

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GRAND FINALE



Some of us condescended to the last phase of Pablo Picasso's career, dismissing it as lazily slapdash. We ignored who we were dealing with. The Gagosian gallery's museum-worthy "Picasso: Mosqueteros," a show of paintings and prints circa 1962-72, crushes resistance with an installation, by John Richardson, that parses the tactical subtleties of what was, after all, a cogent campaign. Ahead of his time yet again, Picasso anticipated generations of painters who have roughed up the medium in order to resuscitate it. Fragments of his previous styles join ad-hoc painterly improvisations in apparent rushes toward chaos, which an ineffable formality surprises and checks. It's as if one threw sticks in the air and they landed as houses. The themes are richly and scarily comic and erotic. The eponymous musketeers, inspired by Rembrandt and Shakespeare, hilariously strut unwarranted panache. In a 1969 masterpiece, a senile fop sits like a happy baby, proudly clutching an object whose use he appears to have forgotten. (It's a sword.)

—Peter Schjeldahl
