



The Master Comes to Music City

Nashville's Frist Art Museum celebrates its 20th anniversary with its first Picasso exhibition

By Justin Goldman

"Give me a museum," Pablo Picasso once said, "and I'll fill it." The Spanish artist created enough works to fill many, many museums—nearly 16,000 pieces are logged in his *catalogue raisonné*—but this month marks the first time that the Frist Art Museum in Nashville can be counted among them.

From top left: *Portrait of Dora Maar*, 1937; *The Bathers*, 1918; *Jacqueline with Crossed Hands*, 1954; *Mother and Child*, 1907

The Frist, in fact, is the only museum in the U.S. that will have the opportunity to display *Picasso. Figures*, an exhibit made up of around 75 works from the Musée National Picasso-Paris. The show, which runs from February 5 to May 2, marks a bold beginning to the 20th anniversary celebrations

for Nashville's premier art museum, which opened at the site of the city's historic former main post office in 2001.

"Our community has become increasingly creative, like Picasso finding inspiration in merging different art forms and styles to generate new ways of reflecting the world," says Mark Scala, the Frist Art Museum's chief curator. "The exhibition is a wonderful way to celebrate our own anniversary, but it also signals an important moment in the life of Nashville."

The works on display focus on figurative representations, but they cover a wide swath



of the prolific and versatile artist's career, both chronologically (with pieces from as early as 1895 to as late as 1972) and stylistically (with everything from sculptures to Cubist paintings to copper etchings). According to Scala, the Frist and the Musée National Picasso-Paris also made a concerted effort to locate the artist within today's nexus of acceptability—an ongoing struggle within the art world. After all, few things exude the concept of "male gaze" more than Picasso's portraits of women.

"While the exhibition writ large is a dazzling panorama of a lifetime of stylistic evolution and experimentation,



an integral part of the story is Picasso's troubling relationships with the women who are portrayed throughout the show," Scala says. "From our earliest discussions, we conveyed to the Musée Picasso that we really wanted the interpretation to directly address this issue." To that end, the exhibit includes an essay on the patriarchal structures of Picasso's time and place and on his attitudes toward women. What's more, the labels for the portraits of women in Picasso's life provide biographical information on the subjects and their relationships with the artist.

Picasso also once said, "I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them." The figures in this exhibit will give visitors much to see—and, surely, much to think about. fristartmuseum.org



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