

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

### Picasso: The Mediterranean Years (1945-62)

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'Overwhelmingly beautiful' ... Picasso's Musicien Assis at the Gagosian. Photograph: Stefan Wermuth/Reuters

Curated by Picasso biographer John Richardson, this exemplary show is full of astonishing things – from great paintings, sculptures and ceramics, to hilarious little cartoons and playful little cardboard cut-outs of faces and birds.

Better installed than most museum shows and made in conjunction with Picasso's grandson Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, this exhibition takes us from the aftermath of the second world war to the 1960s, and from Paris to the Mediterranean. It was here that Picasso was to reinvent ceramics, to revisit his own past as well as the history of art. This show is in part devoted to pleasure – with paintings of and for children, with a suntanned terracotta pot wearing a painted-on bikini, with the famous sculpture of a

baboon whose face is a real, toy car, and with Picasso's bestiary of bulls, goats, minotaurs and priapic old satyrs.

As the current show at Tate Liverpool demonstrates, Picasso was a communist, or at least carried a party card and was generous with both his creativity and his money in supporting all kinds of good causes. This show, which covers much the same period, gives us Picasso the hedonist, who in his art and in his love affairs felt unconstrained by any rules except his own. But death is never far away in Mediterranean culture – and in Picasso's art. A swimmer splutters to shore; a god scatters seeds of death around a group of dancers; a devil smiles, but is still a devil. Ancient myth, modern lovers: the products of Picasso's endless work populate these beautifully redesigned galleries, and we go from well-lit open spaces to a darkened treasure chamber of ceramics, bronzes and cut-outs. This is a wonderful exhibition. There is such variety. A shelf of small objects, flippant little bits of clay and cardboard, is worth dozens of lesser careers. Overwhelmingly beautiful.