

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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PICASSO PORTRAIT OF GERTRUDE STEIN GOES ON EXHIBITION

AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Portrait of Gertrude Stein by Picasso, which came to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Bequest when Miss Stein died July 27, 1946, will go on exhibition Thursday, January 22, at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street. This is in accordance with the terms of a recent agreement, to last ten years, between the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum under which the three museums agreed freely to lend each other objects of art and to coordinate the activities of the three museums in the interest of broader service to the public.

Recently the Museum of Modern Art transferred to the Metropolitan Museum the painting by Daumier, The Laundress, bequeathed to the Museum of Modern Art by the late Lillie P. Bliss. The Metropolitan was to reciprocate by lending to the Museum of Modern Art certain modern works including the Picasso portrait of Gertrude Stein. The Picasso portrait will be returned to the Metropolitan Museum for permanent exhibition there as soon as that museum is prepared to exhibit the work of the earlier modern artists.

The painting of the Stein portrait by Picasso has historic importance in the development of modern art. Picasso met Gertrude Stein in Paris in 1905. At that time he was finishing his now famous series of paintings and etchings of melancholy circus acrobats. Twenty-four years of age, he had come from Barcelona to settle in Paris the previous year and was living in poverty in an old tenement on Montmartre. Gertrude Stein had studied psychology at Radcliffe with William James and then worked for four years at John Hopkins Medical School. In 1902 she gave up her scientific career and the following year went to Paris. She was working on her first book, Three Lives, when she met Picasso.

"It was only a short time after this that Picasso began the portrait of Gertrude Stein..." she recalls in her book, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas. "...She took her pose, Picasso sat very tight on his chair and very close to his canvas and on a very small palette which was of a uniform brown grey colour, mixed some more

brown grey and the painting began. This was the first of some eighty or ninety sittings."

The painting of the portrait went on during the winter of 1906. "Spring was coming and the sittings were coming to an end. All of a sudden one day Picasso painted out the whole head. I can't see you any longer when I look, he said irritably. And so the picture was left like that."

In the summer Gertrude Stein went to Italy and Picasso to Spain. He came back in August, and she in the early fall, "back to a Paris fairly full of excitement. In the first place she came back to her finished portrait. The day he returned from Spain Picasso sat down and out of his head painted the head in without having seen Gertrude Stein again. And when she saw it he and she were content. It is very strange but neither can remember at all what the head looked like when he painted it out."

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections, comments on the Picasso portrait as follows:

"During the period between painting out the portrait's face and painting it in again a change of great importance took place in Picasso's art. The original style of the portrait had been naturalistic, comparatively soft and flat, as you can still see in the costume and background. But the repainted face is in the new style, suggesting a sculptured mask with severely drawn, boldly modeled features, rather like the faces of some ancient Spanish sculptures which Picasso had just seen in the Louvre. This change of style turned out to be of great historic importance for it showed the direction Picasso was to follow step by step until it led to cubism.

"Aside from its value as a landmark in modern art Picasso's painting stands as a powerful characterization of one of the most remarkable and influential American writers of her generation."