Throughout the more than seven decades of his long and extraordinarily productive career, Pablo Picasso retained a significant portion of his output in all mediums — paintings, sculptures, collages, drawings, prints and ceramics. At his death, in 1973 at the age of 91, the artist owned three great houses in his adopted country of France, and when their contents were inventoried, Picasso's magnificent collection of his own work was revealed.

In magnitude alone, the estate was incomparable. It took eleven experts more than three years simply to catalogue the more than 45,000 works stored in Picasso's homes. Altogether, they recorded the existence of 1,876 paintings, 1,355 sculptures, 2,880 ceramics, more than 11,000 drawings and sketches, and some 27,000 etchings, engravings and lithographs, plus cardboard constructions, collages and other works not so easily classified by medium. Officially appraised at $250 million, the estate was unofficially estimated by some experts to be worth closer to $400 million.

The quality of the estate, to some critics, is even more impressive than quantity. According to Dominique Bozo, Curator-in-Charge of the Musée Picasso, Paris, where many of the finest estate works will eventually be on permanent exhibition, "his (more....)
private collection, taken by itself, comprises a complete retro-
spective." Picasso retained works from all stages of his career,
and -- of special significance -- he kept the majority of his
sculptures. He tended, according to William Rubin, co-director
with Mr. Bozo of the exhibition PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE,
"to hold onto the work that he considered most exploratory and
experimental. He needed to have that around him, and for that
reason he kept virtually all his construction sculpture." Picasso
prized above all his Cubist constructions, only two of which he
allowed to leave his studio during his lifetime. "In retaining
virtually his entire output of Cubist sculptures," Rubin explained,
"Picasso confirmed his recognition of its unique position within
his œuvre."

The Picasso estate proved a revelation to critics when a
selection from the Musée Picasso was displayed in Paris in 1979.
Comments ranged from "stunning" and "overwhelming" to "enough
masterpieces for six great painters." Particular mention of the
special role of Picasso's sculpture within his œuvre was made by
critic Pierre Schneider of L'Express who wrote, "Until now, Picasso
was for us a language with vowels, but no consonants. Only by
seeing the sculpture together with the pictures do we see that the
sculpture provides the missing consonants." French President
Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, characterized Picasso as "the chronicler
of this century's sensibilities."

When it was discovered that Picasso had left no will and that
his estate was almost certain to be embroiled in a long process of

(more....)
judicial dispute, it was decided to act on the provisions of a 1968 law that enables the French government to accept works of art in lieu of inheritance taxes. Appointed by the French government, a group of internationally recognized Picasso scholars and specialists made a comprehensive selection of works from the estate. As a result, the new Musée Picasso is being established in Paris' historic Hotel Salé to receive this collection of some 4,000 works.

Almost 300 of the most important paintings, sculptures and prints destined for the Musée Picasso will be on view in PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE. In addition, close to 100 works from that portion of Picasso's estate held by his heirs will also be displayed.

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