Joan Miró
Devotion to Printmaking
Joan Miró
Devotion to Printmaking

January – March 2020
Gilden’s Art Gallery are delighted to announce our latest exhibition focussing on the extensive printmaking career of Joan Miró. The exhibition offers an opportunity to explore the many collaborations between the artist and printmaking studios in France and Spain. With works from the 1950s to 1970s, we have a selection of original prints from across the media of etching and aquatint, lithography and carborundum – a technique that became synonymous with Miró.

Miró was a dedicated printmaker from early in his artistic career and worked with a multitude of talented printing studios, a small selection of which will be highlighted in this exhibition. We start primarily with the two largest and most established printing houses of Twentieth Century France – Mourlot and Maeght. Further to these major and respected houses, we have original prints from Miró’s longest collaborator Robert Dutrou and a selection of etchings and lithographs from the celebrated Spanish printing houses Sala Gaspar and Polígrafa.

We do hope that you enjoy this introduction to the printing studios that Miró so enjoyed working with in order to realise his artistic visions.
Mourlot

The name Mourlot is synonymous with lithography and is the longest operating lithographic printing house in France. Originally founded in 1852 it has undergone numerous name changes in keeping with the generations of family who have expanded on the original business – from Imprimerie Mourlot, Mourlot Frères and Atelier Mourlot. It was under the guidance of Fernand Mourlot that Miró first collaborated with this studio, introduced by Christian Zervos in 1930. In the foreword to the catalogue raisonné of Miró’s lithographs, Mourlot remarks the artist had an instant love for the lithographic medium and this intensified as the years went on. It was originally with his contributions to artistic journals and books of poetry that Miró created his first lithographs, though soon he was so taken with the technique, he produced standalone subjects. Miró produced lithographs with the Mourlot printing studio for a period of over 50 years.

Day, 1953
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours
on Arches Wove Paper
39 x 28 cm. / 15.4 x 11.1 in.
Reference: Mourlot 196
Red and Blue, 1960
Original Hand Signed, Numbered and Dated Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
65.5 x 46.4 cm. / 25.8 x 18.3 in.
Reference: Mourlot 269

Preface, from: 52 Affiches, 1963
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
64.5 x 48 cm. / 25.4 x 18.9 in.
Mourlot 384
Composition V, from: The Perseids, 1970
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
66 x 51 cm. / 26 x 20.1 in.
Reference: Mourlot 660

Composition III, from: A few Flowers for Friends, 1964
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Japan Nacré Paper
41 x 32.5 cm. / 16.1 x 12.8 in.
Reference: Mourlot 341; Cramer 92
The Essences of the Earth, 1968

Seven Original Hand Signed,
Dated and Inscribed Lithographs in
Colours on Arches Wove Paper
26.5 x 25.5 cm. / 10.5 x 10 in.
Reference: Mourlot 506, 509-514;
Cramer 124

This is a unique set of seven of the Bon à Tirer [Good to Print] impressions, each one signed dated and inscribed with the edition details in the verso by Miró. These are the actual final proofs that Miró approved before printing the rest of the edition.
The Essences of the Earth, 1968

The Essences of the Earth, 1968 is considered by many to be the most complex lithographic series undertaken by Miró due to the fluidity in the creative process and the variations published on numerous paper types and subsequent hand-colouring. These impressions contain the important agreement between artist and printmaker as to the way in which the edition will be published.

These Bon à Tirer impressions give us a rare glimpse into how lithographs are made. Equally, they show the complexity of Miró’s mind in preparing and realising the same composition but with a differentiation of colour. It embodies how our senses can be moulded both by the imagery and the choice of colours. The instruction Bon à Tirer [Good to Print] demonstrates Miró’s satisfaction with the tones, colours and form.
Composition IX, from: The Essences of the Earth, 1968
Unique Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph with Hand-colouring on Japon Nacré Paper
49.5 x 36 cm. / 19.4 x 13.9 in.
Reference: Mourlot 514

Composition VIII, from: The Essences of the Earth, 1968
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph with Hand-colouring in India Ink on Japon Nacré Paper
49.5 x 36 cm. / 19.4 x 13.9 in.
Reference: Mourlot 513
Ubu the King

Ubu Roi (Ubu the King) is a play by Alfred Jarry, premiered in 1896. It is a precursor of the Theatre of the Absurd and Surrealism. It is the first of three stylised burlesques in which Jarry satirises power, greed, and their evil practices—in particular the propensity of the complacent bourgeois to abuse the authority engendered by success. It was followed by Ubu Cocu [Ubu Cuckolded] and Ubu Enchaîné [Ubu Enchained], neither of which was performed during Jarry’s 34-year life.

Père Ubu first appeared in 1888 in a collaboration between Alfred Jarry and a fellow student at the Rennes Lycée, but his first public appearance came in 1893 when Jarry published some of his prose works in an avant-garde review, the Minutes de Sable Mémorial. His triumph, however, was on the stage when the director of the Théâtre de l’Œuvre, Lugne-Poe staged a production of Ubu Roi. The audience received the play with screams, whistles, fist-shaking, the critics took up the cudgels and the play became infamous and its author an avant-garde hero.

Joan Miró used Ubu Roi as a subject of his most famous series, made of 50 1940 lithographs known as "the Barcelona Series". These pictures could be Ubu Roi but they also satirise General Franco and his generals after he had won the Spanish Civil War. He revisited this subject many times in his oeuvre.

The Massacre of the King of Poland III, from: Series for King Ubu, 1966
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
54 x 75 cm. / 21.3 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Mourlot 406; Cramer 108
The Night, the Bear III, from: Series for King Ubu, 1966
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
54 x 75 cm. / 21.3 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Mourlot 424; Cramer Books 108

Father Ubu’s Sleep III, from: Series for King Ubu, 1966
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
54 x 75 cm. / 21.3 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Mourlot 427; Cramer 108
The Nobles at the Trapdoor III, from: Series for King Ubu, 1966
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
54 x 75 cm / 21.3 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Mourlot 412; Cramer Books 108

The Return Journey II, from: Series for King Ubu, 1966
Original Hand Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
54 x 75 cm / 21.3 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Mourlot 429; Cramer 108
Bougrelas and his Mother III, from: Series for King Ubu, 1966
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
54 x 75 cm / 21.3 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Mourlot 409; Cramer 108

Composition XVI, from: Ubu’s Childhood, 1975
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
32.4 x 50.1 cm / 12.7 x 19.7 in.
Reference: Mourlot 1013; Cramer 204
In Post-War France the gallerist Aimé Maeght embarked on a project to cultivate a new generation of art collectors. He had trained as a lithographer but is today more well-known through the impressive collection of the Fondation Maeght in Saint Paul-de-Vence. The collection is considered among the finest private collections of the Twentieth century art in Europe. In December 1946 Maeght began printing and publishing a new artistic journal that would include original prints. Joan Miró was an early and enthusiastic contributor to this journal, which was known as “Derrière le Miroir”, affectionately known as DLM. Miró’s first edition was in 1948 and the artist also wrote essays and poetry for subsequent series. Aimé’s son Adrien operated the printing studio that enticed both established artists such as Miró and the new wave of artists flocking to Paris for the city’s resurgence. A main attraction of the printing studio to artists such as Miró was the ability to print both lithography and intaglio (etching and aquatint). Robert Dutrou joined Maeght following his partnership with Crommelynck.

The Ustashi, 1978
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Arches Wove Paper
138 x 96.5 cm. / 54.3 x 38 in.
Reference: Dupin 1000
Plate XI, from: Album 19, 1961
Original Hand Signed and Numbered
Lithograph in Colours on BFK Rives Wove Paper
61 x 51 cm. / 24 x 20.1 in.
Reference: Mourlot 322

Figure and Bird, 1948
Original Hand Signed, Dated and
Inscribed Lithograph in Colours on
BFK Rives Wove Paper
65.2 x 50.5 cm. / 25.7 x 19.9 in.
Reference: Mourlot 68
Fashion Frenzy – Blue, Red, Green, 1969
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
126 x 86.5 cm / 49.6 x 34 in.
Reference: Mourlot 645
The Night Guardian, 1971
Original Hand Signed and Dedicated
Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
123.5 x 91.6 cm. / 48.6 x 36 in.
Reference: Mourlot 695
The Drunken Horse, 1964
Original Hand Signed and Numbered
Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
61 x 90 cm. / 24 x 35.4 in.
Reference: Mourlot 326

Bird of Paradise, 1963
Original Hand Signed and Numbered
Aquatint in Colours on BFK Rives Wove Paper
104.5 x 73.5 cm. / 41.1 x 28.9 in.
Reference: Dupin 361
From 1967 onwards, Robert Dutrou introduced Miró to a new technique invented by Henry Goetz: Silicon Carbide engraving – this became more commonly known as Carborundum.

Different from traditional engraving, here the incised work is replaced by a relief work, a hard superstructure on the copper surface. “The method consists of setting very high pressure resistant substances such as Silicon Carbide, synthetic varnish, or both, on the plate surface. The interstices between the silicon carbide grains and the streaks in the varnish replace the holes or grooves in the metal itself in the more classical methods. These interstices, which hold the printing ink, give it back to the moist paper, under press, to create a print.”

Miró wrote in a letter to Goetz: “the results are fascinating and very beautiful. The artist can express himself with more richness and freedom... which give a beautiful substance and a more powerful line...”

Silicon carbide gave Miró what he was looking for, large and strong original prints, almost “picture prints”.

The Rebel, 1967
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Mandeure Wove Paper
104 x 73 cm. / 41 x 28.7 in.
Reference: Dupin 439

Carborundum
Mark on the Wall I, 1967
Original Hand Signed and Numbered
Etching with Aquatint in Colours and Carborundum on Mandeure Rag Paper
72.4 x 104.5 cm. / 20.5 x 41.2 in.
Reference: Dupin 440

Composition III, from:
A Trip to the Country, 1967
Original Hand Signed and Numbered
Etching with Aquatint in Colours on Mandeure Rag Paper
74.5 x 104 cm. / 29.3 x 40.9 in.
Reference: Dupin 432
The Newspaper, 1972  
Original Hand Signed and Numbered 
Lithograph in 
Colours on Arches Wove Paper  
74.5 x 53 cm. / 29.3 x 20.9 in.  
Reference: Mourlot 836

The Lady Playing Checkers, 1969  
Original Hand Signed and Numbered 
Lithograph on 
Checkered Cloth laid on Wove Paper  
85 x 60.5 cm. / 33.4 x 23.8 in.  
Reference: Mourlot 544
Catalan Night, 1972
Original Hand Signed and Hand Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours on BFK Rives Wove Paper
56.1 x 75 cm. / 22.1 x 29.5 in.
Reference: Dupin 558

Couple of Birds III, 1966
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours on Maneuvre Wove Paper
73.5 x 104.5 cm. / 28.9 x 41.1 in.
Reference: Dupin 416
The Invention of the Look, 1970
Original Hand Signed and Hand Numbered Etching and Aquatint with Carborundum in colours on Arches vellum paper
50.3 x 66 cm. / 19.8 x 26 in.
Reference: Dupin 537

Arrow Head, 1968
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Arches Wove Paper
66 x 50 cm. / 26 x 19.7 in.
Reference: Dupin 460
World Heart Month (Beat), 1968
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on BFK Rives Wove Paper
66 x 63.5 cm. / 26 x 25 in.
Reference: Mourlot 500; Cramer 154

Trace on Water, 1963
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Portfolio with one Hand Signed and Numbered Aquatint on Rives Wove Paper and 14 Watercolours offsets on Onion Skin Marais Paper
28.6 x 71 cm. / 11.2 x 27.9 in.
Reference: Dupin 350; Cramer 82
Many of the major printing houses have been family businesses, which have then evolved with their most talented master printmakers becoming leaders, having started as apprentices. Lacourière, which later became known as ‘Lacourière et Frélaut’ was founded in Paris 1929 by Roger Lacourière and was later led by the brothers and master printmakers Jacques and Robert Frélaut. The skills, expertise and passion for printmaking passing from one generation to the next. This studio was particularly highly regarded for copperplate printing and therefore Miró’s earliest etchings were executed on these plates and presses. Miró was introduced to Roger Lacourière by Christian Zervos, the art dealer and publisher who created the journal ‘Cahiers d’Art’, his first etching was created in 1933. These early etchings printed by Miró in the Lacourière studio are closer to his surrealist period and are notably for their strong use of line.

Composition V, from: Series II, 1952-53
Original Hand Signed Etching and Aquatint in Colours on Arches Wove Paper.
50.5 x 65.5 cm / 19.9 x 25.8 in.
Reference: Dupin 97
Composition II, from: Series IV, 1952-53

Original Hand Signed Etching in Colours on Arches Wove Paper.
32.5 x 50.5 cm. / 12.8 x 19.9 in.
Reference: Dupin 95
Aldo Crommelynck worked in the studio of Lacourrière from 1948-1955 having started as a Seventeen-year-old apprentice. In 1955 alongside his brother Piero, Aldo founded Atelier Crommelynck and continued to collaborate with many of the artists he had known from Lacourrière, including Joan Miró. When Aldo set up his new studio, he brought with him Robert Dutrou, an exceptionally skilled printmaker who worked effortlessly with etching and aquatint, but who equally explored new techniques and who created innovative manipulations of copper plates. Miró worked closely with Dutrou and they would go on to become lifelong friends, even when Dutrou left Crommelynck to work with Maeght in 1959. It was whilst working in this studio that we seem some of the most detailed and fine etchings produced by Miró on a smaller scale – mostly as collaborations between the artist and poets.

Composition II, from:
The Ring of Dawn, 1957
Original Hand Signed and Numbered
Etching with Hand-Colouring on Rives Wove Paper
38 x 28.5 cm. / 15 x 11.2 in.
Reference: Dupin 122; Cramer 45
Composition III, from: Rockets, 1959
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching in Colours on BFK Rives Wove Paper
27.5 x 37.2 cm / 10.8 x 14.7 in.
Reference: Dupin 250;
Cramer Books 54

Composition I, from: The Breakers, 1958
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours on Wove Paper
19 x 14 cm / 7.5 x 5.5 in.
Reference: Cramer Books 46
Atelier Morsang was the final printing studio of Robert Dutrou. The collaboration between Miró and Dutrou is perhaps the most celebrated, spanning 25 years and numerous printing studios. The artist trusted Dutrou’s opinion and technical knowledge that would lead to Miró’s creation of richly coloured, monumental etchings. The copper plate was no longer deemed to be a restriction on Miró’s creativity, and the perceived limitations were pushed time and time again. The printmaker’s skill with carborundum allowed him to set up a printing studio beyond the Southern suburbs of Paris, at Saint-Michel-sur-Orge and here he continued to experiment with this technique.

The Red Egret, 1976

Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Arches Wove Paper

132.5 x 92.5 cm. / 52.2 x 36.4 in.

Reference: Dupin 930
Red Mouse with Mantilla, 1975
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Aquatint in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
138.5 x 96 cm / 54.5 x 37.8 in.
Reference: Dupin 751
The Troglodytes I, 1978
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Arches Wove Paper
48.5 x 140.5 cm. / 19.1 x 55.3 in.
Reference: Dupin 1009
Saturnalian Insects, 1975
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
92 x 63.5 cm. / 36.2 x 25 in.
Reference: Dupin 746

The Well-Maker, 1969
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching and Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Arches Wove Paper
106 x 67.5 cm. / 41.7 x 26.6 in.
Reference: Dupin 516
The Great Thinker, 1969

Original Hand Signed and Numbered Etching, Drypoint and Aquatint in Colours with Carborundum on Arches Wove Paper

106 x 68 cm. / 41.7 x 26.7 in.

Reference: Dupin 514
Sala Gaspar was founded in 1909 by Joan Gaspar Xalabarder as a frame and mirror shop. He soon began exhibiting the work of his artist friends, the generation of Catalan modernist painters, Elisha Meifrén, Ramon Casas, and Isidre Nonell. After the Spanish Civil War, his son Miguel Gaspar Paronella took over the business with his cousin Joan Gaspar and expanded the gallery in 1944. The 1950s marked a turning point in the history of the gallery, artists such as Antoni Clavé and Pablo Picasso were beginning to work with Spanish printmakers and publishers having previously focussed their printmaking in France. Joan Miró followed suit and began a long partnership with the printing studio of Sala Gaspar and indeed the gallery represented the artist for many years. The studio allowed Miró to work both in lithography and in etching.
Fernando Gutiérrez was a friend of Joan Miró who worked closely with Sala Gaspar and curated and critiqued several artists exhibitions held in Barcelona.

*Untitled (Fernando Gutiérrez), 1964*

Unique Signed and Dedicated
Drawing in Crayon on Paper
35 x 44 cm. / 13.8 x 17.3 in.
Provenance: Fernando Gutiérrez
Galería Cortina, Barcelona
This work is accompanied by a photo certificate of authenticity from the Association pour la défense de l’œuvre de Joan Miró (ADOM).
The Mexican born Juan José Torralba was a highly respected etcher and an artist in his own right. When Joan Miró met Torralba for the first time they used the same etching studio and began working on large plates, where Miró continued to explore the carborundum technique. In a very short space of time, an intense collaboration between Torralba and Miró would lead to one of the masterpieces of Miró’s graphic works – the Barcelona Suite. The series was comprised of thirteen etchings and aquatints with carborundum and was created over a two-year period. Whilst most of the compositions are of a similar size, the final one stands out for its impressive scale and was unlike any other suite. The name of the series, an homage to the artist’s hometown, was also a nod to his earlier graphic cycle “Barcelona” from 1944 which Miró executed in lithographs void of colour. Now in the 1970s we see the artist celebrate the city in colour and where he has mastered etching and aquatint.
Polígrafa Obra Gráfica was founded in 1964 by Manuel de Muga and sought to publish graphic works by the contemporary artists of the period, many of whom would go on to be regarded as leading artists of the 20th Century. Based in Barcelona, Joan de Muga, Manuel’s son, further improved the relationships with the artists by setting up a printing studio in the early 1970s. The studio was capable of working in lithography, etching and woodcuts amongst other printing techniques; both traditional and experimental.

Joan Miró was one of the first artists to support this new enterprise and the work ‘Miró and the Catalans’ shows clearly the artist’s unwavering support for Catalonia. The lithograph was commissioned as a project between Miró and the Cologne based gallery L’Orangerie, but the artist insisted that the lithograph be created in Barcelona rather than a German print studio.

Joan Miró and Catalonia, 1970
Original Hand Signed and Numbered Lithograph in Colours on Arches Wove Paper
37.5 x 55 cm. / 14.8 x 21.7 in.
Reference: Mourlot 667; Cramer 123
Untitled (Mauro Pejla), 1970

Unique Signed, Dated and Dedicated Drawing in Crayon with Pen on Paper
19.8 x 19.8 cm / 7.8 x 7.8 in.
Provenance: Mauro Pejla, Italian Collection. A gift from the artist.
This work is accompanied by a photo certificate of authenticity from the Association pour la défense de l’œuvre de Joan Miró (ADOM).
Printing Techniques

**Lithographs** were initially made on slabs of stone (usually limestone), although, in the 20th century, the heavy stones began to be replaced by sheets of zinc, copper and later even acrylic. These new materials allowed for larger compositions to be printed. The artist draws on the stone or plate using a greasy medium, such as a wax crayon. The surface is then dampened with water, which is repelled by the greasy areas, sticking only to the sections of the plate that have not been drawn on. Ink is then applied to the plate with a roller and this sticks only to the greasy sections, as the water protects the rest of the plate. The stone or plate is then covered with paper and run through the press, printing only the areas that received the wax crayon. It is printed in layers of colours to build up the image from the lightest to the darkest.

**Etching** starts with covering the metal plate with a waxy coating called a ground. The artist draws on the ground with a burin, exposing the metal beneath. The plate is then immersed in acid, which “bites” into the exposed lines, preserving the drawing. The ground is then removed, and ink is introduced into the incised lines, and the plate is wiped clean ready for printing. It is much easier to draw quickly on the waxy ground than it is directly onto the plate and this is why etching became the preferred technique for artists such as Joan Miró, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso who wanted to match the fluidity of drawing with the aesthetic possibilities of printing.

**Aquatint** is a form of etching process in which the plate is covered with a semi-porous ground, which allows the acid to bite through evenly, creating areas of tone on top of the incised lines. Because of this, aquatints can often look like ink-brushed drawings or watercolours.

Catalogue raisonné

**Joan Miró Lithographs (Mourlot)**

**Joan Miró Etchings and Aquatints (Dupin)**

**Joan Miró Books (Cramer)**
This catalogue is published for the occasion of the exhibition:

Joan Miró

Devotion to Printmaking

January – March 2020

Edition: 1,000 catalogues
Director: Ofer Gildor
Gallery Manager: Daniela Boi
Head of Research: Stephen D. Gallagher
Gallery Coordinator: Diamante Bagnasco
Publisher: Gilden’s Art Gallery, London
Catalogue Design: Rachel Hooper
Printer: Blackmore

Remarks:
Dimensions listed refer to the sheet size.
Possible colour differences between the reproduction of images in the printed catalogue and the original artworks may exist, but every effort has been made to depict these works as true to their appearance.

Front cover: The Ustashi, 1978