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**PICASSO:
MINOTAURS AND
MATADORS**
CURATED BY SIR JOHN
RICHARDSON

April 28–August 25, 2017

20 Grosvenor Hill
London W1K 3QD

If all the ways I have been along were marked on a map and joined up with a line, it might represent a Minotaur.

—Pablo Picasso

Gagosian, in partnership with the artist's grandson, Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, is pleased to present "Picasso: Minotaurs and Matadors," curated by Sir John Richardson. The exhibition examines the intersection of Picasso's bullfighting imagery with his mythological and biographical compositions of the 1930s. Including works dating from 1889 to 1971, this career-long survey traces Picasso's engagement with the ancient rituals and narratives of his native Mediterranean.

Picasso, though one of history's most innovative modernists, was grounded in the traditions of his Spanish heritage. Born in the southern port of Málaga in 1881, he was a lifelong aficionado of the drama of the bullfight: Matadors, picadors, horses, and bulls were recurring subjects throughout his body of work, from his earliest childhood drawings to some of his

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final paintings. In the 1930s, at a time of upheaval and personal strife, Picasso began to create allusive narrative works ripe for Surrealist interpretation, infusing the theatrical combat of the *corrida* with mythic elements of antiquity. His synthesis of the Minotaur myth, the Spanish cult of the bull, and the intimate details of his private life led to the creation of illustrated books, poetry, set designs, sculpture, ceramics, the celebrated Vollard Suite of prints, and masterpieces such as *La Minotauromachie* (1935) and even *Guernica* (1937). When Picasso returned to live in the Mediterranean after World War II, his work would continue to be steeped in mythology and bullfighting for the remainder of his life. His depictions of Minotaurs and matadors provide a key for biographical and scholarly investigation into an oeuvre Picasso confessed to having created as if keeping a diary. The exhibition aims to examine the proposal Picasso described in the quote above, presenting fresh perspectives on some of his myths and monsters.

Comprised of paintings, drawings, sculpture, prints, ceramics, and a home movie Picasso made in 1929, “Picasso: Minotaurs and Matadors” is presented in an innovative installation designed by the Stirling Prize-winning architecture firm Caruso St. John, and is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Richardson, noted Picasso scholars Michael FitzGerald and Gertje Utley, and historian of Greek art and archaeology Clemente Marconi.

Pablo Picasso was born in Málaga, Spain in 1881 and died in France in 1973. Recent exhibitions include “Picasso: Tradition and the Avant-Garde,” Museo Nacional del Prado and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2006); “Picasso and American Art,” Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006, traveled to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, through 2007); “Picasso et les Maîtres,” Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris (2008–09); “Picasso: Challenging the Past,” National Gallery, London (2009); “Picasso at the Metropolitan Museum,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2010); “Picasso: Black and White,” Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2012–13); “Picasso Sculpture,” Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015–16); and “Picasso - Giacometti,” Musée Picasso, Paris (2016–17).

Sir John Patrick Richardson, British art historian and Picasso biographer, was born in London in 1924. From 1951–62 he lived in Provence, France, and became a close friend of Picasso and his family. Richardson’s three-volume *A Life of Picasso* was the result of this friendship. He is currently working on the fourth volume of the biography. In connection with this, Richardson has organized six major exhibitions of Picasso’s work at Gagosian. He has been a contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, *The Burlington Magazine*, and *Vanity Fair*, and is the author of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Picasso, Provence, and Douglas Cooper* (1999); and *Sacred Monsters, Sacred Masters* (2001), a collection of essays. In 1993, Richardson was elected to the British Academy. He was appointed Slade Professor of Art at Oxford in 1995. In 2011, he was named an officer of France’s Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in recognition of his contributions to furthering the arts in France and throughout the world. He was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in the 2012 New Year Honours for services to art.

Image: Picasso wearing a bull’s head intended for bullfighter's training, La Californie, Cannes, 1959. Photo by Edward Quinn © edwardquinn.com.

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