

Picasso to Rothko: European and American Masters in Dialogue

Presented at Sotheby's Palm Beach

Spanning decades and continents, this exhibition highlights the nuanced historical and stylistic dialogues between some of the most influential artists of the 20th Century: Pablo Picasso (1881-1975), Fernand Léger (1881-1955), Joan Miró (1893-1983), Alexander Calder (1898-1976), Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) Mark Rothko (1903-1970) and Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988).

A constellation of pivotal artistic and historic moments, this exhibition illuminates the influences that connect these icons of post-war art across the Atlantic. Miró, Dubuffet, and Picasso had a formative impact on many mid-century vanguard American painters. In his early work, Rothko was inspired by the primordial imagery and mystical landscapes of Miró, who in turn saw and admired the New York school following a visit to the United States in 1947. When describing his observations of American painting, Miró explained that, "it showed me the liberties we can take, and how far we could go, beyond the limits. In a sense, it freed me." This sentiment was similarly felt and adopted by Picasso in his own work. Decades later, Picasso and Dubuffet's primal mark-making and uninhibited artistic approaches left an unmistakable impression on Basquiat, who made frequent visits to galleries and museums to specially study Dubuffet.

Picasso to Rothko: European and American Masters in Dialogue highlights the relationships and interchange of ideas that inspired these artists to create their greatest works. For example, Miró and Calder's legendary friendship was bolstered by a mutual fascination with calligraphic line and biomorphic forms. Léger would often attend Calder's circus performances in Paris and the two would often walk New York together in search of visual inspiration. Similarly, Picasso and Dubuffet shared an aesthetic language that oscillated between abstraction and figuration. Picasso, Calder, and their mutual friend Miró were aligned by their shared sociopolitical beliefs of the avant-garde. In their most famous coming-together, the three artists captured a crucial moment in European history through their artistic contributions to the 1937 World Fair, communicating the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War to the world.

Revolutionary masters of the 20th Century, this carefully curated selection of paintings and sculptures explores how each artist's personal histories and artistic sensibilities left an indelible mark on one another's practices.