

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Picasso

RECONSIDERED

LARRY GAGOSIAN'S EXHIBITIONS OF RARELY SEEN WORKS BELONGING TO THE MODERN MASTER'S HEIRS SHOW THAT THE BEST-KNOWN ARTIST OF HIS ERA CAN STILL SEDUCE.

BY KATYA KAZAKINA

PABLO PICASSO MET FRANCOISE
Gilot, then a 21-year-old painter, in a Paris restaurant in 1943 during the Nazi occupation, and the two became lovers. While artists such as Max Ernst fled Paris for the U.S., Picasso hung tough even though the Germans prohibited his art from being shown. "People of my generation admired Picasso because he stayed," says Gilot, now 90, who lives in Manhattan. "We thought mostly of that courage."

After the war, in 1948, Picasso and Gilot settled in Vallauris in southern France. The move was liberating for Picasso, spurring a burst of experimentation with sculptures, ceramics and lithographs. Beginning on April 30,

works from this period will make up the fourth in a series of Picasso exhibitions at Larry Gagosian's galleries in New York and London.

The Gagosian shows unite the world's biggest fine art dealer and its best-selling



Buste (1970) was part of Gagosian's first exhibition of the master's works, Picasso: Mosqueteros.



Femme et Enfants: Le Dessin (1954) appeared in the second show, Picasso: The Mediterranean Years.



Marie-Therese Accoudee (1939) was in the third event, Picasso and Marie-Therese: L'Amour Fou.



Paloma et Sa Poupee (1952) will be in the fourth Gagosian Picasso show opening on April 30.

Francoise Gilot, Pablo
Picasso and his nephew,
Javier Vilato, in Golfe-
Juan, France, in 1948



artist over the past decade. The involvement of Picasso's heirs and his most noted biographer, John Richardson, have turned the exhibitions into blockbusters by private-gallery standards. The first three events drew a total of 260,000 visitors to view about 300 artworks. "Having the opportunity to work closely with John Richardson and the Picasso family on what will be our fourth major exhibition has been professionally, and on a personal level, one of the most exciting chapters in the gallery's history," Gagosian says.

Three-quarters of the pieces in these exhibitions were either loaned by or consigned from Picasso's family, including his children and grandchildren, giving collectors their first look at many works. "Each of Picasso's seven heirs inherited a remarkable collection of the artist's work," says Richardson, who's finishing the final book of his

four-volume biography, *A Life of Picasso* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, 1996, 2007).

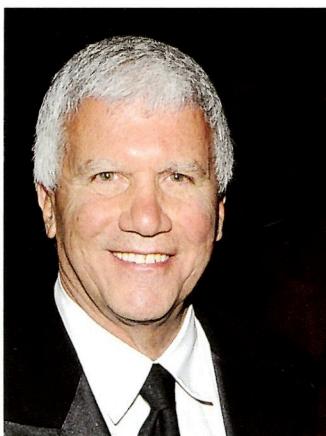
The shows exemplified the strategy Gagosian, 66, has used to expand to 11 galleries in Asia, Europe and the U.S. After opening his first gallery in a 10-foot-wide (3-meter-wide) former Hungarian restaurant in Los Angeles in 1977, he has built an A-list roster of clients, including hedge-fund manager Steven A. Cohen, private-equity magnate Leon Black and real-estate investor and philanthropist Eli Broad. Gagosian often jumps into a rising market and lifts it even higher, says Beverly Schreiber Jacoby, president of New York-based BSJ Fine Art and a valuation specialist.

In 2010, the year after Gagosian put on *Picasso: Mosqueteros*, which focused on his late works from the 1960s and 1970s, a collector paid \$18 million for a 1964 Picasso painting—a record for this period. That topped the prior high of \$17.4 million set in 2008.

In November 2011, an unnamed collector set a new record, paying \$23 million for a 1967 Picasso depicting a naked man playing a recorder for his nude lover. "Gagosian is a great marketer," says Michael Steinhardt, chairman of hedge fund WisdomTree Investments Inc. and a buyer of Picassos in the 1980s and 1990s. "He has created a force in the market by accumulating paintings and having wonderful exhibitions."

Richardson, 88, a Briton who was a friend of Picasso's from 1949 until the artist's death in 1973, has served as a curator for the shows. He wrote long, scholarly essays for the unusually large, 300-page hardcover catalogs, which included letters and photographs of the artist in addition to plates of his artworks. Richardson says the fourth show will focus on the influence that Gilot, whose image appears in ceramics, lithographs and paintings, and the town of Vallauris had on Picasso's work. "The years of Vallauris are enormously important," says Richardson, a critic and former professor of fine art at Oxford University. "He revolutionized the whole craft of ceramics, turning it into an art form. He reinvented the art of lithography, which had been a boring medium, into a major medium. He breaks all the rules." Picasso's famous *She-Goat* sculpture (1950)—assembled with discarded objects, including an old wicker basket to make the rib cage and two broken ceramic pitchers for the udders—is just one example from the period.

Valentina Castellani, a Gagosian gallery director in New York, is the main organizer of the Picasso exhibitions. "Valentina is at the center of everything," Richardson says. "She is Larry's right hand." She first met Richardson in 2007 when she reached out to the writer for his advice on the gallery's upcoming Giacometti-Bacon show. Richardson had just published the third volume of Picasso's biography, drawing on his close friendship with the artist. Richardson had accompanied the Spanish artist to bullfights in southern France in the 1950s and threw dinners for him at the chateau near Nimes that the writer shared with cubist-art collector Douglas Cooper. "Often when there was a bullfight, Picasso would drive over," Richardson recalls. "He would give us lunch at a restaurant beforehand. Afterwards,



Valentina Castellani
in front of a Picasso from
1932, and her boss, art
dealer **Larry Gagosian**



Picasso, far left, with scholar **John Richardson** in 1959; **Paloma Picasso**, below, the artist's daughter



we would give a dinner for him, the bull-fighter and his entourage."

Richardson's intimate knowledge of the artist's work prompted Castellani to suggest to Gagosian that the gallery collaborate with the scholar on a Picasso exhibition. Gagosian already knew Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, who had been interested in promoting his grandfather's lesser-known works. So Castellani, Gagosian, Richardson and Ruiz-Picasso met for lunch and agreed to showcase Picasso's late production, from 1962 to 1972, partly because collectors were showing more interest in this previously overlooked period.

Picasso remained prolific until his death at age 91, creating about 50,000 works in all. His recovery from ulcer surgery in 1965 spurred his last flurry of work, starting when he was in his mid-80s, Richardson says. "Most other people at that age would have lapsed into invalidism," he says. "For Picasso, it was a challenge. During his convalescence, he read books on Rembrandt and Goya. When he recovered, he felt he had a new lease on life, and he worked intensively in the light and shade of these great masters."

Picasso produced large and boldly colored expressionistic canvases. They featured invented characters inspired

by the riffraff that gathered at the back of the open theaters in 17th century Spain, as well as bullfighters. Though Picasso quit smoking after his surgery, he frequently equipped his subjects with pipes. "Nostalgia for tobacco comes across in the long white clay pipes held by his *mosqueteros*," Richardson says. "A self-portrait with the red around the eye I find absolutely terrifying. It's Picasso outstaring death."

The first exhibition was called Picasso: Mosqueteros, which Richardson says was a word for the misfits that the artist painted. The show featured 53 paintings and 39 prints from his late period and drew 100,000 people. "We always have a few works for sale," says Castellani, who declined to provide details of purchases. "We send out a message that Gagosian is a place where you can both sell and buy Picassos of the highest quality."

While Mosqueteros was on view, a

1968 Picasso painting from the collection of Jerome Fisher, co-founder of footwear company Nine West Group Inc., fetched \$14.6 million at Christie's in New York. That was double the price that Fisher paid for the work in 2004.

Steinhardt, the hedge-fund manager, says he had dismissed the last decade of Picasso's work as inferior. "I was loath to get into the late-Picasso market," says Steinhardt, who has bought works from the 1920s and 1930s instead. "But I was proven wrong."

Encouraged by the success of the first show, Gagosian and Richardson decided to do a second—Picasso: The Mediterranean Years—in the summer of 2010 in London. Richardson came up with the idea to focus on the influence of the Mediterranean on Picasso. He was born in the coastal city of Malaga, Spain, and frequently lived in seaside towns in the French Riviera. Picasso's paintings, sculptures, cutouts and ceramics from 1945 to 1962 illustrate musicians, dancers and animals with playfulness and delight. Images of Gilot and their two children, Claude and Paloma, and his second wife, Jacqueline Roque, whom he married in 1961, also appear in the artworks. The show drew 60,000 people, fewer than the first.

Marie-Therese Walter, the subject of a Picasso painting that drew the highest price ever for an artwork at auction, was the inspiration for Gagosian's third exhibition. Picasso's 1932 portrait of his mistress and muse, called *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust*, sold for \$106.5 million at Christie's in New York in May 2010.

Picasso met Walter, then a 17-year-old French girl, on a street in Paris in 1927. At the time, he was married to his first wife, Olga Khokhlova, a former Russian ballerina. By then, his radical experimentation with cubism, which he helped pioneer around 1910, had given way to a more-traditional neoclassical style. "He was a bit bored," says Diana Widmaier-Picasso, granddaughter of the artist and Marie-Therese. "Suddenly Marie-Therese brings this fresh youth, sensuality and desire to renew himself."

He feels so free that he is ready to explore again in his art."

Widmaier-Picasso suggested that Gagosian focus a third show on her grandfather's relationship with Walter. During Picasso's years with his mistress, from 1927 to 1940, he produced some of his greatest works. They include the *Vollard Suite*, a set of 100 etchings depicting lovers, satyrs and mythological creatures, and *Guernica*, painted in 1937, illustrating the human suffering from the bombing of the Basque region during the Spanish Civil War. The artist also made large sculptures of the voluptuous Walter. "He buys a castle outside Paris where



Picasso's *L'Aubade* (1967) fetched \$23 million at Sotheby's in 2011, a record for the artist's late-period works.

very protective with the relationship that her parents had. I had to convince her that the love affair between her parents was not a secret to anyone. It belonged to art history."

On a warm night in April 2011, a long line formed outside of Gagosian's gallery in Chelsea to see Picasso and Marie-Therese: L'Amour Fou (*Mad Love*). Novelist Salman Rushdie; News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch and his wife, Wendi; actress Kim Cattrall; and Leon and Debra Black were there. They saw portraits of Walter that are the definition of rapture and lust; others are filled with tenderness. A painting lent by Steven

Cohen depicts her as a

cross between a woman and an octopus. "Picasso used to say, 'Art can only be erotic,'" Diana Widmaier-Picasso says. "He couldn't be creative without love."

Almost all of the 90 works in the show, which drew about 100,000 visitors, had been rarely if ever exhibited before. "We've never seen a Marie-Therese show like this," says Carmen Gimenez, the Stephen and Nan Swid curator of 20th century art at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which lent a 1931 painting of a sleeping Walter to the exhibition.

Gilot is now working with Richardson and Castellani on the fourth exhibition, which will cover her years with Picasso, from 1943 to 1953. Richardson says they lived in a small house in Vallauris with a garden and raised their two children until she became the only woman to leave him. "I am very independent," she says. "I was a completely new type of woman for him."

Picasso used terra-cotta roof tiles to make full-length images of Gilot, who was 40 years younger than he. Picasso also sculpted her as pregnant and as wheeling a baby carriage. His canvases transformed her into a flower and captured her playing with their children. "These sculptures relate to their life at Vallauris, the little villa where they lived, and Le Fournas, the derelict former orange-flower distillery where he revolutionized painting and sculpture," Richardson says. "He'd gather scrap metal from a nearby junkyard and turn it into sculpture."

Richardson, who has written about Picasso for half a century, still gets excited about his friend's art. Sitting in his Manhattan apartment, which overflows with books, flowers and works by Picasso, Warhol and Ingres, he makes a promise about the fourth show. "Our show will cast new light on a period that has never been studied in depth," he says.

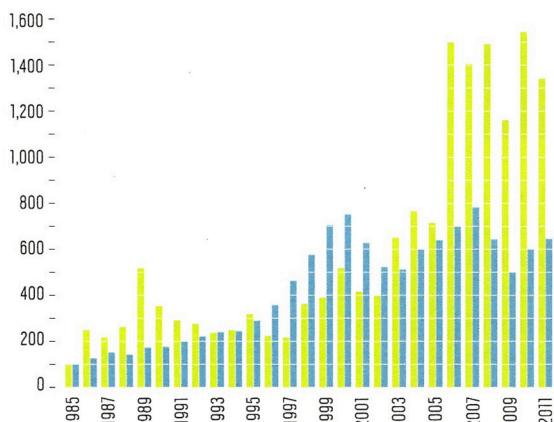
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■ Picasso Index ■ S&P 500 Index



Source: Artnet

he is able to install a sculpture studio and begins making monumental sculpture," Widmaier-Picasso says.

Acquavella Galleries in New York held a Marie-Therese Walter show in 2008 with 15 pieces that attracted 25,000 visitors. Gagosian aimed for a bigger event that included works from the artist's family. But Maya Widmaier-Picasso, 76, the artist's daughter and Diana's mother, resisted the idea of a show about the clandestine love affair. "It was not an easy project," says Diana, who lives in New York. "My mother has always been