

Celebrating Pablo

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Spanish News



To mark the fiftieth anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death there have been worldwide events and exhibitions. Although the painter left Spain to live in Paris in 1904, and never returned after 1934 due to his opposition to the Franco regime, Picasso always maintained a strong emotional bond with the city of his birth. "Look, there, to the south, is Malaga", he was often quoted as saying from his exile in France.

Malaga's amazing regeneration from a dirty and dismal forgotten city, known only for its airport, to one of the most popular cultural, leisure and sporting destinations in Spain owes a huge debt to Picasso, who was born in the city on October 25, 1881.

One of the major factors in kick-starting Málaga's renaissance in 2003 was the pioneering Museo Picasso Málaga. As well as celebrating the 50th anniversary of Picasso's death, the Museo is also celebrating its 20th anniversary. Housed in the beautifully restored Palacio de Buenavista, the permanent collection of over 400 works includes unmissable works ranging from Portrait of Lola (Picasso's sister, painted in A Coruña in 1894) to Jacqueline Seated (an early portrait of his second wife, Jacqueline Roque Hutin, from 1954).

October sees the latest of a series of exhibitions celebrating the anniversary. Curated by Eric Troncy, from Tuesday, October 3 the Museo Picasso Málaga will be hosting the second and last exhibition of the year, The Echo of Picasso. The exhibition explores the effect of Picasso's unparalleled influence on contemporary art and today's art scene. Works

by Picasso will be shown alongside those of artists who acknowledged his influence, such as Francis Bacon, Martin Kippenberger and Maria Lassnig, as well as contemporary artists like Claire Tabouret and Rashid Johnson.

Picasso's innovative techniques ranged from welded iron to painted bronze, and from collage to the use of everyday materials as supports or constitutive elements of an artwork. They also encompass ceramics, a technique that Picasso was one of the first to inscribe in the artistic language of the second half of the twentieth century.

For those who might question whether Picasso has any relevance in contemporary Spain, Matter and Body, the previous exhibition at the Museo Picasso Málaga, attracted over 150,000 people!

Picasso's birthplace, the 19th-century townhouse overlooking the Plaza de Merced on the edge of Málaga's wonderfully atmospheric casco antiguo (old town), has also joined in the celebrations this year. Now converted into the Museo Casa Natal Picasso, The Ages of Pablo, is an exhibition charting the stages and styles of the master's lifelong career and runs until the end of October.

Any time is, however, good to explore the permanent collection here: highlights include over 80 sketches for his landmark 1907 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (which now hangs in New York's MoMA). As well as this, the Casa Natal will be updating its catalogue of works and including the portraits by Juan Goyenche, one of the very few photographers who Picasso allowed into his home and his studio. It will also be publishing books featuring its collection of ceramics by Picasso, as well as the sketchbook he used as he prepared to paint "*Les Femmes d'Alger*".

Although Malaga is celebrating the death of its most famous son half a century ago, it is doing so in extremely 21st century style. The city has created an immersive virtual space inspired by Picasso or a whole metaverse where anyone the planet can attend conferences, contests and concerts on Picasso from any device. But if you prefer the more traditional way of immersing yourself, a free audio guide is available to visitors with information on all of the places that formed part of the artist's life, as well as new signage on the city's Picasso Route.

Picasso's extraordinary inventiveness, formidable stylistic freedom, scant interest in convention and compulsive creativity loom large over contemporary artists. He is probably the only artist so frequently cited, interpreted, evoked, reprised, commented and celebrated in the works of his contemporary and later peers. If you ask anyone to name three famous painters, Picasso will feature in the answer.

As 2023 draws to a close, take the opportunity to celebrate and explore Picasso and his beloved home city!