



Home comfort: a yearning for the family farmstead in Mont-roig del Camp was the creative force behind Joan Miró's *The Farm*, 1921

# Cradle of the Arts

From Paris to the Balearics, Holly Black traces the footsteps of Picasso and Miró

**O**n a spring day in 1920, Joan Miró found his way to Pablo Picasso's studio on the Rue de la Boétie, in Paris. For this much-anticipated first meeting, the young Catalan artist came armed with a cake, at the behest of Picasso's mother, who was an old family friend. It would appear both artist and gift were well received, as Picasso soon took the fellow Spaniard under his wing, introducing him to the city's avant-garde circles and even buying one of

his self-portraits. During this period, the pair of would-be titans were experimenting with entirely new ways of seeing the world. Unbridled by any particular style or medium, they interrogated the principles of Surrealism, abstraction and the power of the unconscious. As Picasso married neo-Classical sensibilities with Cubist theories, Miró had begun moving from stylised representation to his unique form of symbols and hieroglyphs. Soon, their stars rose to imperceptible heights,

to become two of the most ground-breaking artists of the 20th century.

Although it took moving to Paris for these great artists to meet, their connection to their homeland runs deep. Picasso first left the country for the French capital in 1904, yet his creative impulses had already been shaped by the sun-drenched shores of Málaga and A Coruña where he grew up, and the art scene in Barcelona, where he studied at Escola de la Llotja. Despite this urban upbringing, it was



## Arts inspiration



### Madrid, €3.99 million (about £3.51m)

This distinctive eight-bedroom mansion is situated in Las Rozas, a municipality about 12 miles north-west of Madrid. The property boasts its own botanical garden, including a 1,000-year-old olive tree, a 98ft-high cedar tree, Mediterranean pines, a cedar pendulum, fruit trees, rose bushes, ferns, bamboos and a field of wild strawberries. The indoor pool (maintained with solar panels) has direct access to the garden and there is also a dining room with a full outdoor kitchen, a garage and a small separate one-bedroom apartment for a housekeeper.

Madrid Sotheby's International Realty  
(00 34 91 904 1929; [www.sothebysrealty.com](http://www.sothebysrealty.com))

### Barcelona, €4.2 million (about £3.7m)

Completely restored in 2000, this light and airy apartment occupies an entire floor in a historic building overlooking the city's Avenida Diagonal. Spread over 5,963sq ft, the apartment boasts two spacious suites with en-suite bathrooms, a further two bedrooms and separate bathrooms, an office, library and a fully equipped kitchen designed by La Cornue.

Amat Luxury (00 34 93 452 9960; [www.amatluxury.com](http://www.amatluxury.com))

## ‘In the wilderness of Horta, Picasso’s eyes were opened to the wonders of his country’

in the Catalan wilderness of Horta (where he camped for a month aged 16) that his eyes were truly opened to the wonders of his country. As he wrote in a subsequent letter: ‘Everything I know, I learned in Horta.’

Sixteen years later, Miró was all too eager to trade his hometown of Barcelona for Paris, following a failed stint at the art school Picasso had attended and feeling stifled by the lack of avant-garde thinking. Yet it was only on leaving that he truly began to understand his Catalan heritage and appreciate the austere beauty of the countryside. He soon longed for the family farmstead in the Tarragona village of Mont-roig del Camp, the setting that inspired his painting *The Farm* (1921). His friend Ernest Hemingway was so taken by the picture that he trawled local bars looking for loans so that he could buy it, declaring: ‘It has in it all that you feel about Spain when you are there and all that you feel when you are →



### Paris, €5.3 million (about £4.7m)

Once home to the early Impressionist artist Eugène Boudin, this beautiful apartment situated near Sacré Coeur Basilica and rue des Abbesses comprises a spacious living/reception room with a next-door kitchen, four bedrooms, three bathrooms, a fitness room with a steam shower, a utility room and a wine cellar. This exceptional property also benefits from a *petit* garden and a top-floor terrace.

Daniel Féau, an affiliate of Christie's International Real Estate  
(00 33 15 531 9471; [www.christiesrealestate.com](http://www.christiesrealestate.com))





### Mallorca, €9.8 million (about £8.6m)

Villa Son Veri is an elegant modern property with breathtaking sea views across the bay of Palma. Comprising four bedrooms, four bathrooms, a well-fitted kitchen, a pool and glorious inside/outside entertainment space, this villa offers the perfect spot from which to watch the sun go down.

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away and cannot go there. No one else has been able to paint those two opposing things.'

Picasso and Miró continued to shape the language of Spain from afar, as the civil war raged. When residing in self-imposed exile in Paris, the pair contributed to the Spanish Pavilion in the 1937 Exposition Universelle with two powerful denunciations of violence. In the case of Picasso, this was his *magnum opus*: the 25ft-long mural known as *Guernica*. This *grisaille* masterpiece—which now resides on permanent display at the Reina Sofia in Madrid—decries the devastating bombing of this Basque town by focusing on the human cost of the barbarity.

Miró's contribution was another mural, *The Reaper* (now sadly lost), which depicts a man contorted in a cry of despair. This was the artist's ode to the peasant revolt against Fascist rule and demonstrates a turning point in Miró's career, where more whimsical symbols of the natural world and dreams are replaced with politically charged sentiments, as seen in his famous 'Black and Red' series of etchings from 1938. He went on to produce his 'Constellations' paintings, which served as a more uplifting alternative to the realities of war, filled with calligraphic lines and allusions to escape and flight. He began making them in 1940, when seeking refuge on the Normandy coast as the Germans advanced, and continued once he had escaped to Palma de Mallorca with his wife and child, where he had spent happy summers with his grandparents.

Whereas Miró settled on the Balearic island, Picasso never returned to Spain in

any meaningful way and yet the power of both their art is woven into the fabric of the nation. Their careers are celebrated throughout the country with a host of foundations and museums that not only preserve their legacy, but inspire and support new generations of artists. This year marks the anniversary of their deaths—50 years for Picasso, 40 for Miró—and, unsurprisingly, myriad exhibitions and events are taking place in commemoration.

In Barcelona, the Museu Picasso and Joan Miró Foundation are collaborating on a joint exhibition across both sites (October 19–February 25), which showcase not only star

works from their collections, but photographs and correspondence that tell the story of the two artists' friendship. Elsewhere in the city, the Museu del Disseny (June–September) will uncover a lesser-known aspect of Picasso's oeuvre: his ceramics. In Madrid, too, the Museo Nacional del Prado (June 13–September 17) considers his connection to El Greco, the Greek painter who became the star of the Spanish Renaissance. Over in Bilbao, the Guggenheim focuses on the Parisian years when Miró found his radical style (until May 28).

Beyond the major cities, one can explore the very places where these masters lived and worked. In Málaga, for example, the Picasso Birthplace Museum occupies the three floors of the building where he was born and is filled with memorabilia, whereas the Museum Picasso Málaga houses more than 200 works. It will feature an exhibition of the artist's sculptures (May 9–September 10) before the show travels to the Guggenheim Bilbao (September 29–January 14, 2024).

Over in Mallorca, Miró's spectacular former studios are now home to his foundation, which houses exhibitions, a sizeable library and working printmaking workshops, continuing the artist's innovations in engraving and lithography. Meanwhile, in his beloved Mont-roig, the Fundació Mas Miró has preserved the family farm. Tours are available, with some even led by the tenant farmer, so that you might connect to the 'emotional landscape' of the area that inspired him so profoundly. As the artist said himself: 'An artwork should be fertile. It must give birth to a world.'

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### The colour of dreams: Picasso and Miró in France

It is without a doubt that Paris laid the foundation for Picasso and Miró's innovation. The city was the epicentre of the avant-garde scene at the beginning of the 20th century, where poets, writers, artists, dancers and philosophers came together in a hotbed of new creative thinking. However, both artists had a relationship to other parts of France. For Miró (right), decamping to the small village at Varengeville-sur-Mer at the outbreak of the Second World War was a huge source of inspiration. The enforced blackout meant he could not see the night sky, but it ignited his need to reimagine it on canvas for years to come.

Unlike his friend, Picasso (left) made France his permanent home. After enduring German-occupied Paris, he decamped to the Riviera, where he found new sources of classical inspiration in Antibes, Cannes, Provence and finally the village of Mougins, where he spent the last 12 years of his life. It was here, in the 'lair of the minotaur', as it was known among friends, that he experienced a final explosion of inspiration. This last hurrah was inspired, at least in part, by the ancient Greco-Roman foundations of his surroundings.

