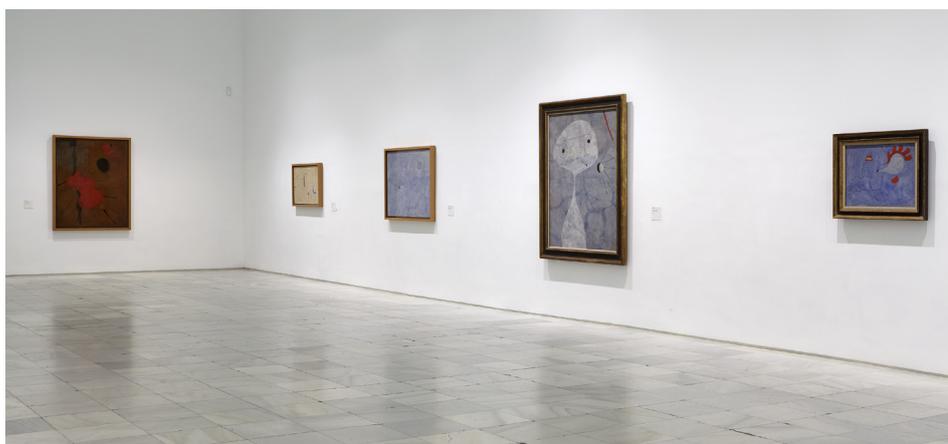


Magnetic Fields

The birth of Surrealism was inextricably linked to literature. For many surrealist artists, painting and sculpture shared the same nature as prose and poetry, in the way they revealed the deepest emotions and psychological processes. One of the major artists was Joan Miró, whose works in the 1920s exemplified this blurring of the boundaries between drawing and writing and between the visual and the poetic.



Les champs magnétiques, signed by André Breton (1896–1966) and Philippe Soupault (1897–1990) in 1920, was the founding text for the surrealist corpus. In it the authors proposed exploring an uninterrupted form of language, sensing that thought unobstructed by reason in stream-of-consciousness ends up revealing what really wants to be expressed through a kind of magnetic relationship among the imagination's different creative connections. André Breton elaborated on the importance of this "automatism" in the first surrealist manifesto in 1924, in which he defined poetic surrealism and argued against control exerted by reason. Influenced by Sigmund Freud's writings, Breton defended the mastery of free, creative associations that operate beyond the immediate control of consciousness.

The birth of Surrealism was highly influenced by literature, demonstrated in these artists' numerous declarations asserting that painting and sculpting were little more than the material consequences of poetry. The first surrealist exhibition was held in 1925 at the Galerie Pierre in Paris, bringing together artists such as Max Ernst (1891–1976), Jean Arp (1886–1966), André Masson (1896–1987), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Joan Miró (1893–1983), among others. Many of them were contributors to the journal *Littérature*, which published literary works from the movement's members and included writings by Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Apollinaire and the Count of Lautréamont. These poets constituted one of the greatest points of reference for the French surrealist movement, and their works formed part of bedtime reading for Miró, who participated passionately in debates organized around the journal. Miró held intense exchanges with this group of poets and even affirmed that he was more influenced by their experimentation with poetry than he was by that of other painters.

The works Miró produced from 1923 to 1928 laid down the foundations for his painting's relationship to poetry. Miró achieved a high degree of poetic and artistic elaboration when

developing his works from this period, primarily due to the rewarding contact he maintained in prior years with visual poetry, which supported his convictions that painting is not easily distinguishable from poetry and that his own work could even include poetic words and phrases. Similarly to Breton and Soupault, Miró makes his viewers aware that all representation is nothing more than a form of language, and he shows the mechanisms for which this comes about on his canvases. The paintings are shot through with a question of constructing space that is not conceived in terms of illusion—an illusion that attempts to mask the fact that it is entirely impossible to represent something "just like it is." By adopting this position, Miró distances painting from the domain of mimesis and moves closer to that of the sign; his paintings turn into colorful fields with a system of juxtaposed signs that, in the painter's own words, "rhyme" within themselves.

Although Miró's work inherits automatism from writing and at times evokes states of hypnosis, its visual and poetic impetus aims at turning painting into a kind of writing formally linked to poetry. For this reason, his oeuvre is what best identifies with the thesis forwarded in *The Magnetic Fields* as a new proposal for language, communication and meaning. The artist demonstrates this intention by asserting, "I do not differentiate between poetry and painting."

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