

Joan Miró



Figures and Dog in Front of the Sun, 1949
tempra on linen, 32 x 21 in
Kunstmuseum, Basel



The Red Sun, 1948
oil and gouache on canvas,
36 1/8 x 28 1/8 in
The Phillips Collection,
Washington, D.C.

The Artist

Joan Miró

Born Barcelona, Spain 1893, died Palma Majorca, Spain 1983

Joan Miró was one of Spain's most celebrated Abstract and Surrealist artists. Miró was born in Barcelona to parents that were artists. He grew up in Catalonia, where he pulled much of his artistic inspiration from in real life. In 1907, Miró started studying under José Pascó at the school of Fine Arts in Barcelona. Though he was already comfortable with color techniques, Miró felt insecure as a draftsman. His time at the school was cut short because of his parent's disapproval of his artistic profession, so he dropped out and became a clerk in 1910. Two years later, his parents approved of his studying art after he suffered a mental breakdown. He resumed his studies at the Academy Galí.

In 1918, Miró held his first one man show in Barcelona that featured 64 paintings and several sketches. He married his cousin, Pilar Juncosa, in 1929. The couple had a daughter in 1931, Marie Dolores. Throughout his career he met and interacted in different styles, which eventually led him into his own unique style of artwork. He found great success as an artist in his life and received multiple awards, including the Guggenheim International Award. He painted with an intense use of color, fanciful shapes, and a wide array of media, his work is overflowing with imagination, intense beauty, and elegance.

Art Movement

Surrealism

This movement is about the exploration of the unconscious and the subconscious, and the transfer to the canvas. The fascination with dreams and trance-like states as a source of inspiration led to the creation of some strange, bizarre and revolutionary art. Although the movement was held together by theories, the stylizations and approaches differed greatly between artists. While he was frequently identified with the Surrealist movement, Miró never fully accepted and refused to sign the Surrealist Manifesto.

The Artwork

Figures and Dog in Front of the Sun

This painting is characterized with playful colors and lines creating dramatic contrast. In the picture, a person and a dog are seen with a red sun in the background. If turned the opposite way, you can see both a different person and a different dog.

The Red Sun

His signature use of bright primary colors, surrealistic imagery, and cartoonish faces are present in this painting. The blood red sphere, or the red sun, the headless torso and the floating cat-like face at the top of the painting are key points in this painting.

Discussion Suggestions

Discuss the Painting:

- *What colors do you see? Are they mainly primary colors? Or secondary colors?*
- *Where is the contrast? (background has light colors, not bold like the foreground)*
- *Describe what you see. Turn the painting upside down and sideways.*
- *Do you see people? Do they look like kids or adults?*
- *Where is the dog? Where is the sun?*
- *Did Miró have a good imagination? What would you title this painting?*

Activity Idea

Miró Look-A-Likes

- Have students arrange objects in the middle of each workstation, give them white paper. Have them use their own pencil to label back of paper with their name.
- Students should look down on the objects and quickly sketch an outline of the objects with their pencil. Stress that details are not important!
- After drawing the objects, have them turn their paper 90 degrees and draw the outline of the objects again so they appear to float. Some of the objects will overlap the previously drawn objects and that is OK. Encourage them to overlap! Next, they may add circles, lines, stars, and crescents in the background.
- Using the black marker, have them outline over all the pencil lines, including the overlapped lines.
- With the colored markers, color in the spaces in between the black lines. Each touching space should be a different color.
- Place the drawing on top of the rough surface and rub, using the side of a light colored crayon to create a background texture. Use two colors for added interest.

Materials Needed:

- 9"x12" white drawing or construction paper
- Colored markers, black markers, broken crayons, pencils
- Surface textures (i.e. screens) for background rubbing
- Objects to be used for visuals
- 12"x18" black construction paper (to use as a mat for the items)