

Miró Gaudí Gomis. The Magical Meaning of Art

24.07.2021 - 28.11.2021

A Project curated by Teresa Montaner and Ester Ramos, Collections Area, Fundació Joan Miró.

Exhibition co organized by Fundació Joan Miró and Fundació Vila Casas.

Can Mario, the Fundació Vila Casas Museum of Contemporary Sculpture in Palafrugell

*I think of Gaudí, who could make a field of stars with a
chrysanthemum in the middle bloom from a stone.*

Joan Miró

The exhibition *Miró, Gaudí, Gomis: The Magical Meaning of Art*, co-organised with **Fundació Joan Miró** based on its collection, and curated by **Teresa Montaner** and **Ester Ramos**, highlights the creative affinities between **Joan Miró** and **Antoni Gaudí**, as well as the artist's admiration for the architect through the photographs by **Joaquim Gomis**, first president of the Miró institution and a major promoter of Gaudí's work.

The exhibition presents a selection of **sculptures, ceramics** and **drawings** by Joan Miró that enter into conversation with the **photographs** that Gomis took of Gaudí's architecture, as well as an important series of **etchings** that, with the titles *Sèrie Gaudí, Enrajolats* and *Gran rodona*, Miró made in 1979 as a tribute to the architect.

This is a project that connects two of the most universally recognised personalities that Catalan culture has ever offered, and does so hand in hand with photographer Joaquim Gomis, who through his images knew how to capture Gaudí's pioneering nature, and proposed a new interpretive reading of Miró's work that relates him to nature and traditional art while highlighting the great coincidences that exist between the artist and the architect. The photobooks Gomis published in the 1950s in collaboration with **Joan Prats**, art promoter and key figure in the development of the Fundació Joan Miró, collected these images and displayed them following a specific rhythmic sequence.

Following his death, **Antoni Gaudí's** work practically fell into oblivion, and eventually managed to emerge from obscurity three decades later thanks to the continuous dissemination work carried out by a series of people linked to the worlds of art, architecture and culture in general. Among these people, **Joan Miró** and **Joaquim Gomis** contributed to this in a very prominent way. Miró, who had always recognised having close affinities with Gaudí, found in the architect's work a source of inspiration, and vindicated his role as a forerunner through his own creations. On his part, **Gomis** became one of the main promoters of Gaudí's work by means of his photographs. His ability to show the magnificent ensemble of Antoni Gaudí's architecture through capturing specific details helped to uncover the architect's genuinely modern character and approach.

As the curators of the exhibition, **Teresa Montaner** and **Ester Ramos**, point out: "From an early age, Miró showed an interest in nature, similar to that of Gaudí, and like the architect, achieved a synthesis of his art through the observation of natural elements. When he went beyond the field of painting in the 1940s and 1950s, he became interested in the sculptural sense of Gaudí's work and technical methods, as well as his desire to associate art and life. Towards the end of his career, Miró paid tribute to him through several series of etchings."

What Miró was interested in about Gaudí was not only the rhythm and structure of his architecture, but also the will to question different materials and methods of expression. Both artists understood nature as the source of their creations. Gaudí was inspired by it to create both structural elements and ornamentation. Following Gaudí's example, Miró created moulds using objects in his everyday surroundings as well as natural elements, and incorporated them into his sculptures. When bringing them together and casting them in bronze, they transformed into fantastic beings, as can be seen in the selection of sculptures presented in the exhibition. He was also attracted to **trencadís**, a traditional technique based on reusing pieces of broken ceramic, which he incorporated into his sculptural and public work, and which he evokes in the **series** of 21 etchings that make up *Sèrie Gaudí* as well as in the 7 etchings of *Enrajolats*, through which he paid tribute to the architect in 1979.

Gaudí and Miró's *photoscopes*

Upon his return from exile following the end of the Spanish Civil War, **Joaquim Gomis** became one of the greatest propagators of Gaudí's work. With the photographs he took of Gaudí and Miró's creations, an important photographic archive was created that contributed to promoting the work of both artists. The initiative, carried out by Gomis and Joan Prats, prompted the appearance of a series of publications, named *photoscopes*, which collected said material under different titles. Prats was in charge of the selection and the rhythmic sequence he felt Gomis' images had to follow.

The *photoscopes* had their origin in the slide projectors known as magic lanterns, in which the concepts of movement and continuity were always present. *La Sagrada Família de Antonio Gaudí* (1952) was the first of a group of *photoscopes* about the architect, in this case published on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. *Atmosfera Miró* (1959), dedicated to the artist's creative surroundings, was born from a selection of images taken at the house he had in Mont-roig, based on which Gomis and Prats offered a new interpretation of Miró's work, connected to the land and to traditional art.

Gaudí as seen by Miró

Miró and Gaudí met in the mid-1910s at drawing classes in Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc. At that time Gaudí already had important projects; Miró, on the other hand, was just beginning his career. Miró's admiration for the architect dates back to his early youth, perhaps due to sensing certain affinities between them or by sharing ties to Camp de Tarragona, where they had both lived.

Miró's first exhibition at the **Galerias Dalmau** in Barcelona, where he presented a selection of work inspired by the French artistic currents of the end of the century, did not generate a positive result. But thanks to his relationship with the area of Mont-roig, his painting then took a turn and began to approach nature in a more intimate way. His reading of books by Goethe, Pascal, Whitman, Dante, and Saint Francis of Assisi also led him to take this step. Miró's time spent in the countryside studying the behaviour of nature was essential for the definition of the artistic synthesis of his work, in the same way that Gaudí, through discovering the structural and geometric rules that governed natural forms, was able to transform his architecture.

“It wasn’t until 1936 that Miró spoke publicly about Gaudí for the first time, and it was in the first interview that *Cahiers d’Art* published with the Catalan painter while he was in exile in Paris as a result of the Spanish Civil War. In that interview, Miró insisted once again on the need for artists to be rooted in their own land, not in a political sense, but in a natural and cultural sense, as a form of artistic self-affirmation, and as a means to recover the magical and sacred attributes of art”, the curators point out.

In this exhibition we have tried to illustrate Miró’s links to the Catalan landscape by means of a drawing made by the artist in 1938, the year in which, feeling distressed for being exiled in Paris while the Francoist army was about to enter the city of Barcelona, he depicted himself metamorphosing into the mountain of Montserrat. The massif’s rocks stand on either side of his head, representing his shoulders.

Gaudí, for his part, almost literally moved the orography of this mountain, crowning the portal of Hope of the Sagrada Família with a massive stone.

Sculpture

Faithful defenders of Gaudí’s work contributed to his work being revalued between the 1940s and 1950s. This increased his influence on Miró, who began working in bronze by first observing the sculptural character of Gaudí’s work, as well as the materials and technical procedures he employed.

Miró’s first bronze sculptures were made using the casting technique at the Gimeno foundry. They represent images of a mythological universe based on Mediterranean tradition, very similar in appearance to the skylights, chimneys and ventilation towers on the roof of La Pedrera, where Gaudí tested his sculptural capacities using unconventional materials and techniques, combining stone and marble with *trencadís*, a technique based on reusing ceramic pieces, granting the sculptures great beauty and resistance.

Miró was also inspired by the moulding system that Gaudí used on the Nativity façade of the Sagrada Família, consisting of directly moulding in plaster the elements that are to be reproduced. The objects that make up Miró’s sculptures came mainly from nature or from the traditional art universe. Once cast in bronze by means of lost-wax process, he brought them together to give life to new beings, reminiscent of the idols of ancient

civilizations. Most of Miró's bronze sculpture work from the 1960s and 1970s, of which one can see a selection in this exhibition, was made following this procedure.

He also applied that same spirit to his sculpture work in ceramic, with which he created pieces of a primitive appearance. Once fired, he used to put them up against the telluric forces that once gave them life: "I have had the experience of placing them in the middle of nature: they blend in and become a single element together with the landscape." In some of those ceramic pieces, such as *Estela de doble cara* (1956), he even allowed nature to leave its mark. Marks that, like those applied by the artist, give the work its magical character.

Miró understood art as a form of expression connected to everyday life. Thus he aspired to work in public spaces. Ceramics and sculpture allowed him to materialise this idea, while prehistoric art, Romanesque art and Gaudí were his references. When, together with ceramist Josep Llorens Artigas, he made the murals for the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (1956–1957) as well as the ceramics and sculptures for the *Labyrinth* at the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence (1963), Park Güell served as inspiration. In the same way that Gaudí knew how to adapt to the terrain on which the park was built, Miró made his work integrate with the architecture and the landscape.

The need to work with weather-resistant materials also led Miró and Artigas to focus on Gaudí's *trencadís* technique, which also gave the work wonderful colour. Later, in the mid-1970s and also under the influence of Gaudí, he made the *Mosaic del Pla de l'Os* (1976), on La Rambla in Barcelona, a piece whose intention was to welcome the people who arrived to the city by sea. In the curators own words: "Among the preparatory material for the piece there is a drawing with annotations that refer to inlays of broken glass, metal and other abandoned materials, as if it were a *trencadís*. However, it is again, above all, in the final destination of the project where the coincidence with Gaudí is most evident. Like the pavement of the main plaza in Park Güell, this piece had also been conceived to be stepped on, that is, to be incorporated into people's everyday lives."

Tribute to Gaudí

Miró expressed his admiration for Gaudí throughout his life, and attributed to him the character of primitive man or of the Old Masters. An influence he explicitly revealed

during the 1940s and 1950s, coinciding with the moment of revitalisation of Gaudí's work.

As a result of everything that Gaudí meant to Miró, at the end of his career he paid tribute to him with several series of etchings. In each of these series he put his craft to the test, and with the help of master engraver Joan Barbará he explored the multiple possibilities the technique had to offer. The most extensive series is the one titled *Gaudí* (1979), in which Miró depicts a series of fantastic characters structured around the black graphic elements and coloured squares, with a marked insistence on using curved and wavy lines.

That same year, and with the help of the same master engraver, Joan Barbará, he created, among others, the *Enrajolats* series, in which he again made reference to the Gaudian technique, as well as *Gran rodona I* and *II*. Both versions of this latter etching evoke the impact that the shape of the main plaza had on him when he discovered it in Park Güell while he was preparing the murals for the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris; a shape that he later also transferred to the pavement of the *Mosaic del Pla de l'Os*.

Timelines

Joan Miró

1893 Born in Barcelona.

1913–1920 Attends drawing classes at the Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc, where he meets Antoni Gaudí for the first time.

1921 Temporarily settles in Paris and interacts with the avant-garde movement. Soon becomes one of the most prominent artists of Surrealism.

1937 In an interview with Georges Duthuit, he declares his admiration for Antoni Gaudí, highlighting the architect's interest in identifying with nature through his work.

1942–1943 Without abandoning painting, he begins to take an interest in sculpture and pays attention to Gaudí's sculptural work.

1955 Is commissioned to make the ceramic walls for the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, seeking inspiration in prehistoric art, Romanesque art and Gaudí.

1960 James Johnson Sweeney and Josep Lluís Sert publish their book *Antoni Gaudí*. Miró designs the cover.

1963–1964 Works together with Josep Llorens Artigas on the ceramic work that will become part of the *Labyrinth* of the Fondation Maeght de Saint-Paul-de-Vence.

1976–1982 Is inspired by the Gaudian *trencadís* technique to create some of his public works: *Mosaic del Pla de l'Os* (1976), *Lluna, sol i una estrella* (or *Miss Chicago*) (1981) and *Dona i ocell* (1981) -1982).

1979 As a token of appreciation towards Gaudí, Miró creates the *Sèrie Gaudí*, *Enrajolats* and *Gran rodona* etchings.

1983 Passes away in Palma de Mallorca.

Antoni Gaudí

1852 Born in Reus or Riudoms (Tarragona).

1873 Begins his studies at the Barcelona Provincial School of Architecture.

1883 Is commissioned to continue work on the Expiatory Temple of the Sagrada Família, that would become his most personal and ambitious project. The redesign he proposes eventually becomes affected by funding difficulties.

1884 His patron, Eusebi Güell, entrusts him with the design of the pavilions and gratings of the Güell estate in Can Feliu, Barcelona. Two years later, he begins work on the Palau Güell and in 1898 begins work on the crypt of the Colònia Güell, which lasted until 1915.

1888 Completes his first project as an architect, Casa Vicens, in the Barcelona district of Gràcia.

1900 Once again, under the auspices of Eusebi Güell, he begins work on Park Güell, a unified city/garden project that never came to fruition as such, but which remains an exponent of his capacity to take risks and innovate.

1906 After Casa Calvet (1900) and Casa Batlló (1906), he begins work on Casa Milà, better known as La Pedrera, his third and final residential building, through which he attains his maximum level of expressiveness and freedom of design.

1922 Congress of Spanish architects in Barcelona, where Gaudí's architecture is highlighted.

1926 Dies unexpectedly in Barcelona as the result of an accident, leaving the construction of the Sagrada Família temple unfinished.

Joaquim Gomis

1902 Born in Barcelona, becomes interested in photography from a very early age.

1932 Creates Amics de l'Art Nou (ADLAN) with Joan Prats and Josep Lluís Sert, a group that was founded with the aim of promoting avant-garde art. Gomis and Miró establish their first bonds of friendship. Following the Spanish Civil War, he continues to promote artistic activity in Catalonia via Club 49.

1948 *Exposition des œuvres récentes de Joan Miró* at the Galerie Maeght in Paris. The *Mas Miró* series of photographs, which Gomis made of the artist's work and creative surroundings, goes on display for the first time. Alfred H. Barr, director of the collections at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), requests copies for the museum's archive.

1952 Coinciding with the centenary of Gaudí's birth, the Amics de Gaudí association is founded with the aim of making his figure public from an artistic, human and spiritual point of view. The first Gomis-Prats *photoscope* dedicated to the Sagrada Família is published. It is later succeeded by *photoscopes* about the Parl Güell (1966), the crypt of the Colònia Güell (1967) and La Pedrera (1971).

1956 *Gaudí* exhibition at the Saló del Tinell in Barcelona, organised by Amics de Gaudí, with large-format photographs Gomis had taken in the 1940s of the architect's work.

1957 The MoMA proposes to Gomis-Prats that their photographs also be shown in the exhibition that the American Museum dedicates to Gaudí that same year.

1959 Gomis-Prats publish the *Atmosfera Miró photoscope*, which includes the *Mas Miró* series of photographs and is the first one dedicated to Joan Miró.

1975 The Fundació Joan Miró opens its doors to the public with Gomis as its first president.

1991 Passes away in Barcelona.

Videos that can be viewed in the exhibition

- Projection of the *Atmosfera Miró photoscopes*, Jorge Bravo Padró and Plei Audiovisuals
- *Around and About Joan Miró*, Thomas Bouchard

Thomas Bouchard's film *Around and About Joan Miró* (1955) takes viewers on a visual tour of the artist's work and highlights the way in which the natural environment, traditional/anonymous forms of expression and Romanesque art have always been a powerful source of inspiration for Miró. Several fragments of the film, which lasts almost an hour, will be projected.

Related activities

- Guided tours of the exhibition scheduled for some Saturdays and Sundays each month.
 - Guided tour by the curators.
 - Family visit/workshop "From Nature to Sculpture" on Saturdays during summer.
- You can check the dates of the visits on our website:

<https://www.fundaciovilacasas.com/ca/actividades>

Art-Lab workshop

From the Educational Service of the Fundació Vila Casas we have allocated a space for artistic creation with the aim of bringing the *Miró, Gaudí, Gomis: The Magical Meaning of Art* exhibition closer to families and other visitors by offering a range of activities to suit everyone's needs. We aim for it to be a space for reflection, interaction and learning.

On the one hand, this space will include different teaching materials that will be available to young visitors in order to complement their visit and help them activate their imagination and creativity by carrying out educational worksheets. This material will be arranged on the tables of the space for those children who would like to carry out the activities.

On the other hand, we offer the **family visit/workshop** "From Nature to Sculpture", an activity based on the exhibition, scheduled for Saturdays during the summer. This activity aims to bring people closer to the three figures presented in the exhibition, highlighting the inspiration the shapes and forms of nature provided to both Joan Miró and Antoni Gaudí, and that Joaquim Gomis knew how to capture in his photographs.

This educational activity will begin with a dynamic and participatory visit to the rooms that make up the exhibition in order to get to know the three figures, and to discover their work through analysing the shapes, colours and even materials obtained from their surroundings. To carry out this visit, certain support materials and dynamics will be used to stimulate reflection, participation, creativity, dialogue, exploration and curiosity. Visitors will then enter the artistic creation space Art-Lab, where children will be able to create a sculpture based on what they learn during the visit.

The idea of the workshop is to make a sculpture by taking nature as inspiration and creating a fantastic being. To create this being we will resort to the assemblage technique. Joan Miró and Antoni Gaudí were great observers of their surroundings and developed their creations based on their connection with nature. Using objects obtained from nature (branches, stones, leaves, shells, straw, pinecones, nut shells or other found objects such as those Miró used) visitors will create their own sculptures by giving new life to the materials and transforming them into art.

Images for Media

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Joaquim Gomis, Joan Miró, Alexina Matisse at Casa Batlló, 1944.

Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.



Joaquim Gomis. *La Pedrera*, 1946. Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.



Joan Miró. *Tête*, 1949. Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona.



Joaquim Gomis. *Park Güell*, 1967.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.



Joan Miró. *Mosaico del Pla de l'Ós en la Rambla de Barcelona*, 1976.

Photo: Jaume Blassi.



Joaquim Gomis. *Sagrada Família*, 1946.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.



Joan Miró. *Woman sun*, 1966 (detail).
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona.



Joaquim Gomis. *Park Güell*, 1946.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.



Joan Miró. *Testa coronada*, 1970.



Joan Miró. *Equilibrist*, 1969.



Joaquim Gomis.
Park Güell, 1946.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional Catalunya



Joan Miró. *Double-sided stele*, 1956.



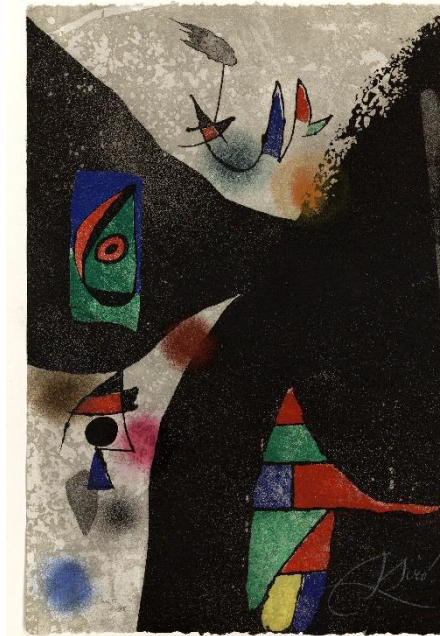
Joaquim Gomis. *Park Güell*, 1946,
And *Sagrada Família*, 1946.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.



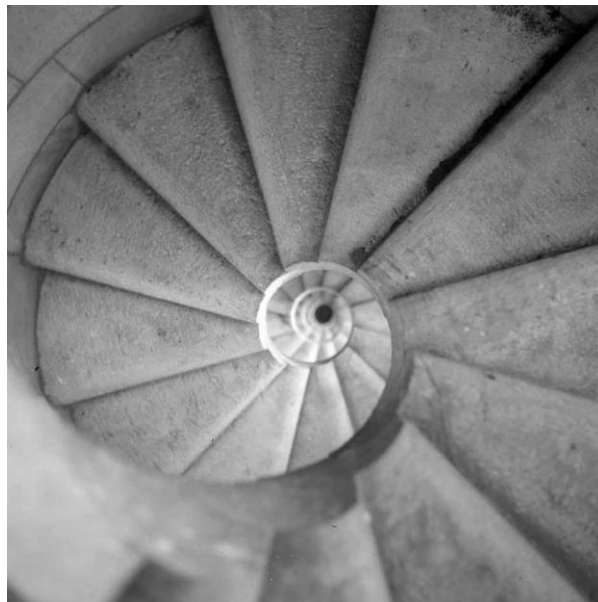
Joan Miró. *Double-sided stele*, 1956, and *Gaudí XIX*, 1979.
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona.



Joaquim Gomis. *la Pedrera*,
1946.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de
Catalunya.



Joan Miró. *Gaudí II*, 1979.
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona.



Joaquim Gomis.
Sagrada Família, 1946.
Fons Joaquim Gomis, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya.

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