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Major Early Drawings by Pablo Picasso on View at the National Gallery of Art, Washington January 29–May 6, 2012



Pablo Picasso, *Juggler with Still Life*
Paris, autumn 1905
gouache over graphite on cardboard
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection, 1963

Washington, DC—Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was the greatest draftsman of the 20th century, exploring every technique from a single line to explosions of color. Through some 60 works, ***Picasso's Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition*** presents the dazzling development of the artist as a draftsman during the first 30 years of his career, from the precocious academic exercises of his youth to his radical innovations of cubism and collage. On view at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from January 29 through May 6, 2012, the exhibition includes many of Picasso's finest drawings, watercolors, and pastels, borrowed from American and European public and private collections—including the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte—and

seven drawings from the Gallery's collection of 278 works by Picasso.

"Drawing served as an essential means of invention and discovery in Picasso's multifaceted art, connecting him with the European masters of the near and distant past," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "Picasso's work has long been integral to the Gallery's collection and has been the subject of six important exhibitions here, but this is the first to focus on his major drawings, watercolors, pastels, and collages."

Exhibition Organization and Support

Picasso's Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition was co-organized by The Frick Collection, New York, where the exhibition was on view from October 4, 2011, through January 8, 2012, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of The Hearst Foundation, Inc. This exhibition is also made possible by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

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

The Exhibition

Picasso's Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition presents a diverse selection of works on paper arranged chronologically, from early academic studies and life drawings to preparatory drawings for paintings, major independent and finished drawings made for sale, and portraits of family and friends in all media.

The son of a drawing instructor, Picasso began to sketch at an early age. The exhibition opens with a selection of the most accomplished drawings from his childhood, including *Hercules* (1890)—his earliest known drawing. By age 14, he had mastered the conventions of classical draftsmanship through intense academic study and hard work, exemplified in *Study of a Torso* (1895) and *Study from Life* (1895–1897). The lessons learned in this period, as well as exposure to the art academies of La Coruña, Barcelona, and Madrid, and to old masters in the Prado, stayed with Picasso

throughout his life.

Picasso's move to Paris in 1904 coincided with rising public access to works on paper by old master and 19th-century artists through museum exhibitions and new means of reproduction. Inspired by Ingres, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, and Degas, as well as Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities, Picasso produced virtuoso drawings as independent works in a variety of materials (pen and ink, charcoal, pastel, watercolor, and gouache) and subjects (the couple, mother and child, and the harlequin family), for example *Juggler with Still Life* (1905).

The exhibition showcases the way in which Picasso (with Georges Braque) devised new approaches in drawing that culminated in cubism and collage—the most critical development in his career and arguably in the 20th century. His interest in ancient Iberian art led to geometric stylization in visions of his mistress Fernande Olivier. In studies of individual figures, such as *Yellow Nude (Study for Les Femmes d'Alger)* (1907), he revealed his thought processes as he progressively rendered the human figure more abstract. Watercolors of landscapes and still lifes as well as figures track Picasso's development of the interlocking facets that underlay cubism. Six major variations on a standing female nude explore his analytic vocabulary. Another series shows the artist's brilliant transformation of the new medium of collage into major artistic statements. In the collage *The Cup of Coffee* (1913), Picasso created a dialogue between conventional means of drawing and unconventional materials and techniques, and between virtual flatness and illusion of depth.

During World War I and immediately following, Picasso balanced tradition against innovation, embracing both classical modes and the cubist approach to representation. In portraits and images of bathers and figures, the artist rendered his subjects in spare contour drawings—for example, *The Bathers* (1918)—and in carefully executed sculptural drawings of the face and body, as in *Portrait of Madame Georges Wildenstein* (1918).

The concluding works in the exhibition are from the summer of 1921, when Picasso and his wife Olga Khokhlova and baby Paulo were staying at Fontainebleau. *Head of a Woman* and *Woman in a Hat Holding a Missal* are pastel and charcoal renderings of

monumental female figures, reflecting Picasso's deep interest in the classical Mediterranean tradition.

Curators and Exhibition Catalogue

The curators of the exhibition are Susan Grace Galassi, senior curator, The Frick Collection; Marilyn McCully, an independent scholar and Picasso expert; and Andrew Robison, senior curator of prints and drawings, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Published by The Frick Collection in association with Yale University Press, the 224-page fully illustrated exhibition catalogue includes an essay by Galassi on Picasso's interest in the old masters and an essay by McCully that examines the early critical responses to his drawings. The catalogue is available for purchase in the Gallery Shops in both softcover and hardcover editions. To order, please visit our website at shop.nga.gov; call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail mailorder@nga.gov.

Related Activities

Film Program

Le Mystère Picasso

Wednesday, February 8, 2:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 9, and Friday, February 10, 12:30 p.m.

Three screenings of the classic 1956 film by Clouzot—an imaginative homage to his friend Picasso as the maestro paints before the camera. (Henri Georges Clouzot, 1956, 35 mm, French with subtitles, 78 minutes)

East Building Auditorium

Concert

Phillips Camerata

Sunday, February 19, 6:30 p.m.

Chamber music written between 1890 and 1921

West Building, West Garden Court

Gallery Talks

Picasso's Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition

Diane Arkin

February 6, 7, 13, 14, and 16, 12:00 p.m.

March 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, and 22, 11:00 a.m.

Sally Shelburne

April 18, 19, 25, and 26, 2:00 p.m.

West Building Rotunda

50 minutes

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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 at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter 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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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