

Picasso

NO. 28

PABLO PICASSO: A RETROSPECTIVE

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

THE PICASSO ESTATE WORKS

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

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private collection, taken by itself, comprises a complete retrospective." 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 oeuvre."

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 oeuvre 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

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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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