

For Immediate Release

Picasso: The Artist and His Muses
Explores the Significance of Six Women in Picasso's Art and Life



Exhibition: June 11 – October 2, 2016
Media preview: 9:00am, Thursday, June 9, 2016
Vancouver Art Gallery (750 Hornby Street, Vancouver)
Please RSVP to Debra Zhou (dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

May 31, 2016, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery will soon open the most significant exhibition of works by Pablo Picasso in Western Canada. A towering genius of Western art in the twentieth century, Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (1881–1973) is known for his enormous contribution to the canon of Western art. Featuring over 60 works including paintings, works on paper and sculptures, *Picasso: The Artist and His Muses* takes the visitor on a journey through the lives and personalities of six women, Fernande Olivier, Olga Khokhlova, Marie-Thérèse Walter, Dora Maar, Françoise Gilot and Jacqueline Roque, who were all major figures in Picasso's personal life and strongly influenced the development of his art. This exhibition is created by Art Centre Basel, curated by Katharina Beisiegel and produced in collaboration with the Vancouver Art Gallery.

“Picasso's bold innovations, enormous skill and prodigious output define Modernism, and his exceptional originality is without parallel. We are very proud to showcase these stellar artworks drawn from public and private collections around the world. They represent Picasso's most prolific and innovative phases, which dramatically altered the course of European art history,” said Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “We not only invite the audiences to follow Picasso's extraordinary and complex development as an artist, but also discover the identities of these six women who have profoundly influenced his life and contributed to his creative output. Each of them has a particular and important story that is revealed in this exhibition.”

“With this exhibition we seek to look beyond Picasso and put a spotlight on the women that heralded the many transformations in his art. These unconventional women often followed their own artistic pursuits and in a form of creative osmosis inspired Picasso intellectually and artistically. Through important works from many international collections this exhibition sheds light on the complex historical and personal narratives that shaped Picasso's work by focusing on his six most important muses,” said Katharina Beisiegel, Deputy Director, Art Centre Basel.

Separated into six sections, the exhibition begins with **Fernande Olivier** (1881–1966), who was a model for a

number of artists. Seen as a signifier of the “Modern” among the artists of the Parisian avant-garde, Olivier lived a bohemian lifestyle in Montmartre when she first met Picasso in 1904. As their relationship developed, so did Picasso’s signature Rose Period, characterized by warm hues and subject matter such as harlequins and circus performers. In 1906, Olivier and Picasso travelled to Spain, visiting the village of Gósol in the Pyrenees, as well as Horta de Sant Joan. During this time, Olivier would often sit for Picasso, and through his many drawings and studies of both her and the terracotta landscape of Catalonia, we see his first forays into Cubism emerge. This new way of imagining space as a hierarchy of planes was developed alongside his friend George Braque (1882 – 1963) and culminated in such works as the remarkable sculpture *Tête de femme* (1909). After her time with Picasso, Olivier continued life as a teacher and in 1933 published her memoirs, clarifying much information on Picasso’s early life. Her journals were also published posthumously in 2001 under the title *Loving Picasso: The Private Journal of Fernande Olivier*.

The next section is dedicated to **Olga Khokhlova** (1891–1955), who was a professional dancer in Sergei Diaghilev's influential Ballets Russes. Khokhlova first met Picasso in 1917 when he was designing sets and costumes that were reflective of his Synthetic Cubism phase for the ballet’s production of *Parade* in Rome. Their relationship developed throughout the year, and in 1918, Khokhlova gave up dance and married Picasso. With the end of the World War I, Picasso and Khokhlova returned to a comfortable lifestyle in Paris, and Picasso reverted to less experimental techniques. This Neo-Classical phase was marked by a surge of images representing motherhood following the birth of Picasso and Khokhlova’s son Paulo in 1921. Monumental and statuesque images of Khokhlova, such as *Seated Nude* (1922), convey a lyrical sense of maternity.

In 1927, Picasso met **Marie-Thérèse Walter** (1909–1977), who is the subject of the third section of the exhibition. During many years of her relationship with Picasso, Walter kept her personal life a secret. Her rich inner world is known to us mainly through Picasso’s representations of her. His colourful palette and serene imagery are telling of Walter’s bright personality and athletic zest for life. By the end of the 1920s, Picasso drew upon Surrealist imagery in his works, creating distorted and non-naturalistic images of Walter such as *Female Bather with Raised Arms* (1929). His incredible ability to adapt the human form and include elements of Classical and African art is paramount in works such as *Femme couchée lisant* (1939). In 1935, Walter and Picasso celebrated the birth of their daughter Maya, though this happiness was dampened by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

The brilliant Surrealist photographer **Dora Maar** (1907–1997) is central to the fourth section of the exhibition. Maar attended art and photography schools in Paris and became a commercial photographer who took avant-garde and photo-documentary pictures in her spare time. Politically and artistically engaged, she was an active member of the Surrealist movement and participated in socialist groups. Through their mutual acquaintance, the poet Paul Éluard, she met Picasso around 1935–36. Maar’s expressive reaction is captured in Picasso’s *Weeping Woman* (1937), a motif that is also used in his tremendous mural *Guernica* (1937), painted in response to the Spanish Civil War. Maar documented the making of *Guernica* and contributed to its painting as well, and the two collaborated together throughout 1936–37. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the difficulties of life are evident in the sombre palettes and fractured planes of Picasso’s portraits of Maar, such as the eloquent *Tête de femme* (1943). Maar presented her work in exhibitions in Paris in the 40s and 50s, and continued making work and writing poetry throughout her life.

In 1943, Picasso met art student and painter **Françoise Gilot** (b. 1921), the same year as her first exhibition in Paris. Gilot was introduced to art at an early age, and during the 1940s she was associated with the Modernist school of Paris. Picasso captured her likeness in a series of evolving styles, as seen in a rich display of lithographs presented in Gilot’s section of the exhibition. His 1946 oil on canvas *Femme au collier jaune* is a luminous portrait showing his strength as a painter. After World War II, Picasso’s and Gilot’s lives were marked by a comfortable period with the birth of their two children; *Claude and Paloma* (1950) is a stunning panel capturing this idyllic period of family life. Throughout the 1950s Gilot exhibited in Paris, and eventually turned to writing, publishing the best-selling *Life with Picasso* in 1964 and in 2015 co-authored *About Women: Conversations between a Writer and a Painter*. She continues to paint daily.

The last section of the exhibition explores the life of **Jacqueline Roque** (1927–1986). Roque moved to Vallauris, France with her daughter to work at the Madoura pottery workshop. The Madoura studio has been producing Picasso’s ceramics since the 1940s, and through his visits and collaborations, he and Roque were introduced in 1953. She soon became a regular subject in Picasso’s paintings and formed a close relationship

with the artist. They married in 1961 and Roque proved essential to assisting Picasso in keeping a quiet, organized life in his later years. For two decades she was the primary subject of his works. In her sittings for Picasso we see Roque reimagined in the traditional poses of *femme assise* and *femme couchée*, including the monumental canvas *Femme couchée lisant* (1960) and the colourful *Nu assis dans un fauteuil* (1963). After Picasso's death, Roque spent her final years organizing the first great retrospectives on his work

Picasso: The Artist and His Muses is accompanied by a catalogue co-published by the Vancouver Art Gallery and Black Dog Publishing, with essays contributed by Katharina Beisiegel, Cécile Godefroy, Laurence Madeline, Diana Widmaier Picasso, Catherine Soussloff, Vérane Tasseau and Gertje Utley.

Related Events:

Friday, June 10, 8pm: Members opening
Saturday, June 11, 6pm: Summer Gala 2016
Tuesday, June 14, 7pm: Heller Lecture "Beyond Muse" by Laurence Madeline
Friday, July 15, 8pm: FUSE
Friday, September 23, 1pm: Scholar's Tour with Catherine Soussloff

Also Opening This Month At The Vancouver Art Gallery:

Harry Callahan: The Street (June 11 – September 5)
NEXT: Stephen Waddell – Dark Matter Atlas (June 11 – September 5)
An Agreeable State of Uncertainty (June 11 – September 5)

For more information please visit www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

A media preview of all four exhibitions will take place on June 9th at 9am. Please RSVP to Debra Zhou at dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca.

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MEDIA INFORMATION:

Debra Zhou, Communications Specialist
dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca, Direct: 604-662-4722, Mobile: 604-537-1530

About the Vancouver Art Gallery:

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. We thank everyone for their continuing generosity.

Images:

(left) Pablo Picasso, *Bust of a Woman (Dora Maar)*, 1938, oil on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966, © Picasso, Estate/SODRAC (2016), Photo: Lee Stalsworth

(middle) Pablo Picasso, *Femme au collier jaune*, May 31, 1946, oil on canvas, Private Collection, © Picasso Estate/SODRAC (2016), Photo: Patrick Goetelen

(right) Pablo Picasso, *Femme couchée lisant*, 1939, oil on canvas, Musée Picasso, Paris, © Picasso Estate/SODRAC (2016), Image: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY, Photo: J.G. Berizzi