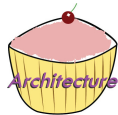




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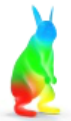


Foreground, Pablo Ruiz y Picasso, Spanish (1881-1973). *Grand Vase aux Femmes Nues* from the Madoura Collection, 1950. red earthenware, white angobe painted background, from and edition of 25.

Bonjour Picasso! Seems more a Footnote than A Chapter in Picasso's Life

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Nelson Atkins Museum of Art
4525 Oak Street
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Gallery L8
Bloch Building
Bonjour Picasso!
September 22, 2012-January 27, 2013

By BLAIR SCHULMAN
Bonjour Picasso! is a cursory glance at Pablo Picasso, one of the 20th Century's most accomplished artists. Beautiful and prolific in parts; we are only given a footnote when an entire chapter is necessary to provide visitors with a richer understanding of how the Spanish painter lived, worked and loved.

The Robert Arneson bust *Pablo Ruiz with Itch* (1980, glazed earthenware) has found an appropriate home at the entrance to the exhibit. I wonder if the entire show was developed around this one, crazily beautiful bust of Picasso scratching his back which



Pablo Ruiz y Picasso, Spanish (1881-1973). *Woman with Mauve Hat (Femme au chapeau mauve)*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 21-3/4 x 18 inches. Private Collection. © 2012 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

...of the artist's life that is in the Nelson's permanent collection.

Photographs by David Douglas Duncan, all from 1958, have the candid expectancy of a vintage *Life* magazine spread. Granted, Duncan was given carte blanche to photograph the artist at La Californie, (his villa in Cannes), when he allegedly conspired with fellow combat photographer Robert Capa to meet the artist. The photos feel out of place here, somewhat repressed and rehearsed compared to the intricacies of this genius with a very complicated personal life. Two wives, four children and several lovers, sometimes overlapping, should be properly acknowledged if we are to get a glimpse of his life at home. Instead, we are presented with the requisite "intimate" portraits; Picasso in his studio, skipping rope with his children; but they are no match to the candor of the actual artwork that is also exhibited. We are also given small glimpses of his friendships with Georges Braque and Jean Cocteau with some drawings and prints too.

One painting of two on loan for this exhibition that explains Picasso's openness of intimacy is *Woman in Mauve Hat* (1939, oil on canvas), his portrait of lover Dora Maar. I am by no means an authority on the master, simply a neophyte who knows what he likes and tries to connect the work with the life of the artist to discern meaning, but it appears to me he presents us with an understanding of how he saw his muse. Maar is depicted here in a patchwork of form and color that displays an angularity both aggressive and loving that is associative of the relationships he had with all the women in his life. He seems to have loved hard. The second painting, *Bust of a Faun* (1946, oil

on paper, mounted on canvas), is an excellent look at the geometry that earmarks Picasso's recognizable markings. This looser style and muddled colors have a less aggressive demeanor and perhaps mark a transitional period. After the liberation of Paris in 1944, he discarded Maar and had a romantic relationship with Françoise Gilot, an art student 40 years younger than the 63-year old artist. She eventually bore him two children, Claude, born in 1947 and Paloma, born in 1949. Picasso also had a son, Paulo, with his first wife, Olga Khokhlova, in 1921.

There are three pieces recognizing some of these intensive relationships; Dora Maar *Seated Women* (1938, black ink on paper), Françoise Gilot *Woman Looking Out of a Window* (1952, aquatint) and Marie-Therese Walter *Visage* (1928, lithograph). But other than *Woman in Mauve Hat*, these images do not divulge further associations to their roles as lovers and muses.

Vallauris is a gelatin silver print by Arnold Newman recognizing his Madoura Pottery era. An earthenware vase from this period is a combination of spontaneity and extreme beauty. The buttocks on the four poses of this female nude are perfect. It is a fine example of what keeps this somewhat disjointed exhibition strong and interesting. The lack of other objects and the reliance on tepid photography is where the promise of intimacy falls short. What we are left with is a lessening of intensity of what Picasso meant as an individual and a hunger for more examples of how his private life labored organically with his ideas, techniques and theories.



Pablo Ruiz y Picasso, Spanish (1881-1973). *Bust of a Faun (Buste de Faune)*, 1946. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 25 3/4 x 19 ? inches. Lent by Shelly Cryer and Michael Stern. © 2012 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Foreground, Pablo Ruiz y Picasso, Spanish (1881-1973). *Bust of a Faun (Buste de Faune)*, 1946. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 25 3/4 x 19 7/8". Lent by Shelly Cryer and Michael Stern. © 2012 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.