



JOAN MIRO (1893-1983)

Tête de Femme (Déesse)

Signed lower middle, "Miró 3/4"

bronze with black patina

66 x 36 1/2 x 30 in.

3/4

1970 (cast 1988)

37743

PROVENANCE:

Galerie Maeght-Lelong, Paris

Pacific Art

Sale: Sotheby's, New York, May 10, 1989, lot 441

Private Collection

LITERATURE:

A. Jouffroy and J. Teixidor, *Miró Sculptures*, Paris, 1973, p. 202, no. 153 (plaster version illustrated, p. 153)

E.F. Miró and P.O. Chapel, *Joan Miró: Sculptures, Catalogue Raisonné*, 1928-1982, Paris, 2006, p. 184, no. 182 (another cast illustrated)

"Tête de Femme" is based upon one of Miró's most utilized themes. He characterized his sculptures as being from the 'truly phantasmagoric world of living' which is, undoubtedly, intended as a term of endearment. Yet "Tête de Femme" seems to evince something less monstrous or grotesque and instead presents in more sobering light as a free-standing, monolithic presence suggesting essential nature, if not a monumental one. Its attributions are fixed, intrinsic, and suggestive of its innateness; a strikingly austere design that adheres to Miró's resistance to a classic bourgeois concept of ideal beauty. While it does not suggest a simple 'female figure' designation, there is plenty of referential material in the curves, domed protrusions, and a central depression suggesting a birthing matrix that in sum, evokes a celebration of fecundity and the creation of life. In any event, any tether to representational reality is a tenuous one, yet one that is calculated to stimulate the imagination and evoke unconscious primordial references and long-forgotten mythologies.

Likely, Miro viewed this lustrous surface as fair compensation for its absence of color for which he is so well known. The impression is one that never suggests the sculptures of Miró are in any way derived from his painting, yet nor are they a complete deviation from that form of expression. Ultimately, it provides strong evidence that Miró was as engaged and involved in an intense dialogue with free-standing form as he ever was as a younger man working as a painter. "Tête de Femme" is cast in an edition of four, one of which was installed at the Yorkshire Sculpture Garden 2012 landmark exhibition "Miró: Sculptor."

Joan Miro i Ferrà was an internationally acclaimed Catalan Spanish painter, sculptor and ceramicist who produced vivid abstract and surrealistic works of art during much of the 1900's. Miró was among the first artists to develop automatic drawing as a way to undo previous established techniques in painting, and thus, with André Masson, represented the beginning of Surrealism as an art movement. However, Miró chose

not to become an official member of the Surrealists in order to be free to experiment with other artistic styles without compromising his position within the group. He pursued his own interests in the art world, ranging from automatic drawing and surrealism, to expressionism and Color Field painting. In numerous interviews dating from the 1930s onwards, Miró expressed contempt for conventional painting methods as a way of supporting bourgeois society, and famously declared an "assassination of painting" in favor of upsetting the visual elements of established painting.

Born to the families of a goldsmith and watchmaker, Miro studied art at the School of Fine Arts at La Llotja and at the Academy of Francisco Gali, in Barcelona, Spain. He had his first show at the Dalmau Gallery in 1918; he was 24 years old.

In 1919, he traveled to Paris, France, drawn towards the gathering arts community in Montparnasse. There, under the influence of the poets and writers, he developed his unique style: organic forms and flattened picture planes drawn with a sharp line. Generally thought of as a Surrealist because of his interest in automatism and the use of sexual symbols (for example, ovoids with wavy lines emanating from them), Miró's style was influenced in varying degrees by Surrealism and Dada, yet he rejected membership to any artistic movement in the interwar European years. André Breton, the founder of Surrealism, described him as "the most Surrealist of us all." Miró confessed to creating one of his most famous works, Harlequin's Carnival, under similar circumstances:

"How did I think up my drawings and my ideas for painting? Well I'd come home to my Paris studio in Rue Blomet at night, I'd go to bed, and sometimes I hadn't any supper. I saw things, and I jotted them down in a notebook. I saw shapes on the ceiling..."

Collaborating with and influenced by many surrealist and abstract painters, including Pablo Picasso, Andre Masson and Max Ernst, Miro developed his individualistic and recognizable style. In 1926, he collaborated with Max Ernst on designs for Sergei Diaghilev. With Miró's help, Ernst pioneered the technique of grattage, in which he troweled pigment onto his canvases. Miró married Pilar Juncosa in 1929; their daughter Dolores was born in 1931. Shuzo Takiguchi published the first monograph on Miró in 1940. In 1948–49, although living in Barcelona, Miró made frequent visits to Paris to work on printing his techniques at the Mourlot Studios (lithographs) and at the Atelier Lacourière (engravings). A close relationship lasting forty years developed with the printer Fernand Mourlot and resulted in the production of over one thousand different lithographic editions.

In 1959, André Breton asked Miró to represent Spain in The Homage to Surrealism exhibition together with works by Enrique Tábara, Salvador Dalí, and Eugenio Granell. Miró created a series of sculptures and ceramics for the garden of the Maeght Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, which was completed in 1964. Throughout the 1960s, Miró was a featured artist in many salon shows assembled by Maeght that also included works by Marc Chagall, Giacometti, Brach, Cesar, Ubac, and Tal-Coat.. In 1974, Miró created a tapestry for the World Trade Center in New York City. His World Trade Center Tapestry was displayed for many years at World Trade Center building. It was one of the most expensive works of art lost during the September 11 attacks, in which the towers were destroyed in a terrorist action.

In 1981, Miró's The Sun, the Moon and One Star (later renamed Miró's Chicago) was unveiled. This large, mixed media sculpture is situated outdoors in the downtown Loop area of Chicago, across the street from another large public sculpture, the Chicago Picasso. Miró had created a bronze model of The Sun, the Moon and One Star in

1967. The model now resides in the Milwaukee Art Museum

One of Miró's most important works in the United States is his only glass mosaic mural, *Personnage Oiseaux* (Bird Characters), 1972-1978. Miró created it specifically for Wichita State University's Edwin A. Ulrich Museum of Art, Kansas. The mural is one of Miró's largest two-dimensional projects, undertaken when he was 79 and completed when he was 85 years of age. Fabrication of the mural was actually completed in 1977, but Miró did not consider it finished until the installation was complete.

Joan Miró i Ferrà won several awards in his lifetime. In 1954 he was given the Venice Biennale print making prize, in 1958 the Guggenheim International Award, and in 1980 he received the Gold Medal of Fine Arts from King Juan Carlos of Spain. In 1981, the Palma City Council (Majorca) established the *Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca*, housed in the four studios that Miró had donated for the purpose. Miro lived to be 90 years old, dying on December 25, 1983.

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Muro 3/4

