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NATIONAL GALLERY ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION
OF KEY CUBIST PAINTING BY PICASSO

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 9, 1973. The acquisition of Pablo Picasso's
_Femme Nue_, the key work of the artist's analytical cubist period,
has been announced today by the National Gallery of Art. It was
acquired through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund.

The painting, generally considered one of the greatest cubist
paintings, is on view in a newly-installed gallery (seventy-six)
which includes fourteen additional Picassos and a selection of
paintings by his close friend Braque. Among the Picassos are
the _Family of Saltimbanques_ (1905), the work that best summarizes
his Rose period; _Le Gourmet_ (1901); _The Tragedy_ (1903);
_Lady with a Fan_ (1905); and _The Lovers_ (1923), an important work
of his classical phase.

This installation is one in a suite of galleries on the
main floor that documents the birth of twentieth-century art. Some
of the paintings in this new arrangement will eventually be rehung
with other contemporary works in the East Building when it is
completed, probably in 1976.

_Femme Nue_ is the largest (73 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches) of Picasso's
analytical cubist paintings. In this period Picasso restricted
his palette to a very subtle and narrow range of buffs, greens and blues.

The painting was done in the Spanish coastal village of Cadaqués,
where Picasso, his mistress Fernande Olivier, and the painter Derain,
spent the summer of 1910.

(more)
In the work done at Cadaqués, Picasso finally and completely broke through traditionally closed contours and forms, coming as near to total abstraction as at any point in his career. As Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, his dealer, later emphasized, this was the crucial moment in the development of cubism. Other exponents have used the term "hermetic" in reference to the great paintings of this period.

At the time Picasso was moving toward greater distillation of traditional forms. In contrast to earlier cubist works, here the nude figure has been replaced by a painting of geometrical forms and their facets, which the artist saw in the model. The interaction of geometric surfaces, to some degree appearing to be translucent, fully dominate the composition.

_Femme Nue_ was an important work for Picasso, as a large number of preparatory drawings indicate. The documents, done in Paris during the winter and spring of 1910, illustrate the extraordinary transformation of the figure from a pictorial, rounded form to an almost complete abstraction expressed in fragmented planes.

This is the only analytical painting by Picasso for which a series of preliminary studies is known. A similar series exists for _Les Demoiselles d'Avignon_, the summary work of his proto-cubist period.

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