

# Picasso



## Sculpture

At The Museum Of Modern Art

## By Stephen May

**NEW YORK CITY** — Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881–1973), the inventive Spanish-born artistic genius, was not only the most famous artist of the Twentieth Century, but also widely regarded as the most significant, versatile and influential. One of the most prolific artists ever, he created 15,000 paintings, 600 sculptures and countless drawings and prints.

Fueled by inexhaustible energy, boundless creativity and supreme talent, Picasso participated in and fathered diverse forms of modern art, notably Cubism in collaboration with Georges Braque. At the age of 26, he

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Temkin and Umland say Picasso “probably used keyed segments from a discarded plaster mold to indicate the plume of the Spartan-style helmet, while two tennis balls form the warrior’s eyes” in “Head of a Warrior,” 1933. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Page Above: Inspired by the sensual curves of traditional forms thrown on pottery wheels, Picasso sought to breathe life into them by transforming them into charming female forms like “Vase: Woman,” 1948. Musée National Picasso, Paris.





created “Les Femmes d’Alger,” an epochal work heavily influenced by distinctive African masks. Some say “Femmes” marked the beginning of Modern art.

By the outbreak of World War I, Picasso had replaced Henri Matisse as the leader of the avant-garde. Many of his lovers modeled for often distorted portraits as he experimented with academic classicism and large, rounded figures. His powerful antiwar mural, “Guernica,” documented his opposition to General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

Often overlooked in this profusion of paintings and other forms of art is Picasso’s three-dimensional work. It is the subject of a large, revelatory exhibition, “Picasso Sculpture,” on view at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) through February 7. Organized by top MoMA

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Picasso’s “Flowery Watering Can,” 1951-52, is “fantastical, with its spiky, nail-decorated blossom reminiscent of a carnivorous plant,” say curators Temkin and Umland. *Musee National Picasso, Paris.*



curators Ann Temkin and Anne Umland, with the Musee National Picasso, Paris, sculpture curator Virginie Perdrisot, it comprises around 140 sculptures spanning the years 1902 to 1964.

Picasso was trained as a painter, not as a sculptor. This meant that his three-dimensional work grew not out of academic tradition, but out of the artist's own powers of invention and experimentation. Over the course of six decades, Picasso redefined the manner of his sculpture repeatedly, setting himself apart from his colleagues and from what he himself had done previously.

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According to curators Temkin and Umland, "Picasso used nails and screws to affix palm fronds and tree branches from...[the] grounds [of Picasso's estate] to the plywood body" of "Bull," 1958. Museum of Modern Art, New York.





Picasso's commitment to sculpture was episodic rather than continuous. Each gallery in the exhibition covers his shift from one studio to another; each new workspace brought with it new tools, processes and materials – and frequently a new muse. Sculpture was highly personal to the artist. He kept most of his three-dimensional objects, living among them as though they were family members.

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Picasso's series of six versions of "Glass of Absinthe," 1914, each differently painted, were revolutionary in their bold decoration and use of the tell-tale spoon to identify the liquid. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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