

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION

Press release

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death by exhibiting all his works in the collection.

Venice, April 7, 2023 —To commemorate the anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death (1881–1973) fifty years ago on April 8, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection displays all the works by the Spanish artist acquired by the U.S. patron between the 1930s and the 1950s in the rooms of Palazzo Venier dei Leoni.

In the early twentieth century, Picasso and French artist Georges Braque developed Cubism, a revolutionary approach to representing reality which changed the course of modern art. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection holds six works by Picasso, from his Cubist masterpiece, *The Poet* of 1911, to *Half-length Portrait of a Man in a Striped Jersey* of 1939, reflecting the evolution of his visual idiom. Of the six works, all but one (*Half-length Portrait of a Man in a Striped Jersey*) were acquired by Peggy Guggenheim prior to the first postwar Venice Biennale in 1948, where they were displayed together with the rest of her collection. This event became a cultural and historical turning point, as it surveyed the most contemporary art of the time. On this momentous occasion, Picasso inaugurated his first retrospective exhibition in Italy. *The Poet* (1911), on view in the room dedicated to the museum's Cubist and Futurist works, epitomizes Cubism's earliest development, Analytic Cubism, in which the subject was fragmented into multiple, overlapping viewpoints within a single picture plane. A later phase, referred to as Synthetic Cubism, was characterized by the use of *papier collé*, as in *Pipe, Glass, Bottle of Vieux Marc* (1914), on view next to *The Poet*.

In the entrance hall of the Palazzo, two other key works by the Spanish master — *The Studio* (1928) and *On the Beach* (1937)—are in dialogue opposite each other. In the former, a depiction of the artist's studio compounds the identities of the "figures," challenging our need to link images to the natural world without surrendering to the artist's liberty to paint what he wishes. *On the Beach*, on the other hand, features the exaggeratedly voluminous and almost sculptural anthropomorphic figures in a marine setting which are typical of some of Picasso's works of the 1920s and '30s. The two bathers, whose attention is largely focused on playing with a boat, are at once graceful and monstrous. The composition appears calm and relaxed, suspended in its subtle lyricism, while simultaneously transmitting a veiled sense of menace by way of the sinister presence of the figure looming over the horizon.

Picasso confronted the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War, a conflict which held a particular significance to him, in *The Dream and Lie of Franco* (1937). The artist depicted General Francisco Franco, the future dictator of Spain, as a monstrous figure. Initially intended to be printed as postcards and mass produced, the images were instead published in the Parisian magazine *Cahiers d'Art*, accompanied by a poem he wrote about the suffering in Guernica, the Basque city bombarded by the Nazis in April 1937.

Created two years after *The Dream and Lie of Franco*, *Half-length Portrait of a Man in a Striped Jersey* (1939) illustrates the continuing development of Picasso's visual language, which underscores his unremitting expression of artistic freedom, possibly in defiance of fascism. The political upheavals of the

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late 1930s affected Picasso profoundly, influencing the range of his palette and the mood of his subject matter.

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