

Nadala at the Fundació Joan Miró Photography in the Foyer

Joan Miró and the Nativity Figures

Installation and photographic selection by Josep Mañà

23/11/2017 – 07/01/2018

Opening: 22 November 2017, 6 pm

Press release

The Fundació Joan Miró presents *Joan Miró and the Nativity Figures*, an installation by Josep Mañà reflecting the admiration that Joan Miró had for this popular art iconography.

For the 2017 Christmas installation, Mañà has recreated a traditional Nativity scene reproducing a wide range of landscapes in the Foyer of the Foundation, in homage to Miró's close relationship with nature and the land.

Taking place from 23 November 2017 to 8 January 2018, the installation will be accompanied by a new photographic selection from the Joaquim Gomis Fonds that aims to highlight the great affection Miró felt for the artistic expressions of popular culture.

Barcelona, 21 November 2017. *'Popular art always moves me. It doesn't cheat or play tricks. It goes straight to the point. It is amazing and so full of possibilities!' 'Look at the Nativity figures that are sold at Christmas markets. You can still see the fingerprints in the clay.'* (Joan Miró)

The Nativity figures, or *pastorets* as they are called in Mallorca, were an integral part of Miró's childhood, when the traditional Christmas market, or Saint Lucia's Fair, used to occupy the Plaça Sant Jaume, close to his birthplace at Passatge del Crèdit. Years later, in Son Abrines, his studio in Palma de Mallorca, he kept a collection of them in a vitrine that he solemnly called his 'Pinacothèque', next to other of his favourite samples of popular craft, such as the Mallorcan clay whistles.

Hand-modelled and painted by individual artisans, this peculiar form of expression, together with the visual qualities of the figures, had great attraction for the artist. As he explains in one of his notes, he often used them as models: 'To apply somewhere in the painting a very glossy layer of *Ripolin* (commercial household paint), so it contrasts with the matt paint, as in the Nativity figures, which have pigments with a glue binder and very shiny gloss in other places.'

Fundació Joan Miró ✱ Barcelona

It is not by chance that the poet J.V. Foix referred to his friend Miró as an ‘astral Nativity scene maker’, in the newspaper *La Publicitat* in 1932, and in the lecture he gave in 1968 on the occasion of the major Miró retrospective at the Antic Hospital de la Santa Creu in Barcelona. In an article written by the poet for the magazine *Serra d’Or* in 1973, titled *El natalici de Miró* (Miró’s Birthday), he further qualifies this definition: ‘...like the Nativity scene makers who try to reproduce landscapes when, in fact, they are creating, with ancestral modesty and fervour, other settings through which to wander peacefully and blissfully, Miró modifies reality and frees himself, with astral opulence, from the siege of obsessions [...].’

The Australian writer and critic Robert Hughes, in his analysis of the Catalan concepts of *seny* and *rauxa* (common sense and excess) and the figure of the *caganer* (the traditional shitter in the Nativity scene), refers in his book *Barcelona* (1966) to Miro’s painting *The Farm* (1921–22) in a similar manner: ‘The *caganer* enters the art of the twentieth century in an unmistakable way [...] if we observe *The Farm* with attention, we will notice the presence of a pale boy, squatting, in front of his mother washing clothes in a laundry sink. Well, this boy is none other than the Christmas *caganer* of Miro’s childhood [...]’ Other scholars of Miro’s work have also remarked on the influence of the Nativity imagery in works such as *The Farmer’s Wife* (1922–23), which responds to the referent of one of the traditional characters known as ‘figurines with an offering’, that of a farmer with a basket and a rabbit; or they have compared the detailed description of the tools and farm labouring done by the artist in works such as *House with Palm Tree* (1918) and *The Farm* with the exhaustive detail of some Nativity scenes.



Josep Mañà working on *Nadala 2017* at Fundació Joan Miró. © Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. Photo: Pere Pratdesaba.

The installation *Joan Miró and the Nativity Figures* shows and contextualises one of the most characteristic iconographic representations of the Christmas costumes and traditions of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. It is a *mise-en-scène* that throws light on Miró’s admiration for a kind of imagery that belonged to the repertoire of popular art objects that he had

been collecting, and which had inspired many of his works. Mañà’s Nativity scene reproduces a wide range of scenarios and landscapes in the Foyer of the Foundation, in homage to Miro’s close relationship with nature and the land.



Joaquim Gomis, 1960. © Hereus de Joaquim Gomis.
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona.

The photographic images of Joaquim Gomis, a close friend of the artist and a documentalist of his work, bear witness to the interest and affection Miró had for the artistic expressions of popular culture. Fifteen of these images, selected by Josep Mañà as part of his Christmas project, will be exhibited in the space dedicated to photography in the Foyer of the Foundation.

The Fundació Joan Miró's Christmas installation is an annual event involving local artists in the seasonal festivities. Every year, the Foundation commissions an artist to produce an installation that interprets some of the

themes typical of the winter festive cycle. Beginning in 2007, the Foundation has so far housed the proposals of Perejaume, Ignasi Aballí, Tere Recarens, Antoni Llena, Fernando Prats, Jaume Pitarch, Eulàlia Valldosera, Fina Miralles, Rafel G. Bianchi and Regina Giménez, and Luis Bisbe.

Since 2012, the Fundació Joan Miró has run a programme of exhibitions of photography in the Foyer. Following an agreement with the heirs of Joaquim Gomis and the Generalitat, the Foundation is now managing the Fonds with the aim of disseminating and promoting the study of his work, which is exhibited regularly, alternating with the work of other amateur photographers.

Joaquim Gomis i Serdañons (Barcelona, 1902–1991) was an entrepreneur, photographer, artistic promotor and the first president of the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (1972–75). For over fifty years, he developed an extensive and rigorous photographic production, closely linked to the most avant-garde movements of his time. He was a founder member of ADLAN (Amics de l'Art Nou, 1932–36) and Club 49 (1949–71), two of the more active groups in the promotion of avant-garde art in Catalonia between 1930 and 1970.

Download video and images at www.fmirobcn.org/press

More information:

Fundació Joan Miró Press Office | Elena Febrero – Amanda Bassa
+34 934 439 070 | press@fmirobcn.org