

PICASSO LA SCULTURA

HOW TO READ THE EXHIBITION

Picasso. The Sculpture proposes a unique and original exchange between the artist's three-dimensional work and the classical tradition represented by the collections of the Galleria Borghese, an extraordinary showcase of ancient, Renaissance and baroque art. It is almost certain that Picasso visited it during his stay in Rome in 1917.

The itinerary of the exhibition highlights key aspects of Picasso's sculpture between 1905 and 1964. Twelve themes create a dialogue between his works and the Galleria Borghese, emphasizing the aspects that are innovative, but also the continuity with the great art of the past.

The correspondences evoked provide a stimulus to reflect on the evolution of the concept of sculpture. The aim of the exhibition is not to establish a direct derivation of Picasso's sculptures from specific ancient examples, but to call attention to similar aesthetic strategies in works that are distant from one another.

Visitors are invited to undertake a journey in Picasso's sculpture with no beginning or end, in accordance with the artist's idea that "there is no past or future in art. Art that is not in the present will never be art".

PICASSO LA SCULTURA

ENTRANCE HALL

Many people consider Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) the greatest modern painter. Today it is becoming more and more widely known that he was also one of the most inventive and prolific sculptors of the twentieth century. The present exhibition – the first in Italy dedicated exclusively to his sculpture – highlights the abundance of this less well known, but fundamental aspect of his work. Fifty-six masterpieces belonging to different phases of a journey that lasted half a century, unpublished studio photos, and videos provide a broad overview of his extremely fertile and often surprising activity as a sculptor.

Picasso began his artistic career at the age of thirteen, when he undertook the academic study of painting. He was twenty years old before he embraced sculpture, self-taught, under the guidance of sculptor friends, and availing himself of the support of colleagues and artisans. His studies had introduced him to classical sculpture through copies and lithographs, while a stay in Rome and Naples in 1917 enabled him to admire it on the spot with the eyes also of a sculptor. Unlike his painting, however, Picasso's sculpture still awaits to be studied in its relationship to the history of Western art.

This exhibition aims to emphasize the complex and extremely sophisticated dialogue that Picasso entertained, as a sculptor, with some of the themes, myths, forms, techniques, materials and theories of the great tradition. The visual and conceptual resonance of his sculptures with the Galleria Borghese's works inspires new reflections on the contribution of Western art to Picasso's sculpture and vice-versa, highlighting, on the one hand, the originality and revolutionary significance of this remarkable modern artist and, on the other, his constant and stimulating dialogue with the past.

PICASSO LA SCULTURA

THE MARIANO ROSSI HALL

Monumental sculpture

From the 1920s, when he was commissioned to create a memorial for the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, Picasso tried to embrace a project of monumentality in his sculpture. The works on display here share an ambition to be colossal, regardless of their sizes, materials and techniques. Two of them, *Seated Woman* and *Head of a Man*, stem from Picasso's efforts to offer radical solutions to the commission for the Apollinaire monument – efforts that finally materialized in the 1950s with the *Head of a Woman (Dora Maar)* [Room of the Gladiator]. In the 1930s his young lover-muse, Marie-Thérèse Walter, inspired his creation of a series of heads and busts, whose monumentality was to manifest itself in their presence in the Pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the Paris World Fair in 1937. From the end of the 1950s, in collaboration with architects and engineers, Picasso fully achieved his monumental aspirations through enlargements of his sculptures in modern materials, as in the case of the Chicago monument, the model of which is on display here.

ROOM OF THE PAOLINE

Variety of techniques and materials

Picasso the painter is known for his extreme stylistic versatility. The same versatility is also characteristic of the techniques and materials of his sculptures. The three little statues displayed here represent the theme of a woman resting with different styles and instruments. The wood figure was produced by rough-hewing a branch of fir found in the park of Picasso's estate at Boisgeloup (Normandy), following the example of Etruscan sculpture, in accordance with a primitivist aesthetic of archaic forms and natural materials. In the sculpture that he modeled in plaster the following year at Boisgeloup, the same subject is treated in a fashion that is at once humanistic and surrealist. *Reading Woman* is an example of the technique of assemblage that characterizes Picasso's found-object sculpture of the early 1950s, when he took pleasure in utilizing the scrap of a perfume factory. The found objects function here both structurally – because of their physical properties – and as metaphors, highlighting an approach to materials that is at the same time utilitarian and philosophical.

PICASSO

LA SCULTURA

ROOM OF THE SUN

Movement and drama

In the twentieth century sculpture attempted to assert itself by abandoning the narrative aspect characteristic of painting and turning towards abstraction and conceptuality. Original even with respect to his own time, Picasso's sculpture is characterized by the observation of real things, people and situations by the sculptor-demiurge. Begun with his stay in Rome in 1917 to prepare the ballet *Parade*, Picasso's theatrical experience contributed to this aspect of his art, as did his marriage with the ballerina Olga Khokhlova, whom he met on that occasion. Ten years later – when their marriage was on the rocks and in the poetic context of surrealism – Picasso began an intense love affair with seventeen-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter. The sculptures on display here were created after a summer on the Côte d'Azur, during which he divided himself between his family and Marie-Thérèse, a sporty girl with a voluptuous figure. These bathers capture her unrestrained vitality and still-developing young body.

ROOM OF APOLLO AND DAPHNE

Metamorphosis of material

"Picasso the sculptor has no prejudices regarding materials" wrote André Breton in 1933. While the modernist theory of the truth of materials, which urged artists to preserve their inherent properties, was in the ascendant, Picasso used and combined them freely according to both practical and creative needs. In the 1930s, he infused uniqueness into plaster – a material traditionally employed in the serial reproduction of sculpture – using it for monumental works as if it were marble. The relief on display here derives from an original in plaster which, in a chiasmic echo of Bernini's statue, metamorphoses into a face. At the end of the decade, a few of these plasters were cast in more solid cement and bronze copies for reasons regarding both politics and conservation (see the Mariano Rossi Hall). During his last period as a sculptor, Picasso transformed his paper clippings into monumental sheet-metal sculptures, as in the case of *Woman with Child*. The parallel between this work and *Apollo and Daphne*, here placed in fruitful proximity, captures the strategies used by Picasso and Bernini to infuse their materials with a new expressiveness.

PICASSO

LA SCULTURA

THE GALLERY OF EMPERORS

Fragment and statuary

Following his creation of busts and heads of women in the early 1930s [see the Mariano Rossi Hall], Picasso sculpted the anatomical details of eyes and hands. This practice was closely connected with that of his statuary and had a famous precedent in Auguste Rodin's anatomical collections. The eyes and hands that Picasso produced in the solitude of his Boisgeloup studio are single creations forming part of a broad reflection on sculpture as a process in the making. A few years later his veneration for his own artist hands and those of his partner, the photographer Dora Maar led him to experiment with the technique of impression, a practice that, like photography, can be considered a sign of the artist's presence-absence. Working in ceramic, which he began to do at the end of the 1940s, Picasso also explored the narrative and decorative aspects of the concept of the fragment.

ROOM OF THE GLADIATOR

Allegory

One of the great themes of Western sculpture is allegory – the personification of virtues and abstract concepts through attributes derived from a shared lexicon – as in Bernini's *Truth Revealed by Time*. In the nineteenth century, allegory became the favorite language of official sculpture and was used for the creation of monuments intended to extol national values. After the First World War, allegorical sculpture was widely used in monuments to the fallen. Modeled by Picasso during the Nazi occupation of Paris and inspired by his partner, Dora Maar, this head initially wore a fashionable small hat. Picasso abstracted the sculpture to the point of turning it into a solemn image that subsequently served as a memorial to the poet Guillaume Apollinaire.

PICASSO LA SCULTURA

ROOM OF THE SILENUS

Objects as sculpture/Myth

Beginning with cubism, which considered simple and everyday objects as important as the human figure, reality invited itself into great art. The use of real objects in cubist paintings and sculptures led to the emergence of the ready-made: the object itself as a work of art. With surrealism, everyday objects were elevated to the status of sculpture because of their ability to activate the poetic possibilities of existence.

Picasso also treated the classical theme *par excellence*, the myth, as an object when, in 1942, he created a bull's head – which he closely associated with the Minotaur, his *alter ego* – with the saddle and handlebar of a bicycle (Musée national Picasso-Paris). In the case of the *Head of a Bull* displayed here, the use of ancestral techniques and materials and the naturalistic style evoke the ancient world as much as the subject represented does.

ROOM OF HERCULES

The female nude in sculpture

A privileged theme of Western representation and the very matrix of ancient classical sculpture, the female nude did not escape the interest of Picasso the sculptor. *Kneeling Woman Combing Her Hair* (Egyptian Room) and the *Bather* of 1931 (Room of the Sun) have world-famous antecedents in the Venus Anadyomenes and the Venus in Knidos, while *Metamorphosis I* (Room of the Flora) is even connected with the prehistoric Venus of Lespugue. In the 1950s, spurred by his new life on the Côte d'Azur with young Françoise Gilot, whose body had the proportions of the classical Venuses, Picasso began to conceive the female body as decidedly Mediterranean. *Female Figure* was inspired by Françoise's figure, which was materialized in the form of an ancient amphora and became, as Picasso himself explained, "a plastic metaphor" of the regenerating beauty of the female body.

PICASSO

LA SCULTURA

THE GALLERY OF LANFRANCO

Formal variety

The heads presented in the center of this room show Picasso's skill in representing the same theme with completely different styles, even using similar materials. All four of them derive from originals modeled in clay or plaster. Although they belong to different periods of the artist's career, they demonstrate his agility in moving seamlessly from the impressionism of the *Jester* to the naturalism of the head of Marie-Thérèse. The two central works, executed only three years apart and inspired by the same woman, Fernande Olivier, arrive at cubism starting from a primitivist classicism. The variety of bronzes reveals Picasso's creative interest in the technique of art bronzes, an aspect connected with the commercialization of sculpture. The photographs from Edward Quinn's collection (on display in the basement) show that an edition in bronze subsequent to this *Head of a Woman (Fernande)* (1909) was studied attentively by Picasso before it was put on the market.

Musical instruments

The genre of musical instruments constitutes a distinctive theme and one of the most revolutionary aspects of Picasso's sculpture. In 1912 he produced a guitar by putting together shapes cut out of cardboard, thus inaugurating planar sculpture. Two years later, he created the same guitar in sheet metal, giving a decisive impulse to metal sculpture, and in the period between the two guitars (both in the MoMA, New York) and the cubist construction displayed here, Picasso created decorated and painted reliefs in wood, metal and paper, demolishing the traditional distinctions between painting and sculpture. *Plate of Fruit and Guitar* indicates that these musical instruments were conceived as "still lifes", a genre of Western painting intended to impress by its masterful illusionism, or *trompe-l'oeil*, which can be admired in the seventeenth-century paintings in this room. Picasso, however, said: "A painting should not be a *trompe-l'oeil*, but a *trompe-l'esprit*. What interests me is fooling the intellect instead of the eye. And the same applies to my sculpture".

PICASSO

LA SCULTURA

ROOM OF HELEN AND PARIS

Animals in sculpture

The presence of animals in sculpture is traditionally connected with their symbolic or narrative function, as in the case of Bernini's *She-Goat Amalthea* (1609-1615), housed here. Picasso loved to surround himself with animals and not only domestic ones, giving them dignity as autonomous sculptural subjects equal to statuary. Beginning with the animated horse he designed in Rome in 1917 for the ballet *Parade* and continuing with the virile roosters and bulls of the early 1930s and the derelict dogs and cats of the Occupation (1940-1944), all the way to a kind of Noah's ark during the Vallauris period (1948-1955), Picasso represented mammals and winged creatures through the multiple materials and techniques with which he worked. *She-Goat* is his most complex and widely known statue of an animal. From a fragile assemblage of plaster and found objects with a metaphorical function, Picasso created a vivid and realistic image of the pregnant animal. The bronze infuses additional dignity in this at once simple and sophisticated she-goat.

ROOM OF PSYCHE

Goddess of fertility

The semi-rural and Mediterranean environment in which Picasso lived in the south of France from the end of the 1940s inspired in him an ancestral classicism linked with the natural world and the notions of abundance and fertility. Two new paternities and his constant involvement with the rounded shapes of crockery led him to explore the theme of pregnancy. *Pregnant Woman, Second State* incorporates ceramic containers in the abdomen and breasts of the statue as metaphors of maternity. The figure is halfway between an archaic goddess and a primate, as noted by Picasso's partner, Françoise Gilot, who inspired it. It is the image of a post-Darwinian maternity, not without an animistic spirituality. Picasso created the statue by modifying the intermediate foundry plaster used to replicate in bronze the first state of the statue. The generative process of the shapes and materials activates the creative possibilities of sculpture as a reproducible form of art.

PICASSO LA SCULTURA

DIDACTIC ROOM

Picasso the sculptor: studio and creative processes

Unpublished photographs belonging to Edward Quinn and videos

The photos and videos presented in this section describe the last phase of Picasso's sculpture, which was also one of the most creative. At the end of the 1940s the artist settled in Vallauris, on the Côte d'Azur. Picasso chose this place because of the local ceramic industry, which enabled him to experiment with this ancestral art by providing new technical and formal solutions for ancient crockery, as well as because of the bullfights that took place there, for which the artist had a deep passion, as we see in Robert Picault's film, *Picasso's Bullfight* (1951). In Vallauris Picasso created extraordinary assemblages in plaster and found materials, which he used with taste and imagination. It is to Vallauris and its metal-scrap industry that we owe the beginning of three-dimensional sculptures in painted sheet metal, several of which later became large-scale monuments. In 1955 Picasso and Jacqueline Roque, his future second wife, moved to Cannes, where he devoted himself to assemblages in wood. The images of his last home, in Mougins, show the quantity and variety of his three-dimensional work. These precious documents, many of which previously unpublished, reveal the creative processes of Picasso the sculptor and demonstrate the central place that sculpture occupied in his life.