Joan Miró's Spanish Dancer: Variations on a Theme

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Joan Miró's Spanish Dancers: Vibrations of the Creative Spirit

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Flamenco's sensuous display of the upper torso, articulate hand gestures, and percussive footwork inspired Joan Miró to produce more than thirty sketches, drawings, paintings, and collages of Spanish dancers over a period of sixty years, between 1921 and 1981. These witty and playful works are rendered in a variety of styles and methods – from realism and cubism to surrealism, from figurative drawing and painting to abstract collage and construction – exhibiting the artist's constant experimentation with form, medium, and technique. Miró's figures transform the popular, dramatic image of the erotic dancer, with her cascading ruffled dress, dangling earrings, hair combs, and mantilla, introducing a modernist language of forms that grapple with the artist's complex national identity. Two works in the Israel Museum collection – Miró's *Painting (Spanish Dancer)* from 1927 (p. 9) and his 1924 drawing *Spanish Dancer* (p. 6) – were the impetus for this analysis of an important ensemble of works which, together, establishes a highly refined vocabulary of visual signs that become fused with the Spanish Dancer. The following study examines the evolution of this theme in Miró's oeuvre, analyzing its meaning in the context of the artist's cultural milieu and creative development.

Born in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, in 1893, Miró was drawn to the themes of Spanish dance, bullfighters, and Catalan peasants, farms, and villages throughout his life. These subjects reflect a deep engagement with

Man Ray, *Joan Miró*, ca. 1933 | Gelatin silver print, 28.4 x 22.5
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art | B98.0157

his cultural heritage as he actively constructed a concurrently Catalan and international artistic identity. Spanish dance and Gypsy flamenco served as authentic native art forms, highly relevant themes for the reinvention of a "Catalan voice" and the expression of a "native Catalan sensibility."[1] Following World War I, the Catalonia of the artist's youth was transformed by political turmoil and class conflict.[2] Miró's dancers are informed by childhood memories, Catalan art, and folkloric objects that he collected. They are also related to the popularity of Spanish themes in Parisian avant-garde painting, sculpture, and music during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, as well as to the gatherings, performances, and exhibitions that reflected this trend.[3] As an artist who divided his time between Paris, Barcelona, and his family farm in Montroig (a village in the Catalonian province of Tarragona), Miró's choice to pursue the theme of the Spanish dancer – often titled by him in French as *Danseuse espagnole* – reflects a desire to use what was perceived as an icon of "Spanishness" in France to express his origins in a personal yet universal avant-garde language.

The following discussion starts out by examining exchanges and encounters with individuals and locales that were central to Barcelona's cultural life and attest to Miró's fascination with flamenco. The second part focuses on Miró's images of Spanish dancers, analyzing them in detail in the order of their creation. While not preconceived as a series, these images relate significantly to one another and constitute a cohesive ensemble, illuminating important aspects of the artist's innovative outlook and production.

Writing in October 1917, during his military service, to his friend and studiomate in Barcelona, Enric Cristòfol Ricart, Miró refers to his first solo exhibition to be presented at the Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona, and considers the future of art. He calls for "a free Art in which the 'importance' will be in the resonant vibration of the creative spirit. . . . Down with all sentimentalism . . . ! Let us be masculine."[4] Miró praises "the great city of New York" and bemoans the state of the art scene in Barcelona, demanding a new, virile art:

> Here in Barcelona, we lack courage. When the critics most interested in the modern and ultramodern movements find themselves in front of an outmoded academic, they melt and start speaking well of him.
>
> No one dares proclaim before those gentlemen who go to the opera and those young ladies whose low-cut necklines reveal flesh that seems painful rather than sensuous, no one dares proclaim that the operas of the lachrymose Italians, Rosetti, etc., are prostitutes compared with the great, vibrant masculine art of "Mojigongo" and "La Macarrona." No one dares insult our museum![5]

Mojigongo and La Macarrona were two flamenco dancers active in Barcelona at the time.[6] Manuel Ríos (nicknamed Mojigongo) has been described as a tall, thin Gypsy the color of baked clay, with strong black hair twisted into two little horns above his forehead. Juana Vargas, called La Macarrona, was an explosive Gypsy dancer during *La Decadencia* – the age of splendor of the *cafés cantantes*, public entertainment venues featuring performances by great flamenco singers, dancers, and guitarists.

In quest of inspiration for his art Miró sought out famous flamenco locales in Barcelona, visiting music cafés and popular night clubs together with author and critic Sebastià Gasch and fellow student Joan Prats.[7] This was no easy task, as Gypsy flamenco was performed more widely in the southern, coastal regions of Spain than in the north, and by the early twentieth century the *cafés cantantes* that had flourished during the second half of the nineteenth century were in decline.[8] In a 1926 letter written by Miró to Gasch, the artist recounts an evening in search of Spanish dancers:

> The same day I saw you at the "Lion," that night I went to dinner at the restaurant "Catalunya," where I had the surprise to see Picasso and his wife sitting at one of the tables; they had come from San Juan-les-Pins by car. After dinner we explored the Paralel in search of Spanish dancers. It was very difficult since everything is influenced by the Charleston. In the end, we finished the night at "Café Sevilla" where we saw two or three embroidered

shawls and a few castanets. At the "Villa Rosa" they didn't begin until two in the morning and we were all tired.[9]

Throughout the years, Miró met many dancers, singers, and musicians who were involved in music hall and theater performances of Spanish dance. Among his contemporaries were internationally renowned dancers such as La Argentina (Antonia Mercé), La Argentinita (Encarnación López), and Carmen Amaya. Musical works inspired by Andalusian flamenco by composers such as Enrique Granados and Manuel de Falla might have contributed to Miró's interest in the motif of the Spanish dancer.[10] Collaborations such as Falla's full-length ballet *El Amor Brujo* (Love, the Magician), first performed in Madrid in 1915 and then re-choreographed and re-orchestrated by La Argentina with the composer's permission in 1925, reconfigured music, choreography, and drama while maintaining "Gypsy and Spanish folk artistry as culture."[11] Similarly, Miró sought a personal language that would combine native Spanish traditions with avant-garde modernism.

Miró enjoyed a lifelong relationship with the seminal flamenco dancer, choreographer, and dance theoretician Vicente Escudero, who also maintained close ties with artists such as Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Georges Braque, and Fernand Léger during his time in Paris. Both Miró and Escudero shared an exaltation of virility in art and a celebration of the masculinity of the Gypsy and the femininity of the female flamenco dancer. Escudero created his own series of Spanish dancer drawings, some of which he sent to Miró in 1974.[12]

Another important figure in Miró's circle who shared his deep interest in Spanish folklore and flamenco was the poet, dramatist, and theater director Federico García Lorca. García Lorca maintained close contact with La Argentina and focused his artistic lens on the Gypsy experience, particularly in his book of poetry *The Gypsy Ballads* (1924–27). Already in 1922 García Lorca had joined Falla in Granada to promote the *Concurso de Cante Jondo*, a festival dedicated to pure flamenco performance, and he later wrote an essay on the art of flamenco. While there is no documentation of correspondence between

Miró and García Lorca, the two maintained an ongoing exchange with the critic Sebastià Gasch and close contact with Salvador Dalí. Gasch championed García Lorca's drawings, stating in a 1928 lecture that these automatist works recall Miró's awareness of inner visions and ability for rapid notation.[13] The same year García Lorca gave a talk entitled "Sketch of the New Painting" in which he praised the young Dalí as natural successor to Picasso, Juan Gris, and Miró, concluding with an analysis of Surrealism and a poetic statement regarding the purity of Miró's images: "They come from dream, from the center of the soul, there where love is made flesh and incredible breezes of distant sounds blow."[14]

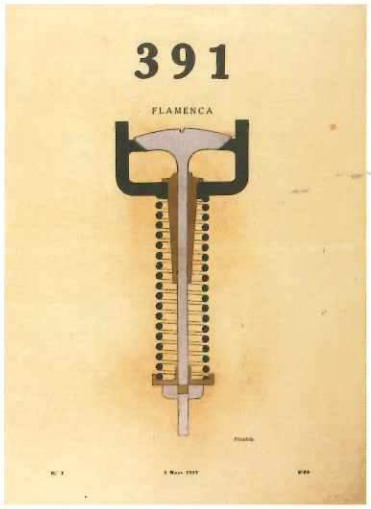
It is tempting to interpret Miró's images and general atavistic connection with nature's grounded forces in light of García Lorca's notion of artistic inspiration, *duende* – though the poet fully developed this concept only in 1933, towards his lecture "Play and Theory of the Duende."[15] This state of trance or heightened emotion, expression, and authenticity, which requires a vivid awareness of death, a connection with the soil, and an acknowledgment of the limitations of reason – a "holistic combination of groundedness and the mystical"[16] – is often associated with flamenco. Lorca writes: "The duende . . . is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought. I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, 'The duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet.'"[17]

In 1932, the choreographer Léonide Massine and Ballets Russes impresario Sergei Diaghilev commissioned Miró to create the sets, costumes, curtain, and accessories for *Jeux d'enfants* (Children's Games) by Boris Kochno, with music by Georges Bizet.[18] The ballet was premiered in Monte Carlo, and then staged in Paris and Barcelona. Miró expressed his admiration for Massine and his "magnetic appeal" that electrified the dancers and motivated them to work ten hours a day.[19] Massine conveyed his mutual appreciation, identifying links between Miró's artistic language and the realm of dance in terms of color, form, movement, and harmony:

Francesc Català-Roca, Joan Miró, his wife, Pilar, and friends watching flamenco dancers La Chunga and El Capullito, Barcelona, 1953 © Photographic Archive F. Català-Roca – Arxiu Fotogràfic de l'Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya

> Joan Miró's art is very like choreography. The marvelous treasure-trove of forms and their persuasiveness, due as much to their lines as their volume, complete and support the movement flowing beneath them. Miró's colors are rich and, through the power of their harmonies, they endow the plasticity and vitality of the choreography with a special value. . . . The sight of the color combinations and forms in his paintings rouses a quite spontaneous delight and need to dance in us.[20]

Miró's admiration for Spanish dance is celebrated in a series of photographs taken by Francesc Català-Roca, who accompanied Miró over a period of thirty years, documenting exhibitions and events as well as the artist's activity in his various workshops. In 1953 he photographed Miró gazing intently at the dancer La Chunga (Micaela Flores Amaya) performing in a locale on Escudellers street in Barcelona (above).[21]



1. **Francis Picabia**, *Flamenca*, 1917
Cover illustration for the periodical *391* No. 3, 1917 | The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Arturo Schwarz Library

Theme and Variations

Portrait of a Spanish Dancer (fig. 2, p. 26), Miró's earliest depiction of a Spanish dancer, is his most straightforward or realistic depiction of a subject to which he returned again twice in 1921. The dancer is portrayed in an exaggerated, stylized manner with dramatic coloring and shading. Her rounded facial features are highly defined, her gaze fixed, and her posture rigid. Rather than focusing on the dancer's body or movement, the artist creates a close-up, expressive portrait bust featuring the classical attributes of flamenco dancers – the high comb, the earrings, and the stylized hairdo with flattened curls around the face.

The curious open-ended beaded necklace looped around the dancer's neck may allude to Francis Picabia's *Flamenca* (fig. 1), which appeared on the cover of the March 1917 issue of *391*, Picabia's magazine published in Barcelona. As in many other works by this artist, women and sexuality are linked with machines, and here the flamenco dancer is translated into an automobile valve and valve spring, with a distinctive repetitive pattern along the vertical

2. *Portrait of a Spanish Dancer*, 1921
Oil on canvas, 66 x 56
Musée national Picasso, Paris

axis. Picabia links the noisy clattering of the valve to the percussive rhythms of castanets and dance.[22] The valve head serves as the dancer's high comb, and her raised arms and body double as a bull's head, linking the flamenco dancer with the bullfighter – a coupling that also appears in the context of Miró's work.

Miró's biographer Jacques Dupin aptly described the quality of arrested emotion characterizing *Portrait of a Spanish Dancer*: "It is a strong painting, intensely, precisely drawn, and undeniably a plastic success, but it seems devoid of all emotion. The studious, constrained realism of the artist at this period aims at objective truth, but never quite attains its goal: this is a realism that has everything but life. Only in the decorative pattern over the bust and in the very literal treatment of the hair do we recognize the flexible, sensual line so characteristic of Miró."[23] Dupin noted that Miró painted this work in his rue Blomet studio in Paris, from a color print that remains unidentified. Miró also mentioned that Dr. Girardin, who owned the gallery where the work had

3. *Self-Portrait*, 1919
Oil on canvas, 73 x 60
Musée national Picasso, Paris

first been shown, had a friend who was a dancer at the Paris Opéra, so it is possible that *Portrait of a Spanish Dancer* depicts this woman.[24]

The style of this dancer, with her highly ornamented red blouse (recalling the traditional mantilla shawl) and dramatically shaded folds, associates this painting with Miró's *Self-Portrait* created two years earlier (fig. 3). *Self-Portrait* (1919) reflects the influence of Cubism's angular faceting (particularly in the diamond-shaped patterning of the quilted jacket); however, the two works share an expressive stylization and sense of stilted self-containment or aloofness. Emphasizing heavily accentuated facial features and a static, iconic quality, they reflect the influence of the Romanesque frescoes of Catalonia.[25] In both, the figures' highly detailed hair evokes the tilled fields of Miró's landscapes of his family farm in Montroig, creating an alliance between the people and the land.[26]

Like *Portrait of a Spanish Dancer*, Miró's *Self-Portrait* was acquired by Picasso after it was exhibited in a Catalan group show in Paris, and according

4. *Untitled (Dancer)*, ca. 1921
Gouache on paper, 25.5 x 20.5
Nahmad Collection, Switzerland

to Roland Penrose the painting remained among Picasso's most treasured possessions.[27] The two works, which established Miró's identity as an artist, can be conceived as pendants – complementary representations of man and woman. Indeed, Miró's Spanish dancers often have male counterparts, conceived in relation to one another within his oeuvre.

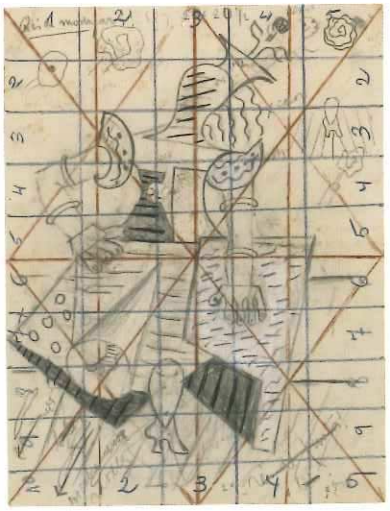
From this point on, Miró's Spanish dancers undergo a process of abstraction, though this progression is not always linear. We move from a depiction of the head and bust of a specific woman to a rendition that includes the whole body of the dancer, albeit in a symbolic language that is gradually distilled and reduced to the bare minimum necessary to identify the theme.

Miró's second Spanish Dancer of 1921 was created first as a small gouache on paper (fig. 4), dedicated to his friend the critic Maurice Raynal, and then as a large oil on black cardboard recalling a classroom blackboard (p. 4; now lost). At this transitional point in his artistic development Miró represents the dancer in a very rudimentary, childlike, two-dimensional style. Drawn in bright

colors on a black background, the figure's facial features are reduced to one schematic eye and a somewhat unsettling toothy smile. Miró emphasizes the dancer's high comb and flowing mantilla, her traditional flounced neckline, and strangely shaped hands that hold what appear like castanets and ribbons. The conical shape of her skirt and apron and the pointed high-heeled shoe recur in Miró's subsequent Spanish Dancers. The juxtaposition of the flamenco shoe (*zapato*) with what looks like a flat bolero shoe might allude to a fusion of Gypsy flamenco with Spanish dance, a synthesis that characterized the choreographic work of La Argentina.[28]

Three years later, in 1924, Miró was inspired to create another Spanish Dancer by a photograph by Antonio Calvache entitled "Angustias, *la gitana*," reproduced on the cover of the review *La Unión Ilustrada* of Malaga (fig. 5, p. 30).[29] In a series of preparatory studies in Miró's "Montroig notebook" (figs. 6–7, p. 30–31), and then in *Spanish Dancer* of 1924 (fig. 8, p. 32), Miró systematically deconstructed the photographic image, subjecting it to Cubist analysis and to a process of abstraction. Emphasizing what he saw as the most essential components, he fragmented the dancer's body and clothing, sectioning it within a grid that is also partitioned diagonally. Retaining a drawing-like quality, the finished painting is characterized by a limited palette of whites, blues, and blacks, and an overall geometric patterning. Though more dynamic than in the earlier works, the dancer has been transformed into a construct of assembled components. The female figure is distinguished now in the black hole-like head and neck, high comb and flower, rubbery uplifted arms with bangles, polka-dot pattern, and conical skirt that doubles as a spotlight. As in the earlier 1921 dancers, one pointed shoe emerges as a leitmotif. Miró charges this otherwise neutral analytic image with sexuality by inserting a bare breast in profile very prominently into the composition. The curious Arabic-looking script in the upper-left corner of the painting, like the bangles adorning the dancer's arms, possibly attest to the absorption of Hispano-Arab customs into Spanish culture. From a white circle that serves as

5. "Angustias, *la gitana*," cover photograph for *La Unión Ilustrada*, Malaga,1920. Photo: Antonio Calvache | Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FJM 4479



6. Final drawing for *Spanish Dancer*, 1924
Pencil, colored pencil, and pastel on paper, 26.8 x 20.5 | Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona
FJM 4480b

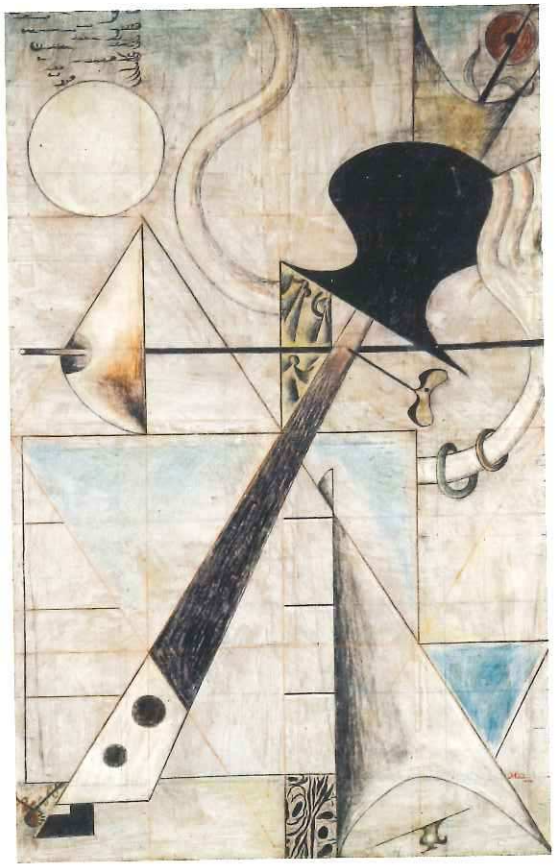
a counterpoint to the dancer's head, a line crosses to the lower-right corner, creating a cancelling X at the center of the composition – perhaps in the spirit of Miró's anti-Cubism, or perhaps a "battle with his sensual, instinctive impulses."[30] Another bisecting line penetrates the woman's breast and nipple, and her neck is pierced by a key, conveying the idea that this dancer should be perceived as a wind-up doll rather than a self-motivated, empowered performer.

In an interview with Francesc Trabal published in *La Publicitat* (Barcelona) on July 14, 1928, Miró shared his state of mind and the creative process behind *Spanish Dancer* and the closely related *Portrait of Mme K.* (fig. 9, p. 33):

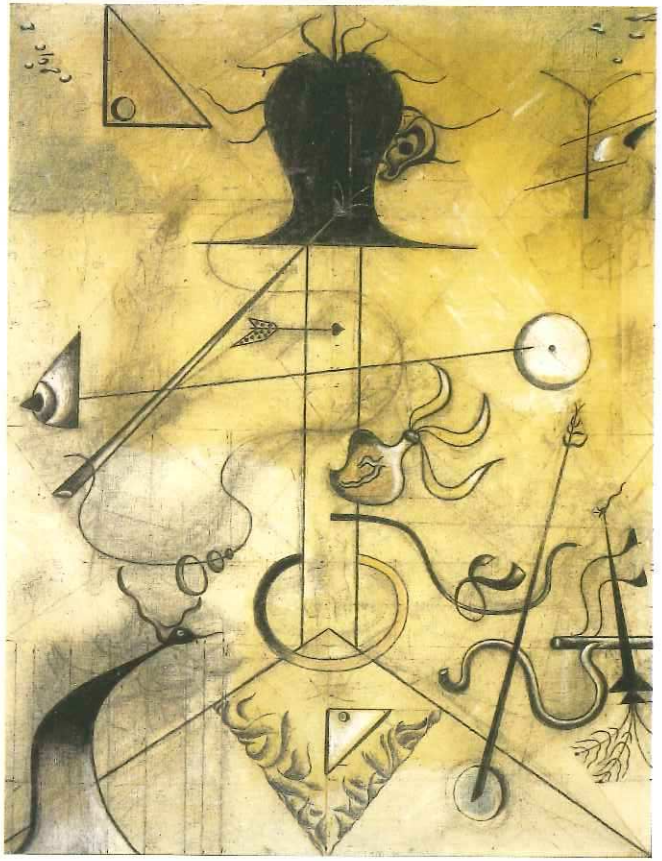
> Starting from real life, I managed to lose contact with reality – in *Spanish Dancer*, for example, and especially in the *Portrait of Mme K.* I was getting rid of any sort of pictorial influence and any contact with realism and I was painting with an absolute contempt for painting . . . when I did the *Portrait of Mme K.* (who actually sat for it), I was planning to do something realistic, but then I started eliminating, eliminating until I got to the point where I was completely anti-Cubist and then I even eliminated Cubism from my work."[31]

7. Preliminary drawing for *Spanish Dancer*, 1924
Pencil and watercolor on paper, 20.4 x 13.5
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona
FJM 44778

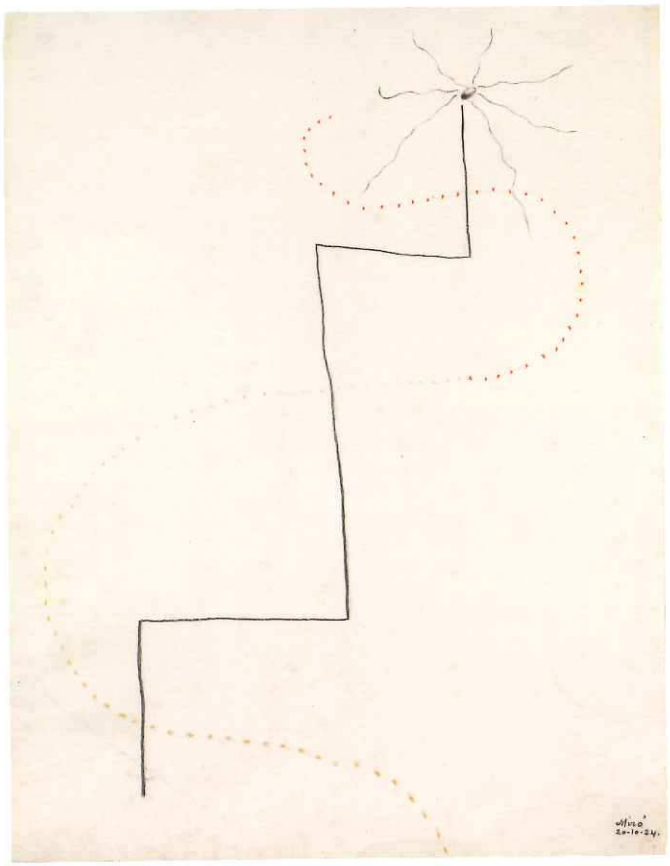
Miró recounted to Jacques Dupin how in the fall of 1924 Picasso visited his studio and "was very enthusiastic about my *Spanish Dancer*, which was only a charcoal sketch on canvas. I was blocked on it and unable to continue. He told me to leave it in that state, and so I left it that way. 'After me,' he said, 'you are the one who is opening a new door.'"[32]



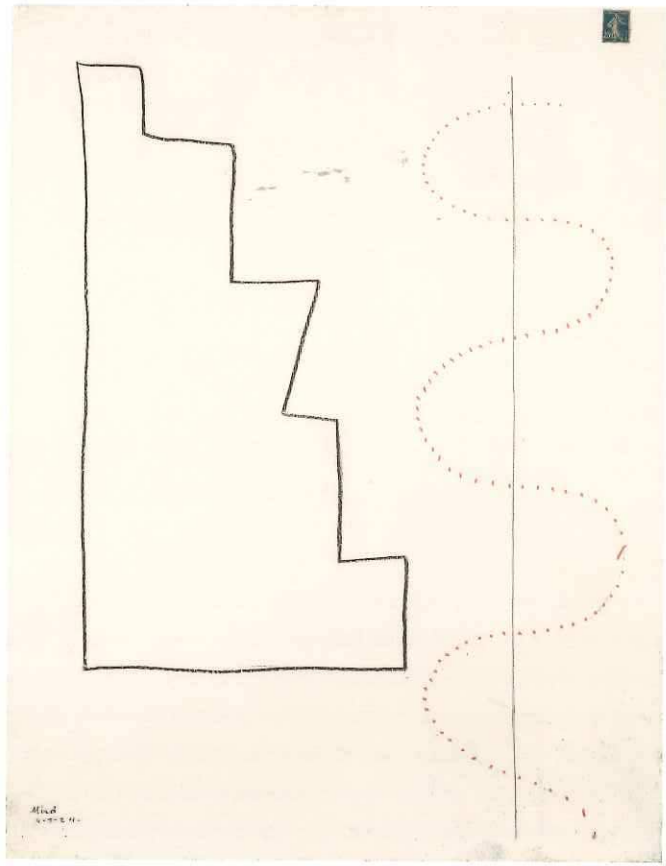
8. *Spanish Dancer*, Paris, spring 1924
Oil, charcoal, and tempera on canvas, 245 x 154
Private collection, New York



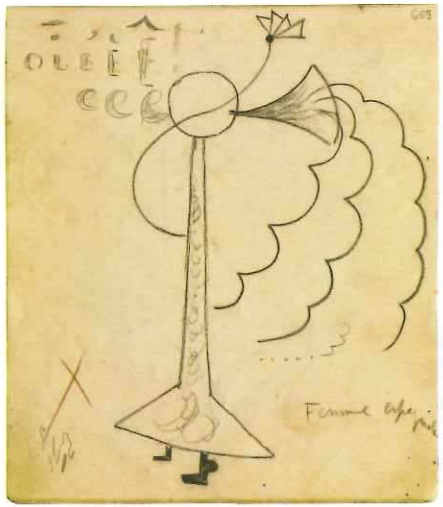
9. *Portrait of Mme K.*,1924
Charcoal, colored crayon, pastel, sanguine, white chalk, and pencil on primed (blanc de Meudon) canvas, 116.5 x 91 | Private collection



10. *Untitled (Spanish Dancer)*, Montroig, October 20, 1924
Pencil, charcoal, and color crayons on paper, 62 x 46
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; bequest of the Kay Merrill Hillman Collection, New York, to American Friends of the Israel Museum | B97.0601



11. *Untitled* (*Nude Going Down the Stairs)*, Montroig, September 4, 1924
Lead pencil, pastel crayon, and collage of stamps on paper, 62 x 46
Private collection



12. Preliminary drawing for *Spanish Dancer ("Olée")*, 1924
Graphite pencil and charcoal on paper, 19.1 x 16.5
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona
FJM 659a

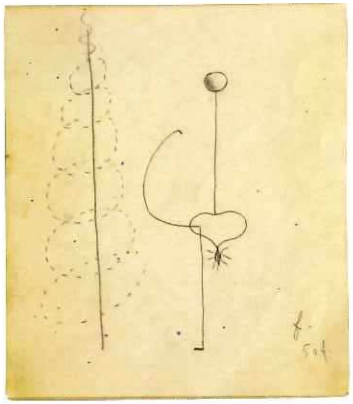
In the sparse and witty drawing *Untitled (Spanish Dancer)* (fig. 10, p. 34), also dated 1924, Miró conveys the rhythm and subtle provocativeness of the Spanish dancer in an extremely abbreviated stylistic language. In the process of moving away from realism and pictorial conventions, Miró left most of the paper bare and employed an open linear style. Stripping away most of the attributes of the Spanish dancer – the colorful mantilla, the flounced skirt, and even the high-heeled shoe – he conveyed the dancer's movement by means of a stepped black line and a red dotted serpentine line that mark meter and time, graphically translating rhythmic cycles of music, singing, and dance. In a letter to his friend the poet and writer Michel Leiris shortly after creating the drawing, Miró described this work in a language that recalls a prose-poem or a Haiku verse, revealing his admiration for the ability to capture an essence through the sparest graphic signs:

> Hokusai [the nineteenth-century Japanese painter] said that he wanted to make a line or a dot perceptible, that's all. A line in the form of a zigzag drawn on a piece of white paper; at the end a kind of egg (an ovum) with sparks shooting out of it. The beauty of stars and letters. Interjections.—Pain; surprise.—Amazement. The eloquence of a cry of admiration made by a child in front of a blossoming flower.[33]

13. *Spanish Dancer ("Olée")*, 1924
Oil and handwritten inscriptions on canvas, 92 x 73
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels

Untitled (Nude Going Down the Stairs) (fig. 11, p. 35),[34] drawn in Montroig less than two month before its counterpart *Untitled (Spanish Dancer)*, similarly expresses Miró's desire to reduce his vocabulary to a minimum to elicit an immediate emotional response. The red dotted line recurs, this time spiraling around a thin straight line that signifies the direct alignment of the figure's body, soon to become a leitmotif of the Spanish dancer.

Spanish Dancer ("Olée") (fig. 13), Miró's fourth major exploration of the theme in 1924, conveys the rhythm, dynamic movement, and even sound associated with the performance of Spanish dance. The semi-transparent, cloud-blue pigment of the background brings out the blackness of the dancer's head – the black hole becoming another leitmotif of the dancer



14. Preliminary drawing for *Dancer II*, 1925
Graphite pencil on paper, 19.1 x 16.5
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FJM 655b

series – the yellow comb, and the rainbow-like fan, fingers, or castanet in the dancer's uplifted hand. The artist transmits a sense of excitement and enthusiasm by inserting the word "Olé" into the composition, thus adding the element of sound and singing (*cantaor*) to that of dance (*baile*). The vibration of the dancer's body is expressed by means of the headdress with its flowing echoing lines (harking back to his 1921 renderings of the dancer with billowing mantilla, pp. 4 and 28), the dotted spiraling line of her arm (which also recurs in varying form in the Spanish dancer series), and the doodled line within the contour of the dancer's dress. This free scribble, which also appears in the preparatory drawing for the painting (fig. 12, p. 36), recalls the "automatic drawings" of André Masson – Miró's neighbor on rue Blomet – who developed this surrealist technique between 1923 and 1927 in order to circumvent conscious control and tap into the creative wellspring of the unconscious. As in his 1921 dancers, Miró continues to use the conical skirt

15. *Dancer II*, November – December 1925
Oil on canvas, 116 x 89
Museum Sammlung Rosengart, Lucerne

16. *Catalan Peasant with Guitar*, 1924
Oil on canvas, 146 x 114
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

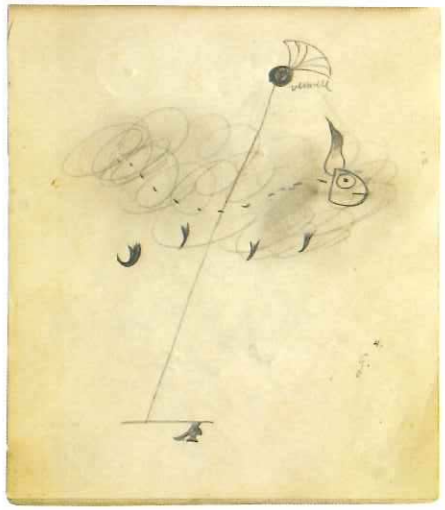
and shoe – with one foot well grounded and the other lifted in the air – as recurrent symbols.

In *Dancer II* of 1925 (fig. 15, p. 38), Miró created a double representation of the dancer, once as an abstract representation of movement – a thin black line enveloped by dotted circles that spiral upward to a wavy line at the top – and once as a sexual moon-woman with swinging arm or leg and throbbing red heart. The sensitively modeled moon-head connects the dancer with nature and its cycles, and the red heart, which appears to symbolize the flame of flamenco, doubles as a flaming erotic zone/genitals. A bold ultramarine background applied roughly onto the canvas (primed with brown paint visible along the edges) creates the illusion of a night sky. Miró borrowed the spiraling dots and line from his sparse 1924 drawings (pp. 34–35), incorporating them into a highly developed mature composition. In addition to the remarkably close preliminary drawing for this canvas (fig. 14, p. 38), Miró created several sketches in 1944, 1957, and 1958 that revisit this dancer. While the dotted

spiraling circles in the 1925 painting convey the dancer's intricate footwork or the rhythmic accompaniments generated by the castanets, clapping of the hands, or snapping of the fingers, the whirling feet can also be read as stylized musical notes.[35] In a letter to Siegfried Rosengart (whose Foundation holds the painting), Miró revealed his fondness for this work, which marked an important stage in his development. The artist described how "the canvas was conceived during my Christmas vacation in Barcelona when I watched a dancer performing; the ascending vertical line and the circles describe the movement. I took some quick sketches in a little notebook I had in my pocket and developed them when I returned to Paris, rue Blomet."[36]

An abstract male counterpart to *Dancer II* can be found in Miró's *Catalan Peasant with Guitar* (1924; fig. 16, p. 39). The jovial Catalan peasant, with his red wool cap (the *barretina* of Catalonia) and pipe, guitar, moon-head, and heart/genitals, was a theme Miró pursued in a series of five paintings created in 1924–25, the years of dictator Primo de Rivera's centralizing policies in Catalonia and the official suppression of the Catalan language. The Catalan Peasants can be seen as reflecting a parallel political and artistic preoccupation as the Spanish Dancer series; both represent a kind of cultural typology that is unique in Miró's oeuvre. The grounded yet spiritually uplifting dancers can be understood as sequels to Miró's early landscapes and Catalan peasants, which have been interpreted as displaced self-portraits and metaphoric symbols of resistance to Fascism.[37]

In *Painting (Spanish Dancer)*, 1927 (fig. 18, p. 42) – a close "sister" of the 1924 *Spanish Dancer* (p. 37) – Miró subverted conventional technique and emphasized the surface of the painting by leaving most of the canvas bare. He portrays the dancer minimalistically, with a black circular head, elaborate and colorful high comb, thin diagonal line of a dress, bottom edge of a skirt, and the familiar pointed shoe, now larger and more prominent. A cloudlike white patch, characteristic of Miró's 1927 canvases, can be read as a flared skirt, in which a fish-like creature floats. In the preliminary sketch



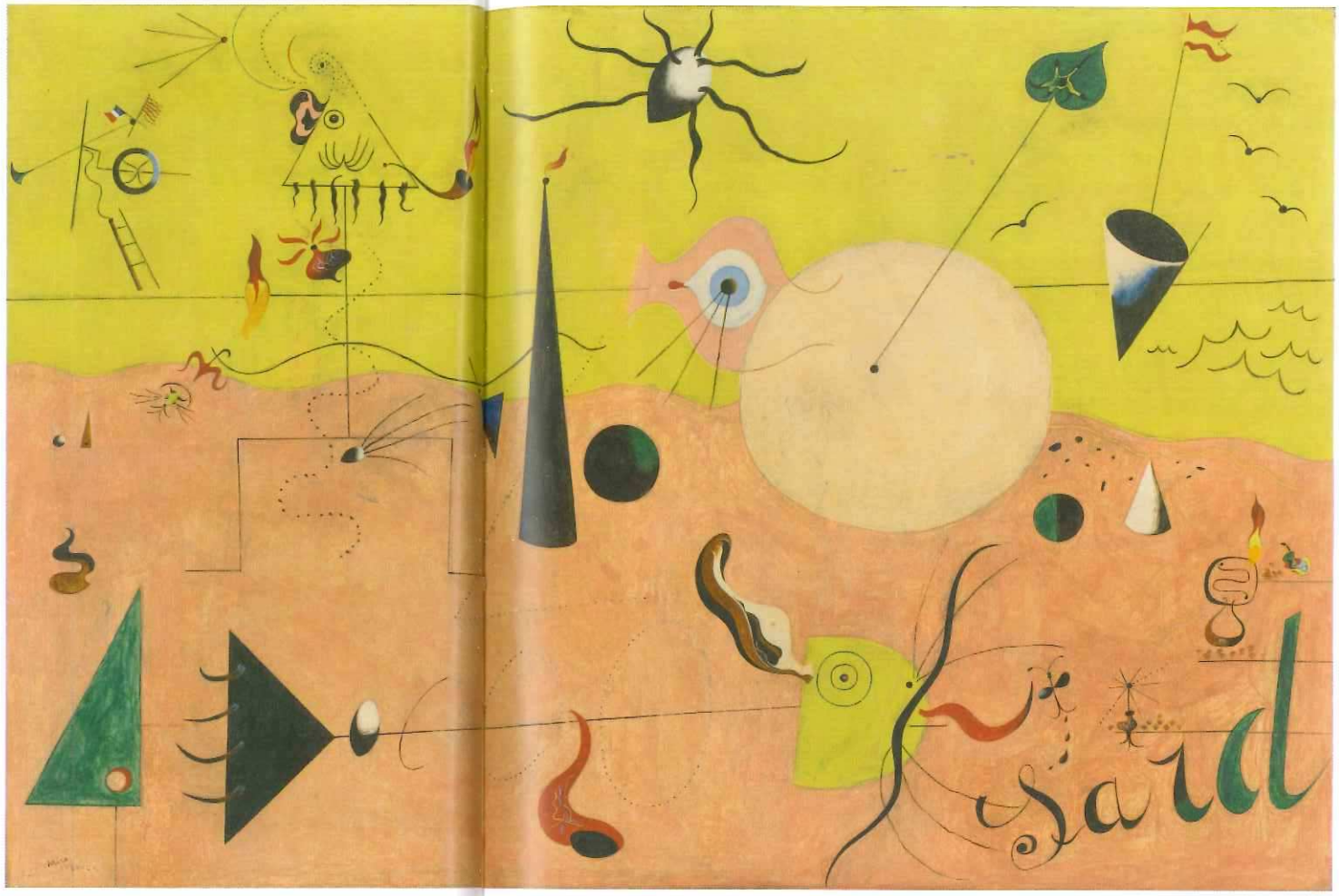
17. Preliminary drawing for *Painting (Spanish Dancer)*, 1927
Graphite pencil on paper, 19.1 x 16.5
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona
FJM 644b

(fig. 17), to which the final painting is highly faithful, the cloud is conveyed by a free "automatic" doodle.

Searching Miró's fantastical menagerie, one finds the source of this creature in *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)* (fig. 20, pp. 44–45), painted in Montroig in 1923–24, and invoking a symbolic language to grapple with Catalonia's contentious history. In an in-depth analysis of the painting, William Rubin wrote of the meaning of the sardine for the artist: "Miró loved to look at sardines; he speaks of a particular vision of them as a kind of epiphany, and describes the unloading of the catch, when 'thousands and thousands of sardines would be shining forth and shimmering like slivers of silvered metal.' These multiple points of sparkling light create an effect analogous to that of fireflies, sparks and stars."[38] In Louis Aragon's *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme*, Benjamin Péret characterizes Miró as "L'arbre à sardines" (tree of sardines).[39] *The Hunter* includes additional signs that surface in the Spanish Dancer series – the spider/sexual orifice/sparking ovum, the cone shape, and

18. *Painting (Spanish Dancer)*, 1927
Oil on canvas, 146 x 114
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; gift of Sylvia and Joseph Slifka, New York, to American Friends of the Israel Museum | B03.0825

19. *Painting* (also known as *The Bullfighter*), Paris, January – mid-February 1927
Oil on canvas, 130 x 97
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; on permanent loan at LaM – Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut, Villeneuve d'Ascq

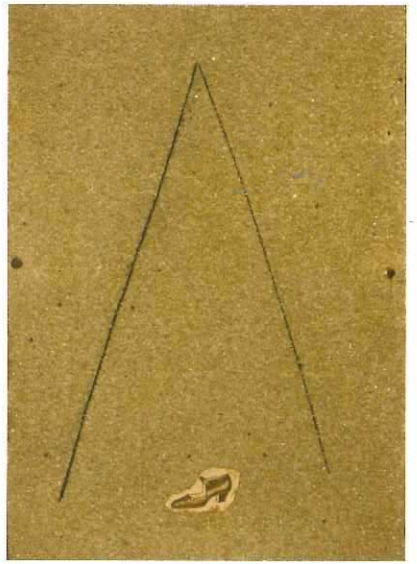


20. *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*
Montroig, July 1923 – winter 1924
Oil on canvas, 64.8 x 100.3
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

the triangle with a hole, all formal elements that carry erotic associations. In the 1927 *Spanish Dancer*, the dashed line of the sardine's body contributes to the expression of the dancer's rhythmic movement, as do the tail and fins or paws that emerge from the white cloud. Regarding the sardine, Miró clarified: "In the painting I wrote *Sard* in big letters, and some people wanted to read it Sardane [the Spanish national dance] (it's more poetic!). But it really is the sardine: you can recognize it! . . . You see, the line of the sardine repeats the horizon line. I have always paid attention to the plastic construction, and not only poetic associations. That's what distinguished me from the Surrealists."[40]

In *The Hunter*, the puzzling image of the eye pierced by the horizon line in the center of the picture (derived from Max Ernst's motif of the transected eye) connects with what Miró described as "crossing the horizon by the trajectory of [the hunter/artist's] vision which unites earth and sky along a vertical axis."[41] This image can now contribute to our understanding of the 1924 Cubist *Spanish Dancer* sign system (fig. 8, p. 32), where the horizon line pierces the dancer's neck and breast, perhaps uniting Miró's vision of reality with his erotic fantasy.

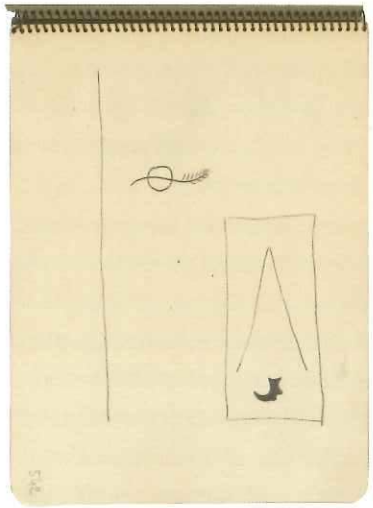
Produced in 1927 – the same year as *Painting (Spanish Dancer)* – Miró's *Painting* (also known as *The Bullfighter*) (fig. 19, p. 43) should be seen as the dancer's pendant or male counterpart. The two works share a naked canvas, white cloud, and minimal linear representation of the body. To use García Lorca's term, both exude *duende* – that powerful, primal force that emanates from the singer, dancer, and even (perhaps especially) the bullfighter.[42] As in several works of 1925–27, including the Catalan Peasants, Miró used a crossed axial structure to depict the standing male figure with outstretched arms. While the bullfighter's head is represented by a tiny red circle (as against the dancer's black hole), Miró uses a black rectangular shape on the bullfighter's arm to represent the cape with which he taunts the bull. However, according to Rosalind Krauss and Margit Rowell, "Miró had voiced strong objections

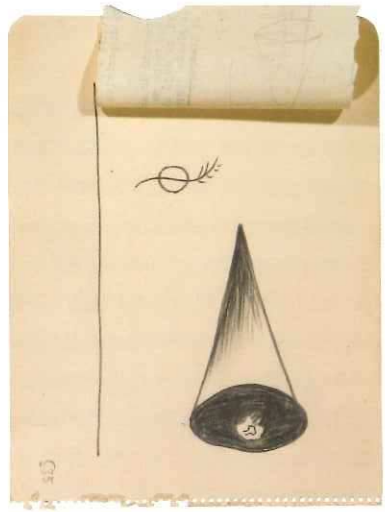


21. *Spanish Dancer I* (detail; see p. 10)
Paris, mid-February – spring 1928
Charcoal, papier collé, and sandpaper nailed to wood (feather lost), 105 x 73.5
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

22. Preliminary drawing for *Spanish Dancer*, 1928 | Graphite pencil on paper, 18 x 13.6
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FJM 542

23. Preliminary drawing for *Spanish Dancer*, 1928 | Graphite pencil on paper, 18 x 13.6
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FJM 535

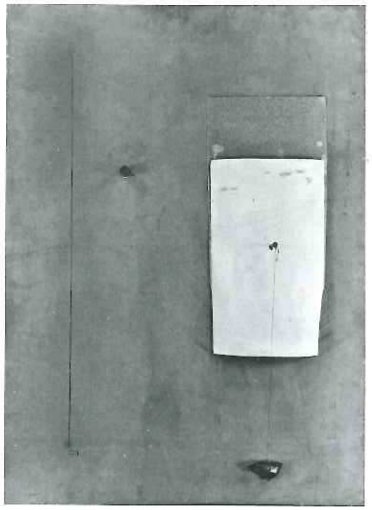




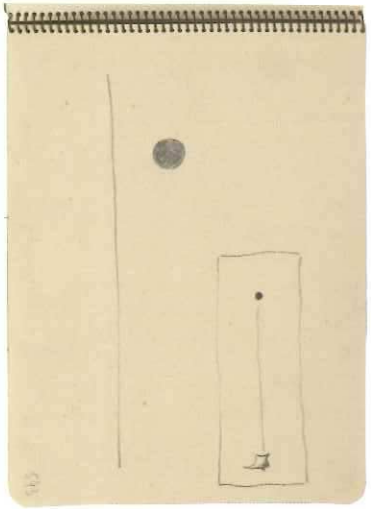
to this title [*Le Toreador*], feeling no doubt that it involves the work in an interpretation which is too literal, congealing its free-floating elements into a static whole and implying physicality."[43] For them, the black rectangle "becomes a kind of cast shadow of the rectangular picture format as a whole – appearing as a projection of the painting's surface backward into the deep space of the work."[44]

Created between mid-February and early June 1928, Miró's series of four Spanish Dancer collage-objects (figs. 21, 24, 28, 29) mark a new direction for the artist. Here Miró represents the female performer through a sophisticated composition of fragmentary materials, printed images, and scraps of real objects that triggered his imagination. While Miró made numerous preparatory drawings for these works (pp. 47, 49, 50), the final collages retain a great sense of immediacy. They herald a period in which Miró powerfully articulated his attack against the conventions of painting, declaring in 1927 to the critic Tériade: "I want to assassinate it [painting],"[45] and a year later to the Spanish journalist Francisco Melgar: "I have utter contempt for painting. The only thing that interests me is the spirit itself."[46] In *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (published in 1928), André Breton criticized Miró's attempt to shatter the conventions of art, asserting that he had "no means at his disposal" other than painting. Given that two of Miró's most radical Spanish Dancer collage-objects were gifted to Breton and to Aragon around July 1928, it seems reasonable to interpret this series as Miró's reaction to Breton's criticism.[47]

In *Spanish Dancer I* (fig. 21, p. 47), minimal components drawn or adhered to the orange-brown paperboard conjure an image of the entire dancer. The vertical line appearing in the 1925 *Dancer II* (p. 38) now emerges as an independent element representing the dancer's carefully aligned body, and her head is an imperfect yellowish circle to which a feather that has since been lost was originally collaged. The dancer's costume consists of a triangle drawn in graphite, opening onto a printed image of a flamenco shoe cut out from a magazine and pasted onto a piece of sandpaper that is nailed



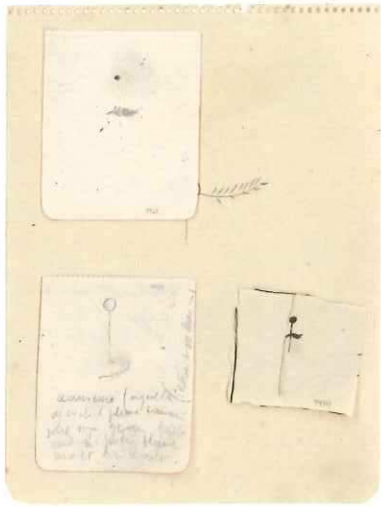
24. *Spanish Dancer (with Doll's Shoe)*, Paris, mid-February – spring 1928 | Sandpaper, cork, nails, string, and doll's shoe on paper, 104 x 67 | Whereabouts unknown



25. Preliminary drawing for *Spanish Dancer*, 1928 | Graphite pencil on paper, 18 x 13.6 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FMJ 543

to the background. The inverted V shape harks back to the conical shape of the 1924 Cubist dancer's skirt (p. 32), which also appears in a number of the 1928 sketches (p. 47), as well as in a 1958 reworking of the theme (fig. 27, p. 50). In addition to serving as representations of the dancer's skirt and female sexuality, the triangle and cone also symbolize the spotlight in which the dancer performs and is seen by her public.

Miró's closely related *Spanish Dancer (with Doll's Shoe)* (fig. 24; now lost) moves from two-dimensional symbol to representation by means of real objects. This work, which belonged to Aragon, contains the same vertical line representing the dancer's body, topped here by a cork head. Sandpaper partially covered with paper was perforated by a nail from which a miniature doll's shoe dangles from a string. Miró's preoccupation with the tactile



26. Preliminary drawings for *Spanish Dancer*, 1928 | Graphite pencil on paper and ink on paper, 18 x 13.5; 7 x 5.6; 7 x 5.6; 4.2 x 4.7 | Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FJM 9927b, 9928, 9229, 9230

27. Reworking of *Spanish Dancer* (1928), 1958 | Graphite pencil on paper, 10.5 x 9.5 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona FJM 541

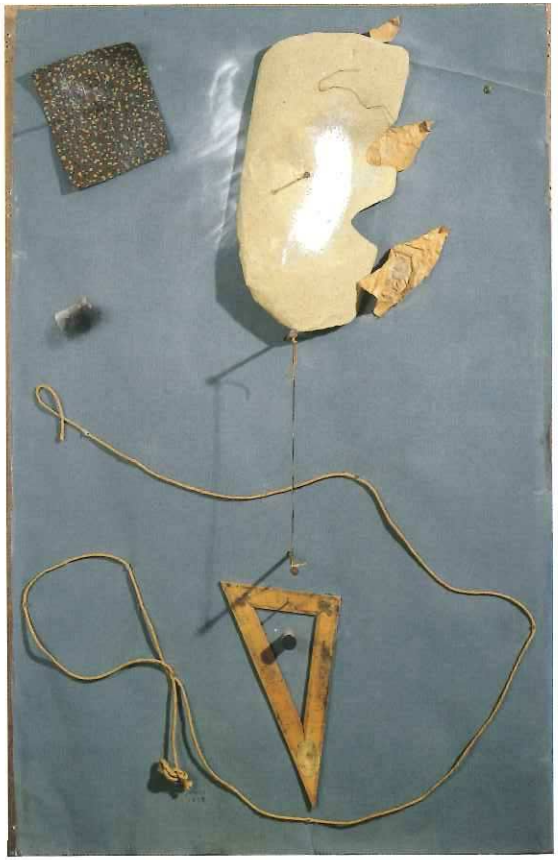
quality of his work led him to use rough sandpaper in three out of the four collages.

In *Portrait of a Dancer* (fig. 28, p. 51), the dancer's body is composed of an oversized hatpin, a feather, and a cork (with two tiny stars imprinted on its tip, like a stripteaser's pasties) inserted into a wood panel painted with white Ripolin, a glossy and durable enamel household paint.[48] The French Surrealist poet Paul Éluard remarked on the extreme simplicity of the work, describing how his wife became enamored with it, "a picture that couldn't be dreamt barer. On the virgin canvas, a hatpin and the feather of a wing."[49] The gleaming head of the hatpin is analogous to the black hole or moon-head of

28. *Portrait of a Dancer* (detail; see p. 11) Paris, mid-February – spring 1928 Feather, cork, hatpin on wood panel painted with household paint (the feather has been replaced), 100 x 80 | Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris Gift of Aube Breton-Elleouet

the earlier dancers, and the feather represents the dancer's skirt in movement, as do the cone, triangle, and cloud in Miró's other renditions of the theme.[50]

The fourth collage, *Spanish Dancer* (fig. 29, p. 52) – composed of sandpaper, paper, string, nails, linoleum, drafting triangle, hair, and dust-grey flocked paper mounted on wood board – differs from the other, highly minimal dancer collage-objects. This collage has much in common with Miró's painting *Potato*, also from 1928 (fig. 30, p. 53), which transposes and reverses *Spanish Dancer*'s bizarrely shaped head, the meandering cord becoming a painted line, the triangle appearing in black on the left, and other collaged fragments transmuting into floating biomorphic creatures.[51] The roughness of texture, base materials, and triangular symbol for female genitalia (with a label advertising "*Entrada Libre*" – Free Entry) create a "discomforting intermingling of repulsion and attraction" shared with Picasso's collage-construction *Guitar* of 1926, which was reproduced next to the *Spanish Dancer* in Louis Aragon's



29. *Spanish Dancer,* mid-February – spring 1928
Sandpaper, paper, string, nails, hair, drafting triangle, and paint on sandpaper mounted on linoleum, 109.5 x 71.1
Private collection, New York

30. *Potato*, Montroig, July – December 1928
Oil on canvas, 100 x 81
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection

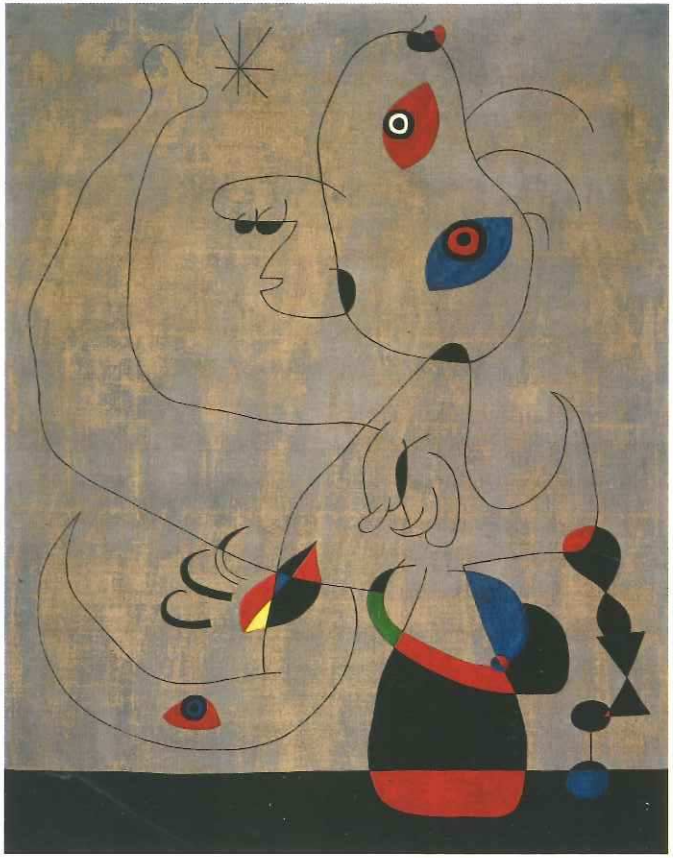
preface for the 1930 exhibition catalogue *La Peinture au défi* (In Defiance of Painting).[52]

Miró's use of the shoe, protruding elements such as nails and corks, and black voids has been connected with Freudian theories of fetish and castration anxiety. Adding a personal angle to the esthetic and psychosexual interpretations of the 1928 dancers, Rémi Labrusse claims that "Miró associates his girlfriend to the figure of the dancer on the basis of violent and obsessive eroticism."[53] He points out Miró's inscription of the name "Bianka" on the back of one of the preparatory sketches for the 1928 Spanish dancers, identifying this name with Dora Bianka, an artist of Polish origin whom Miró presented over many years as his wife or fiancé. In the course of 1928 Miró broke up with Bianka, and in August of that year he asked his dealer and friend Pierre Loeb to destroy the letters of "Mme B." On another fragment of the same preparatory drawing, Miró wrote "portrait of Mme –," referring almost certainly to Dora Bianka, as do the paintings *Portrait of Mme B.* and *Portrait of Mme K.* (p. 33), whose close connection with Miró's 1924 Cubist *Spanish Dancer* was noted earlier.[54]

The 1930s and first half of the 1940s were years of political tumult. In July 1936 the Spanish Civil War broke out and by late November it became clear that as a Republican sympathizer, Miró, who had traveled to Paris with his most recent work, could not return to Spain. Sending his paintings to his New York dealer, Pierre Matisse, Miró remained in Paris until 1939, living in temporary dwellings and in a state of uncertainty and general disquiet. In January 1939, Franco's troops occupied Barcelona (borrowing Hitler's war planes to destroy the Basque town of Guernica) and in September World War II broke out. In January 1940 Miró began his series of gouaches relating to the war, the "Constellations." With the bombing of Normandy, he fled France for Spain, settling in Palma de Mallorca, where the political climate was more auspicious, and leaving both finished and unfinished artwork in Barcelona and Montroig.

31. Preliminary drawing for *Spanish Dancer* (1945), ca. 1935
Graphite pencil on paper, 21.3 x 15.5
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona | FJM 1345

In 1945 Miró returned to a Spanish Dancer sketch he had made in 1934–35, already gridded for transfer to canvas (fig. 31). The sketch contains signs identified with earlier Dancers, such as the castanets and ribbons of 1921 (pp. 4, 28) and bangles of the 1924 *Spanish Dancer* (p. 32). However, the image of a grotesque, haunted specter with huge proboscis and dislocated eyes is far removed from the ludic, erotic, or minimalistic experiments of 1921–28. *Spanish Dancer* of 1945 (fig. 32, p. 56) reflects the chaotic upheaval Miró had experienced; in his 1940–41 notebook "Une femme," the artist noted: "[T]he *Spanish Dancer* must be comic in a cruel way, with planted nails – the floor can be filled with poetic and astronomic signs. . . ."[55] He also reminded himself to go back to the drawings he had made for Mother Ubu, one of the distorted ogres in his 1944 Barcelona series based on Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. Laboratory examination conducted by Carolyn Lanchner has identified erasure of an intermediate stage of the 1945 painting: "Under the surface film of the paint are traces of three jagged, tooth-like elements hanging from



32. *Spanish Dancer*, Barcelona, July 7, 1945
Oil on canvas, 146 x 114
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen / Basel

33. *Woman and Little Girl in Front of the Sun*, 1946
Oil on canvas lined to linen, 45.8 x 114.1
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution
Gift of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation

34. *Spanish Dancer*, 1981
Ballpoint pen on paper, 21.4 × 15.5
Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca
FPJM-1421.15a

a bulbous form over a star . . . its abrasions and masked motifs embodying the frustration and despair endured when he had been forced to abandon his work in Barcelona."[56] The schematic, linear language with concisely outlined shapes in primary saturated colors relates back to the "Constellations," which display a similar mobile-like quality. Miró's use of ideograms contrasts a seemingly childlike, lighthearted, humoristic style with the menacing image of a distorted and decomposed clawed creature. A physical embodiment of this menace is revealed in the sun-spot at the center of a closely related work, *Woman and Little Girl in Front of the Sun* from 1946 (fig. 33, p. 57), which draws on the interplay between careful definition and chance effects of finger painting, splotches of pigment, and staining.

At the age of eighty-eight, two years before his death, Miró returned to the Spanish Dancer in a group of drawings, almost his last, which revive an old theme (fig. 34). The dancer's already established vocabulary of signs – the

black hole for a head, comb, flounced mantilla, straight line of the body – now recur in rapid notation with a childlike simplicity and urgency.

The recurrence of the figure of the Spanish dancer in Miró's work across six decades reveals the intensity of his interest in this subject, which allowed him to explore esthetic, psychosexual, and national questions that preoccupied him throughout his creative life. In his sketches, drawings, paintings, and collages, Miró goes well beyond the "postcard" image of the Spanish dancer, expressing through his sensitive, poetic language the feeling, movement, and interplay between groundedness and spirituality that this theme evokes. Just like flamenco, which can simultaneously express happiness and grief, so Miro's Spanish dancers manage to cover a broad range of human emotions. While seldom shown in movement, they all convey a distilled sense of rhythm and balance that is inherent to great art. As Miró wrote in 1928: "Rhythm is a secret movement of the soul, whose vibrations can only be sensed by those who are not devoid of a soul, the only thing that really matters . . ."[57]

* I am deeply appreciative of the wise counsel and generous research assistance proffered by Teresa Montaner, Curator of the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona; Pilar Ortega, Curator of the Successió Miró, Palma de Mallorca; Patricia Molins, Curator at the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Ariane Lelong-Mainaud, ADOM (Association pour la défense de l'oeuvre de Miró), Paris; dance historian Ninotchka Bennahum, New York; and filmmaker Shem Shemi, Jerusalem.

1 Margit Rowell (ed.), *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 2, 6.
2 For the broader political context of Miró's work in relation to both French Surrealism and the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, see Robert Lubar's essay in this catalogue, p. 65.
3 See Pedro G. Romero, "The Sun at Night: Preparatory Notes for Poetics and Politics among Flamenco and Modern Artists, A Paradoxical Place," in Patricia Molins and Pedro G. Romero (eds.), *The Spanish Night: Flamenco, Avant-Garde and Popular Culture 1865–1936* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2008), pp. 49–89.
4 Joan Miró to E. C. Ricart, Barcelona, October 1, 1917?, in Rowell (see note 1, above), pp. 52–53.
5 Ibid.
6 In the above source the dancers' names are erroneously translated from Catalan and interpreted as *moixiganga* – a traditional Catalan dance performed only by men and said to date from the

Middle Ages – and *macariana*, a festival held in honor of the Virgin of the Macarena, patron of Seville. My thanks to Teresa Montaner, Curator at the Miró Foundation in Barcelona, for pointing out the mis-transcription and subsequent misinterpretation of these names.

7 See *Record de Joan Prats* (Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, 1995), pp. 12–14.

8 For a concise study of flamenco and its historical roots see Ninotchka Bennahum, "Flamenco Dance," in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

9 Miró to Sebastià Gasch, October 7, 1926, Montroig, in Joan Ainaud de Lasarte et al (eds.), *Epistolari Català de Joan Miró* (Editorial Barcelona: Barcino/Fundació Miró, 2009), no. 191. My thanks to Judith Amselem, who served as in-house Catalan reader and helped me translate this and other source material.

10 Examples include Enrique Granados's *Danza V* (1890) and *La danza de los ojos verdes* (1916), and Falla's *Spanish Dance* from the one-act opera *La vida breve* (The Brief Life, 1905/13).

11 Ninotchka Bennahum, *Antonia Mercé, "La Argentina": Flamenco and the Spanish Avant Garde* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), pp. 76–102, 175.

12 Escudero requested Miró's assistance in promoting and selling these drawings in Spain and abroad (Vicente Escudero to Joan Miró, November 8, 1975, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. Donació de Francesc Farreras).

13 Federico Bonaddio, *A Companion to Federico García Lorca* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2007), p. 85.

14 Ibid, p. 86.

15 Federico García Lorca, *In Search of Duende* (New Directions Bibelot, 1955/98).

16 Shem Shemi, oral communication. And see *Por El Flamenco* [videorecording], a film by Shem Shemi, Yes Docu, 2009.

17 García Lorca (see note 15, above).

18 Thirteen years earlier the Andalusian-inspired ballet *Le Tricorne* (The Three-cornered Hat), also choreographed by Massine for the Ballets Russes with stage sets by Picasso and music by Manuel de Falla, had premiered at the Alhambra Theatre in London. Diaghilev and Massine's production reflected their immersion in Spanish dance and music during their sojourn in Spain. The enduring critical and popular success of the production led Massine to revive the ballet in 1934, using the sets and costumes from Diaghilev's 1919 production.

19 Miró to Sebastià Gasch, 1932, in *Epistolari Català de Joan Miró* (see note 9, above), nos. 338, 344.

20 Leonide Massine, "Joan Miró," in *Cahiers d'Art*, nos. 1–4, 1934, translated in *Homage to Joan Miró* (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1976), p. 82.

21 In this series of images Miró appears in the company of his wife, Pilar Juncosa, the painter Paco Revés, the ceramist Llorens Artigas, the young artist Guinovart, and other friends. My thanks to Núria Gil Pujol, Arxiu Fotogràfic Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya, for her assistance in obtaining information about these photographs.

22 For an analysis of Picabia's machinist works, see Mariea Caudill Dennison, "Automobile Parts and Accessories in Picabia's Machinist Works of 1915–17," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 143, no. 1178 (May 2001), pp. 276–83.

23 Jacques Dupin, *Joan Miró: Life and Work* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1962), pp. 130–31.

24 Miró later told the interviewer that the painting had originally belonged to his gallerist José Dalmau, and that it was included in the 1921 exhibition Dalmau organized for Miró in Paris at the gallery La Licorne. After the exhibition, Dr. Girardin, the gallery owner and an important collector, put all the works that did not sell in his own storage and as collateral with Picasso's dealer, Pierre Loeb. In 1937 Loeb acquired all of the stored works, including *Portrait of a Spanish Dancer*. Miró, who never received any payment from Girardin, recounted how "One day I go to Pierre Loeb who tells me laughingly: 'Do you know who bought the *Dancer*? *Picasso! He did that to have a good laugh at us!*" In Georges Raillard, *Joan Miró, Ceci est la couleur de mes rêves* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), pp. 51–52.

25 See Giuseppe Marchiori, "Miró through the Years," in Gualtieri Di San Lazzaro (ed.), *Homage to Joan Miró* (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1976), p. 22.

26 James Thrall Soby connected *Self-Portrait*'s deliberate primitivism with a meaningful quote from Miró: "Courage consists in remaining within one's ambience, close to nature, which takes no account of our disasters. Each grain of dust possesses a marvelous soul. But to understand this, it is necessary to rediscover the religious and magic sense of things – that of the primitive peoples." In James Thrall Soby, *Joan Miró* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 28.

27 Roland Penrose, *Miró* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), p. 22. And see Lubar's essay in this catalogue for a discussion of the Miró-Picasso dialogue and their respective expression of "Spanishness."

28 See Bennahum (note 11, above).

29 In the 1920s Calvache portrayed many members of the period's Spanish literary and artistic vanguard, including performers such as Eugenia Zuffoli, Pastora Imperio, and La Argentinita.

30 Rowell (note 1, above), p. 3.

31 Joan Miró to Michel Leiris, Montroig, October 31, 1924, in Rowell (see note 1, above), p. 95.

32 Joan Miró, "Memories of the Rue Blomet," transcribed by Jacques Dupin, in ibid, p. 102.

33 Joan Miró to Michel Leiris, Montroig, October 31, 1924, in Rowell (see note 1, above), p. 87.

34 The title was no doubt given in reference to Marcel Duchamp's work of the same name, originally created in 1911 (and reproduced by the artist in 1912 and 1916), which had aroused outrage by its display at the 1913 Armory Show. And Miró must have seen the 1912 Cubist exhibition at Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona in which Duchamp had participated. However, as opposed to Duchamp, Miró's work reflects a search for a Japanese type of minimalism rather than constituting a study related to chrono-photography, Futurism, or temporal seriality. Miró returned to this theme in his grotesque *Naked Woman Climbing a Staircase*, 1937, which reflects a significant change in style related to the Spanish Civil War.

35 Joan Miró to Siegfried Rosengart, August 5, 1980 (Rosengart Foundation archive).

36 Ibid.

37 Marko Daniel and Matthew Gale (eds.), *Joan Miró: The Ladder of Escape* (London: Tate Modern; Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró; and Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2011), p. 68. And see Christopher Green, "Miró's Catalan Peasants," in ibid, pp. 60–71, for a reading that brings together metaphysical and Kabbalistic interpretations of the peasants.

38 These sparkling elements, later generalized in Miró's iconography by what he terms *les etincelles* (sparks), would inspire such "all-over" flickering compositions as the "Constellations" series and *The Song of the Vowels* (see William Rubin, *Miró in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* [New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973], p. 25).

39 Louis Aragon, *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme* (Paris: José Corti, 1938/69), p. 17.

40 Gaëton Picon (ed.), *Joan Miró, Catalan Notebooks: Unpublished Drawings and Writings* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), p. 60. Gerta Moray proffers the interesting hypothesis that the syllable *sard* should be regarded "as a deliberate pun in the manner of Picabia and Duchamp, since the word sardine is a colloquialism for phallus in Catalan" (in "Miró, Bosch and Fantasy Painting," *The Burlington Magazine* [London], vol. CXIII, no. 820 [July 1971], p. 391). Since Miró rejected the idea that the letters were thus intended, the pun would have had to be an unconscious one (see William Rubin [note 38, above], note 30).

41 Rosalind E. Krauss and Margit Rowell (eds.), *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1972), pp. 77–78.

42 Lorca (see note 15, above).

43 Krauss and Rowell (see note 41, above), p. 121.

44 Ibid.

45 In the French newspaper *L'intransigeant* (Paris), April 7, 1930, p. 5. The artist quoted in this article remained anonymous, but Miró maintained that the reference was to him. See also Rowell (note 1, above), pp. 291 and 314, note 2.

46 Ibid, pp. 116–17.

47 Anne Umland, "Joan Miró's *Collage* of Summer 1929: 'La Peinture au defi'?" in *Studies in Modern Art 2: Essays on Assemblage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), pp. 53–54. André Breton kept his Spanish Dancers throughout his life, and it was gifted by his daughter to the Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, in 2003.

48 Anne Umland, *Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting 1927–1937* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 46.

49 Quoted in Georges Raillard (see note 24, above), p. 199, note 2.

50 Umland views the finely calibrated positioning of elements as an invitation to "the kind of fetishistic contemplation envisioned by [the anthropologist] Michel Leiris: [Miró's] dancer is isolated, presented for scrutiny and delectation. Her importance is intensified by the vast field of white that frames and supports her. The role of the artist's hand and of subjective traces of touch are so diminished as to be declared nonexistent, supplanted by the figure's real, tactile appeal. The caress of the feather is countered by the sharp sting of the hatpin's tip, which skewers the cork Miró literally plugged into what Éluard described as the 'virgin canvas,' implicitly equating the pictorial support with the (female) body." In *Joan Miró* (see note 48, above), pp. 47–49.

51 Umland (note 48, above), p. 46.

52 Ibid, p. 47.

53 Rémi Labrusse, "Joan Miró, *Portrait d'une danseuse*, Paris, 1928," in *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 98, Winter 2006/2007, p. 81.

54 Labrusse underlines Miró's suitability for an anthropological rather than psychoanalytic analysis, claiming that the 1928 dancers emerge as "an absurd, erotic-exotic cliché which here is strangely, deliciously turned against itself, and reveals the depths to which others at the same moment – anthropologists of the sacred – also explore in their own way." Ibid, pp. 81–89.

55 Gaëton Picon (ed.), *Carnets catalans, dessins et textes inedits, Les sentiers de la creation* (Editions Albert Skira, 1976), Vol. 2, p. 60, 61, 62.

56 Carolyn Lanchner, *Joan Miró* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993), p. 73.

57 *"Rythme est un mouvement secret de l'âme, lesquelles ondulations ne peuvent saisir que les personnes qui ne sont pas dépourvues non plus d'une âme, la seul chose qui compte en somme."* Joan Miró to Pierre Loeb, October 11, 1928 (Loeb Archives, Paris), quoted in Labrusse (note 53, above), p. 85.