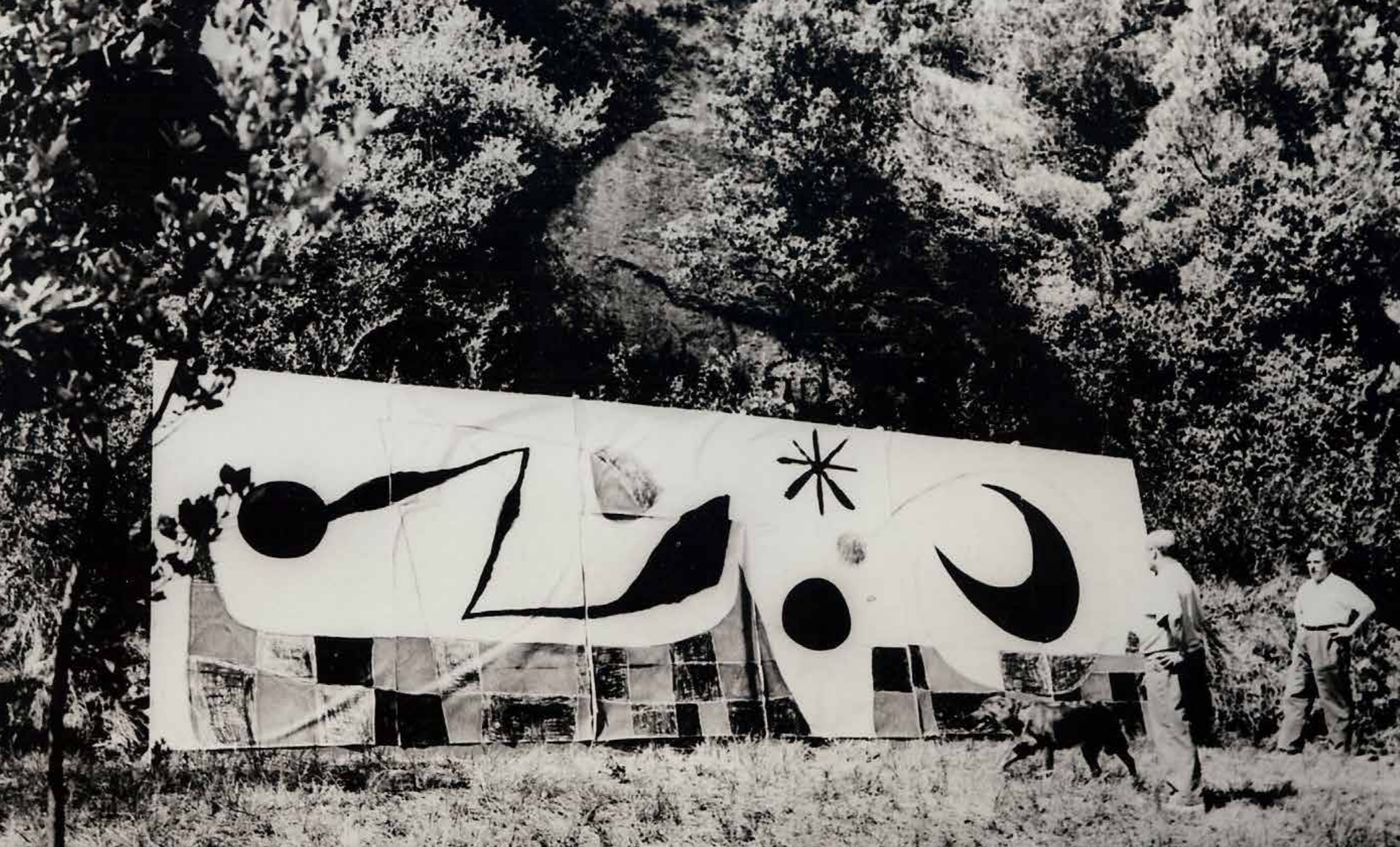




JOAN MIRÓ

Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon);
the maquette for the UNESCO
ceramic mural, 1955



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Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon);
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JOAN MIRÓ (1893 - 1983)

*Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon); the maquette for the UNESCO
ceramic mural, 1955*

gouache, watercolour, ink and pencil on paper laid on masonite
22.9 x 74.6 cm. (9 x 29 ³/₈ in.)

PROVENANCE

Marcel Breuer (1902 - 1981), U.S.A.; and by descent to the present owner.

LITERATURE

J. Miró, 'My Latest Work - a Wall', in *The Unesco Courier*, no. 11, Nov. 1958,
pp. 34-36.

ENGRAVED

In lithograph, edition of 300, published by Maeght, Paris, 1958, directory
no. 1711.



Figs. 1-2: J. Miró and J.L. Artigas,
Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon),
1958, earthenware tiles, 220 x 750
cm., UNESCO plaza, Paris

“Ces oeuvres qui me semblent d’une
importance capitale”

(Joan Miró)

THE UNESCO COMMISSION

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was founded in London in 1945, in the wake of two World Wars, according to the belief that political and economic agreements alone are insufficient grounds for the construction of a lasting international peace. The purpose of the organisation was to foster peace through the promotion of a moral and intellectual solidarity. It champions education; intercultural understanding; the safeguarding of designated World Heritage Sites; and the pursuit of international scientific cooperation. UNESCO is considered to be the intellectual agency of the United Nations (figs. 1-2).

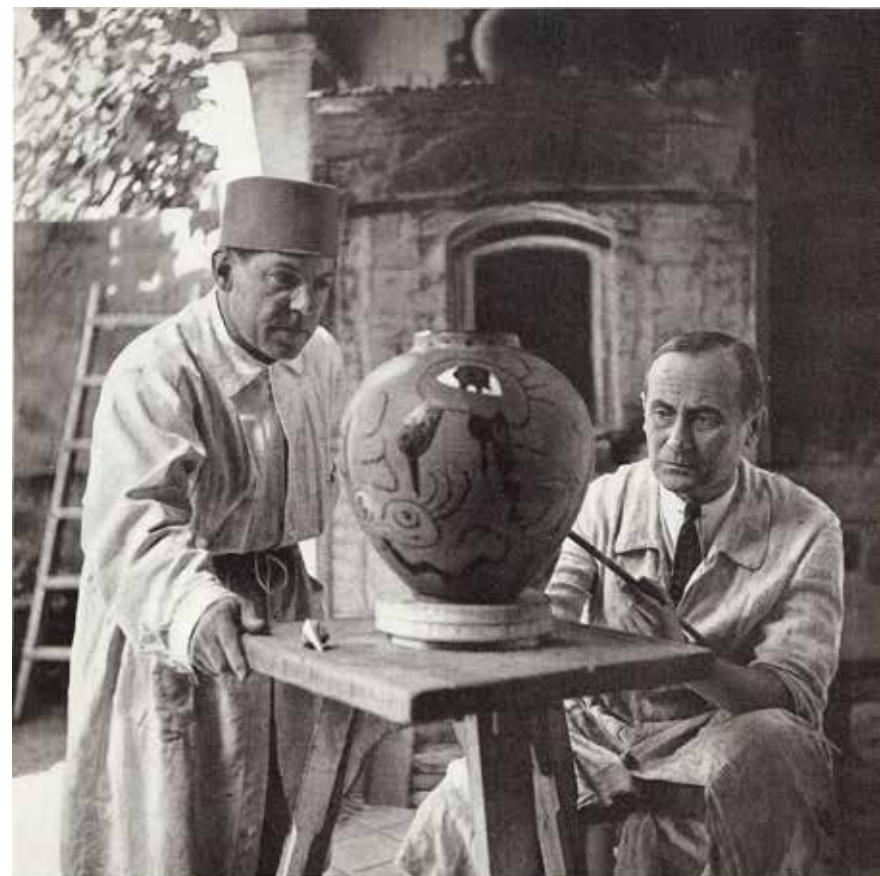
On September 16th, 1946, the UNESCO Preparatory Commission moved from London to the Hotel Majestic on the Avenue Kléber in Paris, its temporary headquarters until construction was completed on a new building on the Place de Fontenoy. Designed as a ‘three pointed star’, the new building represented the vision of three architects – Marcel Breuer, a Hungarian-born American national; Pier Luigi Nervi of Italy; and

Bernard Zehrfuss of France – under the direction of an international committee. The edifice was itself an international construct, featuring floors made of Norwegian quartzite, aluminium panels from Belgium, lighting equipment manufactured in the United States, and glass doors built in France and incorporating teak finger plates from Burma. The new building was inaugurated on November 3rd, 1958, proudly flying the flags of its eighty-one member states.

In 1955, after the architectural plans for the new headquarters had been approved, UNESCO’s Committee on Architecture and Works of Art organised a competition for the decorative scheme of the seven and a half acre site. Only eleven artists were selected, charged with the production of works evocative of the peace supported and preserved by the organisation. One of the chosen artists was the Catalan painter, sculptor and ceramicist Joan Miró, who ultimately produced two monumental ceramic murals in partnership with his long-time collaborator Josep Llorens Artigas.

MIRÓ AND CERAMICS

Miró embarked on his first experiments in ceramics with Artigas, a fellow Barcelona native a year his senior, during the war in 1944 (fig. 3). The pair began by creating vases. Miró spent much of the 1940s experimenting in a range of artistic media, including engraving, lithography and pastel, but his interest in the possibilities offered by ceramics persisted, and he declared to Artigas in 1950: ‘We must go back to ceramics. Everybody is practicing it, and most of those who do come to grief, or rather, come to nothing at all. They are content with painting as before, and they ignore the peculiarities of ceramics – the materials, colours, and glazes. Least of all are they aware of the real nature and spirit of this art. At most, in the domain of form, they venture a few deformations, but they don’t create new forms. It is high time to strike a blow.’ In 1954, Miró and Artigas, with the assistance of Artigas’s son Joan Gardy Artigas, began preparing works for a large-scale exhibition at Galerie Maeght in Paris. Between February 25th, when the first batch of objects went into the kiln, and May 10th 1956, the date the final batch was fired, the collaborators produced a total of 232 individual works – two tons of art, which was packed into 30 crates for shipment. As Joan Gardy observed of these pieces, “they are not decorated ceramics, they are just ceramics [in which] it is impossible to see where the painter starts and the ceramist ends”.



‘Miró is now profiting from his long experience of a medium he first became familiar with in 1945. He has a knowledge of the reactions of clays and glazes, of the powers and caprices of the fire, which let him be more daring and create more directly. He forgets all about being a painter now, when he works – and with astonishing facility! – as a ceramicist.’

(Joan Gardy Artigas)

Fig. 3: Josep Llorens Artigas and Joan Miró, Barcelona, 1944

Fig. 4: Joan Miró painting *Le Faucheur (The Reaper)* in the stairwell of the Spanish pavilion at the Exposition Internationale, Paris, 1937



MIRÓ AND MURALS

In addition to his earlier experimentations with ceramics, Miró had a history with mural production and had created large-scale works on several occasions before he received the UNESCO commission. His earliest murals were those adorning the walls of the family farmhouse at Mont-roig, designs that ultimately served as a jumping-off point for *La Ferme* (1921-22; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) From the beginning, Miró acknowledged that the surface on which he worked – whether canvas, ceramic or rough wooden wall – played a role in dictating the composition. He appreciated the qualities of different surfaces, rather than trying to negate or erase them. By the early 1940s, Miró had already produced some large-scale site-specific works. The first public wall painting he created was his contribution to the pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the 1937 Exposition Internationale. Entitled *Le Faucheur* (*The Reaper*, now lost), it took the form of a mural in the stairwell of the pavilion, which was designed by the Catalan architect Josep Luis Sert (fig. 4). Like Picasso's iconic *Guernica* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), painted for the same exposition, it represented a critique of the fascist cause during

the Spanish Civil War. Over the course of the next twenty years, Miró continued to produce public works, receiving commissions for the terrace of the Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati (1947), Harvard University (1950-51), the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, in addition to the UNESCO and other projects. He found he liked the wide, narrow format, returning to it repeatedly for small as well as large scale works. He also liked the immediacy of murals, which are not separated from their audiences by frames in the same manner as traditional pictures.

PREPARING THE UNESCO MURALS

Having worked so closely with Artigas, it was no surprise that Miró immediately thought of his collaborator when he was awarded the UNESCO commission. Miró envisioned two perpendicular walls constructed of ceramic tiles – one twenty-four and a half feet long, the other twice that length – to be installed near the conference building. From the outset of the project, Miró was determined to work closely alongside the

architects so that his piece would integrate well with its surroundings. His design, his chosen shapes and the colour scheme were inspired by the design of the building itself. In an article written in 1958 for the *UNESCO Courier*, Miró recalled how his initial ideas for the project came about: 'As a reaction to the huge concrete surfaces around the larger wall came the idea of a large, vivid red disc. Its counterpart on the smaller wall would be a blue crescent to accord with the more confined area it was to occupy. I could see these two shapes in powerful colours and given still more force by incised work. The chessboard compositions and the forms of the human figures were inspired by details of the building, such as the design of the windows. I aimed at a crude and forceful expression in the large wall and at something more poetic in the smaller one. I also wanted to provide an element of contrast within each composition itself, and for this reason I conceived harsh, dynamic outlines side by side with restful coloured shapes, in flat-tinted or in check design.'



Fig. 5: J. Miró, *Mur de la Lune* (*The Wall of the Moon*): full-sized gouache maquette, 1957, Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence



Fig. 6: Joan Miró and Josep Llorens Artigas setting up full-sized gouache maquette for the ceramic walls, near Gallifa, Spain

The project presented the artists with challenges on a number of different levels. For Miró, the primary challenge was to envision a working model for a project that was intended for production on a monumental scale. His original conception evolved over the course of three individual maquettes; ours is the first representation of the *Mur de la Lune*. This reduced-scale model was translated into a life-sized sketch in charcoal on paper with the assistance of Joan Gardy, and subsequently coloured in gouache (fig. 5). In order to more easily envision how the completed work would look in the context of the new UNESCO building, Miró and Artigas Senior set up the large maquette in a dell surrounded by a circle of boulders and trees near the Artigas workshop in Gallifa (fig. 6). With the natural elements standing in for the curves of the UNESCO building, Miró and Artigas began imagining how the completed commission might look.

For Artigas, the challenge was to transfer Miró's very specific vision of the project from paper into clay, and specifically into a form of ceramics robust enough to withstand the natural elements. In order to achieve this, Artigas was obliged to create a new ceramic process: traditional earthenware was not suited to the Parisian winter climate, while stoneware did not allow Miró the specific colour palette he desired. In an effort to capitalise on the best qualities of both processes, Artigas combined them into a multi-step method. He began with a fire-clay covered with a white slip, fired at 1000 degrees. To this he added a background of variously coloured sandstone, employing a different colour for each tile, fired at 1300 degrees. Finally, the decoration would be applied before a last firing at 1000 degrees to set the coloured enamel.

Having worked out the technicalities of the process, Miró and Artigas travelled together to Santillana del Mar to look at the famous Altamira cave paintings, which Miró described as ‘the world’s earliest mural art’ (fig. 7). From there they travelled on to the ‘Collegiata’, the old Romanesque church at Santillana, where they admired the material texture of the ancient church wall. Finally, they visited Barcelona, where they examined the work Catalan Romanesque artists, and took in Antonio Gaudí’s Guell Park, which Miró acknowledged as an ongoing influence.

When the pair returned to Gallifa, Artigas began working on the tiles, firing 250 slabs in batches of thirty-three tiles each. But something struck him as wrong and he declared himself dissatisfied with his efforts, pointing to the regularity of the tiles, which he felt undermined the ‘life’ of the piece. Remembering the decaying wall of the Collegiata, he started again, attempting to reproduce the ‘throbbing irregularity’ of the stones at Gallifa using tiles of different sizes. Once these new, irregularly-sized tiles had been made, it was Miró’s turn to decorate them with enamelled designs. To make matters more difficult, the artist was essentially working blind, as enamel only reveals its true colour once it has been fired. Miró was obliged to rely on Artigas’s experience and knowledge in order to select the appropriate colours. But rather than lamenting the unpredictable and uncontrollable element in the creative process, Miró celebrated it as an advantage, declaring later: ‘In spite of every precaution you take, the real master, in the last analysis, is the fire; its action is unforeseeable, and its sanction redoubtable. This is what makes this medium so valuable in my eyes.’

In reproducing his original design on a large scale, Miró wanted the shapes to appear spontaneous rather than laboured, which meant certain marks had to be made with a single brush stroke. He constructed a long-handled brush of palm fibres and used this tool to paint shapes that were five or even six meters in size (fig. 8). This part of the process was extremely risky: mistakes could not be corrected, and any mis-marked tiles would have to be replaced, a chore that would take Artigas months. Fortunately, Miró declared himself happy with his efforts. He wrote: ‘The last firing was on May 29th, 1958. It was the thirty-fifth of the whole series. We had used twenty-five tons of wood, four tons of earth, nearly a quarter of a ton of enamel and fifteen pounds of colouring matter.’



Fig. 7: Joan Miró and Josep Llorens Artigas in the caves at Altamira, March 1957



Fig. 8: Joan Miró painting the ceramic tiles for the UNESCO walls using a long-handled brush made of palm fibres



FROM MAQUETTE TO MURAL

As Miró himself observed, the design for the walls evolved slightly at each successive stage of production, from the first sketches and maquettes to the completed project. While the fundamental design remained the same, certain subtle changes can be seen in a comparison of our maquette with the final version of the *Mur de la Lune*. For example, the black peak at the far left of the chequerboard design in the maquette has been transformed in the mural into a slender, curved hook shape; meanwhile, the thin black line bisecting the chequerboard at left has, in its bent angle, been embellished with a more elaborate triangular design. The boundaries of the two chequerboards themselves, along the bottom of the mural, are defined by straight lines in the maquette and by curved and wavy ones in the mural. We can see also the different feeling contributed by the irregular ceramic tiles of the mural, as compared to the gridded lines of the original tiles as imagined by Miró in the maquette (figs. 9-10).

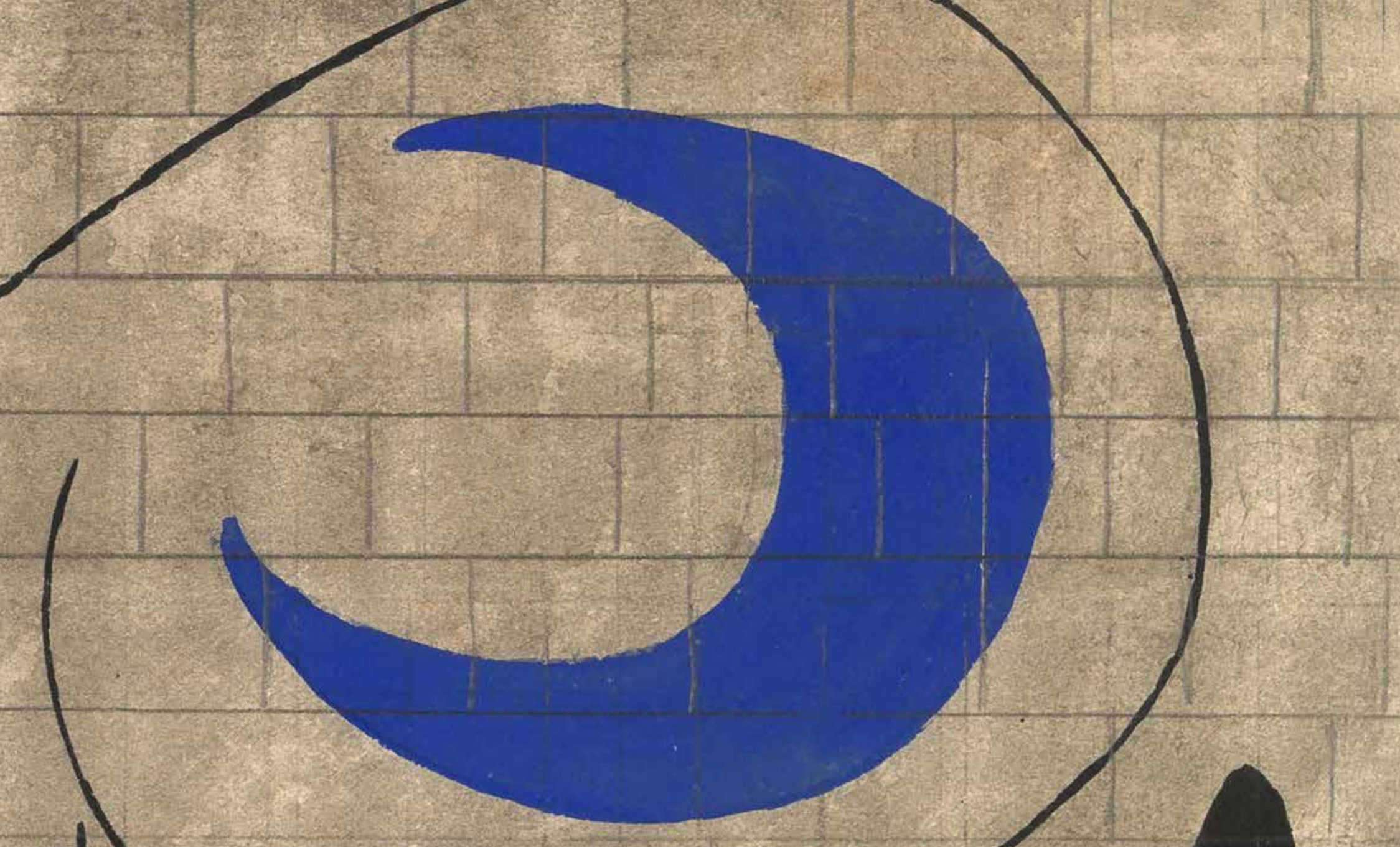
‘The artist is a man who must go beyond the individualist stage and struggle to reach the collective stage. He must go further than the self – strip himself of his individuality, leave it behind, reject it – and plunge into anonymity. [...] a mural painting is determined by the architecture, by the surfaces – the forms, the volumes, the planes – so that there is a complete fusion of landscape, architecture and painting.’

(Miró, 1951)

Fig. 9: Maquette for *Mur de la Lune*
(*The Wall of the Moon*)

Fig. 10: *Mur de la Lune* (*The Wall of the Moon*)





MIRÓ AND CALDER

The UNESCO commission also brought together Miró and his friend the American sculptor Alexander Calder (fig. 11). Having first met in Paris in late December 1928, Miró and Calder initiated a friendship, from time to time sustained though letters over long distances. Both artists were represented by the gallery owner Aimé Maeght, and although Calder was not a Spanish national, Miró enlisted his collaboration in producing the Mercury Fountain for the 1937 Spanish pavilion at the Exposition Internationale. In addition to their mutual affection and admiration, Calder and Miró shared certain visual qualities in their work, leading the *New York World Telegram* to write of one exhibition ‘Calder’s “Mobiles” are like living Miro Abstraction’ (February 1936). In 1955, Miró wrote to Calder: “My dear Sandy, I have recently been in Paris, where I was working with the UNESCO architects. They told me you are going to produce a large mobile. Bravo! I have to do a large 15-metre mural for the outside”. It was a long term project, and the piece Calder eventually produced for UNESCO, entitled *The Spiral*, was one of his first monumental stabiles, large-scale metal constructions intended for installation outdoors. *The Spiral* combined a fixed base with a moving element in the upper part of the construction, and it was sent to Paris from Calder’s Waterbury workshop in spring of 1958. It moves according to the direction and speed of the wind, and, at 10 meters tall, it was at the time the tallest mobile in Europe (fig. 12).



Fig. 11: Joan Miró and Alexander Calder



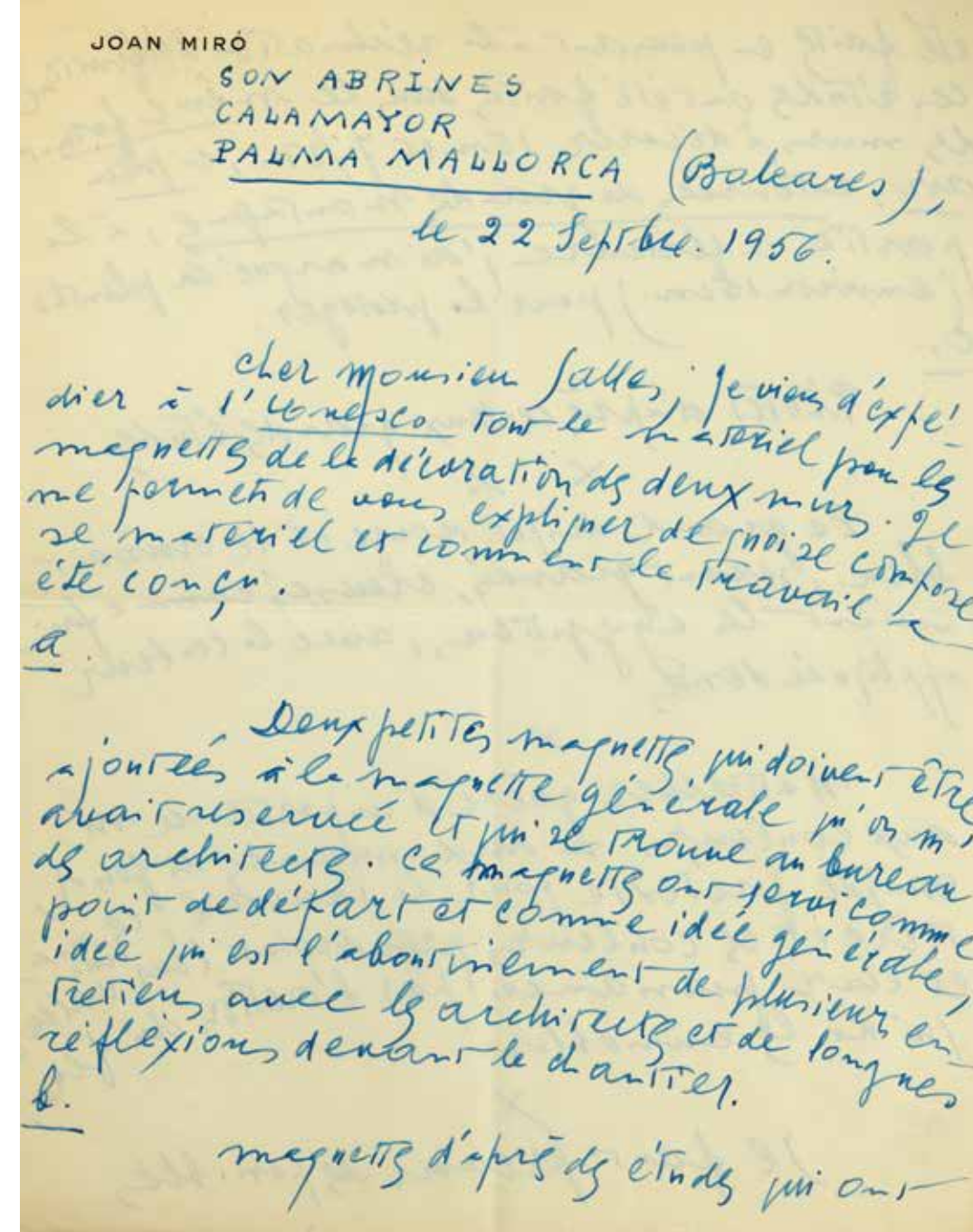
Fig. 12: A. Calder, *Spirale*, 1958, steel plate, rod and paint, 914 cm. high, UNESCO plaza, Paris

FOLLOWING THE CREATIVE PROCESS: MIRÓ'S LETTERS TO GEORGES SALLES

Miró's and Artigas's creative process is well documented in Miró's article for the *UNESCO Courier*, published in November 1958. However, we are additionally fortunate to have several letters written by the artist to Georges Salles (1889 – 1966), a French art historian who served as Director of the Museums of France between 1945 and 1957. It was in large part Salles's support that allowed for the commission of Miró's ceramic wall and of the other ten commissions for the UNESCO building.

On September 22nd, 1956, Miró wrote a long letter to Salles explaining his working method, making specific reference to the scale maquettes he used to envision his ideas and to imagine how the completed piece would come together. His reference to 'deux petites maquettes' relates to the *Mur de la Lune* and the accompanying *Mur du Soleil*. Miró goes on to explain the new method of creating ceramic tiles discovered by Artigas, and points out that there may be differences between the original design and the final conception, as dictated by the materials themselves. He assured Salles that by following this process they will have the greatest chance of achieving success (fig. 13).

Having anticipated – even welcomed – changes to the project during the course of its execution, Miró began worrying about the preservation and protection of his realised designs. He even suggests removing them from their intended site outside on the plaza for storage inside a museum, and adds that he remains hopeful that Artigas will find a solution for maintaining the piece. As before, the letter addresses Salles as “cher ami” and signs off “ma profonde amitié, Miró”.



été fait en pensant à la réalisation définitive.
ces études ont été faites dans le même format
de murs à décaler 15m. et 7/8m., le plein
air, entourées de grands montants, à la
partie inférieure j'ai marqué la plinthe
(environ 15cm.) pour la protéger.
c.

Photos d'après ces deux grands états

Le grand disque rouge et le croissant
bleu, seront gravés, creusés comme font
savent les égyptiens, avec la couleur
appliquée dessus

N'attacher qu'une d'importance mi-
aux couleurs mi aux nuances du fond,
sans prétexte pour le travail, ce sera
très et ces couleurs prendront leur valeur
et leur puissance par l'action du feu,
mi ne les ennoblit.

Il faut prévoir des possibles

JOAN MIRÓ

changements au cours de l'exécution, chan-
gements dictés par la matière et qui ne
feront qu'enrichir l'ensemble.

ce travail ont été faits chez le
céramiste catalan, ce qui nous a permis
de prévoir et d'étudier à l'avance
de nouvelles couleurs et matières et de
réfléchir à l'emploi de nouveaux matériaux

En suivant cette méthode de travail
je crois qu'on a le maximum de chances
de réussite. cette méthode a été dure et pénible,
mais il fallait la suivre, il faut jouer
fort et net pour être digne de la tâche
que vous m'avez faite.

J'espère que vous avez passé de
bonnes vacances. nous sommes main-
tenant en pleine installation, c'est très
désagréable et fatigant, mais une

fois ceci fini, le travail y reprendra dans
le calme de ce bel endroit.

Sans l'attente de vous ^{voir} bientôt, je
vous prie, cher Monsieur Salles, de recevoir
mes meilleurs salutations,

Mico!

Son Abrines
Calamayor
Palma Mallorca (Balears)
Sept. 23, 1956

Dear Mr. Salles,

I have just shipped to UNESCO all the materials for the models
for the decoration of the two walls. Allow me to explain what the
materials are and how the work was conceived.

a.

Two small models to be added to the general model that was put
aside for me and that can be found at the architects' office. These
models were used as a starting point and as a general idea, an idea
that is the culmination of several interviews with the architects
and lengthy considerations in front of the construction site.

b.

Models after the studies made while I was considering the final
project. These studies were made in the same format as the walls
to be decorated, 15 m by 7 ½ m., outdoors, surrounded by large
mountains, at the lower part I marked the plinth (around 15 cm.)
to protect it.

c.

Photos after these two large studies

xx

The large red disk and the blue crescent will be engraved, carved
like those of the Egyptians, with densely applied colour.

x

Do not give any importance to the colours or the background
shading, as they are only examples for the work, and the materials
and colours will take on their true qualities and power through the
action of the fire, which will ennoble them.

x

We must foresee potential changes over the course of the execution, changes dictated by the materiality, which will enrich the entire work.

x

These works were made at the studio of the ceramicist Artigas, and they allow us to predict and study in advance new colours and materials and to consider how to use the new enamels.

x

By following this working method I think we have the best chance of succeeding. This method has been hard and changeable, but we have to follow it, we have to play hard and cleanly to be worthy of the trust you have given me.

x

I hope you had a good holiday. We are now in the middle of installation, it is unpleasant and tiring, but once it is done, the work will win in the calm of this beautiful place.

I look forward to seeing you soon. In the meantime, please accept, dear Mr. Salles, my very best wishes,

Miró.

SON ABRINES - CALAMAYOR - PALMA DE MALLORCA

le 24 / VII / 60.

cher ami,

Nous avons été heureux, ma femme et moi, de passer une soirée avec vous avant notre départ.

J'ai aussi été heureux de voir que vous partagiez mes craintes sur les céramiques de l'UNESCO et que vous étiez prêt à intervenir pour trouver une solution pour les protéger. Ceci me fait mal au cœur, car j'avais mis tout mon enthousiasme pour réaliser ces œuvres qui me semblent d'une importance capitale.

Toutes les fois que je me suis adressé au Comité, je me suis heurté, hélas, à des conceptions bureaucratiques qui me décourageaient. Il m'était ainsi adressé à Mr. Sweeney, en qualité de Directeur de la Fondation Guggenheim

qui avait décerné le prix, avec un
résultat nul.

Je viens d'écrire à Artigas, mon colla-
borateur et technicien de grande autorité,
en le mettant au courant de ces démarches,
et en lui disant de vous écrire un mot pour
donner son avis.

Il me semble indispensable, cher Monsieur
Salles, que ces murs soient protégés avant
les froûds et les gelées d'hiver, soit en les
placant à l'intérieur de l'édifice, soit en les
mettant à l'abri dans un musée.

Il est néanmoins possible que Artigas
trouve une solution efficace pour que
ces céramiques restent à l'état primitif,
écartant toute crainte de suites irréparables.

Je vous dis en core merci de tout coeur,
cher ami, et vous prie de croire à ma
profonde amitié,

Miró.

24 VII 60.

Dear friend,

We were very glad, my wife and I, to spend an evening with you
before leaving.

I was also happy to see that you shared my concerns about the
UNESCO ceramics and that you were very willing to intervene to
find a solution to protect them. This pains me deeply, because I had
put all my efforts into realising these works, which I considered
of paramount importance. Whenever I spoke to the committee,
however, I ran into bureaucratic issues that discouraged me.
I was also sent to Mr. Sweeney, as Director of the Guggenheim
Foundation, which awarded the prize, with no result.

I just wrote to Artigas, my collaborator and a technician of great
authority, to keep him up to date on these developments and to ask
him to write you a note to give his advice. It seems essential to
me, dear Mr. Salles, that these walls are protected against the cold
and winter frosts, either by placing them inside the building, or by
putting them in a museum.

It remains possible that Artigas has found an effective solution for
maintaining these ceramics in their original state, avoiding and
risk of irreparable damages.

I say again thank you again with all my heart, dear friend, and ask
you to believe in my deep friendship,

Miró



PROVENANCE

This maquette has descended in the family of the Hungarian modernist architect Marcel Lajos Breuer, one of the three members of the team awarded the commission to design the new UNESCO building. Breuer, known as Lajkó to his friends, was born in 1902. At age 18, he became one of the earliest and youngest students at the recently-established Bauhaus school of arts and crafts in Weimar. Its founder, Walter Gropius, recognised Breuer's talent and became a lifelong friend and mentor. As there was initially no course in architecture, Breuer studied cabinet-making, completing his training in 1924. After a short period spent working in the Paris office of the architect Pierre Chareau, Breuer returned to the Bauhaus as a *jungmeister* and was quickly put in charge of the cabinet-making workshop. Breuer initially made his reputation as a designer of tubular steel furniture inspired by the handlebars of a bicycle. His best-known and most widely copied pieces are the B3 (known as 'Wassily', for Kandinsky) and B33 ('Cesca') chairs, which combine a tubular steel skeleton with wide leather or fabric bands for the back and seat (fig. 15).

Fig. 13: Joan Miró to Georges Salles, 22 Sept. 1956 (insert)

Fig. 16: M. Breuer, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Fig. 14: Joan Miró to Georges Salles, 24 July 1960 (insert)

Fig. 17: The Breuer House, Williams Pond, Wellfleet, 1949

Fig. 15: Marcel Breuer in his first tubular chair, the B3 or "Wassily" chair, 1927

In 1928, Breuer left the Bauhaus to open his own architectural practice, based first in Berlin and subsequently in Switzerland and Hungary. He looked to the architecture of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, in addition to that of Gropius himself, as inspiration; it was Gropius who secured Breuer his first architectural commission for the Harnischmachers in Wiesbaden in 1932. Shortly thereafter, Breuer relocated to London, and in 1937 he followed Gropius to Cambridge, Massachusetts after Gropius accepted a position as chairman of Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Breuer joined Gropius on the faculty. Their partnership exerted a lasting influence on the development of American modernist architecture: their pupils included Philip Johnson, Eliot Noyes, I.M. Pei and Paul Rudolph, among others.

In addition to their teaching, Breuer and Gropius opened an architectural partnership in Cambridge. Breuer's designs, elegant in their logic and simplicity, led his colleague William Landsberg to observe: 'He solved problems so directly, they always came out clean and sure, the inevitable thing, why didn't everyone think of it?' In

1946, Breuer left his teaching position and moved to New York, where an exhibition of his work at the Museum of Modern Art brought him wider acknowledgement and further residential commissions. Having made a name for himself as a leading modernist architect, Breuer was awarded two important institutional commissions: the UNESCO building, in collaboration with Nervi and Zehruss, and St. John's Abbey in Minnesota (1961). These two projects marked the beginning of Breuer's reliance on concrete as his primary building medium. He went on to design the IBM research centre in La Guardia, France (1962), and the Whitney Museum in New York (1966). The latter structure, known as the Breuer building, is located at the corner of Madison Avenue and 75th street, and until 2014 housed the Whitney's collection of American Art (fig. 16). At the time of its completion in 1966, its heavy, concrete façade – called “an inverted Babylonian ziggurat” by one critic – contrasted sharply with the more traditional buildings that characterised the majority of the neighbourhood. Since the opening of the new Whitney in 2015, the Breuer building has been taken over by the Metropolitan Museum to showcase their Modern and Contemporary art collections.

By the middle of the 1940s, several of Breuer's friends from the Bauhaus, including Gropius and his wife Ise, had begun spending summers in Wellfleet and Truro on Cape Cod. Renters at first, in 1944 Breuer and his wife Constance bought a plot of land on Ryder Pond across from their friends the Chermayeffs. Breuer immediately envisioned an idyllic community of his friends living as neighbours, and drew up plans for a prototype “long house” design. Between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s, Breuer designed and constructed several long houses for his friends, and one (the Breuer house, 1949) for himself and his family (fig. 17).

In 1950, Breuer, Nervi and Zehruss were awarded the commission to design the new UNESCO building. As he had with Salles, it seems Miró forged a friendship with the three architects, determined as he was to integrate his vision with theirs. On October 1st, 1956, Breuer wrote to the artist (fig. 18):



Fig. 18: Marcel Breuer to Joan Miró,
1 Oct. 1956

October 1st
1956

Mr. Joan Miró
Son Abrines
Calamayor
Palma Mallorca (Balears)

My dear Miró:

Thank you very much for your note of September 21st, which has been forwarded to me in New York.

I am happy to know that you are working on the model for your murals, and I am looking forward to seeing them, - and to continue our most pleasant exchange of thoughts. I shall be in Paris roughly between October 23rd and November 10th, with some weekend interruptions. Are you coming to Paris by any chance, too, about that time? It would be very nice to see you again.

With very best regards, also to Mme. Miró.

Sincerely yours,

Marcel Breuer

MB:mf
cc Mr. Zehruss
Mr. Nervi

“My dear Miró
...I am happy to know that you are working on the model for your murals, and I am looking forward to seeing them. – and to continue our most pleasant exchange of thoughts.”

This was followed shortly thereafter on October 5th by a letter from Breuer’s partner Zehrfuss, which adopts an equally collegial tone:

“Cher Ami,
Nous n’avons malheureusement pas encore reçu votre maquette et nous l’attendons avec impatience.

Pourriez-vous tout de suite nous indiquer de quelle façon nous devons préparer les murs. Doivent-ils être enduits, ou doivent-ils être en granit? Il faudrait donc nous indiquer quelles sont les préparations que vous souhaitez pour chaque face des deux murs. Ces renseignements sont urgents car nous devons commencer la construction de ces murs.

Bien amicalement, et mon meilleur souvenir à Madame Miró.
Bernard Zehrfuss”

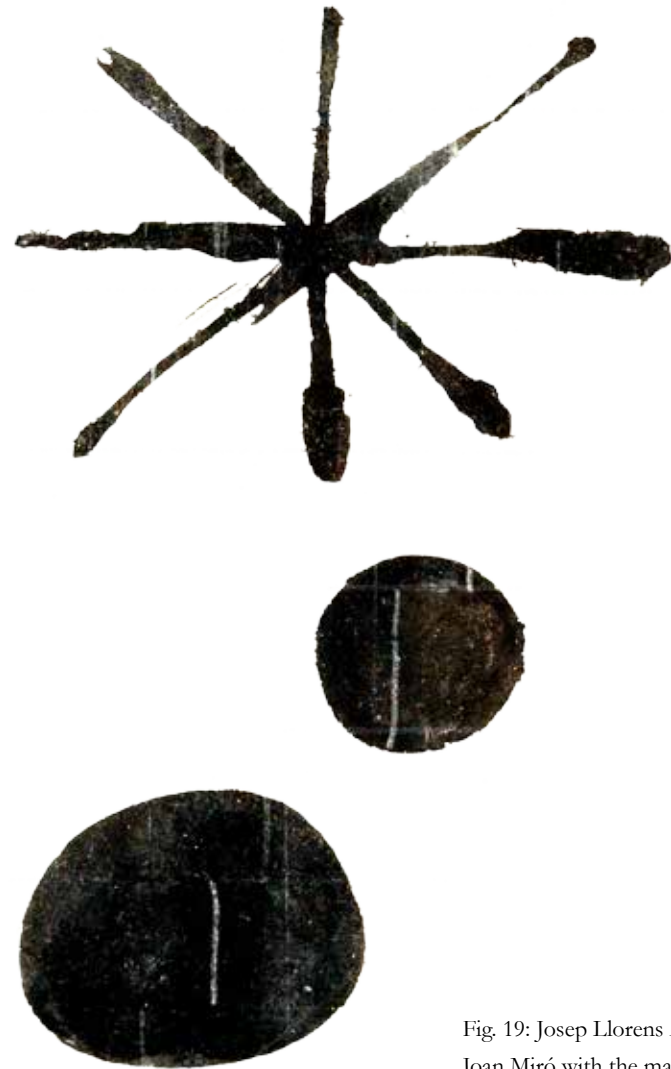
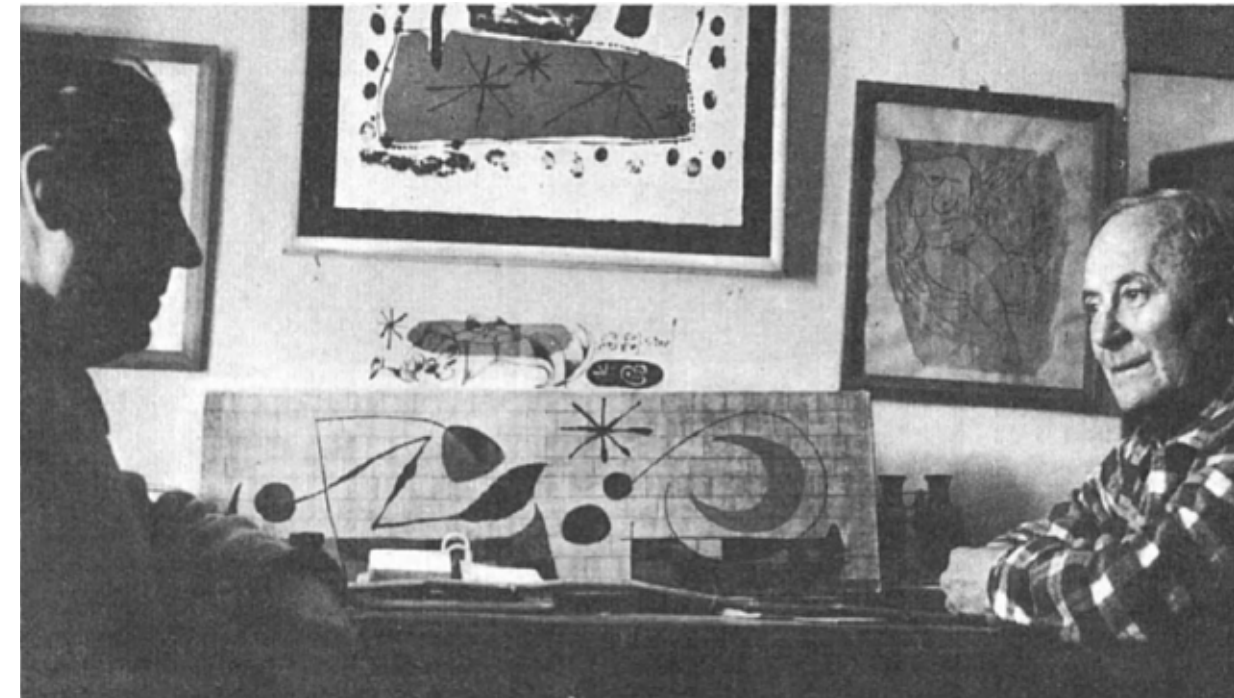


Fig. 19: Josep Llorens Artigas and Joan Miró with the maquette for *Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon)*



Clearly, the collaboration was of similarly great importance to the architects, who were anxious to begin constructing the walls and to prepare them in the exact manner Miró required for his piece. A year and a half later, another letter dated April 8th 1958 shows Breuer following up to check on Miró’s progress:

“How is it with your UNESCO work? I imagine it must be finished by now, or pretty close to it.”

It is perhaps not surprising that Miró chose to give the maquette for the *Mur de la Lune* to his friend and collaborator Breuer, especially as Breuer – together with the Swede Sven Markelius and Italian Ernesto Rogers, both members of the committee that appointed Breuer, Nervi and Zehrfuss to the job – was responsible for enlisting Miró’s contribution. Breuer, Markelius and Rogers chose six artists to contribute to the project, offering the commission to Moore, Arp, Picasso and Noguchi along with Miró and Calder. The maquette has remained in Breuer’s family ever since.

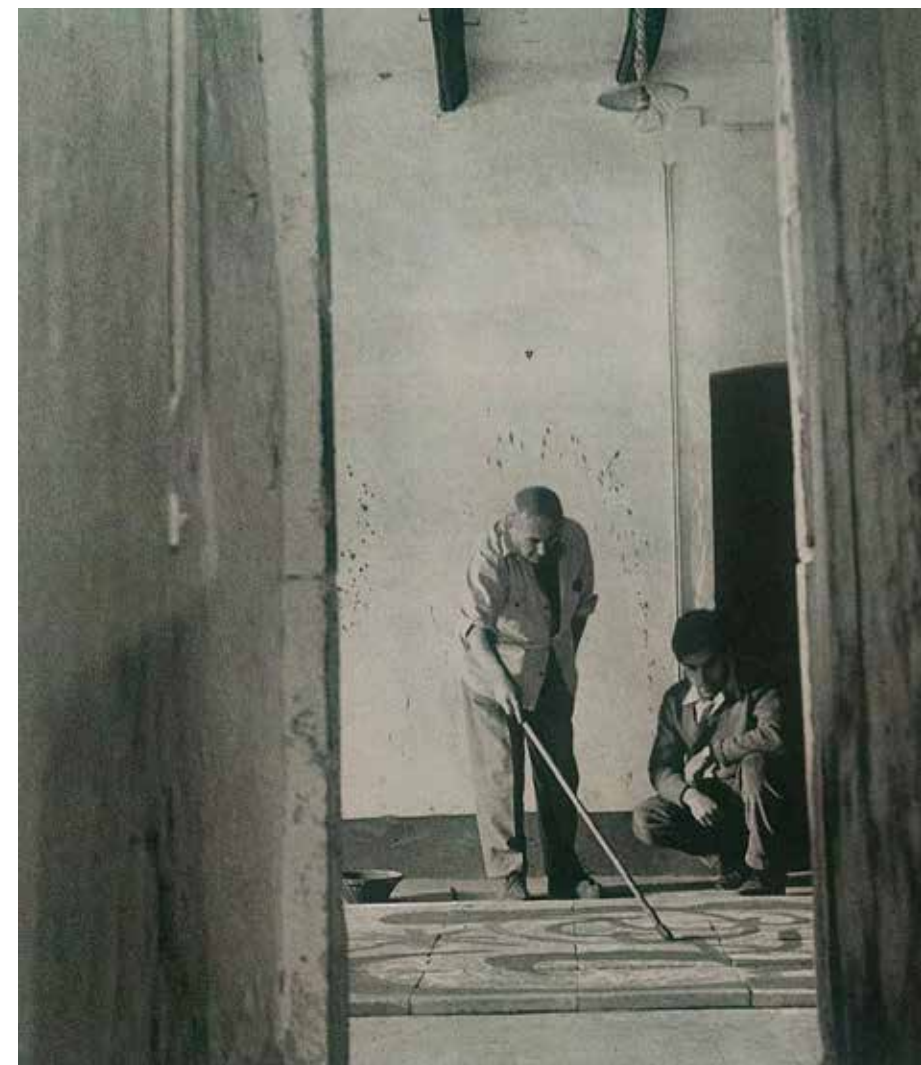
LEGACY

Miró's ceramic murals for the UNESCO project have proven to be one of his most beloved and widely-admired works. They were an immediate critical success, earning the artist the 1958 Guggenheim International Art Award and accompanying \$10,000 prize. Established just two years earlier in 1956 by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, and awarded biannually, the prize attracted one hundred and fourteen entrants from twenty-two countries in 1958. Miró was awarded his prize by President Eisenhower at the White House on May 19th, 1959. The project was realised in cooperation with his long-time collaborator, Artigas, and featured a contribution from Miró's good friend Calder as well. By the time the project had been finished, the genial Miró had also forged friendships with several other key players, as documented in a series of affectionate letters: Salles, Breuer, and Zehrfuss. In a gesture of friendship, he gave this maquette for the *Mur de la Lune* to Breuer. It has descended in the architect's family ever since, its whereabouts since 1958 having remained unknown to experts until it was brought to light earlier this year (fig. 19). The spirit of camaraderie and cooperation that characterised Miró's UNESCO project is best summed up in the artist's own words: "Mural art is the opposite of solitary creation; but although you must not give up your individual personality as an artist, you must engage with it deeply in a collective effort".



Fig. 20: J. Miró, *Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon)*, lithograph, 1958

Fig. 21: Joan Miró painting the ceramic tiles for the UNESCO commission



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Fig. 22: *Mur de la Lune (The Wall of the Moon)*, artists' signatures





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