

Timeline 1961–1973 (Presented in the exhibition, Moderna Museet)

About the artist

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was born in Málaga, Spain and lived most of his life in France. Over a career spanning more than seventy years, he produced a remarkable body of work across painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, and ceramics, constantly reinventing his style.

His early periods include the melancholic Blue Period (1901–1904) and the warmer Rose Period (1904–1906). In 1907 Picasso began developing Cubism with Georges Braque. This radical approach broke with centuries of artistic convention by deconstructing objects into geometric forms and depicting them from multiple viewpoints at once. Cubism challenged traditional notions of space, depth, and representation, laying the groundwork for much of modern art.

Following World War I, Picasso returned to neoclassicism, creating monumental, classically inspired figures. In the 1930s, influenced by Surrealism, his work became more symbolic and psychologically charged. Though never formally part of the movement, he shared its fascination with myth, dream, and metamorphosis. A committed political figure, Picasso joined the French Communist Party in 1944 and expressed his activism most famously in *Guernica* (1937), a response to the bombing of a Basque town during the Spanish Civil War.

1961

On 2 March, Picasso married Jacqueline Roque, who stayed by his side for the rest of his life. In summer 1961, they moved from Cannes to Mougins, to a house named after the nearby Church of Notre-Dame-de-Vie. It was secluded and spacious, allowing Picasso to set up two studios. He lived in retreat, away from the glamour of Cannes, seeing only close friends and avoiding the public.

For his 80th birthday, the Vallauris town council held a two-day celebration, culminating in a bullfight. Since the practice of killing bulls was officially banned, Picasso had to pay a large fine.

1963

The Picasso Museum in Barcelona opened on 9 March, based on a generous donation of works from Picasso's close friend and former secretary, Jaime Sabartés.

In October, printers Piero and Aldo Crommelynck moved to Mougins and opened a printing workshop in a former bakery, working with Picasso for the rest of his life.

Two of Picasso's old friends died in 1963: Georges Braque on 31 August and Jean Cocteau on 11 October.

1964

An exhibition of works from the last two years was shown at Galerie Louise Leiris in Paris. The gallery often presented Picasso's latest work and was an important space for the press to follow the developments of the artist's late career. Having seen the exhibition, the American art critic John Ashbery identified a new style in Picasso's current paintings that drew inspiration from contemporary American Action Painting.

Françoise Gilot, Picasso's former partner, published her memoir *Life with Picasso* with Carlton Lake. Picasso did everything in his power to prevent the release of the French translation.

1965

The artist underwent stomach surgery at the American Hospital in Neuilly near Paris in November. This was his last stay in Paris.

John Berger published *Success and Failure of Picasso*, in which he wrote that Picasso's time had passed.

1966

To mark Picasso's 85th birthday, the city of Paris organised a major retrospective in honour of the artist. The Grand Palais featured 284 paintings; the Petit Palais showed 205 drawings, 176 sculptures, and 115 ceramics. The Bibliothèque Nationale exhibited 171 prints. Most exhibited works were from earlier periods, while contemporary Picasso was represented primarily by sculptures and drawings. It was the largest exhibition ever devoted to a living artist. Some critics proclaimed the "Century of Picasso", while others announced his failure. Picasso himself did not attend the opening ceremony.

1967

The exhibition at the Petit Palace in 1966 eventually led to the discovery of Picasso as sculptor. In 1967, both the Tate Gallery in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York held exhibitions devoted exclusively to his sculptures.

1968

While Picasso's late sculptures had thrilled the art world a year earlier, attention now turned to his drawings and prints. Once again, Galerie Louise Leiris played a key role, with two important exhibitions: Picasso's drawings from 1966 to 1968 was presented in early 1968, and a series of prints from 18 December to 1 February 1969. Some prints were kept in a back room for reasons of decency.

1970

In February, Picasso donated all the works owned by his family in Spain to the Picasso Museum in Barcelona. Most of these works originated during his early period.

On 1 May, an exhibition of his late work opened in the chapel of the Papal Palace in Avignon. The presentation featured 167 paintings and 45 drawings completed in just one year (1969/70). The contemporaneity of the works was highlighted by their hanging as unframed paintings fixed directly on the rough stone walls of the Gothic chapel.

1971

Picasso turned 90 on 25 October. To mark the occasion, works from municipal collections were exhibited in the Grande Galerie of the Louvre – an honour never before given to a living artist. French President Georges Pompidou opened the show, once again without Picasso's presence.

The Soviet Union also took part in the tribute, lending 25 major works from museums in Moscow and Leningrad to the Musée national d'Art Moderne. Many of these works have never again been exhibited outside Russia.

From 23 April to 5 June, Galerie Louise Leiris showed 194 of his drawings.

1973

A series of 156 prints was exhibited at Galerie Louise Leiris from 24 January to 24 February.

A second exhibition featuring Picasso's most recent works was presented in Avignon during the Festival d'Avignon. The artist selected works from the years 1970 to 1973 for this show himself. Picasso died on 8 April, before the exhibition opened on 23 May.

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The Reception of Picasso after His Death/Picasso after Picasso

Since Picasso's death in 1973, his legacy has remained both towering and tumultuous – celebrated with near-mythic reverence and scrutinised with growing critical complexity. In the immediate aftermath, Picasso's reputation as a modern master was reaffirmed through major retrospectives and surging market interest. The opening of the Musée Picasso in Paris in 1985, founded on the artist's own personal collection, further institutionalised his status.

A key moment in the posthumous reception of Picasso came with the influential 1981 exhibition *A New Spirit in Painting* at the Royal Academy in London. This exhibition marked a turning point in how painting was understood in a contemporary context and played a significant role in reasserting the relevance of Picasso's late painting. Positioned alongside a new generation of expressive

painters – Georg Baselitz, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Anselm Kiefer – Picasso was presented not as a distant monument of modernism but as an active precursor to the renewed vitality of the medium.

Yet Picasso's posthumous reputation has not gone unchallenged. As feminist and postcolonial critiques gained traction in the late 20th century, scholars and artists began to interrogate the personal and political dimensions of his work. In recent years, Picasso's work has been revisited with greater nuance. He stands less as an untouchable icon and more as a figure through whom the complexities of modern and contemporary culture are reconsidered.