

PICASSO'S LATE SCULPTURE : *WOMAN*. THE COLLECTION IN CONTEXT.

11 May- 30 August 2009

- *Woman* (1961), in the Museo Picasso Málaga Collection, belongs to the extensive series of sheet-metal sculptures that Pablo Picasso made in the early 1960s.
- The work is at the centre of MPM's new exhibition, which will run until 30 August 2009, and which brings together some 40 works by Picasso, alongside prominent works by two of the Andalusian artist's great contemporaries: Julio González and Henri Matisse.

Museo Picasso Málaga's new exhibition, **Picasso's Late Sculpture: *Woman*. The Collection in Context** is part of a series of exhibitions aimed at placing selected works from the MPM Collection in their historical and artistic context. The sheet-metal sculpture, *Woman* (1961), donated by Christine Ruiz-Picasso, is the highlight of this exhibition, which runs until 30 August 2009, bringing together some 40 works produced by Picasso at different moments of his life. It includes the paper cut-outs he made as a child, his Cubist constructions, and paintings and sculptures from his later years.

Alongside paintings and drawings from different periods, **Picasso's Late Sculpture: *Woman*. The Collection in Context** also includes three major sculptures by Julio González and a magical *decoupage* by Henri Matisse, which allow the viewer to examine the artistic exchange that took place between the three great artists.

With this selection of works, the exhibition examines a lengthy creative process that culminated in a new and unique kind of sculpture towards the end of Picasso's artistic career. The origins of *Woman* and his other late sculptures are to be found in the paper cut-outs of his childhood, and in the Cubist constructions from which it is also derived.

During the Cubist period, Picasso devised a new artistic language which revealed his interest in concepts such as planes, transparency and space, and which are fundamental in order to understand the creative context of *Woman*. These concerns are also apparent in the works included in the exhibition that he produced between the 1920s and 1950. This long and complex creative process eventually led to the sheet-metal sculptures of the early 1960s.

Despite everything that has been written about Picasso and his work, and the countless exhibitions that have been held on the artist, his late sculpture has rarely been the object of study. **Picasso's Late Sculpture: *Woman*. The Collection in Context**, therefore, is practically the first time that these sculptures have been examined in depth, and they are shown in the context of their origin. The exhibition is curated by **Elizabeth Cowling**, professor of History of Art at Edinburgh University, and one of the leading international authorities on Picasso.

***Woman*, the sculpture**

Woman, the fascinating piece that is at the centre of this exhibition, is a sheet-metal sculpture produced in 1961. It is constructed of three distinct panels, folded and painted white, and is based on a paper cut-out model that Picasso made in January of the same year. The work belongs to the group of over a hundred sculptures that Picasso produced between 1961 and 1962, and with which he ended his revolutionary and innovative career as a sculptor.

Origins

Lionel Prejger, who worked with Picasso on the making of these sculptures, said that, after accepting the artist's proposal that they work together, Picasso confessed to him: "I'm achieving a dream I've had for a long time, to take these little pieces of paper scattered all around and turn them into a medium that will last". In the early 60s, the elderly artist enthusiastically embarked upon this new project, turning metal into a new kind of planar sculpture. In an article in the catalogue of this exhibition, Prejger tells us: "Picasso never leaves anything to chance. Every curve, flat surface and hollow is thought out and deliberate. The shadows are real; he created them. The smooth surfaces are suited for dark desires."

Cubist constructions

Elizabeth Cowling points out how Picasso used his skill at cut-outs throughout his lifetime, and how this technique reached maturity with Cubism. It was during this period that Picasso produced his first collages and *papiers collés*, and his first cardboard and sheet-metal constructions. This was when the artistic process enabled him to apply this skill to an endless number of novel combinations, thanks to a reductionist and flexible "sign language". These Cubist constructions were a foretaste of the freestanding, screen-like, sheet-metal sculptures of the 1960's.

Pablo Picasso continued to use these Cubist construction techniques after the First World War, both in his collaboration with the Catalan sculptor, Julio González, and in later two-dimensional investigations. For a long time, using models made of cut and folded paper, Picasso examined how to make sculptures comprising several planes, exploiting both the disorientating effects of

asymmetry and the comforting beauty of balance. In this way, Picasso devised a new kind of light, planar, architectural sculpture, which was often animated with the use of colour.

Sylvette

Though Picasso used “found” metal objects during the 40s and 50s in his *assemblages*, he did not make planar sculptures until he met Tobías Jelinek and Sylvette David in 1954. The beautiful young Sylvette is the subject of many paintings and drawings which Jelinek transferred to sheet metal, which Picasso then painted. This collaboration served as the model for the artist’s later one with Prejger and his foreman, Tiola, in the 1960s.

Sheet-metal sculpture

Woman, and other sculptures Picasso produced during the same period, are shown alongside paintings which reveal the same interest in planar, multiple viewpoints and the relationship between form and space. Viewed as a whole, they highlight the unity between Picasso’s sculptures and paintings at this stage of his career.

On the occasion of his 80th birthday, Pablo Picasso was interviewed on a radio programme. He was asked what he was working on, and he described his sheet-metal sculptures. Asked if he was also painting anything, he replied, “Yes, of course - and anyway, it’s the same thing, exactly the same”.

Monumental sculpture

From 1964 onwards, Picasso no longer made paper and cardboard models, or modelled and constructed works, although he did authorize Norwegian artists Carl Nesjar to transfer some of his sculptures into monumental-sized versions. This collaboration with Nesjar continued until just before Picasso’s death, although Picasso did not live to see his sculptures in place. During the exhibition, a selection of photographs will be presented in the Gallery XII of the MPM. It illustrates collaboration between the two artists.

Picasso’s Late Sculpture: *Woman. The Collection in Context* is curated by Elizabeth Cowling, Professor of History of Art at Edinburgh University. Cowling has carried out intense research into 20th-Century European art and, in particular, the work of Magritte, Matisse and Picasso. She has curated *Picasso: Sculptor/Painter* (Tate Gallery, London, 1994) and *Matisse Picasso* (Tate Gallery, London; Grand Palais, Paris; MoMA, New York; 2002-2003). Her book *Picasso: Style and Meaning* (Phaidon Press), was selected book of the year 2002 by *Apollo* magazine. In 2007 she published *Picasso : the “Reclining Woman on the Beach” series*, commissioned by the Museo Picasso Málaga.

Catalogue and activities

The Museo Picasso Málaga has published a catalogue of the exhibition, in both Spanish and English, which contains articles by the curator, Elizabeth Cowling, and by Lionel Prejger. The latter, which is published in fully in English for the first time, is also the first article to be written on Picasso's late sculptures. The catalogue duly documents and includes photographs of all the works in the exhibition.

The MPM has also scheduled a series of lectures in which art history experts will discuss various aspects of *Picasso's Late Sculpture*. These lectures will be held on Thursdays, at 8.00pm, and are organized in collaboration with the University of Malaga.

- **14 May > Elizabeth Cowling:** *Paper, cardboard and scissors: Picasso and the craft of sculpture*
- **21 May > Diana Widmaier Picasso:** *Picasso's cut sheet-metal sculptures: newly released information on the artist's collaboration with the artisan metalworker, Joseph-Marius Tiola*
- **28 May > Pepe Karmel:** *From Sheet Metal to Concrete: Picasso and the New Brutalism*
- **4 June > Tomàs Llorens:** *Sculpting Space and Sculpting light (Picasso and the 20th-century tradition of cut-out sculpture)*
- **11 June > Elizabeth Cowling and Lydia Corbett (aka Sylvette):** *Posing for Picasso: Lydia Corbett in conversation with Elizabeth Cowling*

The exhibition will also be the main theme of the museum's guided visit, *Gallery Talks*, which is free with admission every Thursday at 6.00pm.

Picasso's Late Sculpture: *Woman*. The Collection in Context

Dates: 11 May- 30 August 2009

Curator: Elizabeth Cowling

Price: 4.5 €(8 €exhibition + MPM Collection). Reduced fees available.

Publications: catalogue, information leaflet.

Web: www.museopicassomalaga.org