



Miró in Holland: The Dutch Interiors (1928)

• PANDA DE HAAN AND LUDO VAN HALEM •

In early May 1928, while his exhibition in Georges Bernheim's gallery in Paris was rapidly selling out, Joan Miró (Barcelona 1893-Palma de Mallorca 1983) went to the Netherlands for the first time in his life. He had been planning the trip for some time, telling his dealer Pierre Loeb on 7 November 1927, 'I'll go to Belgium and Holland, and will be back right away next summer in Spain already married.'¹ From Paris he travelled by way of Brussels to The Hague, where he went to see the Royal Picture Gallery in the Mauritshuis, and then on to Amsterdam, where his main objective was a visit to the Rijksmuseum. The art of the Golden Age in these museums' collections made such an impression on Miró that he still vividly recollected his trip half a century later. 'I went to Holland for two weeks in order to visit the museums. ... I was tremendously interested in Vermeer and the seventeenth-century Dutch masters.'²

The Netherlands lived on not just in his memory, but in his work. When Miró got back to Spain in the summer of 1928 he embarked on a series of three paintings that came to be titled *Dutch Interior* (figs. 2, 4, 5). They were based on two postcard reproductions of paintings by Hendrick Martensz Sorgh and Jan Havicksz Steen that he had seen in the Rijksmuseum (figs. 1,

Detail of fig. 4

3, 12, 13). The marriage of which he had been so sure did not, though, go ahead. His engagement to Pilar Tey was broken off, but during the trip he began to court his future wife, Pilar Juncosa i Iglesias, by sending her an endless stream of picture postcards.³

Miró finished the three *Dutch Interiors* in the autumn of 1928. They were shown for the first time at Galerie Pierre in Paris from 7 to 14 March 1930, after which they were almost constantly to be seen in important exhibitions.⁴ In 1961, consequently, Jacques Dupin referred to them in the first major monograph and oeuvre catalogue as 'the famous series of Dutch interiors'.⁵ *Dutch Interior* (I), acquired by New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1945, was the best known.⁶ *Dutch Interior* (II) was bought by Peggy Guggenheim in 1940 and was on permanent exhibit from 1942 to 1947 in the room of Surrealist paintings in her famous New York gallery, Art of This Century.⁷ *Dutch Interior* (III) was less visible. This painting was bought by the Belgian businessman and journalist René Gaffé before the first exhibition even opened.⁸ In 1950 it found its way into the American Marx (later Marx-Schoenborn) collection, after which it seldom appeared at exhibitions although it frequently cropped up in publications. Finally, in 1995, it was



Fig. 1
 HENDRICK
 MARTENSZ SORGH,
The Lute Player, 1661.
 Oil on panel,
 51.5 x 38.5 cm.
 Rijksmuseum,
 Amsterdam
 (inv. no. SK-A-495).

Fig. 2
 JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch
 Interior (I)*, 1928.
 Oil on canvas,
 91.8 x 73 cm.
 The Museum of
 Modern Art,
 New York (Mrs Simon
 Guggenheim Fund,
 inv. no. 163.1945),
 © photo The Museum
 of Modern Art, New
 York/Scala, Florence.





Fig. 3
 JAN HAVICKSZ STEEN,
*Children Teaching a
 Cat to Dance, known
 as 'The Dancing
 Lesson', c. 1665-68.*
 Oil on panel, 68.5 x 59 cm.
 Rijksmuseum,
 Amsterdam (bequest
 of J.S.H. van der Poll,
 Amsterdam,
 inv. no. SK-A-718).

Fig. 4
 JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch
 Interior (II)*, 1928.
 Oil on canvas,
 92 x 73 cm.
 Peggy Guggenheim
 Collection, Venice
 (inv. no. 76.2553 PG 92),
 © photo David Heald
 2010 The Solomon
 R. Guggenheim
 Foundation.



bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Miró himself donated the postcards he had used for the *Dutch Interiors* to the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona in the 1970s, together with his sketches and the preliminary drawings (figs. 12-30).⁹

The *Dutch Interiors* were almost always discussed at length in the monographs that followed ever harder on one another's heels as Miró's fame grew in the 1950s. The most substantial of these works also looked at the postcards and the preparatory sketches in conjunction with the paintings. In 1961, on the basis of the sketches, which at that time were still with Miró himself, Dupin showed for the first time how different motifs in *The Dancing Lesson* had been transformed and combined to create the eventual composition of *Dutch Interior (II)*. In 1973 William Rubin brought out a catalogue of work by Miró in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in which all the preparatory material for *Dutch Interior (I)* was published. On the basis of conversations with Miró he also compiled a detailed diagram of all the motifs in this painting. In his 1993 *The Roots of Miró* Pere Gimferrer, like Dupin, discussed the sketches for *Dutch Interior (II)* at length and – for the first time – the drawings for *Dutch Interior (III)*. These and other books usually discuss the individual paintings in the series in direct relation to their specific examples.¹⁰ We must, though, bear in mind that it was not just these works that made such an impression on Miró. It was the Dutch painting of the Golden Age as a whole, as represented in the museum collections in The Hague and Amsterdam, that prompted him to make his own interpretation.

Now, for the first time, the three *Dutch Interiors* and all the preparatory material are hanging together with the two 17th-century examples in *Miró &*

Jan Steen, an exhibition running from 17 June to 13 September 2010 in the Rijksmuseum and then as *Miró: The Dutch Interiors* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York from 5 October 2010 to 17 January 2011. This has prompted new research into Miró's trip to the Netherlands in 1928. Although not much is known about his stay in Holland itself, a great deal of information can be derived from the works and museum collections he saw and the way they were presented. Taken in conjunction with an explanation by Miró himself, which has never before been considered in the analysis of these paintings, this Dutch context sheds new light on the creative process that led to the *Dutch Interiors* and on their position in his oeuvre.

Creative Copies

Miró himself attached great value to the *Dutch Interiors*. 'Now I am working at an extremely slow pace, as I had not done for many years, and on *very important canvases*,' he wrote on 16 August 1928 to his childhood friend Josep-Francesc Ràfols, when he had just started work on the first painting in the series.¹¹ And indeed Miró did return temporarily to the painstaking style in which he was working around 1924, breaking with the poetic, dreamy mood of the paintings he made between 1925 and 1927. But it is not only the fact that Miró returned to an earlier manner for the *Dutch Interiors* that makes them exceptional – they also marked the start of an eighteen-month period in which he focused on a dialogue with the painting of the past. *The Potato* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Still Life with Lamp* (private collection), which immediately followed the *Dutch Interiors*, reference the Dutch portrait and still life painting of the Golden Age, although without any identifiable example, while for the *Imaginary Portraits* of 1929 he used reproductions of work by, among others, George

Fig. 5
JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch Interior (III)*, 1928.
Oil on canvas,
129.9 x 96.8 cm.
Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York
(Bequest of Florence
M. Schoenborn, 1995,
inv. no. 1996.403.8),
© photo The Metro-
politan Museum of
Art/Art Resource/
Scala, Florence.



Engleheart (a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds), Constable and Raphael.¹²

This profound interest in old masters at a time when modernism was at its height is remarkable but not unique. With his interpretation of the paintings by Sorgh and Steen, Miró was following a long tradition of artists who emulated the work of their predecessors – to copy and hence to learn from them, certainly, but also to compete with them and – preferably – surpass them. They also sought solutions to pictorial problems in the work of the greats.¹³ Max Ernst, for instance, who collaborated with Miró on the sets and costumes for the Ballets Russes' *Romeo and Juliet* in the mid-twenties, specifically cited Leonardo da Vinci as the source of the *frottage* technique he developed around 1925.¹⁴ In an autobiographical sketch Ernst even included a list of 'Favorite Poets [and] Painters Of The Past' to acknowledge that painters like Uccello, Altdorfer, Bosch, Seurat, and Van Gogh had been important to his work.¹⁵ Picasso, who supported and advised his younger compatriot Miró in Paris during this period, also had immense powers of pictorial assimilation and engaged in undisguised competition with other artists all his life.¹⁶

Outside Miró's immediate circle of friends and colleagues, Johannes Itten was a fellow practitioner of 'creative copying' who was as unexpected as he was interesting. In his *Analysen alter Meister* (1921) Itten 'transposed' the work of artists like Master Francke and El Greco into 'word pictures' that literally made the structure of the paintings legible. Although 'analysis' suggests a cool, objective approach, it was in fact the way a work of art resonated with an individual that was key. 'To experience a work of art, to re-experience it,' explained Itten, 'means to breathe personal life into its essence, which lies in its form. The work of art takes shape inside me. We say: To experience a work of art means to re-create it.'¹⁷ When Miró

looked back on the *Dutch Interiors* half a century later, he likewise concluded that the re-creation of his examples mirrored his own personality: 'I had no intention of making fun of Sorgh's realistic concept. What happened is that the result reflects the tragicomic mixture of my character.'¹⁸

Rendez-vous des amis in Brussels

Miró left for the Netherlands after the opening of his exhibition in Georges Bernheim's gallery on 1 May, stopping in Brussels on the way.¹⁹ Twenty minutes' walk from Brussels South station, where the Paris trains came in, at number 43 Charleroisesteenweg, was L'Époque, the gallery established by the art promoter Paul-Gustave van Hecke in October 1927. The gallery, managed by E.L.T. (Edouard) Mesens, linked the Brussels art world to the Surrealist and Dadaist avant-garde in Paris. The gallery's impressive programme rapidly attracted attention – in Holland, too. 'Just last year, its first in business,' reported the Brussels correspondent of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* on 1 October 1928, 'this establishment has acquainted us with Germans like Hans Arp and Heinrich Campendonck, Max Ernst and Paul Klee, with Russians like Marc Chagall and Ossip Zadkin [*sic*], with the Italian Giorgio de Chirico, with the Spaniard Joan Miro, certainly none of them unknown ... before then, but whom, thanks to "l'Epoque", we have come to appreciate more and more.'²⁰ Miró exhibited in a group show there in November 1927, and in June 1928 was again represented in an exhibition of both Surrealist and Expressionist artists.²¹

Miró no doubt wanted to discuss his part in the upcoming show with Mesens, but at that moment the gallery was staging an exhibition of the work of Jean Arp, who was there in person. Photographs reveal that the visit was not purely business. Van Hecke,

Fig. 6

From left to right:
P.G. van Hecke,
Jean Arp, Joan Miró,
E.L.T. Mesens and
Camille Goemans.
'Arp' Exhibition,
Galerie L'Époque,
Brussels, May 1928,
photo Gobert,
Bruxelles.
Archives Successió
Miró, Palma de
Mallorca.

Mesens, Miró, Arp and the Belgian art dealer Camille Goemans, who made up the group, had their pictures taken together several times. It was evidently regarded as a memorable moment, for one of the photographs was published in the June issue of the cultural magazine *Variétés*, which Van Hecke had founded not long before (fig. 6). Mesens, who did a good deal of the image editing and layout work for the magazine, placed the picture above a reproduction of Max Ernst's painting *Au rendez-vous des amis* (1922), drawing a visual parallel with the meeting in Galerie L'Époque – another 'rendez-vous des amis'.²²

The year before, in January 1927, Miró had moved from rue Blomet in Montparnasse to the studios in the Villa des Fusains in Montmartre, becoming Arp's close neighbour.²³ Max Ernst worked in a studio directly across from them, and Goemans lived there too. Miró admired Arp's poetry

and in times of – financial – trouble they seem to have helped one another out. He recalled in 1938: 'Things were better, but they still were rather tough. Once, Arp and I shared a meal of radishes and butter.'²⁴ But there was more to it than sharing frugal meals and neighbouring accommodation in the Villa des Fusains in rue Tourlaque. Looking back in an interview in 1962, Miró said, 'In 1928, it seems that Arp and I were influenced by each other. Why not: We lived in the same building ...' Followed in the next breath by, 'Another influence was that of the Dutch masters – Jan Steen, Vermeer, etc. – that can be seen in the Dutch interiors I painted that same year.'²⁵ The immediate association with these paintings is an indication that there was a definite connection between his friendship with Arp and the rest of his trip.

In photographs, the layout of Arp's exhibition looks highly unorthodox. It differed dramatically from Miró's



quite traditional exhibition in Georges Bernheim's museum-style galleries, where the works hung close together, side by side, above a dado.²⁶ In L'Époque's space, which resembled nothing so much as a living room, Arp's reliefs and paintings were hung with large, irregular gaps between them and at seemingly random heights, as if the individual pieces had to work together on the walls to form a larger composition. In this respect the layout was reminiscent of the asymmetrical division of planes of colour in the space-colour compositions beloved of De Stijl. Something of Arp's recent collaboration with Theo van Doesburg on the decoration of the Aubette in Strasbourg (1927) seems to resonate in this exhibition.²⁷

Unlike the stopover in Brussels, the rest of the trip to the Netherlands seems to have had no ulterior motive – Miró simply wanted to go to the museums. There is nothing to suggest that he either had or wanted to make contacts in the Dutch art world. In Holland, by contrast with Belgium, there were no collectors of any importance who took an interest in Surrealist art, while Dutch art critics were at best dismissive of the latest developments from Paris. In 1930, when the Amsterdam artists' society De Onafhankelijken ('the Independents') included an entry of almost forty works by Belgian and French Surrealists in its annual exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum – Miró was represented, with a painting and two collages²⁸ – the movement was brushed aside by the authoritative art critic W. Jos de Gruyter in *Het Vaderland* of 3 June 1930 as being 'of no, not the slightest significance!' because it was 'a reaction against all naturalness and humanity'.²⁹ Throughout the thirties Surrealism failed to strike a chord in the down-to-earth Netherlands: the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* staged in the Robert Gallery in Amsterdam in 1938 – with the 1931 *Woman Strolling* among

the Mirós there – met with the same blank incomprehension in the press.³⁰

Opinions about Miró's work were similarly mixed. When a Paris correspondent reviewed Miró's exhibition at Bernheim's in *De Telegraaf* of 6 June 1928 – the first lengthy review of his work in a Dutch newspaper – he wrote that 'with his cheerful flags of flat colour and system of open lines he reveals an undeniable personality, one of the strongest in an age when so many people show off as oddly and as affectedly as possible to conceal their inner emptiness'.³¹ Something over a year later, though, when Miró's work was seen in the Netherlands for the first time at the *ESAC Exposition selectes d'art contemporain* in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, a critic writing in *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* rather condescendingly described the painting *Homme et femme* as 'two ghostly little balloons which bind one another together in a ghastly atmosphere – not with Vondel's mighty chains, but with a few astral entrails'.³² In the end, the Dutch art world did not warm to his work and very little of it found its way into private or public collections.

For his part, Miró showed equally little interest in contemporary Dutch culture. The only concrete indication is a postcard to his friend Josep Ràfols with a picture of the façade of the apartment block at 13-23 Heinezestraat in Amsterdam South, a classic example of Amsterdam School architecture designed by Piet Kramer.³³ It is not inconceivable that Miró's interest in the Amsterdam School, which had emerged a stone's throw from the Rijksmuseum in the early twenties, was sparked in Paris in 1925 by the Dutch pavilion built to J.F. Staal's design at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*. The exuberantly decorated Amsterdam School structure with its dramatic curving rear elevation may have evoked memories of Antoni Gaudí's work in Barcelona, Miró's birthplace.

A Monument to the Birds in The Hague

'Un bon record de Miró,' wrote Miró on a postcard he sent from The Hague on Friday, 11 May 1928 to his friend, the art critic Sebastià Gasch, in Barcelona.³⁴ We know that he was still in Brussels on 5 May, but the date he went to The Hague has not so far been traced.³⁵ Nor do we know where he stayed – in a hotel, a guest house or perhaps at an address supplied by his network of friends in the artists' community. It is quite possible that Theo and Nelly van Doesburg helped him here, since they had numerous contacts in The Hague.³⁶ Although there is no evidence of direct contact, they might well have known him personally through their mutual friend Arp in Paris. Be this as it may, they rated Miró's work so highly that Nelly wanted to show it at the *ESAC* exhibition she staged in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Pulchri Studio in The Hague in 1929.³⁷ Theo also wanted to include it in the book – which never actually saw publication – *Panorama de la peinture contemporaine présenté par Theo van Doesburg. 100 Images avec texte et portraits d'artistes*, on which he was working around 1928-29 and for which he had collected several photographs of paintings by Miró.³⁸ He wrote about Miró in glowing terms in his diary for 1929, mentioning in passing that he owned one of his works.³⁹ However, a guest like Miró would not have gone unremarked in art circles in The Hague and so far there are no Dutch sources that shed any light on his stay there.

The picture on the postcard Miró sent to his friend in Barcelona is of the Hofvijver and the Gevangenpoort in The Hague – the lake and the 'prisoners' gate' in the royal court complex. On the other side of the lake lay the principal goal of his trip, the Mauritshuis, where Miró was for the first time able to see numerous works by 'the great Dutch masters, whom

I admire greatly,' as he said in his first published interview, which appeared that summer, after his trip to Holland, in the Catalan newspaper *La Publicitat*.⁴⁰ Opportunities to study his favourites, Vermeer and Steen, in French public collections, had certainly been limited: in the 1920s the Louvre had just one Vermeer – *The Lace Maker* – and two Steens – *Feast at an Inn* and *Bad Company*.⁴¹ And it was not until July 1928 that Miró made his first trip to Madrid, where he could have seen paintings of the Dutch Golden Age in the Prado.⁴² In The Hague a work like the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* must have made a great impression on him, for in 1960 he gave a vivid description of how much he had been struck by the meticulous way painters like Vermeer rendered materials: 'I loved that way the Dutch painters have of bringing out minute details like specks of dust and concentrating attention on a tiny spark in the darkness. This is where their great power to fascinate lies.'⁴³ And yet Vermeer left no discernible traces in Miró's work; the flat, sharp-edged style of the *Dutch Interiors* even implied a radical rejection of his illusionism.⁴⁴ The work of Jan Steen, who at that time was represented by eleven paintings in the Mauritshuis collection, appears to have touched a deeper chord.⁴⁵

Steen's reputation had grown considerably after 1926. The exhibition staged that year in the Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal in Leiden to mark the tercentenary of his birth had been a success, attracting more than 42,000 visitors as well as a good deal of interest in the Netherlands and neighbouring countries. The following year saw the publication of two substantial and, in terms of reproductions, impressive books: *Jan Steen* by A. Bredius and *40 Meesterwerken van Jan Steen* by F. Schmidt-Degener and H.E. van Gelder. The latter monograph also appeared in English and French editions.⁴⁶ Miró may have

Fig. 7
 JAN HAVICKSZ
 STEEN, *Portrait*
of Jacoba Maria
van Wassenaer,
known as 'The
Poultry Yard', 1660.
 Oil on canvas,
 106.6 x 80.8 cm.
 Royal Picture Gallery
 Mauritshuis, The
 Hague (inv. no. 166).

known the French edition of this monograph, and this could have been an added incentive to study the painting of the Golden Age in Holland. Steen's work certainly seems to reflect the pattern of interests that Miró and Ernst developed in the twenties, particularly because animals were so emphatically part of the action. This definitely chimed with the direction Ernst's work took in the 1925-27 period. 'I decided to erect a monument to the birds,' he wrote, the italics alluding to the titles of his paintings: 'It was the beautiful season. It was the time of serpents, earth worms, plume-flowers, scale-flowers, tubular flowers. It was the

time when the forest flew away and the flowers struggled under water.'⁴⁷ In the early twenties Miró had also started to look very intently at the animals and plants on and around the family farm in Montroig and give them a permanent place in his paintings. *The Farm* of 1921-22 (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.) meant a particularly great deal to him: '[It] was a résumé of my entire life in the country. I wanted to put everything I loved about the country into that canvas – from a huge tree to a little snail.'⁴⁸ Jan Steen's large *Portrait of Jacoba Maria van Wassenaer, known as 'The Poultry Yard'* of 1660 must have struck him immediately in



Fig. 8
 JOAN MIRÓ,
The Tilled Field
(La terre labourée),
 1923-24.
 Oil on canvas,
 66 x 92.7 cm.
 Solomon
 R. Guggenheim
 Museum, New York
 (inv. no. 72.2020).

Fig. 9
 JOAN MIRÓ,
The Family, 1924.
 Charcoal, chalk,
 and conté crayon
 on flocked paper,
 741 x 104 mm.
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New
 York (Gift of Mr and
 Mrs Jan Mitchell,
 inv. no. 395.1961),
 © photo The Museum
 of Modern Art,
 New York/Scala,
 Florence.

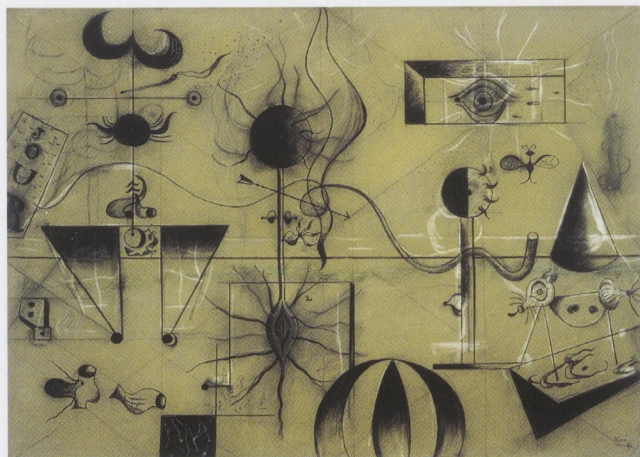


the Mauritshuis, with its great tree and crammed so full of chickens, doves and ducks that it is, to echo Ernst's words, a true 'monument to the birds' (fig. 7).

The Poultry Yard must have seemed to Miró like a distant prefiguration of the familiar and much-loved world he had depicted in *The Farm* and in the

slightly later *The Tilled Field* of 1923-24 (fig. 8): a microcosm in which the life cycles of man, animal and plant are intimately entwined. Of course the differences are legion, but the similarities – particularly between *The Tilled Field* and *The Poultry Yard* – are so great that it is safe to assume they struck Miró in the Mauritshuis: in both compositions a young animal is feeding, there is a little dog nearby, and a bird flies obliquely to the left above it. The lively scene under the tree is very similar, while the 'all-seeing' eye, the spider and the ear attached to the trunk of the tree in *The Tilled Field* have their counterparts in Steen's peacock. And in the exact centre of the composition stands the house that is the focal point of these worlds.

Unlike *The Poultry Yard*, *The Tilled Field* has virtually no humans in it. They do, though, figure in another, related work, *The Family of May* 1925 (fig. 9). Several of the motifs in the painting recur in this drawing, among



them the 'all-seeing' eye, which now looks through a window in the wall, and the newspaper ('jour'nal), which has been shifted to the left. Three elements that feature prominently in the composition of *The Tilled Field* – the tree on the right, the suckling mare in the middle with the house above it and the extraordinary flagstaff on the left – have become three figures in *The Family*: the mother in the centre, the father on the left and the son on the right. Strikingly, they are in the same position as the girl, the figure of the farmer and the servant in Steen's painting, and this similarity, too, is unlikely to have escaped Miró.

It is, however, extremely improbable that Miró was already familiar with *The Poultry Yard* when he was working on *The Tilled Field* or *The Family*. There is nothing to suggest that he had a publication with a reproduction in it at that time and he does not refer to 17th-century Dutch painting until after his trip to the Netherlands, so the visit to the Mauritshuis must have caused a shock of recognition – *The Poultry Yard* was so close to his own experience and corresponded so strikingly in so many respects with his own work. It may well have prompted the particular interest in the genre painting of the Golden Age he evinced during the continuation of his journey.

Amsterdam

In the Rijksmuseum, which Miró must have visited around 14 May,⁴⁹ two related genre paintings – Jan Steen's *Dancing Lesson* and Hendrick Sorgh's *Lute Player* – must in any event have attracted more than his passing attention. Miró went to a museum which, after his appointment as director in 1921, Frederik Schmidt-Degener had remodelled with the audacity and energy that seem to have characterized the roaring twenties, drastically modernizing an institution that was still deeply rooted in 19th-century notions of what a museum should be. One of the features of moder-

nity, wrote Peter Conrad in the introduction to his comprehensive cultural history of the 20th century, is that it achieves its freedom 'by anachronistically rearranging the past'.⁵⁰ It was in this spirit that Schmidt-Degener set to work. The way in which he took the liberty of rearranging the collection was as typical as it was radical. Admittedly not anachronistically, and roughly organized by 'school', he imposed a strictly symmetrical order on utterly incongruent genres – portrait, still life, landscape, marine, interior. With the most important work as the focal point in the middle and a mirror-image composition of 'wings', the walls showing 17th-century painting were transformed into something akin to geometric Rorschach tests (figs. 10, 11). Disparate pictures were compelled to act as pendants by replacing the old frames with uniform new ones and hanging the paintings opposite one another. It was even considered acceptable to make minor changes to their size.⁵¹

From a modern perspective, paradoxically, Schmidt-Degener's relentlessly symmetrical arrangement often looks quite unbalanced and even random, but at the time visitors saw the metamorphosis as refreshing; in consequence enthusiasm for the collection and the museum grew at home and abroad.⁵² The 19th-century academic approach that subordinated the individual work to stylistic trends by regarding it as a sort of link in a chain had made way for an emphasis on the individual perception of the work of art, which authors like Johannes Itten had championed. The shotgun marriages into which paintings were forced were intended specifically to throw the separate and distinct qualities of each picture into sharper relief. The barest minimum of information, tucked away inconspicuously on the frame, likewise did not detract from the aesthetic contemplation of the work. It was experiencing the work of art, not knowing about it, that was

paramount. In spirit, if not in form, the Rijksmuseum galleries were as modern and certainly as innovative as the intuitive, asymmetrical structure of Arp's exhibition in Brussels, which Miró had seen a few days earlier (fig. 6).

The insistent symmetry in the Rijksmuseum may well have opened Miró's eyes to an unexpected aspect of the paintings by Sorgh and Steen – that in a way they could be seen as pendants. In terms of composition they are more or less mirror images, for the musicians in the two paintings (the lute player and the girl playing the shawm) turn to the viewer's right and left respectively. And the paintings correspond in other ways, too. In both pictures the protagonists are at a table; in both pictures there is a jug on the right and a white cloth hanging over the edge of the table. The dog and cat that are part of the action in Steen's painting, on the other hand, lie quietly in Sorgh's work. In both pictures the scene is played out against a background in which different motifs tell a parallel story – the view of the canal and the painting of Pyramus and Thisbe in the Sorgh, and the man looking through the window, flanked by a chimney breast and a lute, in the Steen.

The similarities were evidently not enough for Schmidt-Degener to use the works as 'pendants' in a composition – and indeed they are too different in size and proportions for this to work. *The Lute Player* hung in a gallery where Jan Steen was the focus and was given Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Reading Aloud* as its 'pendant'. These two paintings, virtually the same size, were framed identically; Steen's *Feast of St Nicholas* hung between them (figs. 10, 32). An English guide written in 1927 provides a good impression of the works on display: 'The ... room contains a number of jovial scenes by Jan Steen, which show the different and various aspects of his art. Often he used himself and his family as the actors in little domestic festivals. The



"Sick Maiden" ... is one of the most attractive character studies ... the suspicious little doctor and his elusive patient being depicted with great human insight. The colour scheme is perfect and original, the grey and yellow of her dress contrasting with the blue-green of the bed-curtains in the quiet background. Steen's remarkable skill as a draughtsman is seen in the woman standing in the centre of a homely room and raising her arm to feed the parrot. Another of Steen's more famous works is the "Feast of St Nicholas", Steen exulting in his cleverness in catching the little flaws of early childhood. "The Village Wedding" on the contrary illustrates the childishness of the grown-up people indulging in harmless pleasure after the bridal dinner, the musicians playing and the dance commencing. A remarkable feature of this room is the stately self-portrait by Jan Steen, just the face we would expect after having seen his pictorial comedies, a keen and rather ironical observer of human weakness and natural enjoyments.⁵³

Fig. 10

Room 255c at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, late 1920s. Top: LUDOLF DE JONGH, *Portrait of Aletta van Ravensberg*, 1668 (inv. no. SK-A-197). Bottom row from left to right: HENDRICK MARTENSZ SORGH, *The Lute Player*, 1661 (inv. no. SK-A-495); JAN HAVICKSZ STEEN, *The Feast of St Nicholas*, c. 1663-65 (inv. no. SK-A-385) and QUIRINGH GERRITZ VAN BREKELNKAM, *Reading Aloud*, c. 1650-68 (inv. no. SK-A-673).



Children Teaching a Cat to Dance, known as 'The Dancing Lesson' hung in the room devoted to the J.S.H. van de Poll Bequest, from which the painting came, and was part of a large 'composition'. It hung to the right of the much-discussed *Portrait of Elisabeth Bas*, which had been attributed to Ferdinand Bol not long before. Rather than another interior, Schmidt-Degener had selected as its 'pendant' on the left Allaert van Everdingen's *Swedish Landscape with a Watermill*, which was essentially the same size and had a similar frame (fig. 11).

However, the differences in size and proportions between *The Lute Player* and *The Dancing Lesson* were entirely eliminated in the two postcards of these paintings (figs. 12-13). The cards of reproductions of paintings in the Rijksmuseum collection that were available at the time were published by the firm of Stengel & Co in Dresden. This company had a dominant position in Europe as a printer and publisher of top-quality cards, produced in

Fig. 11
Room 235C
(Van de Poll Cabinet)
at the Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam, late 1920s.
Top row from left to
right: NICOLAES
ELIASZ PICKENOY,
*Portrait of
Maerten Rey*, 1627
(inv. no. SK-A-698);
JAN VAN KESSEL,
A Waterfall,
c. 1660-80
(inv. no. SK-A-696);
NICOLAES ELIASZ
PICKENOY, *Portrait
of Maria Joachimsdr
Swartenhont*, 1627
(inv. no. SK-A-699).
Bottom row from left
to right: HENDRIK
MARTENSZ SORGH,
*The Vegetable
Market*, 1662
(inv. no. SK-A-717);
ALLAERT VAN
EVERDINGEN,
*Swedish Landscape
with a Watermill*, 1655
(inv. no. SK-A-691);

FERDINAND BOL
(attr.), *Portrait of
Elisabeth Jacobsdr
Bas*, c. 1642
(inv. no. SK-A-714);
JAN HAVICKSZ
STEEN, *Children
Teaching a Cat to
Dance*, known as
'The Dancing
Lesson', c. 1665-68
(inv. no. SK-A-718);
HENDRIK JACOBSZ
DUBBELS, *Calm Sea*,
c. 1650-76
(inv. no. SK-A-687).

Fig. 12
Postcard of HENDRIK
MARTENSZ SORGH,
The Lute Player, 1661,
used for *Dutch
Interior (I)* (fig. 2).
Chromolithograph
on cardboard,
14 x 9.2 cm,
published by
Stengel & Co.
G.m.b.H. Dresden
(cat. no. 29113),
c. 1920s.
The Museum of
Modern Art, New York
(Gift of Joan Miró,
inv. no. SC117.1973),
© photo The Museum
of Modern Art, New
York/Scala, Florence.

various languages for the international market and designed not just to send but as collectibles and to put up on the wall. As the puff in the Stengel catalogue put it: 'Since each card can be purchased individually, anyone can acquire a "Private Picture Gallery" inexpensively. With reusable picture frames, it is possible to decorate the walls with different cards from time to time.'⁵⁴ The two cards Miró used for the *Dutch Interiors* were part of a series of hundreds of masterpieces in dozens of important collections. There were fourteen cards with illustrations of works in the Rijksmuseum collection.⁵⁵ The company used the tried and tested method of chromolithography, which produced a high-quality print, for the reproductions. The manual nature of the technique meant that the proportions of the original work of art could be adjusted such that the standard

size of the card could be used to best advantage without impinging on the composition. Stengel's manipulation of *The Dancing Lesson* transformed the work from almost square to an upright rectangle, making the mirror symmetry with *The Lute Player* even more marked. The floor in both paintings was extended slightly. By making them the same size in this way Stengel effectively made them one another's counterpart – just as Schmidt-Degener constructed his 'pendants' in the galleries.

Montroig

Half a century later Miró recalled that he started processing his impressions as soon as he got back from his trip to Holland. 'I bought a lot of postcards featuring reproductions of their most typical and most famous paintings. When I got back to Paris, I decided to copy some of them in my own style ...'⁵⁶

Fig. 13
Postcard of JAN HAVICKSZ STEEN, *Children Teaching a Cat to Dance*, known as 'The Dancing Lesson', c. 1665-68, used for *Dutch Interior (II)* (fig. 4).
Chromolithograph on cardboard, 14 x 9.2 cm, published by Stengel & Co., Dresden (cat. no. 29114), c. 1920s. Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (Gift of Joan Miró, inv. no. FJM3142).



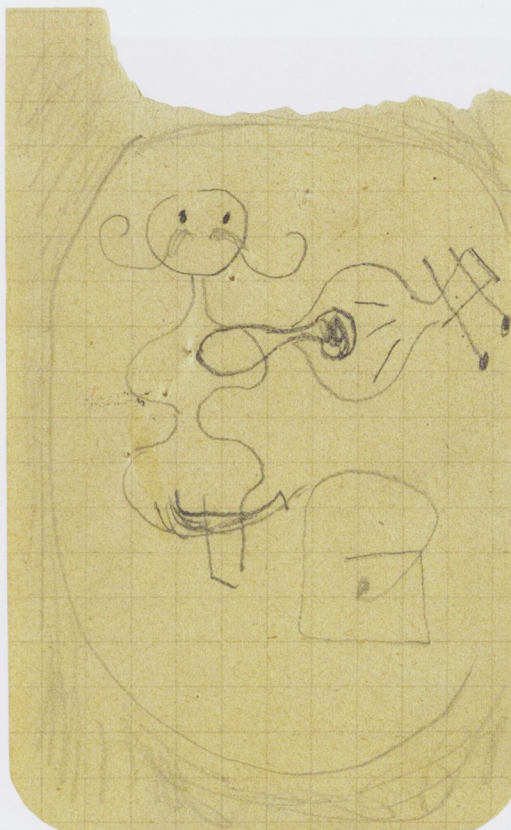


Fig. 2
JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch Interior (1)*, 1928.

Fig. 14
JOAN MIRÓ,
Study for Dutch Interior (1), 1928.
Pencil on graph paper, 91 x 57 mm.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
(Gift of Joan Miró, inv. no. 119.1973),
© photo The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

Fig. 15
JOAN MIRÓ,
Study for Dutch Interior (1), 1928.
Pencil on graph paper, 81 x 57 mm.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
(Gift of Joan Miró, inv. no. 120.1973),
© photo The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

There are two little sketches of a lute player on small sheets of squared paper that must have come from a pocket notebook, which suggests that he got his first ideas down on paper while he was on the way back from Amsterdam (figs. 14, 15). On 17 May he was back in his studio in Paris, in early June he went to Barcelona and a month later he arrived in Montroig.⁵⁷ During these two months, his first impressions led to a firm plan to make five paintings: the set of three *Dutch Interiors*, *The Potato* and *Still Life with Lamp*. On 16 August 1928 he told Gasch: 'What I am doing now requires an endurance comparable perhaps to the time I was doing *The Farm* ... My aim is to execute five canvases here, all of the same calibre as the one I am finishing. I believe it will be a pretty impressive effort.'⁵⁸



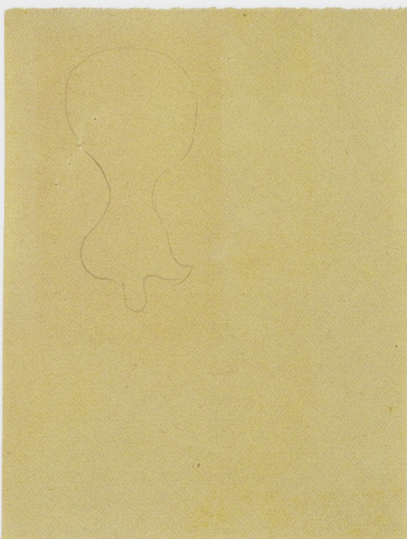


Fig. 16

JOAN MIRÓ, *Study for Dutch Interior (1)*, 1928. Pencil on paper, 153 x 117 mm. The Museum of Modern Art,

New York (Gift of Joan Miró, inv. no. 121.1973), © photo The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

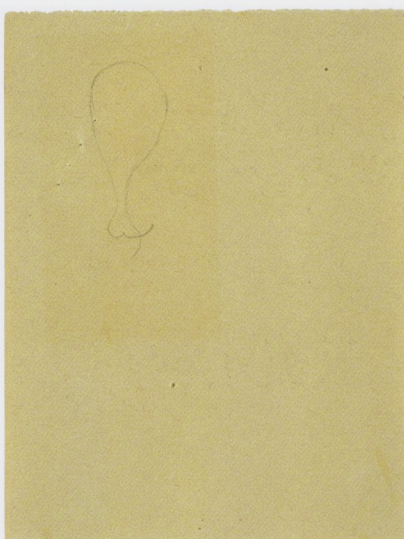


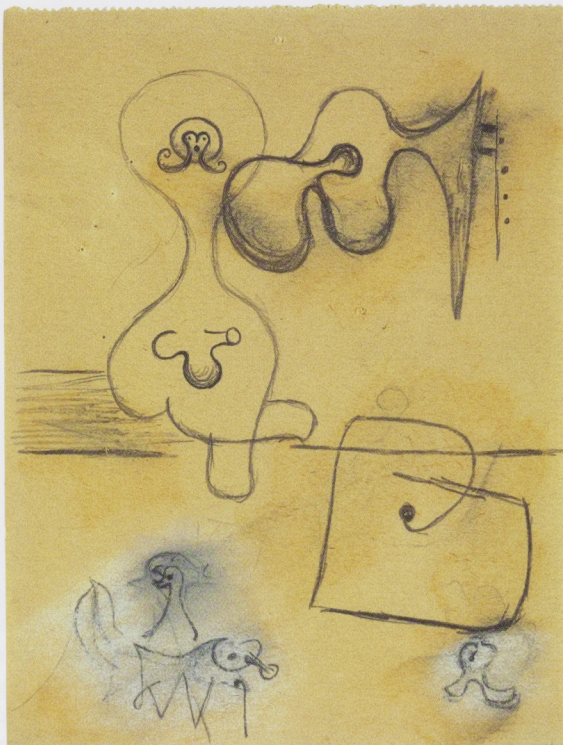
Fig. 17

JOAN MIRÓ, *Study for Dutch Interior (1)*, 1928. Pencil on paper, 153 x 117 mm. The Museum of Modern Art,

New York (Gift of Joan Miró, inv. no. 122.1973), © photo The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

Fig. 18
JOAN MIRÓ, *Study for Dutch Interior (1)*, 1928. Pencil and white chalk on paper, 153 x 118 mm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (Gift of Joan Miró, inv. no. 123.1973), © photo The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

Although Miró gave his set of three paintings the generic title *Dutch Interior*, the musical theme of the two 17th-century examples seems to have been his specific point of departure. One indication of this is the note 'motif' he jotted on the back of the postcard of *The Lute Player*.⁵⁹ He also concentrated on the figure of the lute player in all the – known – sketches for *Dutch Interior (1)* (figs. 14–20). In the smallest sketches the musician holds the instrument away from him and even looks as if he wants to smash it (figs. 14, 15). In one of the sketches there are rudimentary indications of the dog and the table, in the other an oval frame has been drawn around the lute player. Miró evidently considered other aspects of the painting as secondary, since he ignored the interior, the view of the canal and the listening woman at this stage. In one of these two sketches, a shape resembling a shoe appears in the place where the cat is lying.



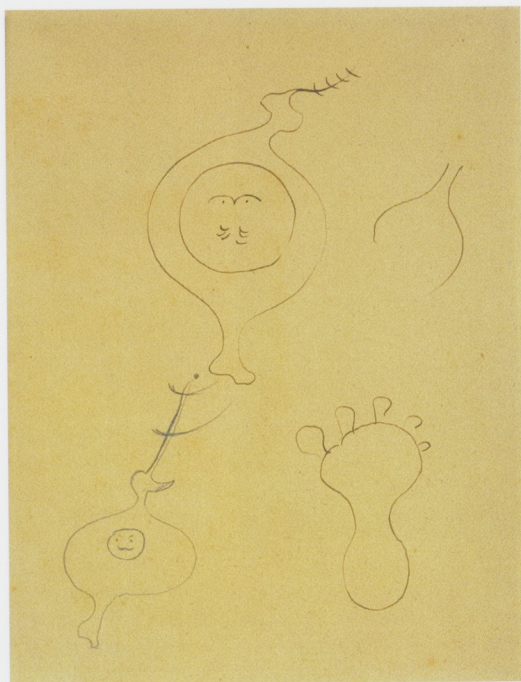


Fig. 19
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (I)*, 1928.
Pencil and ink
on paper,
217 x 167 mm.
The Museum

of Modern Art,
New York
(Gift of Joan Miró,
inv. no. 124.1973),
© photo The Museum
of Modern Art, New
York/Scala, Florence.

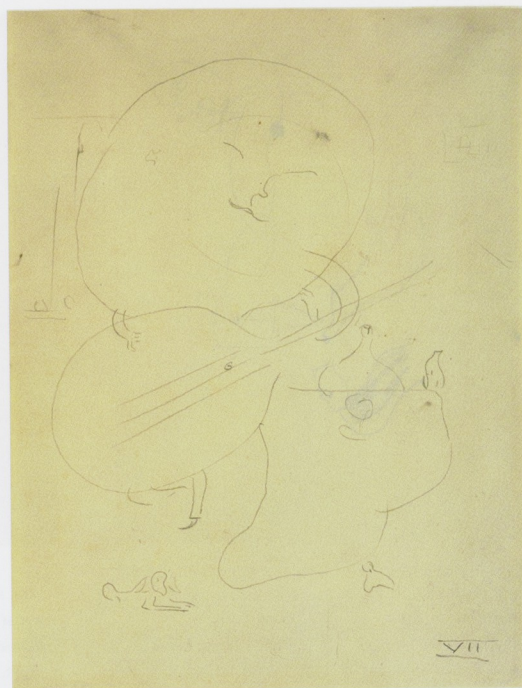


Fig. 20
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (I)*, 1928
(recto).
Pencil on paper,
267 x 204 mm.
The Museum

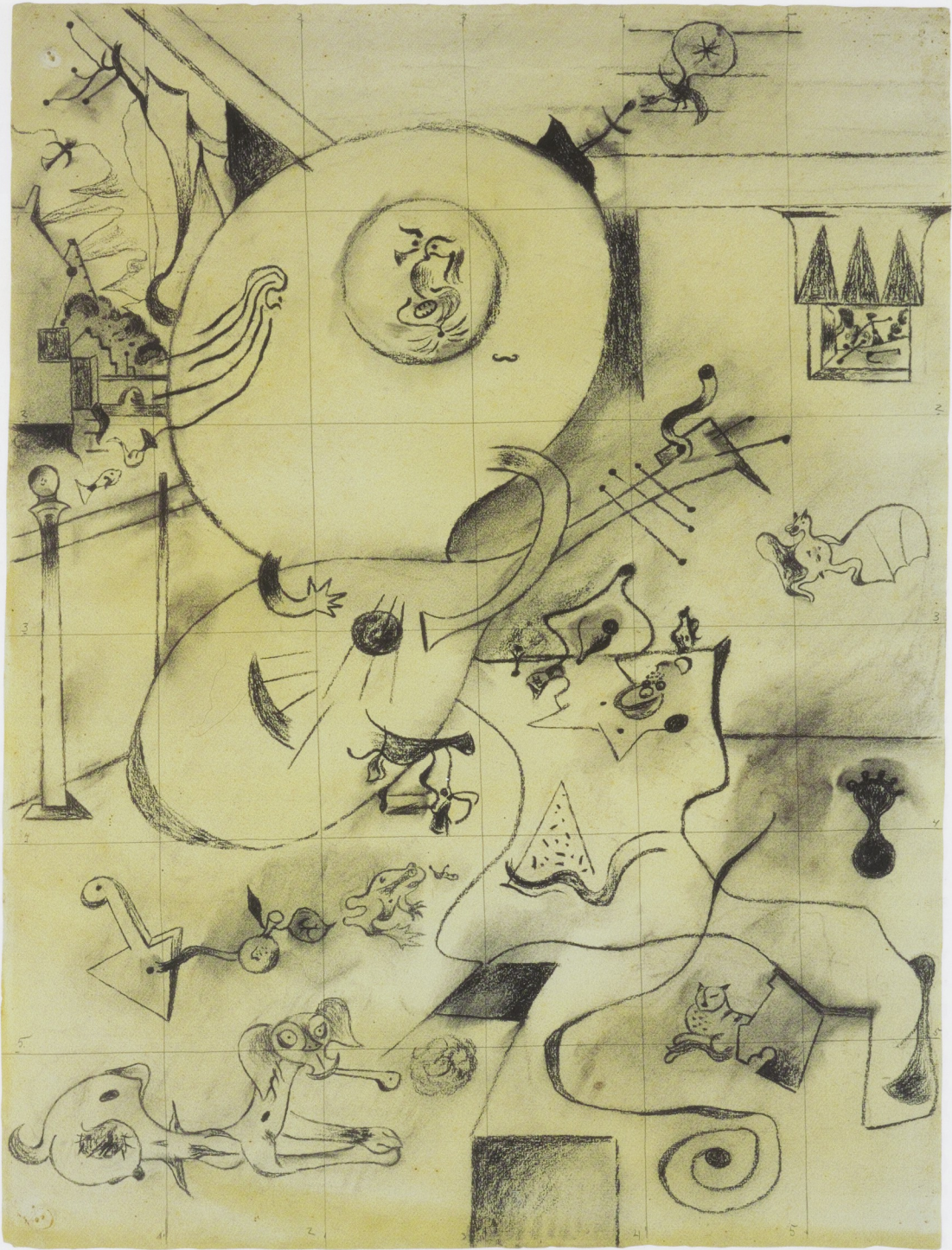
of Modern Art,
New York
(Gift of Joan Miró,
inv. no. 125.1973-1a-b),
© photo The Museum
of Modern Art, New
York/Scala, Florence.

In two other sketches he focused on the outline of the lute player, including his crossed legs (figs. 16, 17), as he also drew it in the sketches on squared paper. This led on to a drawing that is more fully resolved (fig. 18). Miró evidently took an erotic view of Sorgh's painting, witness the lute player's prominent genitalia, echoing the organic trumpet form the lute has assumed. The listening woman and the table have now been definitively transformed into a linear shape with a knob at the end, while the shoe here is unmistakably based on the rather hard, graphic character that the cat had acquired in the postcard (fig. 12). A year later Miró used these initial sketches and the drawing as the starting point for a *Collage* in which

the musical and erotic aspects are much more explicitly linked than they are in the paintings (fig. 33).

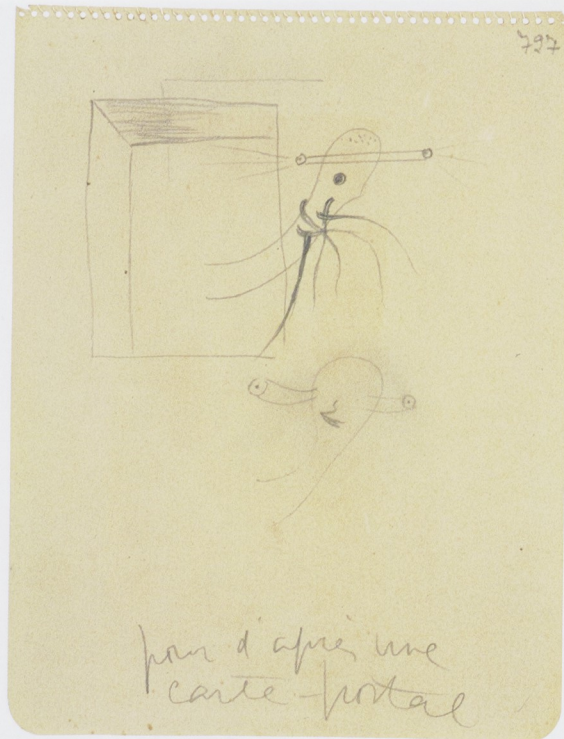
In another sketch the shoe turned into a foot (fig. 19), which was to return later in the painting. The composition was given its final form in the largest sketch, dominated by the huge balloon shape of the lute player's head (fig. 20). During its working up in the detailed preliminary drawing, the composition suddenly acquired a surprising wealth of secondary details, in the sphere of 'serpents, earth worms' that Max Ernst recalled from these years and 'the insects, which have always interested me a great deal,' as Miró put it (fig. 21).⁶⁰ All at once the dog and cat are joined by birds flying in and out and a bat fluttering around, a

Fig. 21
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Preliminary
drawing for Dutch
Interior (I)*, 1928.
Charcoal and
pencil on paper,
626 x 473 mm.
Museum of Modern
Art, New York
(Gift of Joan Miró,
inv. no. 126.1973),
© photo The Museum
of Modern Art, New
York/Scala, Florence.



swan and a fish swim in the canal and a frog tries to snap up a little snail – a bustling scene reminiscent of *The Poultry Yard*. The listening woman has merged into the table and everything on it, a knife used to peel an apple lies on the ground, the cat reclines contentedly under a bench and the dog has been given a bone that looks like a pipe.

Working on the painting, Miró wrote to Gasch on 2 August: 'What I'm doing now is different from the past – *Enormément poussé* – however, it is parallel to *The Tilled Field* [fig. 8] and the *Carnival of Harlequin* [1924-25].'⁶¹ From the outset, Miró evidently associated the *Dutch Interiors* with his paintings of the first half of the 1920s. This return to his methods of that period seems to have been prompted in part because he had been immensely impressed by the detailed handling of textures and fabrics he had seen in the paintings in The Hague and Amsterdam,⁶² and in part because he recognized motifs from his earlier work in Steen's and Sorgh's genre works. Aside from the similarities between *The Poultry Yard* and *The Tilled Field* there are, for instance, parallels between *The Family*, *The Dancing Lesson* and *The Lute Player* (figs. 1, 3, 9). To start with there is the dog, part of Miró's family scene and in both the Steen and the Sorgh. The all-seeing eye looking in through a window in the back wall in *The Family* is a reflection of Steen's old man peering through the window at the children and the 'dancing cat'. This motif seems to have caught Miró's attention straight away: 'after a postcard' he noted on a sketch of a similar figure sticking his head through a window (fig. 22).⁶³ There are equally striking resemblances between Sorgh's painting and *Carnival of Harlequin* (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo), to which Miró also explicitly referred. Here too, the central figure is a musician, flanked on the right by a window in the wall reminiscent of the little painting of



Pyramus and Thisbe, and a table with a white cloth hanging over the edge and a cat lying underneath it.

Miró's second *Dutch Interior* was painted on the same size canvas as the first, so that he followed the format imposed by the postcards (fig. 4).⁶⁴ The process of resolving the diverse motifs seems to have been very different, though, as the various sketches reveal. This time, instead of concentrating on the principal motif and adding elaborate details at the end, as he did in the 'miromorphosis' of Sorgh's painting, he worked out the different motifs in four different sketches.⁶⁵ Steen's little dog became a chimerical creature pierced with arrows which – modelled to some extent on the dog in *The Family* – pisses and defecates simultaneously (figs. 9, 23). The girl playing the shawm was contained in a constricted outline and dissected in sweeping folds (fig. 24). In another sketch the cat becomes a little dancer

Fig. 22
JOAN MIRÓ,
Study for Dutch Interior (II), 1928
Pencil on paper,
180 x 136 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM797).



Fig. 23
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (II)*, 1928
Pencil on paper,
218 x 168 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM798).

Fig. 4
JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch
Interior (II)*, 1928.

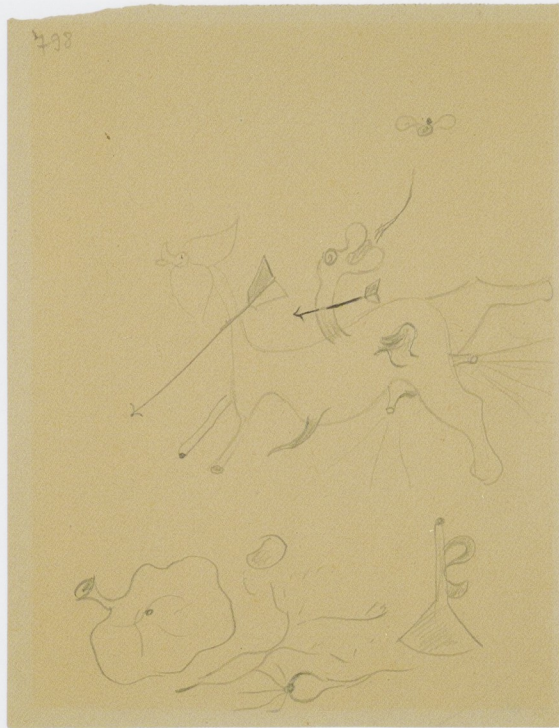


Fig. 24
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (II)*, 1928
Pencil on paper,
218 x 168 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM799).

– in one variant topless and wearing a short skirt – and the man holding the animal turns into a sort of Cyclops with long, sinuous arms (fig. 25). The fourth and final sketch is a study of various jugs and stools and the saucepan leaning against a chair. By adding a head and tail – analogous to the lugs of the pewter bowl standing on the chair – Miró transformed the pan into a fish with a long handle to which a miniature chair is attached (fig. 26).

The various motifs were used without many changes in the final composition. Here, Miró remained closer to his starting point than he had in *Dutch Interior (I)*; there are no additions and all the original motifs in Steen's painting are identifiable and readable (figs. 13, 27). Nevertheless, *The Dancing Lesson* has totally mutated. Two long serpentine shapes now spring from the little dog's body, enclosing the figures and ending in a spider and a triangular 'blade' like the one in *Dutch*



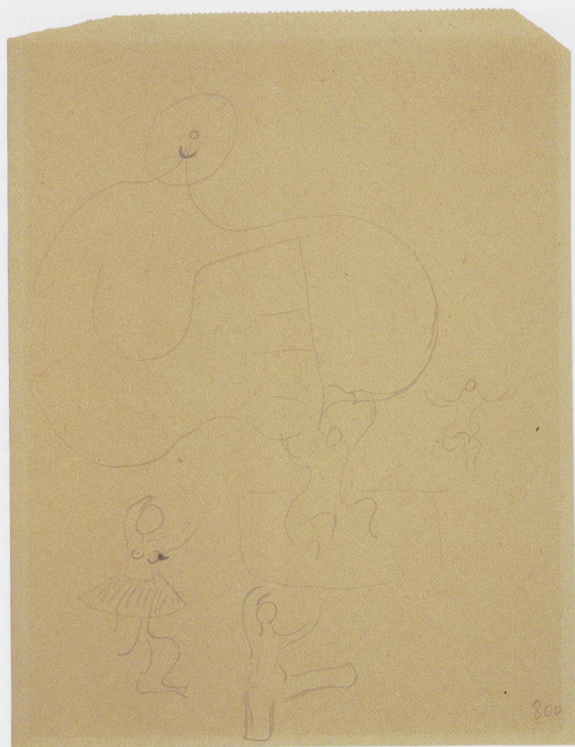


Fig. 25
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (II)*, 1928
Pencil on paper,
218 x 168 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM800).

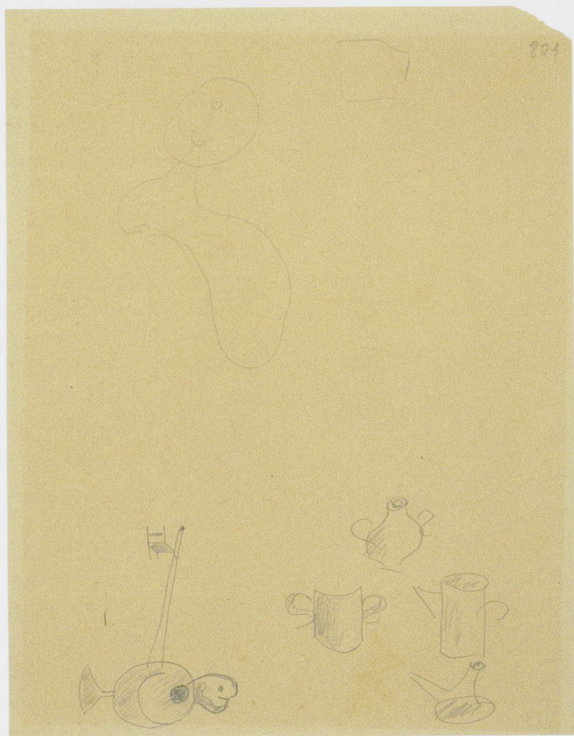


Fig. 26
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (II)*, 1928
Pencil on paper,
218 x 168 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM801).

Fig. 27
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Preliminary
drawing for Dutch
Interior (II)*, 1928.
Charcoal and
pencil on paper,
616 x 475 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM802).

Interior (I). The spider and the black square beside it are in turn the result of the change experienced by the man in the window (fig. 22), and the cat has undergone a complete metamorphosis and become a geometrical figure. Miró has transformed the podgy little boy laughing uproariously at the cat's enforced antics in Steen's painting into a giant frowning face in a form strongly reminiscent of the reliefs and paintings Arp had exhibited at L'Époque a few months earlier (fig. 6).

A Musical Triptych?

Miró had put immense effort into the third painting in the *Dutch Interiors* series (fig. 5), as he told René Gaffé on 19 June 1929 when he bought the work: 'I am very happy that the *Interior* belongs to you ... You cannot imagine the drama the painting of that canvas represents for me, a canvas that has an enormous value as a *struggle*, a *human struggle* in my





Fig. 5
JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch
Interior (III)*, 1928.

career.⁶⁶ We know far less about the background to the creation of this painting than we do about *Dutch Interior (I)* and *(II)*. Because Miró had used 17th-century examples for the first two paintings, authors have sometimes assumed that there must also have been an as yet unknown source in Dutch genre painting.⁶⁷

In 1961 Dupin described *Dutch Interior (III)* as 'nothing more or less than a woman giving birth to a goat'.⁶⁸ With some stretch of the imagination a goat's head can be made out in the horned form in the centre of the painting, above the red wedge, but the notion that there could be a 'satanic' example of this kind in the art of the Golden Age is not very plausible. A more likely source would be Hieronymus Bosch, whose work certainly interested Miró when he saw it in the Prado in July 1928.⁶⁹ Similarities to Bosch's work had already struck contemporaries. As the Paris correspondent of *De Telegraaf* observed drily: 'Miró ... is a great-grandson of Hieronymus Bosch.'⁷⁰ There does not, however, appear to be a specific and convincing relationship between any painting by Bosch and *Dutch Interior (III)*, nor does there seem to be a direct connection with an unknown 17th-century Dutch example.⁷¹

In 1965 Miró gave an explanation for *Dutch Interior (III)* that shed a different light on the painting and its creation. Although Carolyn Lanchner drew attention to this explanation in 1993, it has not so far played a role of



Fig. 28
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Study for Dutch
Interior (III)*, 1928.
Pencil on paper,
218 x 168 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM794).

any significance in the discussions of this painting and the series to which it belongs. On the occasion of the inventorying of the Marx-Schoenborn Collection, of which *Dutch Interior (III)* was then a part, Miró wrote to Monroe Wheeler, head of the exhibitions and publications department at the Museum of Modern Art: '*Dutch Interior [III]* does not relate to any single picture, being a sort of résumé of the ones in this series.'⁷² The painting can thus be seen as a synthesis of different motifs that were explored in the two earlier works.

The white tablecloth in *Dutch Interior (I)*, for instance, returns in broad outline and reversed in the light, meandering form in the middle. It ends on the left in a bluish-black shape pierced by one of the balusters from Sorgh's banister. To this Miró now attached the plume on the lute

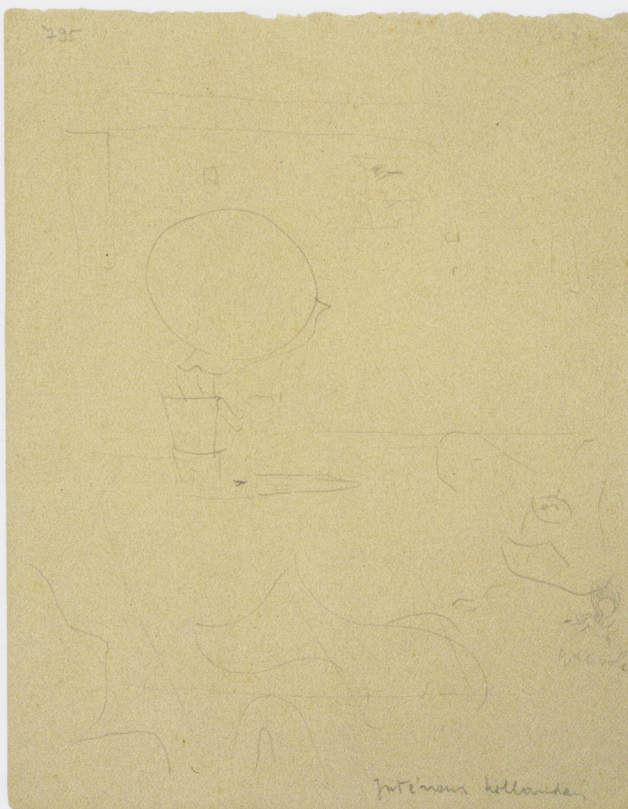
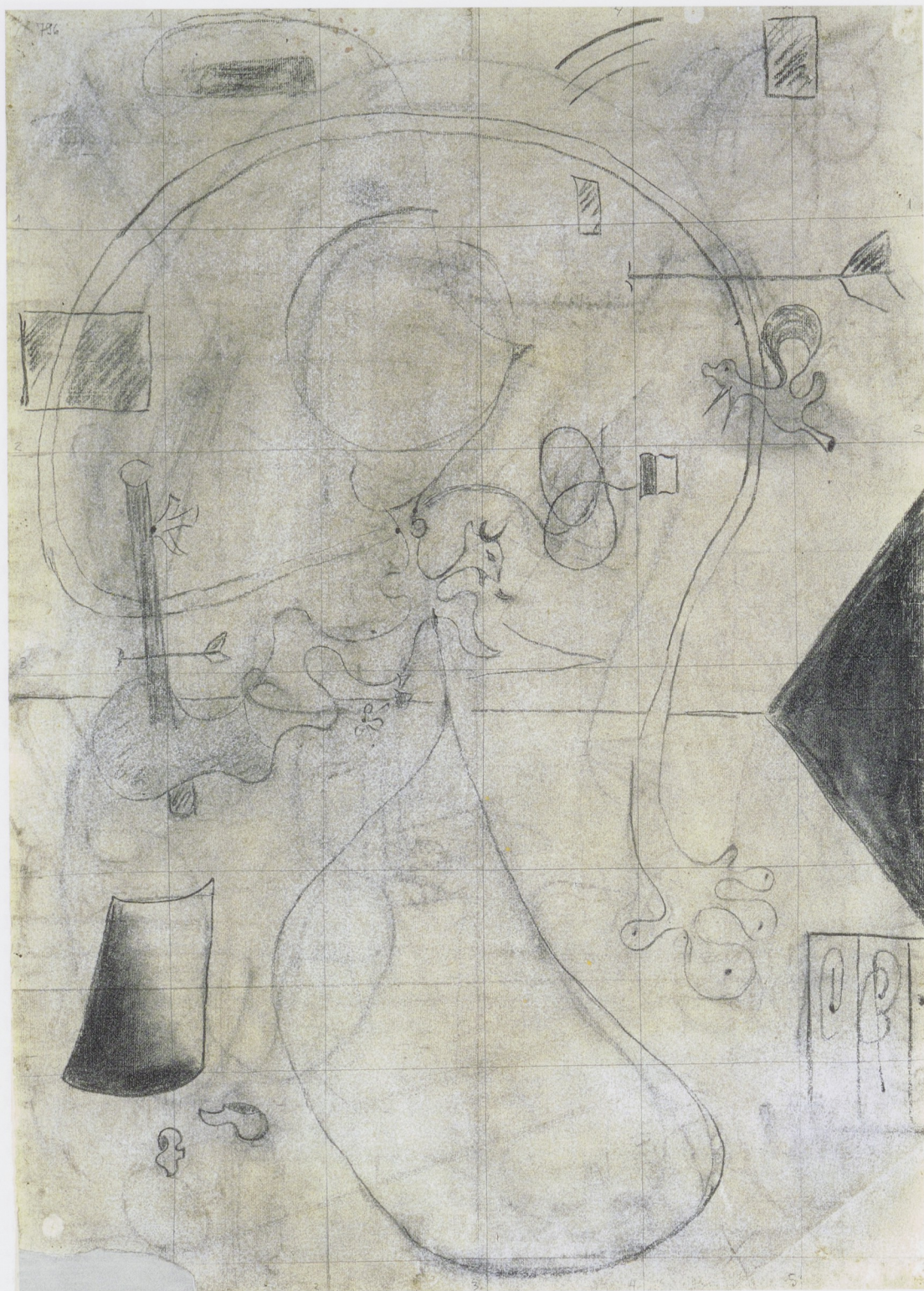


Fig. 29
JOAN MIRÓ,
Study for *Dutch
Interior (III)*, 1928.
Pencil on paper,
273 x 211 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM795).

player's hat and painted an arrow like that in *Dutch Interior (II)* through it; the blue rectangle above it suggests the remnants of the view of the canal. In *Dutch Interior (III)* the book of sheet music that lies on the table in front of the lute player floats on a fine thread towards the flying dog. The position of the unattached foot in *Dutch Interior (I)* corresponds with the hand fastened to a serpentine similar to that in *Dutch Interior (II)*, likewise pierced by an arrow. The small black square upper right, which is a rudimentary window from Steen's painting, also found a place in *Dutch Interior (III)*.

There are two known sketches for *Dutch Interior (III)* which indicate that the main outline of the composition was essentially fixed right away. The interior from *The Dancing Lesson* can just about be identified in the first rough sketch, with a window in the

back wall and a little dog that already had wings. 'Que vole' – he flies, Miró noted on the sketch. The balloon shape with the point corresponds to the face and hat of the young man making the cat dance (fig. 29). In the second sketch the central figure has been drawn twice and elaborated with various details. That this is a woman, as Dupin wrote, is suggested by the breast Miró drew on the meandering body, which he took from one of the sketches in which he turned the cat into a topless ballerina (figs. 25, 28). What Dupin interpreted as a goat (to the right of the breast) appears rather to have been derived from the cat in Steen's painting. The linear construction in the right foreground, which originated in the table in Sorgh's painting, seems to have been taken from the very first sketches for *Dutch Interior (I)* (fig. 15).



One of the most striking aspects of *Dutch Interior (III)* is the red form with two small shoes beside it. Miró had already reworked the folds of the girl's skirt in one of the sketches for *Dutch Interior (II)* (fig. 24). This time he emphasized its outline, in the same way as he transformed the head of the lute player and the young man with the dancing cat into large, empty shapes. The girl's blue skirt has become as red as her stockings, and she appears to have kicked off her shoes. Shoes like these frequently feature in 17th-century Dutch interiors, for example in *The Feast of St Nicholas*, which was hanging in the gallery next to *The Lute Player* in 1928 (figs. 10, 32), but Miró had already drawn a similar shoe and sock himself in *The Family* (fig. 9).

As well as reusing different motifs from the preceding two paintings and the preliminary sketches, Miró also returned to his own earlier work for this painting. The 'rainbow' of three parallel curved lines, for instance, can be found in several drawings and paintings from the 1923-25 period, and even an apparently purely formal element like the dark, curved shape just above the shoes derives from a specific motif. At this point in the composition Miró wrote 'taps de suru' – wine cork – on one of the sketches for *Dutch Interior (III)* (fig. 28), indicating that he wanted to borrow a shape he had previously used in his 1924 work *The Wine Bottle* (Lola Fernández Jiménez Collection).

Most of the motifs in *Dutch Interior (III)* can be traced back to different sources – as, indeed, can the composition as a whole. Miró stayed close to his 17th-century examples in the process of mutation and metamorphosis in the first two paintings in the series, but in the composition of the final work in the series an association with a subject that had been occupying him for some time appears to have been the most important factor. In one of the sketches Miró had already transformed the cat in *The Dancing Lesson* into a ballerina, with prominent breasts and a disproportionately large leg (fig. 25).

Fig. 31

JOAN MIRÓ,
Spanish Dancer, 1924.
Oil, charcoal and
tempera on canvas,
92 x 73 cm.
Private collection.
Photo courtesy The
Museum of Modern
Art, New York.

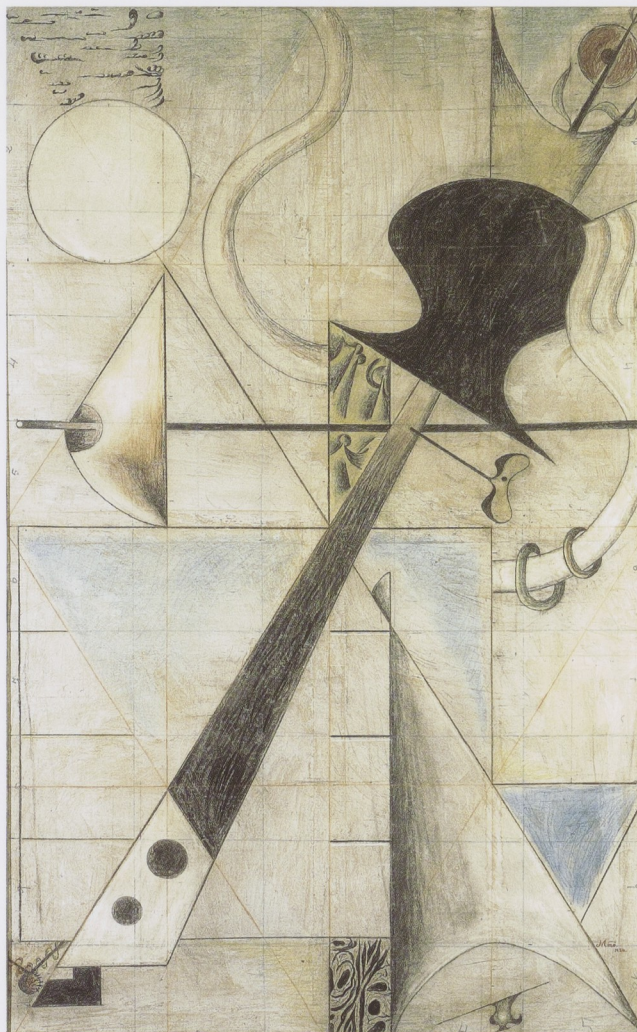


Fig. 30

JOAN MIRÓ,
*Preliminary
drawing for Dutch
Interior (III)*, 1928.
Pencil, charcoal and
pastel on paper,
615 x 475 mm.
Fundació Joan Miró,
Barcelona
(inv. no. FJM796).



Fig. 32
JAN HAVICKSZ
STEEN, *The Feast
of St Nicholas*,
c. 1663-65.
Oil on canvas,
82 x 70.5 cm.
Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam
(inv. no. SK-A-385).

Dancing figures continued to fascinate him throughout the 1920s and led to a steady output of works on the subject. One of the first *Portraits of a Spanish Dancer* dates from 1921 (Musée Picasso, Paris), and he even worked it up in four object collages shortly before he went to the Netherlands. The relationship with *The Spanish Dancer* of 1924 (fig. 31), which was also acquired by René Gaffé, seems to have been of particular significance for *Dutch Interior* (111). As he had for *Dutch Interior* (I) and (II), Miró had worked from an illustration, in this case a photograph of a dancer on the cover of the magazine *La Union ilustrada*.⁷³ The composition of this 1924 work is similar in many ways to that of *Dutch Interior* (111): a vertically placed figure with a pronounced breast, sinuous arms and a large, dark hat. The geometric division of the planes, too, is echoed in *Dutch Interior* (111), in which the background is bisected and there is

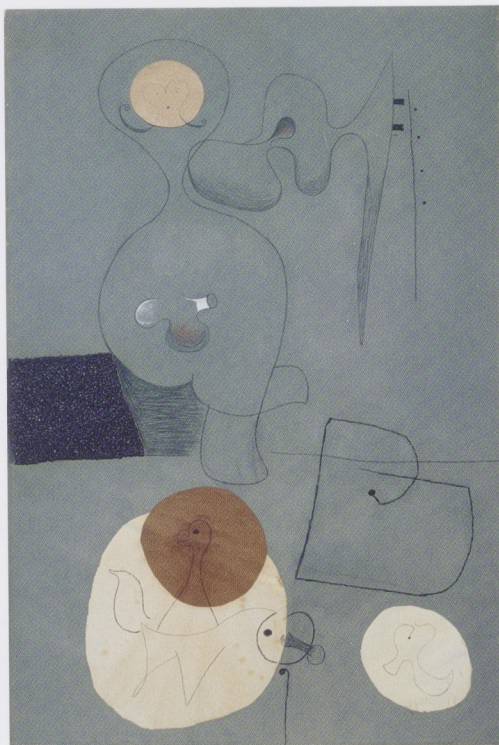


Fig. 33
JOAN MIRÓ,
*Collage (d'après
Interieur hollandais I)*,
summer 1929.
Pencil, conté crayon,
pastel, gouache,
flocked paper, tar
paper, and kraft paper
on flocked paper,
1080 x 710 mm.
Musée National
d'Art moderne –
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris
(inv. no. AM 1995-282),
© photo Collection
Centre Pompidou,
Dist. RMN / Philippe
Migeat.

a prominent triangle on the right. The shoes that have been 'kicked off' and the skirt spilling forwards give every impression that the form with the sweeping arm in *Dutch Interior (III)* is also a dancing figure.

Making music is the subject of both *The Lute Player* and *The Dancing Lesson*. In Miró's eyes, reflecting Schmidt-Degener's rehanging in the Rijksmuseum and the format imposed by the picture postcards, they became one another's 'pendants'. The step

from music as the primary motif in the first two paintings to dance in the third is a small one. The dancing cat that almost disappeared in *Dutch Interior (II)* reappears on the scene as the central figure in the third painting. Viewed thus, the *Dutch Interiors* series becomes an imaginary triptych of musicians accompanying a dancer, reflecting something of Schmidt-Degener's extraordinary symmetrical compositions on the Rijksmuseum walls.



Fig. 2

JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch Interior (I)*, 1928.

Fig. 5

JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch Interior (III)*, 1928.

Fig. 4

JOAN MIRÓ, *Dutch Interior (II)*, 1928.

NOTES

- * All images Joan Miró © Successió Miró, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2010
- 1 Quoted in cat. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, *Joan Miró. Painting and Anti-Painting, 1927-1937* (Anne Umland and Jim Coddington), New York 2008, p. 43.
 - 2 Quoted in Margit Rowell (ed.), *Joan Miro. Selected Writings and Interviews*, New York 1992 (original edition 1986), p. 292.
 - 3 Lluís Permanyer, *The Life of a Passion*, Barcelona 2003, p. 85.
 - 4 Cat. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, *Joan Miró* (Carolyn Lanchner et al.), New York 1993, pp. 391-92 (cat. nos. 77-79).
 - 5 Jacques Dupin, *Joan Miró. Life and Work*, New York [1962], p. 189 (original French edition 1961).
 - 6 William Rubin, *Miro in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art Including Remainder-*

interest and Promised Gifts, New York 1973, pp. 40-45.

- 7 Cat. Venice, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice* (Angelica Zander Rudenstine), New York 1985, pp. 540-45. See also Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands, *Peggy Guggenheim & Frederick Kiesler. The Story of Art of This Century*, New York 2004.
- 8 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 112-13.
- 9 See Rubin 1973, op. cit. (note 6); cat. Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró, *Obra de Joan Miró. Dibuxos, pintura, escultura, ceramica, tèxtils* (Rosa Maria Malet et al.), Barcelona 1988, pp. 115-66 (cat. nos. 406-14).
- 10 Dupin 1962, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 170 ff.; Rubin 1973, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 40-45, 119-20; Pere Gimferrer, *The Roots of Miró*. Barcelona/New York 1993, pp. 130-37, 352-53.

- See also e.g. James Johnson Sweeney, 'Miro', *Art News Annual* 23 (1954), pp. 58-81, 185-88; Walter Erben, *Joan Miró*, Munich 1959, pp. 128-32; James Thrall Soby, *Joan Miró*, New York 1959, pp. 54-60; cat. Paris, Centre Pompidou, *Joan Miró 1917-1934. La Naissance du monde* (Agnès de la Beaumelle, ed.), Paris 2004, cat. nos. 130-37; M.J. Balsach, *Joan Miró. Cosmogonías de un mundo originario (1918-1939)*, Barcelona 2007, pp. 161-75; Umland 2008, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 9, 53 ff.; Charles Palermo, *Fixed Ecstasy. Joan Miró in the 1920s*, University Park, Penn. 2008, pp. 128-38.
- 11 Published in Anna Gramiccia (ed.), *Joan Miró 1893-1983*, Barcelona & Boston 1993, p. 235 (authors' italics).
 - 12 The *Imaginary Portraits* series comprises the *Portrait of Mistress Mills in 1750* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) after an engraving by T.R. Smith of George Engleheart's *Portrait of Mrs Mills* (see Rubin 1973, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 46-50, 121); *Portrait of a Lady in 1820* (private collection) for which Dupin 1962, op. cit. (note 5), p. 195, suggested a reference to Constable; *Portrait of La Fornarina* (private collection) after Raphael's *La Fornarina*; and *Portrait of Queen Louise of Prussia* (Meadows Museum, Dallas) for which two advertisements in *La Veu de Catalunya* of 14 April 1929 served as the point of departure. For a discussion of the whole series see Dupin 1962, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 192-98 and Umland 2008, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 57 ff.
 - 13 See cat. New York, The Drawing Center, *Creative Copies. Interpretative Drawings from Michelangelo to Picasso* (Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann and Carolyn Logan), New York, 1988.
 - 14 Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting. And Other Writings by the Artist and his Friends*, New York 1948, pp. 4 ff.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, p. 6, originally published in *View* (April 1942), no. 20.
 - 16 See Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso. Style and Meaning*, London 2002; cat. Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, *Picasso et les maîtres* (Anne Baldessari et al.), Paris 2008.
 - 17 'Ein Kunstwerk erleben heißt, dieses wiedererleben heißt, sein Wesentliches, das in seiner Form ruht, zu persönlichem Leben erwecken. Das Kunstwerk wird in mir. Wir sagen: Ein Kunstwerk erleben, heißt dieses wiedererschaffen.' Johannes Itten, 'Analysen alter Meister', in: Bruno Adler (ed.), *Utopia. Dokumente der Wirklichkeit*, Weimar 1921 (reprinted Munich 1980), unpag.
 - 18 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 292.
 - 19 Lanchner 1993, op. cit. (note 4), p. 326.
 - 20 'Reeds verleden jaar, het eerste van haar bestaan, heeft deze inrichting ons in kennis gebracht met Duitschers als Hans Arp en Heinrich Campendonck, Max Ernst en Paul Klee, met Russen als Marc Chagall en Ossip Zadkin [sic], met den Italiaan Giorgio de Chirico, met den Spanjaard Joan Miro, voor dien tijd allen zeker geen onbekenden ..., maar die wij, dank zij "l'Époque", beter en beter zijn gaan waarden.'
 - 21 Lanchner 1993, op. cit. (note 4), p. 438; *Johan de Smet, Sint-Martens-Latem en de kunst aan de Leie, 1870-1970*, Tiel & Zwolle 2000, p. 330 n. 81. The show in June 1928 also featured work by Jean Arp, Heinrich Campendonck, Josef Condré, Marc Chagall, Giorgio De Chirico, Max Ernst, Gust De Smet, Paul Klee, René Magritte, Auguste Mamboers, Floris and Oscar Jespers, Frits van den Berghe and Ossip Zadkine.
 - 22 Neil Matheson, 'E.L.T. Mesens - Dada Joker in the Surrealist Pack', *Image & Narrative. Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative*, 6 (6 November 2005), no. 3 (www.imageandnarrative.be, 6 May 2010).
 - 23 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 12. Umland 2008, op. cit. (note 1), p. 325 and p. 352 n. 285, believes that Miró originally moved into Arp's old studio.
 - 24 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), *ibid.* and p. 162.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 265-66.
 - 26 De la Beaumelle 2004, op. cit. (note 10), p. 336, fig. 3.
 - 27 See Emmanuel Guigon, Hans van der Werf and Mariet Willinge (eds.), *De Aubette of de kleur in de architectuur. Een ontwerp van Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Theo van Doesburg*, Rotterdam 2006.
 - 28 Cat. Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum, *Catalogus Voorjaartentoonstelling (De Onafhankelijken. Vereniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars)*, Amsterdam 1930, cat. nos. 12 ('Peinture') and 13-14 ('Collage').
 - 29 'van geen, van niet de minste betekenis!' ... 'een reactie tegen alle natuurlijkheid en menselijkheid'.
 - 30 See Mattie Boom, 'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme in Amsterdam', *Jong Holland* 4 (1988), no. 1, pp. 5-15. Two paintings in the series on Ingres paper can be seen in fig. 9.
 - 31 'met zijn vroolijk-vluggende vlakke kleuren en open lijnstelsels blijkt geeft van een ontegenzeggelijke persoonlijkheid, een der sterkste in een tijdperk, waar zooveel menschen zich zoo vreemd en gewild mogelijk aanstellen om hun innerlijke holheid te verbergen.' See also note 70.

- 32 'twee spookachtige luchtballontjes die – niét met Vondels machtige ketenen – maar met enkele astrale darm-slierten elkander in een griezelige sfeer verbonden houden'; A.E.v.d.T. [A.E. van den Tol], 'Moderne Franse Kunst in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam', *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift*, 39 (1929), no. 78, pp. 359-60; cat. [Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam], *ESAC Expositions selectes d'art contemporain organisées par mme Pétro van Doesburg*, [Amsterdam 1929] cat. no. 49 ('Homme et femme').
- 33 Illustrated in Joan M. Minguet *et al.*, *Joan Miró. Epistolari Català 1911-1945. Volume 1*, Barcelona 2009, p. 350.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 348.
- 35 Amadeu Soberanas, Francesc Fontbona (eds.), *Cartes a J.F. Ràfols (1917/1958)*, [Barcelona] 1994, p. 48.
- 36 Theo and Nelly often went to The Hague, where they met friends and acquaintances at the home of Theo's ex-wife Lena Millius. Nelly's mother also lived in The Hague.
- 37 *ESAC* 1929, op. cit. (note 32). The exhibition opened at the Stedelijk on 2 October 1929 and ran there until 31 October; it then moved to The Hague, where it ran at Pulchri Studio from 10 December 1929 to 5 January 1930. See also Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland 1910-2000. Picasso als pars pro toto*, Amsterdam 2001, pp. 94-96. Almost simultaneously there was an exhibition in the Galerias Dalmau in Barcelona – the 'Exposición de arte moderno nacional y extranjero' – organized by Josep Dalmau and Joaquín Torres García, both of whom were living in Paris at the time. As well as work by Catalan artists like Miró, the show also featured paintings by Piet Mondrian, Jean Arp, Jean Hélion and Theo van Doesburg. See cat. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art & New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, Dalí* (William H. Robinson *et al.*), Cleveland & New Haven 2006, p. 314, and cat. Barcelona, Galerias Dalmau, *Exposición de arte moderno nacional y extranjero*, Barcelona 1929.
- 38 Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), The Hague: Theo van Doesburg Archive, inv. no. 2089. The photographs are actually housed in the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), Rijswijk, inv. nos. 11427-34.
- 39 Miró's use of thin, untextured paint particularly appealed to Van Doesburg. In 1929 he noted after a visit by an artist identified simply as V., who tended to paint thickly:
- 'The work must be lean, or at least give that impression. The material may not intrude. Many believe that power lies in the thickness and heaviness of the handling. But that is a mistake. The power of the inner tension lies not just in the abstraction, i.e. the absence of form in the extension, but also in the abstraction, in the *definition* of the material. It is in this that the charm of Miro's surrealist paintings lies, e.g. in that thing of his I have myself.' ('Het werk moet mager zijn, of althans dien indruk maken. De materie mag zich niet opdringen. Velen meenen dat de kracht schuilt in het vette en logge der factuur. Doch dat is een vergissing. De kracht der innerlijke spanning ligt niet slechts in de abstractie, d.w.z. de afwezigheid van vorm in de uitbreiding, maar ook in de abstractie, in de *begrenzing* van het materiaal. Hierin ligt de bekoring van Miro's surrealistische schilderijen b.v. in het ding dat ik zelf van hem bezit.') *De Stijl* (1932) last issue, p. 23. The work in question has not so far been identified.
- 40 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 97.
- 41 Taken from provenance data in *Joconde. Catalogue des Collections des Musées de France* (www.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/joconde_fr, 10 May 2010).
- 42 In an interview in *La Gaceta Literaria*, 1 July 1928, however, Miró said that he went to the Prado chiefly for the (classical) Spanish painting. Quoted in De la Beaumelle 2004, op. cit. (note 10), p. 338.
- 43 'J'ai été séduit par cette capacité des peintres hollandais de faire ressortir des points minuscules comme des grains de poussière et de concentrer l'attention sur une petite étincelle au milieu de l'obscurité. C'est là leur grand pouvoir de fascination.' Quoted in Dora Vallier, 'Avec Miró', *Cahiers d'Art* (1960), nos. 33-35, p. 168.
- 44 Umland 2008, op. cit. (note 1), p. 57.
- 45 See cat. The Hague, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, *Abridged Catalogue of the Pictures and Sculpture*, The Hague 1923 (5th edition). These catalogues were published regularly from 1899 onwards for foreign visitors. A French edition also appeared in 1899, but it was not reprinted until 1955.
- 46 A. Bredius, *Jan Steen met honderd platen bevattende 101 afbeeldingen in photogravure van zijne beste werken*, Amsterdam 1927; F. Schmidt-Degener and H.E. van Gelder, *40 meesterwerken van Jan Steen afgebeeld in heliogravure, met een karakteristiek van zijn kunst*, Amsterdam 1927, published in English as *Jan Steen. Forty reproductions in photogravure of the artist's principal works*,

- London 1927, and in French as *Quarante chefs-d'oeuvre de Jan Steen reproduits en héliogravure, accompagnés d'un essai sur le caractère de son art*, Paris [1927?].
- 47 Ernst 1948, op. cit. (note 14), p. 9, illustrations on pp. 44 ff.
- 48 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 93.
- 49 Witness the postcard to Josep Francesc Rafols of 14 May 1928, published in Minguet 2009, op. cit. (note 33), p. 350.
- 50 Peter Conrad, *Modern Times, Modern Places. Life & Art in the 20th Century*, London 1998, p. 8.
- 51 Ger Luijten, "De veelheid en de eelheid": een Rijksmuseum Schmidt-Degener', in: *Het Rijksmuseum. Opstellen over de geschiedenis van een nationale instelling. Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 35*, Weesp 1985, pp. 351-429: 367-68; Gijs van der Ham, *200 jaar Rijksmuseum. Geschiedenis van een nationaal symbool*, Zwolle & Amsterdam 2000, p. 233 ff.
- 52 Van der Ham 2000, op. cit. (note 51), p. 251.
- 53 Lena Laurie, *Rijksmuseum. An Illustrated Guide to the Principal Pictures*, [Amsterdam 1927], p. 50.
- 54 'Dadurch, daß jede Karte einzeln käuflich, ist es jedem ermöglicht, für wenig Geld sich eine "Gemäldegalerie im Hause" zu schaffen. Durch Wechselrahmen können die Wände verschiedentlich mit diesen oder jenen Karten dekoriert werden ...' *Die Gemäldegalerie im Hause. Eine Sammlung der berühmtesten Gemälde der Welt in Postkartenform hergestellt in Vielfarbendruck, herausgegeben vom Kunstanstalt Stengel Co. G.m.b.H.*, Berlin, Dresden & London s.a., p. 111; Helmfried Luers, 'Stengel & Co. Dresden', *The Postcard Album* [s.a.], no. 22, pp. 41-47.
- 55 *Die Gemäldegalerie im Hause*, op. cit. (note 54), p. 16-17, cat. nos. 29101-14. With thanks to Henk Voskuilen.
- 56 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 292.
- 57 Lanchner 1993, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 326-27.
- 58 Quoted in Umland 2008, op. cit. (note 1), p. 327.
- 59 The Museum of Modern Art Collection, New York, inv. no. SC117.1973.
- 60 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 291.
- 61 Quoted in Umland 2008, op. cit. (note 1), p. 327.
- 62 This was pointed out by Rubin 1973, op. cit. (note 6), p. 43.
- 63 'pour d'après une carte postal' [sic].
- 64 Miró often used canvas measuring c. 92 x 73 cm in 1926-27, but not after 1928, which suggests that these were the last two canvases in this size that he had in stock in his studio.
- 65 The term 'miromorphosis' is Rubin's, op. cit. (note 6), p. 45.
- 66 Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2) p. 113.
- 67 Rudenstine 2004, op. cit. (note 7), p. 542, for instance, writes: 'The source for the third in the series ... has apparently not been identified.'
- 68 Dupin 1962, op. cit. (note 5), p. 191.
- 69 'I admit that I was very interested in Bosch, but I wasn't thinking about him when I was working on the *Carnival* [1924-25],' he recalled in 1978. Quoted in Rowell 1992, op. cit. (note 2), p. 291. See also Gerta Moray, 'Miró, Bosch and Fantasy Painting', *The Burlington Magazine*, 113 (1971), no. 820, pp. 387-91.
- 70 Anonymous, 'Droomschilderkunst. Beleven wij een terugkeer der inspiratie? Joan Miro en zijn duivelarijen', *De Telegraaf*, 6 June 1928 (evening edition), p. 9.
- 71 Balsach 2007, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 168 ff., discusses the suggestion put forward by Kees Schoemaker (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) in 1992 that *Dutch Interior* (111) was based on Jan Steen's *Woman at her Toilet* in the Rijksmuseum collection (SK-A-4052). Although a relationship can be posited on formal grounds, it cannot be convincingly demonstrated that Miró knew or could have seen the painting or a colour reproduction of it. In 1928 it belonged to the collector J. de Bruijn in Spiez, Switzerland, and in 1961 it was given to the Rijksmuseum, where it was officially registered in December 1960. True, the painting was illustrated in the monograph by F. Schmidt-Degener and H.E. van Gelder referred to in note 46, but not in colour, so the red of the stocking was not evident. A colour reproduction of *Woman at her Toilet* appeared in the Christmas issue of the *Haagsche Post*, an illustrated magazine with a limited local circulation, in December 1927, p. 25. Also with thanks to Kees Schoemaker.
- 72 'L'Interieur Hollandais [111] ne se rapporte a aucun tableau précis, en étant une sorte de résumé de ceux de cette série [sic].' Letter from Joan Miró to Monroe Wheeler of The Museum of Modern Art, June 30, 1965, Collection files, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (with thanks to Rhys Conlon); Lanchner 1993, op. cit. (note 4), p. 80 n. 197. She rejects the relationship between *Dutch Interior* (111) and *Woman at her Toilet* (see note 71).
- 73 See Lanchner 1993, op. cit. (note 4), p. 30.

