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ACQUAVELLA GALLERIES

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Acquavella Galleries Presents
Pablo Picasso: Seven Decades of Drawing
October 7 – December 3, 2021



Pablo Picasso, *Tête de femme*, 1921, Charcoal on paper, 24 x 18 1/2 inches (61 x 47 cm). Private Collection © 2021 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

New York, NY – August 20, 2021 - Acquavella Galleries is pleased to present ***Seven Decades of Drawing***, a survey of significant drawings by painter, draftsman, sculptor, printmaker, and ceramicist, **Pablo Picasso**. Curated by Olivier Berggruen, the show features over 80 drawings spanning seven decades of the artist's career, the exhibition includes works in an array of mediums including charcoal, crayon, colored pencil, collage, graphite, gouache, ink, pastel, and watercolor.

Drawing was the foundation of Picasso's practice throughout the many stages of his stylistic development. The son of an art teacher, Picasso began to sketch at an early age; it is said that his

first word was “piz,” short for “lápiz,” the Spanish word for pencil. He began his formal training at the age of seven, quickly mastering the techniques of classical draftsmanship.

Picasso’s drawings reflect the artist’s lifelong quest to innovate and experiment; they also demonstrate his virtuosic ability to switch between styles, techniques, and mediums. Guided by his intuition and innate understanding of line, in his drawings Picasso imaginatively experimented and pioneered the development of radical ideas, innovating new approaches to form and expression in the process.

Several works on view provide insight into the evolution of his most influential, large-scale paintings, such as *Les demoiselles d’Avignon*, while others stand alone as virtuoso, independent works showcasing Picasso’s mastery of line, form, and medium. Developed in concert with *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907, The Museum of Modern Art, New York) and *Les trois femmes* (1908, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia), *Les demoiselles d’Avignon: Nu jaune (Étude)* and *Nu debout (Étude pour ‘Les trois femmes’)* illustrate Picasso’s development of the striking, geometric female figures whose fragmented forms paved the way to Cubism. The watercolors, studies of the female form in motion, mark a radical break from traditional composition and perspective in painting. These bold and confrontational depictions of form became a seminal point in the development of Cubism and modern art.

One of the most recurring subjects in Picasso’s oeuvre is the *tête de femme* or *buste de femme* (the female head or bust of a woman). The subject serves not only as a motif to explore the artist’s stylistic development, but also to chronicle his personal life and relationships. The notorious lothario’s rapid and often dramatic changes of style are frequently attributed to the presence of a new love interest, the waning of an old one, or both. Numerous examples of the motif of the *buste de femme* abound in the exhibition, including early portraits evincing his study of archaic sculpture; fragmented, Cubist representations; more naturalistic, classicizing portraits; biomorphic Surrealist abstractions; and later, more erotic portraits. In his early drawing, *Buste de femme nue* (1906), a representation of his mistress and muse Fernande Olivier, Picasso fused Fernande’s striking face with his study of ancient Iberian masks and Romanesque sculpture, while *Buste de femme* (1907) betrays Picasso’s increasing interest in African masks, a formative influence in his development of Cubism. The evocative *Tête de femme* (1921), reflects the artist’s study of Classical sculpture and art history after World War I, when he was married to Olga Khoklova, while the sensual *Portrait de femme endormie, III* (1946), reflects Picasso’s later impassioned affair with Françoise Gilot and his spurring rivalry with Henri Matisse.

Seven Decades of Drawing is supported by generous loans from The Art Institute of Chicago, The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Fondation Beyeler, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Morgan Library & Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and The Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso Para el Arte (FABA).

A fully illustrated hardcover catalogue will be produced for the exhibition featuring critical essays by historian and curator Olivier Berggruen and historian Christine Poggi.

About Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

Arguably the most influential artist of the 20th century, over the course of his career Pablo Picasso pioneered successive artistic innovations that shaped the development of modern art. He was prolific in a wide range of mediums, including painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, and printmaking. Born in 1881 in Spain, the son of an art teacher, Picasso exhibited his first paintings in Barcelona at the age of 12. After an earlier trip to Paris, he left Barcelona in 1904 and moved permanently to France, where he would live until his death in 1973.

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