DOG BARKING AT THE MOON

In this sparse landscape, a ladder reaches up toward the black night sky. Nearby, a colorful dog stands on the brown earth, looking up to the half moon and bird above him. The bright colors and humorous subject matter create a fun, playful mood. The title of the painting, Dog Barking at the Moon, adds to this lighthearted feeling. However, the dark background and the vast empty spaces between the dog, ladder, and moon also produce a sense of loneliness and mystery.

Although he spent each winter in Paris, Joan Miró (j’wahn mee-ROE) found inspiration for his art in his home in Catalonia (cat-ah-LONE-ee-ah), Spain, where he made sketches on his family farm. He based many of his paintings on these drawings and his memories of the farm, including this one. In Paris, he was influenced by Surrealist artists and poets, who were inspired by dreams and the unconscious.

While his art was always based on actual places and objects, Miró thought of reality as “a point of departure, never as a stopping place.” In Dog Barking at the Moon, he provided a recognizable landscape, but the exact setting remains unclear. The dog, moon, and bird are also identifiable, but they are distorted. The ladder reaches toward empty space, resting on nothing. The original sketch for the painting included words, with the moon telling the dog that he does not care about his barking. Miró omitted these words in the final painting, leaving it up to the viewer to imagine the story taking place.