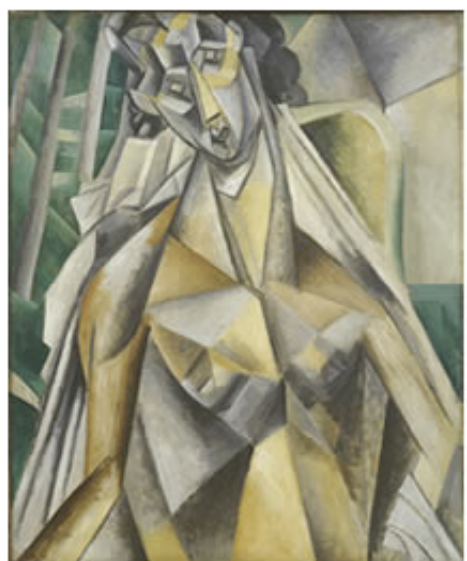


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FIRST EXHIBITION OF PICASSO'S CUBIST PORTRAITS OF FERNANDE OLIVIER ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART OCTOBER 1, 2003-JANUARY 19, 2004



Pablo Picasso

Nude in an Armchair, Horta de Ebro, summer 1909

oil on canvas, 92.7 x 74.9 cm (36 1/2 x 29 1/2)

Private collection

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Washington, DC -- **Picasso: The Cubist Portraits of Fernande Olivier** will be the first exhibition ever to focus exclusively on Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973) 1909 portraits of his companion, Fernande Olivier, as a single body of work. On view in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art from October 1, 2003, to January 19, 2004, the exhibition will present over 50 of these works, including paintings, drawings, and sculpture executed between the spring and winter of 1909, an unprecedented assemblage that offers rare insight into Picasso's artistic process.

The exhibition celebrates the National Gallery of Art's recent acquisition of an early bronze cast of *Head of a Woman (Fernande)*, Picasso's only significant cubist sculpture prior to 1912 and an icon of early modern art. Paintings, works on paper, and studio photographs revealing Picasso's exploration of cubist form are also included. Organized by the National Gallery of Art, the exhibition will travel to the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas, where a selection of works will be shown from February 15, 2004, through May 9, 2004.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

"This exhibition presents a crucial moment in the invention of cubism," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art. "To do justice to this portrait series, it was important to assemble as many of the relevant works as possible. We are indebted to the many museums and private collectors who are generously lending their works to the exhibition."

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

BACKGROUND

Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (1881-1973) is generally considered the most influential artist of the 20th century. He was unique as an innovator of styles and techniques and one of the most prolific artists in history, creating more than 20,000 works.

Shortly after moving to Paris in 1904, Picasso met Fernande Olivier (1881-1966), who soon became his companion. An artist's model, "la belle Fernande" was the inspiration for numerous works during the course of their relationship.

Picasso's depictions of women during the years he and Fernande lived together reflected her presence in his life, but it is important to recognize that Picasso's work reveals many influences and stylistic concerns. His artistic process was not so much a matter of strict observation of Fernande but a transformation of her image through repeated experiments with pictorial and sculptural form.

In 1906, Picasso's work entered a new phase, marked by the influence of Greek,

Iberian, and African art. Drawing on the innovations of the French artist Paul Cézanne, Picasso and the French artist Georges Braque painted landscapes in 1908 in a style later described by a critic as being made of "little cubes," hence leading to the term "cubism." Between 1908 and 1911, Picasso and Braque completely transformed pictorial conventions of form and space, thereby introducing a new language for representing the face and body.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION

Picasso's 1909 Fernande series stands out in the history of portraiture, encompassing virtually every medium but printmaking. Such intense devotion to a single "portrait" subject is exceedingly rare in Picasso's work and does not exist prior to 1909. The Fernande works are not portraits in the conventional sense: only a dozen or so portraits from 1909 clearly represent Fernande. But during a ten-month period of time, Picasso produced more than 60 images of women in various formats-- head, bust, half-length, and full-length--that clearly possess Fernande-like attributes.

Organized chronologically, the exhibition begins in the spring of 1909, when Picasso created a large group of works on paper, among them the Art Institute of Chicago's *Head of a Woman*. In these works, Picasso pursues specific structural and psychological aspects of the head and face that would come to occupy him repeatedly throughout the Fernande series.

The great majority of works that make up the exhibition were executed during a 1909 summer stay in the remote Spanish mountain village of Horta de Ebro. There the artist took the image of Fernande to new extremes, as he struggled to retain elements of likeness while rendering the image increasingly abstract, as demonstrated by *Woman with Pears* (Museum of Modern Art) and *Nude in an Armchair* (private collection). By emphasizing the downward rotation of the head, Picasso imbued his figure with an aura of melancholy, an expressive quality rarely found in cubist works. At Horta, Picasso also recorded the portrait series in a sequence of studio photographs that allowed him to review the progress of his work.

Returning to Paris in the fall, Picasso embarked on the final group of portraits. These

include the sculpture, *Head of a Woman (Fernande)*, which he executed in clay and plaster before casting in bronze. The exhibition features three versions of this iconic work, two plasters from the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Dallas, Texas, and the Latner Family Collection, Toronto, Canada, respectively, as well as the National Gallery of Art's bronze. The sculpture, in turn, appears to have been the direct model for three large drawings and an important painting, *Woman in Green* from the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, which unexpectedly portrays Fernande as an austere, formal, and commanding figure.

The final three paintings, including the Tate's *Seated Female Nude*, dating from the winter of 1909-1910, once again present a figure of melancholy, with the fragmentation of the image rendering the subject's identity elusive.

CURATOR, CATALOGUE, AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

The curator for the exhibition is Jeffrey Weiss, curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

A richly illustrated catalogue, **Picasso: The Cubist Portraits of Fernande Olivier**, accompanies the exhibition. Authors include Jeffrey Weiss; Valerie J. Fletcher, curator of sculpture at the Hirshhorn Museum; and Kathryn A. Tuma, assistant curator of historical exhibitions at The Drawing Center, New York. The catalogue examines the internal development of the Fernande portrait series and relates it to other themes, including serial repetition, likeness, and the history of melancholy. Special attention is devoted to the technical development of the sculpture *Head of a Woman (Fernande)*. A separate discussion considers the powerful impact of Cézanne on Picasso's work during this period. Published by the National Gallery of Art in association with Princeton University Press, the catalogue will be available from the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov (<http://www.nga.gov/home.htm>) or by phone at (202) 842-6002 or (800) 697-9350 for \$39.95 softcover (192 pages, 80 color, 75 duotones).

Exhibition curator Jeffrey Weiss will present a lecture, "**Picasso's Cubist Portraits of Fernande Olivier: A Preview of the Exhibition**," on Sunday, September 28, 2003, at 2:00 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium. Other activities related to the exhibition

include the film, "**Pablo Picasso: Legacy of Genius**," presented October 15, 16, and 17 at 12:30 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium, and "**Gallery Talks**" by lecturers Sally Shelburne and Wilford W. Scott (consult www.nga.gov (<http://www.nga.gov/home.htm>) for location, dates, and times).

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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