

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Picasso shows a softer face in London

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The artist's later statues and ceramics, on show at the Gagosian gallery's Mediterranean Years, reveal a tender family man



'A mind-boggling appetite for new forms' ... Picasso's Musicien Assis at the Gagosian gallery.

Photograph: Stefan Wermuth/Reuters

If you are in or visiting London this August and have not yet seen it, do not miss Picasso: The Mediterranean Years at the Gagosian gallery. No other current exhibition in London will enrich your day, your summer, or your life as much.

Picasso – so many things to so many people – shows yet another face to the world in this luxurious selection of works from the private holdings of his family. Here are "new" Picassos, and a new Picasso: the tender family man. A less enticing title might have been Picasso: The Retirement Years. I kept thinking of Marlon Brando playing with his

grandson in the garden in *The Godfather* – the fearsome old Don putting orange peel in his mouth to entertain a child, a Picasso-like visual game if ever there was one.

Here are paintings of little Paloma with her doll, of baby carriages and toys on the rug. Picasso goes soft! In fact, the curator John Richardson, biographer of Picasso, here makes a subtle and convincing reply to charges of Picasso's inhumanity. There's a lot of love on display – Picasso's love of his world, Richardson's love of Picasso. Not that personal details are the only reason to see it – by a long chalk. Here are dazzlingly imaginative ceramics, haunting landscapes, a mind-boggling appetite for new forms and methods and mad possibilities.

Picasso, on this evidence, was coasting as a painter after 1945. He had reinvented the art of painting quite a few times by then and his canvases were no longer milestones of modernism. The three-dimensional works – from terracotta plates to welded statues – are another matter. Picasso is not just modern in these playful creations, he is our contemporary, as he shows how art can be made from nothing. Move over, Martin Creed. Grandad's here and he's taking doves out of his hat.

Take a dip in the Med – in King's Cross. What a thing to step off the harsh city street into Picasso's sensual labyrinth. A minotaur in his natural habitat is something to see.