ALMINE RECH

Pablo Picasso
Picasso, the Figure

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Under the curatorship of Cécile Debray, President of the Musée national Picasso-Paris, Virginie Perdrisot-Cassan, Chief Curator and Head of Sculpture and Ceramics at the Musée national Picasso-Paris, and Aisha AlAhmadi, Associate Curator at Louvre Abu Dhabi, the exhibition offers a retrospective and a chronological itinerary of Picasso's work, intertwining his radical artistic transformations with Greek mythology, manifested through his various techniques on painting, sculpture, drawing, and ceramics.

The exhibition brings together over 130 artworks, including seven from Louvre Abu Dhabi's collection, six from the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, and other significant loans from France, Qatar, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and West Asia. Valuable contributions from eight lending institutions, private collections, and one art gallery – including Musée du Louvre (Paris), Mobilier National (Paris), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art (Doha), Dalloul Art Foundation (Beirut), Meem Gallery (Dubai), and Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah) – will further enrich the showcase.

Key works by six Arab artists are also featured throughout the exhibition, highlighting the Picasso's impact on modern art in the Arab world and its resonance beyond Europe. Among them are paintings by Iraqi artists Dia al-Azzawi, Jewad Selim, and Shakir Hassan Al Said, in addition to Egyptian artist Ramses Younan. A painted ceramic work by the Algerian painter and ceramicist Baya Mahieddine will also be showcased. Mahieddine's 1947 exhibition at Galerie Maeght in Paris drew the attention of Surrealists and of Picasso himself, illustrating a reciprocal artistic exchange.

Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said: "We are delighted to unveil Picasso, the Figure, a first-of-its-kind exhibition at Louvre Abu Dhabi that explores the legacy of one of the leading artistic figures of the 20th century, inviting visitors to experience an exceptional selection of artworks spanning instrumental periods of his career. We are equally proud to present works by Arab artists whose practices highlight the ongoing dialogue with Picasso's legacy, and more broadly, between cultures that defines our museum's mission. This exhibition reflects our commitment to connecting global artistic narratives, and we are deeply grateful to our partners and lenders, regionally and internationally, whose collaboration has made it possible."

Cécile Debray, President of the Musée national Picasso-Paris, and Virginie Perdrisot-Cassan, Chief Curator and Head of Sculpture and Ceramics at the Musée national Picasso-Paris, said: "This first monographic exhibition devoted to Picasso at Louvre Abu Dhabi offers an original journey centred on the question of the figure. Conceived from the world's richest collection of the artist's works and developed in a spirit of exchange with the teams and collections of Louvre Abu Dhabi, an institution that stands as a cultural crossroads between East and West, archaeology and modern art, the exhibition explores how Picasso continually reinvented representation and expression, from the hieratic signs of Cubism to the classical bodies of the 1920s and the hybrid beings of his Surrealist period. It provides a profound immersion into a prolific and fascinating body of work, rich in universal resonances, with several masterpieces being shown at Louvre Abu Dhabi for the very first time."

Visitors are first welcomed to the exhibition by a sequence from the film Le Mystère Picasso by French film director and screenwriter Henri-Georges Clouzot, which introduces the artist at work and sets the tone for the exploration of Picasso's artistic evolution in modernity.

Structured into five thematic sections, the exhibition connects Picasso's formal evolution with enduring mythological archetypes. Early encounters with Catalan sculpture and African and Oceanic art shaped his radical simplifications of the body and the emergence of Cubism. A post-war return to classicism reveals his dialogue with the masters through refined portraits and idealised forms. The hybrid creatures of Surrealism, inspired by the Minotaur myth, expose Picasso's fascination with metamorphosis and the psychological tensions within the figure. From the 1930s onward, his figures become more monumental and sculptural, echoing prehistoric idols and the emotional weight of conflict.

A pivotal moment in the exhibition juxtaposes Dora Maar's photographs documenting the creation of Guernica with Iraqi artist Dia al-Azzawi's Elegy to My Trapped City (2011), drawing parallels between their use of art as a tool for political commentary. The final section brings together Picasso's late works, distinguished by bold colour, liberated line and multiple viewpoints, where musketeers, matadors and other archetypes reflect a return to his Spanish identity.

Guilhem André, Louvre Abu Dhabi's Scientific, Curatorial & Collection Management Director, and Aisha Al-Ahmadi, Associate Curator, said: "This exhibition marks our first collaboration with the Musée national Picasso–Paris and presents the artist in an innovative way through the lens of mythology. It centres on a universal question, the figure, which Picasso explored throughout his career across a range of mediums. The art historical narrative is further enriched by the inclusion of Arab modernists, highlighting the depth of cross-cultural artistic exchange. This event is also the first opportunity to display some of the most important artworks from Picasso assembled in the national collections of Abu Dhabi together with the loans from the Musée national Picasso–Paris."

'Picasso, the Figure' offers a rare opportunity to explore the artist's creativity and enduring influence across cultures. This major exhibition reflects Louvre Abu Dhabi's mission to connect global artistic narratives and brings together masterpieces that shaped modern art.