

NYTimes.com
February 18, 2010

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

The Torrent That Flowed in Picasso's Final Years

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Published: February 18, 2010

The post-World War II years were a particularly prolific period for Picasso. He began spending most of his time in the south of France surrounded by bullfighters and poets, master craftsmen and fellow artists like Matisse.



Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Pablo Picasso's "Seated Musician," from 1956, pastel on sawed and painted plywood.



Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

"Les Jeux," (1950), will be among the works to be shown in "Pablo Picasso: The Mediterranean Years (1945-1961)" at the Gagosian Gallery in London.

In the view of John Richardson, Picasso's biographer, this period in the artist's life has not been properly explored. So he and the artist's grandson, Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, are teaming up to organize their second exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery, this time in London.

The show, "Pablo Picasso: The Mediterranean Years (1945-1961)," will run June 4 through Aug. 28 at the gallery's Britannia Street space, where they are hoping to repeat the same success they had last year in New York when Mr. Richardson and Mr. Ruiz-Picasso organized "Picasso: Mosqueteros," focusing on the artist's late paintings and prints. (The exhibition will not be coming to New York, gallery officials said.)

"Mosqueteros," which opened in March at one of Gagosian's Chelsea spaces, drew crowds eager to glimpse Picasso's images of musketeers and matadors, twisted couples and haunted women. By the exhibition's end on June 6 more than 100,000 visitors had seen it.

For this new show Mr. Richardson, a Gagosian adviser, and Mr. Ruiz-Picasso are moving back in time. "During World War II his paintings were very funereal and dreary, as though they were contained within gray walls," Mr. Richardson said in a telephone interview. "But when he suddenly goes to the south of France, to the Cote d'Azur, it becomes a protean period of incredible virtuosity, where he revolutionizes sculptures, revolutionizes engraving techniques, revolutionizes ceramics and comes up with paintings that pit him against the great masters of the past."

During these years Picasso fathered two more children — Claude and Paloma — with Françoise Gilot, his young art-student mistress; he later married Jacqueline Roque. It was during those years that he painted canvases filled with images of his young children and Gilot, and then of Roque. More important, he revisited the classics, working on a series inspired by "Women of Algiers," Delacroix's famed painting of Algerian concubines now in the Louvre, and another based on "Las Meninas" by Velázquez. "It was Jacob wrestling with the angel," Mr. Richardson said of these series.

The show, which will feature about 100 works, will be more varied than the first exhibition. Besides paintings, drawings and prints, it will include ceramics and sculptures of all kinds: bronze, wood, those that incorporate found objects and some cut from metal. Loans are coming primarily from family members like Mr. Ruiz-Picasso, but there will be a few museum loans too.

“It was a crucial period,” Mr. Ruiz-Picasso said by phone from his home in France, explaining that a lot of his family’s works have not been shown publicly until now. And only some things will be for sale.