

Picasso

No. 24

PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

PICASSO AND THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE, which opens at The Museum of Modern Art on May 22 and continues through September 16, will be the largest exhibition ever shown at the Museum, as well as the most comprehensive exhibition of Picasso's work ever held. It marks MOMA's fifth major Picasso retrospective and the 16th exhibition in the Museum's history solely devoted to the work of the artist.

This modern master has been importantly represented in the Museum's program and collection since its early years. Under the leadership of the Museum's first director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., 15 works by Picasso were exhibited the year after the Museum's founding in 1930, as part of PAINTING IN PARIS, MOMA's first exhibition devoted to 20th century European art. In Barr's pioneering group show of 1936, CUBISM AND ABSTRACT ART, 29 paintings, drawings and sculptures by the artist were displayed.

Barr also organized the Picasso anniversary shows of 1939, 1957 (with the assistance of William S. Lieberman), and 1962 (in collaboration with Dorothy C. Miller and Mr. Lieberman). The 1939 retrospective, PICASSO: FORTY YEARS OF HIS ART, was the most comprehensive exhibition of his work ever assembled until that time.

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Consisting of over 360 works, and including Guernica and its studies, the exhibition broke all of the Museum's previous attendance records; it was later shown at The Art Institute of Chicago and toured other museums in the U.S. The largest lender to the show was Picasso himself, who contributed 91 works. Alfred Barr's classic study for the show was later revised and updated, and issued as Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art (1946). It remains the best general reference work on the artist.

A second great retrospective was held by the Museum in 1957 to honor Picasso's 75th anniversary, and was subsequently shown at The Art Institute of Chicago and The Philadelphia Museum of Art. The exhibition included the first major showing in America of Picasso's sculpture as well as many paintings never before seen here.

In 1962 the Museum presented a major Picasso retrospective drawn for the first time from its own collection and from gifts which had been promised to it; some 80 paintings, sculpture, drawings and collages, 97 prints and five illustrated books were shown. Five years later the Museum's then-director, René d'Harnoncourt, in collaboration with Picasso's friend and biographer Roland Penrose, presented THE SCULPTURE OF PICASSO. Consisting of over 200 works by the artist, it was the first major retrospective of Picasso's sculpture to be shown in the United States.

PICASSO: MASTER PRINTMAKER, the largest exhibition of Picasso's graphic work ever seen in this country, was held at the Museum in

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1970. Directed by Riva Castleman, Director of Prints and Illustrated Books, the show exhibited more than 200 Picasso etchings, woodcuts, color lithographs and linoleum cuts.

In 1972 William Rubin, the Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture and co-director of the present Picasso exhibition, directed and wrote the accompanying catalog for PICASSO IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, which again put on display the Museum's Picasso holdings, this time in honor of the artist's 90th birthday. Of particular interest in the exhibition were a number of new acquisitions, including The Charnel House (1944-45) and the revolutionary metal and wire sculpture Guitar of 1912, which Picasso had generously given as a gift to the Museum the year before.

Over the years, there have been a number of smaller Picasso shows, including those devoted to his drawings, lithographs and etchings, and the Museum has issued a number of important books on the artist and his work. In addition to Alfred Barr's Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art, the Museum has published The Sculptor's Studio: Etchings by Picasso and Picasso: His Graphic Art (1952) with introductions by William Lieberman, Picasso: 75th Anniversary Exhibition (1957) edited by Mr. Barr, Portrait of Picasso (1957) and The Sculpture of Picasso (1967) by Roland Penrose, and William Rubin's Picasso in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art (1972) and Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective (1980).

The first Picasso to enter the Museum's collection was the gouache Head of 1909, given by Mrs. Saidie A. May in 1930. In

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1934 Green Still Life came to the Museum as part of the exceptional bequest of Lillie P. Bliss, one of the founders of the Museum and its vice-president until her death in 1931. In 1935 Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., a member of the Museum's newly-formed Advisory Committee, donated The Studio, and in 1937 Seated Woman was given anonymously. In that same year the Museum made its first Picasso purchase, the collage Man with a Hat.

In 1937 Mrs. Simon Guggenheim gave her first purchase fund to the Museum, making possible the acquisition of Girl Before a Mirror in 1938. Also through the Guggenheim Fund such masterpieces as the Three Musicians and Night Fishing at Antibes were acquired, the former in 1949, the latter in 1952. Three other Picasso paintings and three of his sculptures, including the She-Goat, were also purchased by means of the Fund.

The epoch-making Les Demoiselles d'Avignon of 1907, which influenced the Cubist generation as did no other single work, was acquired through the sale of a Degas equestrian picture in 1939. The Bliss Bequest provided funds for "Ma Jolie," four other paintings and several drawings.

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