

## Ordovas opens the first exhibition to examine the relationship between Chillida and Miró



**LONDON.-** Examining the work of two of Spain's most important artists, Chillida on Miró, on public display from 5 June until 26 July, is the first exhibition to be dedicated to the friendship and mutual respect between Joan Miró and Eduardo Chillida. Organised in collaboration with the families of the two artists, Chillida on Miró provides access for the first time to unpublished letters, poems and other exchanges between Joan Miró and Eduardo Chillida, as well as to personal photographs. The correspondence between the men spans several decades, and was discovered in the respective family archives by Chillida's children, and Miró's grandson. Among the highlights of the works to be shown are a major Miró canvas from 1945 that has not been exhibited in the UK for 50 years, an unseen drawing by Miró given to Chillida in 1971 and works by Chillida, including several that were gifted to Miró.

"The idea to present this exhibition was sparked by conversations last summer with Ignacio Chillida, Eduardo's son," says Pilar Ordovas. "Ignacio's childhood memories of the summers spent in Saint-Paul de Vence with his family and the Miró family really inspired me to want to know more about the friendship between the two artists, a bond which continues to unite the two families to this day."

Miró and Chillida first met in Paris in the late 1940s when the two men and their wives were staying in the same hotel, and a special rapport quickly developed. Later, the artists, their wives – both named Pilar – and children would spend several months each summer with the Maeght family in their large house and gardens in Saint-Paul in the South of France. There was a ceramic studio and a printing studio in which the artists worked – the press was renamed 'La Pilar' after Miró's wife. Pilar Chillida would vividly recall those early days of the friendship, which grew steadily in mutual admiration and respect. It was by looking at Miró's work, and contemplating his use of the convex, that Chillida came to see the concave lines in his own work differently. Chillida would go on to be represented by the same gallery as Miró, and their friendship continued, and indeed strengthened, until Miro's death on Christmas Day in 1983.

Chillida viewed Miró as a revolutionary, both artistically and in his readiness to support causes he believed in – and indeed Chillida himself later benefited from Miró's support during a controversy over the placement of his sculpture *Lugar de Encuentros III* under the bridge of La Castellana in Madrid in 1972; Miró wrote to the press in defence of artistic freedom and offered to donate a sculpture to the Museo de escultura al aire libre de la Castellana if Chillida was allowed to place the work, hanging, as it had been conceived. It was not to be and Chillida donated the contested sculpture to Miró for his foundation in Barcelona. Years later, with the first democratic mayor in power, Miró allowed the sculpture to return to Madrid to be installed at the original site, just as Chillida had intended. In gratitude and as a substitute for his foundation, Chillida gave Miró a major sculpture in concrete entitled *Arquitectura Heterodoxa I*; a study in alabaster for this work is included in the exhibition.

Miró's immersion in the issues of Catalan identity and politics was evident throughout his long career, never more so than during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Painted in 1945, shortly before the end of the war, Miró's oil on canvas entitled *Femme dans la nuit* will be shown for the first time in the UK in 50 years (last exhibited at the Tate in 1964), alongside three sculptures – *Femme*, a bronze cast in 1949, *Maternité*, a bronze cast in 1967, and a later painted bronze, *Projet pour un monument*, executed in 1979.

Of the group of seven sculptures in the exhibition by Chillida, three are forged from steel, each unique, and ranging from the monumental *Consejo al Espacio IX*, executed in 2000, standing two metres high, to intimate, smaller scale works, *Besarkada III* and *Elogio del Hierro II*. Perhaps the most poignant pieces in the exhibition are a pair of terracotta sculptures, *Lurra 57* and *Lurra 58* which Chillida made specifically for Miró and which have been loaned by Miró's grandson and great-granddaughter. A further terracotta, *Lurra G-30*, will also be shown alongside two works on paper from 1985, which relate to the *Homenaje a Miró* in corten steel that Chillida forged in the same year.

The unpublished correspondence includes poems and letters full of affection, exchanges of ideas and humour and drawing from Joan Miró to Eduardo and Pili Chillida, made in 1971 and exhibited here for the first time. The exhibition catalogue will include a written account by Ignacio Chillida recalling the summers the two families spent together as guests at Aimé Maeght's house in Saint-Paul, while Joan Punyet Miró has written a poem, a personal response to poetic exchanges between his grandfather and Chillida.