

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on September 29

PICASSO SCULPTOR MATTER AND BODY

The Picasso Celebration 1973-2023

2023 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death and thus places the year under the sign of the celebration of his work in France, Spain and internationally. To celebrate Picasso's legacy today is a way to question what this major work for western modernity represents today. It is to show its living, accessible and current part.

The Picasso Celebration 1973-2023 is initiated by the Musée national Picasso-Paris, main lender of the event and coordinator, and Bernard Picasso, grandson of the artist and president of the FABA and the Picasso Museum in Malaga. In Spain, it is being supported by the Spanish National Commission for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of Pablo Picasso. It is structured around some fifty exhibitions and events to be held in renowned cultural institutions in Europe and North America, which, together, thanks to new interpretations and approaches, will make it possible to review the state of studies and understanding of Picasso's work.

Through a French-Spanish binational commission, the French and Spanish governments have decided to work together on this major transnational event, and the commemoration will be punctuated by official celebrations in France and Spain and will end with a major international symposium in the autumn of 2023, at the time of the opening of the Picasso Study Centre in Paris.

It is a "Picasso today" which embodies this Celebration and which lays the foundations for the Musée national Picasso-Paris of tomorrow.

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EXHIBITION ORGANIZED BY THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MUSEO PICASSO MÁLAGA



WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF PABLO PICASSO
WITH THE EXCEPTIONAL COLLABORATION OF MUSÉE NATIONAL PICASSO-PARIS

Picasso
Celebración
— 1973.2023



COLLABORATING COMPANY IN SPAIN



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Picasso Sculptor. Matter and Body

- Dates: September 29, 2023, to January 14, 2024
 - Curator: Carmen Giménez, with the participation of Lucía Agirre
 - The exhibition and the accompanying educational and public activities are organized with the support of the National Commission to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Death of Pablo Picasso as part of the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023, with Telefónica as the corporate partner company in Spain.
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- Picasso created sculptures throughout nearly his entire artistic career with the freedom of a self-taught artist prepared to break all the rules.
 - This survey of nearly sixty years of sculptural work is a unique approach to the history of art through Cubism, abstraction, primitivism, and the found object, showing the evident cross-disciplinary fertilization in Picasso's oeuvre.
 - Although it was his least known production at the time of its execution, numerous photographs of Picasso's studios and residences testify to the constant presence of sculpture in his most intimate surroundings.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents *Picasso Sculptor. Matter and Body*, an exhibition centered on matter and the human figure that brings together more than 50 sculptures created between 1909 and 1962 and covers the full range of styles used by Pablo Picasso throughout his career to represent the forms of the human body. Testing the limits between sculpture and painting, and those between project and finished work, this journey through nearly sixty years of Picasso's sculptures constitutes a historical survey of Cubism, abstraction, primitivism, and the found object.

Organized by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in collaboration with Museo Picasso Málaga, the show is part of the international program of the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023, with the support of the National Commission for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Death of Pablo Picasso, and the exceptional collaboration of the Musée national Picasso-Paris, with Telefónica as Collaborating Company in Spain.

Although it is the least known of his artistic disciplines, Picasso regarded sculpture as a form of expression comparable with painting, drawing, engraving, or ceramics, since as he said himself, no art is more or less important than the rest. The artist from Málaga thus produced sculptures throughout nearly the whole of his artistic career, approaching the medium with the freedom of a self-taught artist prepared to break all the rules. In doing so, he used a wide range of formats and materials like wood, iron, plaster, cement, metal, and bronze, which allowed him to express different aspects of his art.

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Numerous photographs of his studios and residences testify to the presence of Picasso's sculpture in his most intimate surroundings. Most of them formed part of his private collection, and the artist enjoyed reviving them in a variety of situations.

TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

Gallery 205

Ten days after Picasso's death in April 1973, one of the two bronze copies of the sculpture *Woman with Vase* was placed over his tomb at the Château de Vauvenargues (France). The other is here to welcome visitors to this tour of the artist's sculptural work.

Picasso made *Woman with Vase* in plaster in 1933, and in 1937 he presented it, cast in cement, at the Spanish Pavilion of the International Exhibition in Paris, which also housed *Guernica* (1937). This demonstrates how important his sculptures were to him. Because *Woman with Vase* was a part of the Guernica Bequest, it was agreed between Picasso's family and the French State that it should be returned to Spain in 1985, after the end of Franco's dictatorship, in accordance with Picasso's wishes.

Coarsely modeled, *Woman with Vase* is a monumental and disproportionate female figure that recalls the fertility goddesses of Antiquity. The plaster original of 1933 was destroyed after being used for the two bronze castings, carried out in 1972 and 1973, while the cement copy is now lost.

Gallery 206

In 1909, in the midst of the rise of Cubism, Picasso modeled the bust of his partner Fernande Olivier, transforming her features into geometrical facets which he condensed and twisted in order to achieve a sculptural rendering of what he had experimented within Cubist painting.

This need to transcend two dimensions led Picasso to experiment further with industrial materials and techniques to construct what his gallerist, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, called "drawings in space." This phase opens with the commission he received for a monument for the tomb of his friend, poet Guillaume Apollinaire. In 1928 Picasso made a series of sketches of filiform human figures made up of geometric silhouettes, and sought the help of sculptor Julio González to transfer these drawings to sculptures. The pieces never came to be placed on the poet's tomb.

Gallery 207

In 1930, Picasso purchased an 18th-century Norman mansion and transformed one of its stables into a studio. For the first time, this gave him a large space in which to work on his sculpture. His favorite material during this period was plaster, and many of his pieces were inspired by the physiognomy of the young Marie-Thérèse Walter, as can be appreciated in the three busts displayed in this space.

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On a small free-standing plaster form, for example, Picasso places an oversized nose and a spherical eye above a neck with a bone-like appearance. He employs similar features in all the sculptures he dedicates to this model. The other two heads of Marie-Thérèse, initially made in plaster in 1931, are shown here in their cement versions, which were presented at the Spanish Pavilion of the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris. They are notable for their compact volumes, with the forms appearing to emerge from the same mass.

Gallery 209

Picasso not only worked the plaster directly with his hands but also sought to transfer other textures to it, including those of natural elements, by using the material's ductility. Some of these works were first seen by the public in the photographs taken by Brassai's in 1933 for the first issue of the magazine *Minotaure*. That contact led to a lasting relationship between the two, and to Picasso's admiration for Brassai's ability to convey in his images the monumentality of his sculptures.

In the atmosphere of light and contrasts of the artist's studio, inhabited by white pieces of different sizes, the busts of Marie-Thérèse were accompanied by other works, some now lost while others are displayed here, such as the small plaster bathers with diminutive heads and exuberantly contorted volumes reminiscent of prehistoric fertility goddesses.

Later came the sculpture modeled in plaster in which found objects enabled Picasso to mold or create textures. One example is the bronze sculpture *Head of a Warrior* (1933), whose large plume evokes classical Antiquity. Here, the artist experiments with elements like pipes, chicken wire, and nails. In the meantime, bricks and cardboard dominate part of the body of the pseudo-goddess of agriculture, *Woman with Leaves* (1934), where the organic shapes remain trapped in the plaster of the upper part.

Gallery 203

During the German occupation of France, Picasso decided to face up to the situation by remaining in Paris, even though he was threatened by the Gestapo and some of his works were destroyed by the Nazis because they were considered 'degenerate art.' His work was enormously limited by the lack of materials, especially bronze, and the impossibility of exhibiting, but even so he produced some of the most outstanding works of his career during this period, which are shown in this space.

In 1941, he created *Head of a Woman*, a monumental bust of Dora Maar with evident references to Antiquity. One of the four bronzes cast of this sculpture was set up in 1959 as a monument to the poet Guillaume Apollinaire behind the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. However, it was not placed on Apollinaire's tomb, which had already been occupied by a stele made by Serge Férat.

Skull (Death's Head) of 1943, also displayed in this gallery, shows a decomposing head, an image Picasso used in many of the works he produced during the war.

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After the war, in 1948, Picasso moved to Vallauris, near Cannes, where there was a nearby pottery. The path between his house and his recently acquired studio in an old perfume factory ran across some waste ground where the potters used to throw away their refuse, and where Picasso found material for his work. Coinciding with the recent pregnancies of Françoise Gilot, it was during this phase that he created his second version of *Pregnant Woman* (1950), using water jars for the belly and breasts and modeling the rest of the piece. After it was cast in bronze, the woman as receptacle of life was modified in 1959 with the addition of a navel, nipples, and more solid feet.

Gallery 202

In 1956, the artist resorted once again to found objects for the creation of his most monumental sculptural ensemble, *The Bathers*, which relates to and actualizes the Picasso of the early Cubist assemblages. These six sculptures, shown here in bronze, were initially made with broomsticks, fragments of old wooden frames, furniture, and other objects that Picasso found in scrapyards and on rubbish heaps. Here too, each figure has its own personality, while all are interrelated through the arrangement of their arms in a sort of pseudo-nautical code.

A quarter of a century earlier, Picasso had used found objects, in this case fir wood, to carve a dynamic set of women who recall bronze statuettes of Antiquity. Although limited in his work by the characteristics of the material, which was not destined to be assembled but to be fashioned in a single piece, Picasso gave each of the five figures with its own identity.

Gallery 204

This gallery features *Little Girl Jumping Rope* (1950), of which Françoise Gilot wrote in her book *Life with Picasso*: “Pablo had always wanted to make a sculpture that didn’t touch the ground. One day, watching a little girl jumping rope, he decided that would be the way to do it. He had the ironmonger in Vallauris make him a rectangular base from which rose, to a height of three or four feet, a curving iron tube in the shape the jump-rope would have as it touched the ground. The top ends of the ‘rope’ provided the support for the little girl.”

Gallery 208

Picasso started his first group of works based on cut, bent, and painted sheet metal in 1954. That same year, he produced four sculptures of Sylvette David, the young woman whose hairdo the artist made fashionable around the world, and whom he had met through her partner, Tobias Jellinek.

This young British designer worked with metal at the studio of Joseph-Marius Tiola, who thereafter helped Picasso to transfer some of his drawings to the sheet metal sculptures that characterize the last phase of his career.

In *Sylvette* (1954), drawing and painting create new planes inside the forms, whereas in other pieces, like *Woman with Child* (1961), the sheet metal is folded and twisted as if it was paper in order to draw the

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forms of the figures, adding small touches of paint. In *Woman with Outstretched Arms* (1961), the work with sheet metal is simpler while the painting gains in importance on this large figure, whose tiny head is silhouetted against a long mane of hair made of triangular painted mesh.

The itinerary concludes with *Head of a Woman* (1962), one of the profile portraits of Jacqueline Roque, represented with prominent eyes, an aquiline nose, and dark hair streaked with silver strands. This three-dimensional painting closes a cycle which Picasso had begun by looking to sculpture for what painting could not give him, and by seeking the essential cross-fertilization between the two disciplines.

DIDAKTIKA

As part of the Didaktika project, the Museum designs on site and online educational spaces sponsored by the Fundación EDP, as well as special activities, that complement each exhibition, offering tools and resources to aid appreciation of the works on display.

The educational section dedicated to this exhibition presents texts and images to show how Picasso experimented with different sculptural techniques to create surprising pieces. The different techniques he applied in the course of his life emerged both from his own creative genius and from what he learned from craftsmen and collaborators, allowing him to create sculptures in plaster, bronze, metal, cement, and made assemblages, sometimes starting from found objects.

Extracts from a documentary by Luciano Emmer recorded in 1953 show the artist at work on one of his best-known sculptures at his home in Vallauris. The Didaktika section also includes a reading area where the exhibition catalogue can be consulted.

Activities

Inaugural Talk (September 27)

Presentation by exhibition curator Carmen Giménez, with the participation of Lucía Agirre.

Shared Reflections*

Visits that offer different points of view on the contents of the exhibition, accompanied by professionals from the Museum:

- Curatorial Vision (October 18): Lucía Agirre, Curator of the Museum
- Key Concepts (October 25): Luz Maguregui Urquiza, Education Coordinator

*Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre

New Views of the Exhibitions (November 8)

Tours of the works in the exhibition, featuring guests from different areas like science, film, sport, design, literature, or music to see them from different perspectives.

These tours will begin with *Picasso Sculptor* with a visit led by renowned writer from Bilbao Pedro Ugarte.

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Creative Session +18: Writing Workshop (November 16)

An initiatory workshop on novelized narrative conducted by Bilbao writer Pedro Ugarte, whose awards include the 1996 Euskadi Prize for Literature and the 2017 Setenil Prize for Short Stories. Ugarte will introduce participants to the least-known facet of Pablo Picasso: his work as a writer and poet.

Creative Session +18. Ceramic 3D Printing Workshop (November 23)

An opportunity to experience the leap between tradition and technology and discover 3D printing in clay in this introductory workshop conducted by Japi, architect, designer, and founder of JetClay. The starting point will be the hands of Picasso himself, sculptor and ceramist.

Picasso in Dance (December 3)

Dancers and choreographers Andres Marín (winner of the 2022 National Prize for Dance) and Jon Maya (3 Max Awards in 2020 and the National Prize for Dance in 2017) meet and ‘converse’ in front of *Woman with Vase*, the sculpture opening the exhibition *Picasso Sculptor. Matter and Body*. This is one of two bronzes cast in 1972, whose cement version was displayed together with *Guernica* at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris, and which can now be seen both at this exhibition and at the artist’s tomb.

Conversations will flow between bodies, cultures, and disciplines in an exclusive soirée that will leave no-one indifferent.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition will be accompanied by a monograph dedicated to the artist, with essays by Carmen Giménez, Diana Widmaier-Ruiz-Picasso, and Pepe Karmel on Picasso’s sculptural oeuvre. The volume is illustrated with images of the works shown in the exhibition, including both contemporary illustrations and Brassai’s historic images.

Cover image:

Pablo Picasso

Head of a Warrior, Boisgeloup, January 1, 1933

Bronze with patina

121 x 69 x 32 cm

Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, Madrid. On temporary loan to the Museo Picasso Málaga

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Images for the use of the Press
Picasso Sculptor. Matter and Body
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

Online press image service

In the press section of the Museum's website (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.eus), registered users can download high-resolution images and videos of both the exhibitions and the building. If you have not yet opened an account, you can register and download the required material.

If you are already a user, introduce your username and password and access the image downloading facility directly.

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For further information, the Press Department of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao can be contacted by phone (+34 944 359 008) or email (media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus).

Pablo Picasso

Woman with Vase, Boisgeloup, summer 1933

Bronze, cast in 1972 or 1973

220 × 122 × 110 cm

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid. Gift of Pablo Picasso

Picasso DE00051

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Pablo Picasso

Figure: Project for a Monument to Guillaume Apollinaire, 1928

Iron wire and sheet metal

59.5 × 13 × 32 cm

Musée national Picasso-Paris. Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979. MP265

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée national Picasso-Paris) / Adrien Didierjean



Pablo Picasso

Head of a Woman, Paris, 1929–30

Iron, sheet metal, springs, and metal colanders; all painted in white

100 × 37 × 59 cm

Musée national Picasso-Paris. Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979 MP270

Foto © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée national Picasso-Paris) / Mathieu Rabeau

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Pablo Picasso

Head of a Woman, April–July 1937 [original in plaster made in Boisgeloup in 1931]

Cement, unique edition

142 × 54.5 × 62.5 cm

Musée Picasso, Antibes

Gift of the artist, 1954

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023



Pablo Picasso

Bather, Boisgeloup, 1931

Plaster and wood

72 × 41 × 34.5 cm

Private collection

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023



Pablo Picasso

Head of a Warrior, Boisgeloup, January 1, 1933

Bronze with patina

121 × 69 × 32 cm

Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, Madrid. On temporary loan to the Museo Picasso Málaga

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Pablo Picasso

Head of a Woman (Dora Maar), 1941

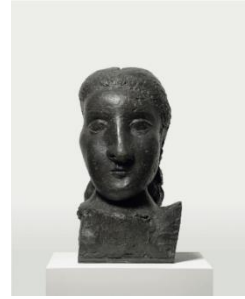
Bronze

80 x 40 x 55 cm

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Sammlung Beyeler

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023

Photo: Peter Schibli



Pablo Picasso

Pregnant Woman (second state), Vallauris, 1950/1959

Plaster and shellac

111 x 32.5 x 34.5 cm

Private collection

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023

Photo: Robert Mackeever



Pablo Picasso

Little Girl Jumping Rope, Vallauris, 1950

Bronze

153 x 62 x 65 cm

Private collection

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023



Pablo Picasso

Sylvette, Vallauris, 1954

Cut and folded sheet metal, painted on both sides

69.9 x 47 x 7.6 cm

Fondation Hubert Looser, Zurich

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023

Photo © Fondation Hubert Looser, Zurich



Pablo Picasso

The Bathers, Cannes, summer 1956

Bronze

Six sculptures, dimensions vary

Musée national Picasso-Paris, Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979,

n°. inv.: MP352-357

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée national Picasso-Paris) / Mathieu Rabeau



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Pablo Picasso

Head of a Woman, Mougins, late 1962

Cut, folded, and polychromed sheet metal and iron wire

32 × 24 × 16 cm

Musée national Picasso-Paris. Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979

© Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée national Picasso-Paris) / Adrien

Didierjean/Mathieu Rabeau

