

Press Release

Joan Miró Sculptures

21 November 2025—7 February 2026

Thaddaeus Ropac
Seoul Fort Hill
2F, Dokseodang-ro 122-1, Yongsan-gu, Seoul



Joan Miró, *Gymnaste*, 1977.
Bronze. 102 x 92 x 86 cm.
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*It is in sculpture that I will create a truly
phantasmagoric world of living monsters.*
— Joan Miró

In the wake of Joan Miró's retrospectives at Sejong Center for the Performing Arts (2016) and My Art Museum (2022) in Korea, Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul presents an exhibition of the Catalan artist's

late bronze works, which have rarely been seen in Korea. Finding its roots in surrealist assemblage, his sculptural work evolved into an essential facet of his practice, crystallising his unrelenting spirit of experimentation. The sculptures shed light on Miró's avant-garde use of found objects which he masterfully metamorphosed into uniquely poetic sculpted constellations. Conceived in his Majorcan

studio, the works incorporate elements Miró scavenged on the Balearic island, from folk art and craftwork to coastal flora and minerals. The exhibition is accompanied by an important early gouache, as well as two photographs by Irving Penn that portray Joan Miró alongside his sculptures, translating the symbiotic relationship between the artist and his works.

Joan Miró began experimenting with the medium of sculpture as early as 1922, inspired by the formal wealth of the plants and stones he collected in the Catalan countryside around his family farm in Mont-roig. During the early 1930s, the artist made further incursions into the tri-dimensional realm through the creation of surrealist *Constructions* and subsequent *Objets poétiques* incorporating found objects such as a taxidermied parrot. In 1944, he embarked upon an artistic partnership with the master ceramist Josep Llorens Artigas, which they renewed in 1953: a crucial collaboration from which Miró emerged as



Joan Miró, *Figure*, 1976.
Bronze. 205 x 62 x 38 cm.

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a true sculptor. From the 1960s onwards, sculpture became paramount for the artist, who notably built a site-specific labyrinth of statuary at the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul de Vence between 1961 and 1981. The works on display, which were created in the final years of his life, distil the ever-inventive nature of Miró's sculptural practice.

Irving Penn's photographs of 1948, also on view in the exhibition, capture Joan Miró in all his sculptural splendour. In one shot, Miró non-chalantly leans on the roof of his Catalan home in Tarragona, his cosmic sculptures brushing the sky, while in the other, the artist cradles his biomorphic sculpted creatures as he pierces Penn's lens with his gaze. These masterful photographs reveal the ingenuity of Miró's sculptural production of the 1940s: small bronze figures distinguished by primordial volumes that he modelled directly with his hands, like a ceramist. Demonstrating the striking development of the artist's sculptural work, the exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul focuses on Miró's later 'assemblage sculptures' created from found everyday objects, wherein, as art critic and poet Jacques Dupin has set forth, 'the real, almost unique inventiveness of Miró the sculptor lay.'

Created in his Sert atelier in Majorca, the sculptures on view reflect Miró's avowed hypnotisation by the inexhaustible natural elements and bric-a-brac he harvested on the island, ranging from twigs and pebbles to *siurells*, folkloric ceramic whistles. As the artist confided in his grandson, Joan Punyet Miró: 'When I go for a walk I don't hunt for objects as if I were looking for mushrooms. There's a sudden force, bang! like a magnetic force that makes me look down at a certain moment.' Miró would scatter the foraged objects on the floor of his studio, before instinctively arranging them into configurations that sparked a 'poetic shock' that he ultimately immortalised in bronze. Drawing on the surrealist logic of oneiric automatism, Miró's alchemical sculptures transmute the simplest, most humble bits and pieces into supreme works of art. As his close friend Joan Prats quipped, 'When I take a stone, it is just a stone. When Miró grabs a stone, it is a Miró.'



Irving Penn
Joan Miró (A), Tarragona, Spain, 1948
© The Irving Penn Foundation

The exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul kindles ‘the tremendous feeling of entering a new world’ that Miró sought to conjure up with his corpus of sculptures. In one work, Miró morphs a clothes hanger, bamboo sticks and fragments of plastic into a spirited gymnast on the brink of performing, while in another, a totemic embracing couple emerges from a palm tree stump piled with synthetic foam rubber and a deformed bottle. Harnessing the ‘spiritual’ energy he divined in each object, Miró transformed the seemingly disparate array of elements into unique sculptures imbued with his childlike whimsy, Catalan humour and inimitable poetry. In the gallery’s outdoor courtyard stands Miró’s three-metre-tall *Femme et oiseau* (1982): first conceived in 1962 as a ceramic, this iconic bronze is a precursor to his monumental *Dona i Ocell* sculpture of 22 metres, which was inaugurated in the Parc de Joan Miró in Barcelona in 1983. The imposing, abstracted female figure – whose primitive forms and incised hypertrophied sex hark back to Paleolithic mother-goddess statues – is crowned by a moon-shaped bird that symbolises the potent connection between the earthly and celestial realms that runs through Miró’s artistic practice.

Not only does the exhibition provide a unique opportunity to experience Miró’s sculpted dreamscape in Korea, but the space at Thaddaeus Ropac Seoul was specially designed to embed his works in the Korean aesthetics and literati philosophy of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1897). Though he never had the opportunity to visit Korea, Miró’s sensitivity to his surroundings resonates with the profound appreciation of nature that pervades traditional Korean art. In his own words, ‘May my sculptures be confused with the elements of nature, trees, rocks, roots, mountains, plants, flowers.’ To reflect this, the viewer encounters each sculpture through the opening of a rice paper construction rooted in the *chagyeong* – a key concept of traditional Hanok architecture signifying ‘borrowed scenery’, whereby an aperture subtly draws the natural world into one’s space. The structure’s intricate design simultaneously nods to the artist’s seminal *Labyrinthe Miró* erected at the Fondation Maeght, as well as the surrealist fascination with mazes as a metaphor for the mind. The expressive bronze sculptures come in and out of view like jagged landscapes framed by windows or open doors. Weaving the Catalan artist’s animistic sensibility with a Korean aesthetic consciousness, the exhibition heightens the spiritual essence of Miró’s radical assemblage sculptures.



Joan Miró. © Archive Successió Miró

About the artist

Joan Miró, the Catalan master of modernism, was born in 1893 in Barcelona and died in 1983 in Palma de Mallorca. In 1907, Miró enrolled at the Barcelona School of Commerce concurrently with La Lonja School of Fine Arts. After contracting typhoid fever in 1911, he renounced his profession as an accountant to devote himself to painting. Between 1912 and 1915, Miró attended the Francesc Galí

Art School, where he was deeply marked by 'touch-drawing' experiments which sparked his interest in sculpture. His first monographic exhibition was held at the Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona in 1918. Early paintings evince the influence exerted by Fauvism, as well as Paul Cézanne and the Cubists on the young artist. In 1920, Miró travelled to Paris for the first time where he notably became acquainted with Pablo

Picasso. He settled in an atelier on 45 rue Blomet and befriended avant-garde poets, such as Antonin Artaud, Robert Desnos and René Char, whose formal innovations enthralled him. In 1924, he signed André Breton's *First Manifesto of Surrealism* and, a year later, he commenced his cycle of 'dream paintings'. Eluding categorisation, Miró would maintain his independence from the group, despite Breton's claim that he was 'the most Surrealist of us all'. In 1927, Miró proclaimed his desire to 'assassinate painting' and, throughout the 1930s, he experimented with sculptural objects, as well as collages and works on paper. Amid the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), Miró was commissioned to paint the mural *Le Faucheur (Paysan Catalan en Révolte)* for the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris, where it was exhibited alongside Picasso's *Guernica*. During the Second World War, Miró created his series of *Constellations* (1940–41), widely considered one of the greatest masterpieces of the twentieth century.

Joan Miró's first retrospective was held in 1941 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1958, Miró's ceramic murals *Wall of the Sun* and *Wall of the Moon*, created in collaboration with Llorens Artigas, were unveiled at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, earning him the Guggenheim International Award. 1970 marked the first exhibitions dedicated to Miró's sculptural work at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York and Galerie Maeght in Paris, followed by the landmark show *Miró Sculpture* at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1971, which travelled to the Cleveland Art Museum and The Art Institute of Chicago, and *Miró Bronzes* at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1972. The ensuing year, Clovis Prévost and Carles Santos directed the film *Miró sculpteur*. In 1978, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris organised the exhibition *Miró: 100 sculptures 1962–1978*. His monumental sculptures *Lune, Soleil et une étoile (Miss Chicago)* (1981) and *Personnage et Oiseaux* (1982) were installed in Chicago and Houston, respectively. In recent years, exhibitions dedicated to Miró's sculptures have been held at Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (2015–16); Centro Botín, Santander (2018); Museum Beelden aan Zee, The Hague (2024–25).

Joan Miró's sculptures are held in prestigious institutional collections across the globe including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX; Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona; Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca, Palma de Mallorca; Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; Hakone Open-Air Museum, Japan; and Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan.

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