

**EXHIBITION OF PICASSO'S THEMES AND VARIATIONS OFFERS UNIQUE VIEW INTO ARTIST'S CREATIVE PROCESS**

**Picasso's Extensive Work in Printmaking Explored in Exhibition, with Publication and Complementary Online Project**

***Picasso: Themes and Variations***

March 28–August 30, 2010

The Paul J. Sachs Prints and Illustrated Books Galleries, second floor

**NEW YORK, March 16, 2010**—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Picasso: Themes and Variations***, an exhibition exploring Pablo Picasso's creative process through the medium of printmaking, from March 28 to August 30, 2010. It features approximately 100 works from the Museum's superlative collection of the artist's prints. The exhibition is organized by Deborah Wye, The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Chief Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, The Museum of Modern Art.

Pablo Picasso's insatiable curiosity and tireless urge to create art often led him to mediums beyond painting. He fully explored sculpture and drawing, as well as printmaking and ceramics. This exhibition looks at Picasso's engagement with printmaking over the course of his long career, and the ways it fostered his creativity by encouraging a thematic approach to his subjects and by allowing for constant experimentation.

As a young artist, Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973) bought a small printing press, and prints became part of the ongoing development of his work. His first series of etchings and drypoints was devoted to themes of the Blue and Rose periods. Examples include *Frugal Repast* (1904), a well-known scene of a destitute couple at a sparsely-filled dining table. Others depict itinerant circus performers known as *saltimbanques*. As Picasso went on to forge his Cubist style, he made prints intermittently, cross-fertilizing related drawings and paintings. One series of his abstracted images was conceived in 1910 to illustrate *St. Matorel*, a book by poet Max Jacob, who was among his closest friends during the first years in Paris.

While prints played a small but continuing role in Picasso's early work, by the late 1920s and early 1930s, he became truly engaged in the medium, and remained so for the rest of his life. It was at that time that he grasped the narrative potential in his printmaking. He enjoyed propping up his copperplates and conjuring up compositions that led his invented characters from one scene to another. Later he would call this manner of printmaking his own way of "writing fiction."

Picasso created tales of the Minotaur, of fauns and satyrs, and of bullfighting. In *Minotauromachy* (1935), he combined the Minotaur myth and the violence of the bullfight in a highly symbolic, enigmatic scene that is considered a milestone of modern printmaking. Especially under the influence of Surrealism, such motifs became entangled with events in

Picasso's personal life, particularly those involving his relationships with women. These entanglements are also a factor in other themes he explored, from scenes of the artist in the studio, to portrayals of sexual aggression, to tableaux in which one figure watches the other sleep.

Picasso's focus on the women in his life also involved portraiture. Each time he became involved with a new woman, he absorbed her features into his artistic vocabulary, depicting her over time in a manner reflecting his own changing moods. The exhibition includes a range of prints inspired by these women, from the 1905 *Head of Woman*, which portrays Madeleine, a lover known only by her first name, to a late series of linoleum cuts presenting a complex and evolving portrait of Jacqueline Roque, the artist's second wife and companion until his death in 1973. Also included are the young Marie-Thérèse Walter, whose face constitutes a mysterious presence; Picasso's first wife, Olga, whose stirring portrait, which was recently acquired, exemplifies her role as muse of the Neo-Classical period; the Surrealist photographer Dora Maar, who served as model for the monumental *Weeping Woman* of 1937; and Francoise Gilot, the aspiring painter who spent the postwar years with the artist, and whose likeness evolves over time to show Picasso's changing relationship to her.

Picasso continued making prints with great enthusiasm until the last years of his life. During seven months in 1968, he created *Suite 347*, named for the number of prints it contains. It represents an intense period of printmaking in a range of etching techniques, exploring a variety of themes. Among the subjects is the artist's reflection back on his long life, with figures of varying scale in compositions filled with spatial disparities that suggest a flood of memories.

The master printers with whom Picasso worked provided not only technical expertise, but also stimulating collaborative partnerships. Roger Lacourière tutored him in intaglio techniques (etching, drypoint, engraving, and aquatint) in the early 1930s, as he reached a new level of complexity in such prints as *Faun Unveiling a Sleeping Girl* (1936). Fernand Mourlot championed Picasso's work in lithography after World War II. The printers at Mourlot's shop in Paris fostered Picasso's seemingly endless experimentation with developing images, like those in the *Bull* series, which begins with a naturalistic rendering and ends with a few simple lines. In linoleum cut, Hidalgo Arnéra spurred Picasso on at his workshop in the South of France in the 1950s and 1960s. Picasso created masterworks like *Portrait of a Young Girl* in this medium, which until then had been considered secondary. Finally, in his last years, Picasso collaborated with Aldo and Piero Crommelynck, who set up an etching workshop near his residence in the Mougins to accommodate his demanding schedule.

### **Interactive Picasso Web Project:**

An unprecedented online project on the subject of Picasso's printmaking launches on March 28. It includes over 250 prints from the Museum's collection. This project allows for the interactive exploration of Picasso's work from a variety of approaches. Sections of the site are devoted to the following topics: Styles and Periods, Subjects and Themes, Publishers and Illustrated Books, Print Techniques, Comparing Print Techniques, and Evolving States. Short texts accompany the prints to provide background and context. The site will be available at [www.MoMA.org/picassoprints](http://www.MoMA.org/picassoprints).

**MoMA's Picasso Print Collection:**

Picasso made approximately 2,400 prints overall and the Museum's collection includes over 1,000 examples. Starting on March 28, images of the Museum's complete holdings of Picasso's prints will be available through the Museum's online collection at [www.MoMA.org/picassoprintscollection](http://www.MoMA.org/picassoprintscollection).

**Publication:**

*A Picasso Portfolio: Prints from The Museum of Modern Art*, by Deborah Wye, was published to accompany the exhibition and celebrate the Museum's collection of Picasso's prints. It explores the artist's printed work through large-scale illustrations, each with an accompanying short text. The works are presented roughly chronologically, but also organized into 17 thematic sections, each with an introductory text. A general essay, chronology, bibliography, checklist, and index complete the volume. Hardcover; 9 x 10 ½"; 200 pp; 168 color illustrations. \$40.00

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**Flickr:** [www.flickr.com/groups/themuseumofmodernart/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/themuseumofmodernart/)

**Hours:** Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Closed Tuesday

**Museum Admission:** \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

**Film Admission:** \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)