followed by *Miró and Twentieth-Century Sculpture*, a publication containing the lectures from the international symposium held at CaixaForum Madrid in April 2016, which aimed to place Joan Miró's work within the tradition of modern sculpture in dialogue with other artists.

## Activities

Activity open to everyone

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Thursday 11 May, at 7 pm

**Ricard Ripoll reads a selection of poems by Paul Éluard**

<http://www.fmirobcn.org/activities>

Family activity

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Sunday 22 and 29 April, at 11 am

### **Mirotípies**

Artist Book Workshop conceived and conducted by **Experimentem amb l'ART**

Starting with our name and using various typefaces we will print on sheets of paper. Then we will fold them and make a small publication. In a game of printing and folding we will arrive at different readings. Recommended age: 5 and over

<https://www.fmirobcn.org/familimiro>

Activities for Friends of the Fundació

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20 April 2017, at 6 pm

### **Éluard, Cramer, Miró - "À toute épreuve", more than a book**

Guided tour of the exhibition *Éluard, Cramer, Miró - "À toute épreuve", more than a book*. Conducted by the Conservation Department of the Foundation.

6 May 2017, 10 am to 2 pm

### **À toute épreuve Workshop**

Introduction to *moku-hanga*, the Japanese woodblock printing technique which inspired Miró to create the book *À toute épreuve*. Led by Sebi Subirós.

<http://www.fmirobcn.org/friends>

## General information

### Opening hours

#### **Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday**

10 am to 6 pm (November to March)

**Thursday** 10 am to 9 pm

**Saturday** 10 am to 8 pm

**Sunday and public holidays** 10 am to 2.30 pm

**Monday (except public holidays)** closed

Last admission to the Foundation: 30 minutes before closing

### Admission charges

#### **General admission**

Adults: €12

Concessions: students aged 15 to 30, seniors over 65: €7

Children under 15 and unemployed (proof required): free

#### **Admission to temporary exhibitions**

Adults: €7

Concessions: students aged 15 to 30, seniors over 65: €5

Children under 15 and unemployed (proof required): free

Annual pass: €13

Multimedia guide: €5

### Articket BCN

Visit 6 major art centres in Barcelona for €30 [www.articketbcn.org](http://www.articketbcn.org)

### Accessibility



### Transport

**Buses 55 and 150** (Parc de Montjuïc bus)

**Montjuïc Funicular** (metro Paral·lel, integrated fare)

The Fundació recommends that you use public transport for your visit.

Press **images** and digital **dossier** available at our virtual press office [www.fmirobcn.org/premsa](http://www.fmirobcn.org/premsa) and at the link <http://bit.ly/2az8JYm>

**Follow** the activities of "*À toute épreuve*" – *more than a book* on social media with the hashtag **#mésqueunllibre** and on the website [www.fmirobcn.org](http://www.fmirobcn.org)

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**Fundació Joan Miró**  
\* J... Barcelona

With the collaboration of:

\* J... **Cercle Miró**

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