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GALLERY



IMAGINING BACKWARDS:

Seven Decades of Picasso Master Prints

September 13 - October 29, 2016

Opening Reception Tuesday, September 13, from 6-8pm.

Exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog with essays by renowned art historian Charles Stuckey and foreword by Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Director Gary Tinterow.

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Imagining Backwards: Seven Decades of Picasso Master Prints

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McClain Gallery is pleased to present *Imagining Backwards: Seven Decades of Picasso Master Prints*, an exhibition of 50+ works that provides a succinct overview of one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. The art dates from 1905 to 1970, with an emphasis on the 1920's and 1930's, and in particular the iconic *Vollard Suite* (1930 – 1937). *Imagining Backwards* is on view from September 13th through October 29th.

The opening of the exhibition coincides with the opening of *Picasso: The Line*, an exhibition organized by the Menil Drawing Institute. McClain Gallery hopes to contribute to the active dialog about Picasso occurring in the community this fall.

A fully illustrated catalog accompanies the exhibition. Renowned art historian Charles Stuckey provided written commentary on a selection of works for the *Imagining Backwards* catalog. Also included in the catalog, a foreword by Museum of Fine Art, Houston's Director Gary Tinterow.

For press inquiries please contact Anna Farrow:

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Top image: **Pablo Picasso**, *Tête de femme VII, Portrait de Dora Maar*, 1939, engraving printed in four colors on Montval paper, 23 ¾ x 20 inches.

Imagining Backwards: Seven Decades of Picasso Master Prints Foreword by Gary Tinterow

Despite the frequent exposure and familiarity, Picasso's oeuvre retains its power to startle and to seduce; his inventiveness remains inexhaustible. Any exhibition of his work is bound to surprise even the most knowledgeable observer, and I look forward with great anticipation to the retrospective of Picasso prints that McClain Gallery has assembled for Houston.

Given that this exhibition is mounted at an art gallery, it seems appropriate to acknowledge the role that gallerists have played in the creation and promotion of Picasso's work. Although the artist is most closely associated with the German-born promoter of Cubism, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who represented Picasso briefly before the First World War, and again after the Second World War, it was the canny and irascible Ambroise Vollard who made possible many, if not most, of the prints in this exhibition. Vollard is best remembered as the Parisian gallerist who, at the turn of the twentieth century, discovered Cézanne and Gauguin toward the end of their careers; and as the man who launched Fauvism with Derain, Vlaminck and Matisse. But Vollard's relationship with Picasso was absolutely crucial to the career of the young Spaniard, and, for the rest of Vollard's life, they made great art together.

Vollard gave Picasso his first show in Paris, in 1901, when the artist was not yet twenty years old. Following what was then a formula, Vollard sold almost everything, but kept nothing for himself, not even the portrait that Picasso made of him. It took the urging of Leo and Gertrude Stein, young American collectors in Paris, for Vollard to see the value of Picasso's art. Following their suggestion, Vollard bought a huge trove of Picasso's canvases in 1906, making him owner of most of the great works from Picasso's Blue and Rose Periods; after that he bought a cache every year until 1912, essentially subsidizing the artist's studio production, enabling him to buy the finest drawing papers and large canvases. In September 1911, Vollard bought a miscellany of fifteen copper plates, drypoint and etchings, as well as some plaster and clay sculptures which he had cast in bronze. Vollard steel-faced the plates to produce an enormous edition of 250 called *The Saltimbanque Suite*. For the first time, Picasso's work began to be distributed across Europe and America, and *The Frugal Repast*, the largest of the plates, entered the pantheon of iconic European etchings. Once again, Vollard did not keep the great Cubist portrait that Picasso made of him in gratitude, selling it instead to one of his Russian collectors. But until Vollard's death in 1939, the gallerist was the principal publisher of Picasso's graphic oeuvre and intimately involved with his sculptural production.

Picasso was miserable sitting out the First World War in Paris. Vollard was one of the few dealers in operation, and they kept in touch, supplying works to the still-active art market in New York. Although Picasso signed lucrative contracts with socially prominent dealers after the war, Léonce Rosenberg and Georges Wildenstein, the most productive relationship was with Vollard. By the end of the 1920s, he had commissioned illustrations for Balzac's *Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, whose

themes of artist and model, abstraction and representation, became the predominant motifs of Picasso's work in the 1920s and 1930s, and the basis for the extraordinary *Vollard Suite*, 100 plates executed over nearly a decade and printed in 1938. Picasso installed his young lover Marie-Thérèse Walter in Vollard's country house, Boisgeloup, and the sculptures he produced there, inspired by Marie-Thérèse, are ever present in the *Vollard Suite*. Picasso's wonder at the delight he experienced with his young lover is memorialized in the *Satyr Unveiling a Nymph*. As Picasso's marriage to Olga Khokhlova disintegrated, Picasso gave vent to his self-pity in great images like *The Blind Minotaur* and his *gesamtkunstwerk*, the *Minotauromachy*. Indeed, in times of distress, Picasso worked through his demons by working on prints and drawings, rather than painting and sculpture. Many of the plates of the *Vollard Suite* represent a collaboration with the master printer Roger Lacourière, who remained Picasso's collaborator long after Vollard's death: Vollard did not live to see the printing of the witty and charming illustrations for Buffon's *Bestiaire*. The artist's unceasing experimentation with Lacouriere led to new techniques and unseen effects that continue to impress.

After the close of the Second World War, Picasso moved definitively to the south of France, where he took up new media he had not previously explored. His work in linocut, and especially color linocut, represents a highpoint in his graphic oeuvre, even if much of the imagery harks back to masters of previous centuries. As Picasso entered his seventies he seemingly entered into dialogue with his private pantheon of previous masters - Cranach, Rembrandt, Delacroix, Corot, Courbet, and Degas - without of course knowing that he would have nearly two decades of work ahead of him. And while his output in the 1950s and 1960s was sometimes derided by his former admirers, the freshness and vitality of the work continues to inspire artists to this day. While the winsome *Saltimbanques* harken back to another world long gone, Picasso's late work retains its urgency with universal themes of love and life, artmaking and death. The sweep of graphic work that McClain has brought together proves yet again that works of art can truly transcend time.

Gary Tinterow returned to his native Houston in 2012 to become director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston where he coordinated the Picasso Black & White exhibition the same year. Tinterow is considered one of the foremost Picasso scholars of his generation. His contributions began with the exhibition Master Drawings by Picasso at the Fogg Art Museum in 1981. Working with the great Picasso collector Douglas Cooper, in 1983 Tinterow co-organized The Essential Cubism 1907-1920: Braque, Picasso & Their Friends presented at the Tate Gallery, London. The following year Tinterow became the curator for modern European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In 1992 he organized the Picasso clásico exhibition for Picasso's hometown of Malaga. Most recently Tinterow was a co-organizer of two landmark exhibitions devoted to Picasso: Cezanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-garde in 2006; and Picasso in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010. In 2003 he was awarded a knighthood in the Légion d'honneur and in 2012 he was promoted to Officer.

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Pablo Picasso

Salomé, 1905

drypoint printed on Van Gelder Zonen

Framed Dimensions:

27 3/4 x 23 1/2 inches

Edition of 250

(PaP-33)

*With its emphasis on the eroticized male gaze and the unconventional presentation of superimposed images, both key factors in Picasso's art for the rest of his life, his drypoint *Salomé* is a watershed work. *Salomé* belongs to Picasso's first sustained attempt at printmaking begun not long after the twenty-two-year-old artist returned to Paris in 1904 to settle in the so-called Bateau Lavoir, a dilapidated Montmartre building where many struggling artists were neighbors.*

Excerpt from *Imaging Backwards* catalog by Charles Stuckey

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Pablo Picasso
Sculpture. Tête de Marie-Thérèse,
February 18, 1933
drypoint on laid paper
Framed Dimensions:
24 5/8 x 20 5/8 inches
Edition 16 of 50
(PaP-42)

The dizzying beauty of the final image shares some of the premises of well-known works by several of his Paris colleagues, for example, Man Ray's 1922 double exposure photographic portrait of the Marquise Casati or Jean Cocteau and Alexander Calder's heads sculpted in wire as drawings in space, made beginning in the 1920s, to present a viewer simultaneously with far and near, inside and out. Most interesting, perhaps, is the relationship between Picasso's Head of Marie Thérèse and the so-called "Transparencies" exhibited in Paris by Francis Picabia in 1928, paintings with multiple linear images superimposed over one another like apparitions of his young mistress haunting his every pictorial idea. Having moved his studio to the South of France in 1924, Picabia left his wife for his son's young governess in 1927. Who could miss the irony that Picabia's "Marie-Thérèse" was named Olga, like Picasso's wife?

Excerpt from *Imaging Backwards* catalog by Charles Stuckey

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Pablo Picasso

Sculpteur et Modèle se regardant dans un Miroir calé sur un Autoportrait sculpté (S.V. 69), April 8, 1933

Etching printed on Montval laid paper

Framed Dimensions:

28 x 23 3/4 inches

Signed by the artist in pencil, lower right

(PaP-37)

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Pablo Picasso

Minotaure caressant du Mufle la Main d'une Dormeuse (S.V. 93), June 18, 1933

drypoint printed on Montval laid paper

Framed Dimensions: 24 1/4 x 25 3/4 inches

Signed by the artist in pencil, lower right

(PaP-39)

As an image of himself in the act of looking, Minotaur Caressing a Sleeping Woman is a remarkable revelation. Courting the twenty-two-year-old Françoise Gilot in 1943, the sixty-two-year-old Picasso explained, "A minotaur can't be loved for himself.... At least he doesn't think he can." Showing her an impression of Minotaur Caressing a Sleeping Woman, he went on: "He's studying her, trying to read her thoughts... trying to decide whether she loves him because he's a monster." "It's hard to say," he concluded, "whether he wants to wake her or kill her."

Excerpt from *Imaging Backwards* catalog by Charles Stuckey

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Pablo Picasso

Femme au fauteuil Songeuse, la Joue Sur La Main (S.V. 21), 1934 (March 9, Paris)
engraving printed on laid Montval paper

Framed Dimensions:

22 x 18 1/2 inches

signed bottom right front

(PaP-24)

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Pablo Picasso

Tête de femme VII, Portrait de Dora Maar, 1939 (between January and June, Paris)

engraving printed in four colors on Montval paper

23 3/4 x 20 inches

Edition of 105

(PaP-25)

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Pablo Picasso

Tete de Femme IV, Portrait de Dora Maar,
1939 (20 April)

color aquatint printed on Montval paper

Framed Dimensions:

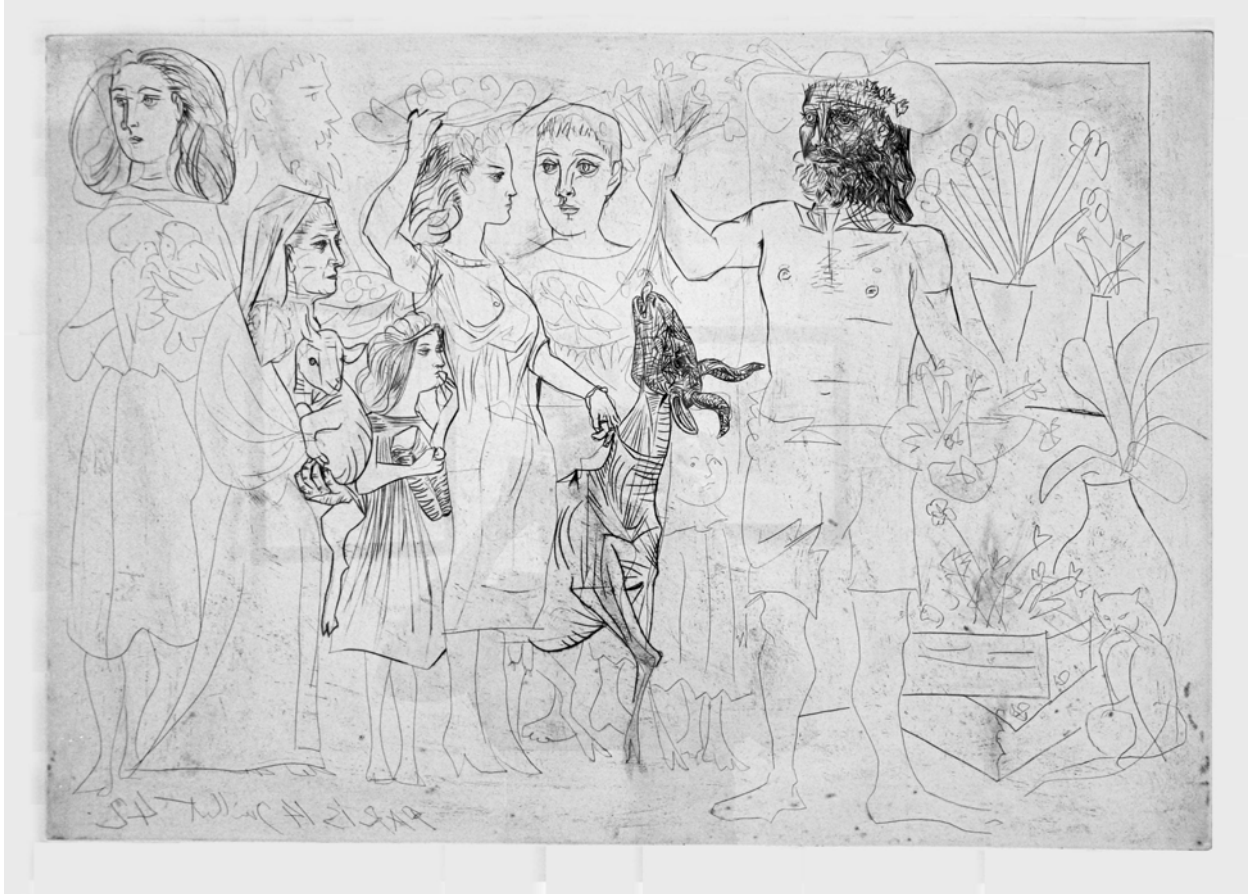
22 1/16 x 19 3/8 inches

(PaP-11)

A left-wing activist and participant in the surrealist group, Maar lived around the corner from Picasso, whom she famously intrigued by quickly stabbing a knife between her fingers at a café table for effect. She immediately became the principal woman in his life and art until the advent of the twenty-three-year-old painter Françoise Gilot in 1943. Having spent her childhood in Argentina, the Spanish-speaking Maar helped Picasso address the Spanish Civil War as an artist in exile, at first treating their relationship as a sort of collaboration, rather than accepting only the role of muse.

Excerpt from *Imaging Backwards* catalog by Charles Stuckey

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Pablo Picasso

L'Homme au mouton, July 14, 1942
engraving with etching and aquatint

Framed Dimensions:
24 1/4 x 30 1/4 inches
(PaP-30)

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Pablo Picasso

Femme Au Fauteuil No. 4 (d'après le violet), 1948
lithograph on Arches vellum with Arches watermark
Framed Dimensions:
37 15/16 x 31 1/8 inches
Edition 47 of 50, of the fifth (final) state
Signed by the artist lower right, in pencil
(PaP-18)

*Picasso devoted the majority of his lithographs to images of Françoise Gilot, the twenty-two-year-old emerging artist that he first met in 1942. As courtship strategy he introduced her to her idol, Matisse, who immediately offered to paint her, with green hair. Responding to what he took as a challenge, Picasso often portrayed Gilot with reference to works by Matisse, among them *The Romanian Blouse*, 1940 which had been exhibited in Paris in 1945 together with framed photographs of all the stages that preceded the final work.*

After putting this Matisse-based image of her aside for nearly two years, Picasso seemingly decided at the end of October, 1948 to portray Gilot in advance of her twenty-seventh birthday on November 27, 1948 while she was roughly four months pregnant with their second child. Working from imagination, Picasso posed her in the fur-trimmed jacket that he had brought home as a gift in September 1948 from a Communist Party conference for intellectuals in Poland. Presumably he hoped as an artist to overcome Gilot's initial dislike of the coat.

Excerpt from *Imaging Backwards* catalog by Charles Stuckey

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Pablo Picasso

Portrait de Jacqueline, October 17, 1959
linocut printed in colors on Arches wove paper
25 1/4 x 20 5/8 inches
signed in pencil, lower right
(PaP-69)

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Pablo Picasso

Portrait de Jacqueline de face. II, January 15, 1962
linocut printed in four colors on Arches wove paper
Framed Dimensions:
38 1/4 x 32 3/4 inches
Edition 3 of 50
Signed in pencil, lower right, numbered 3/50 in
pencil, lower left
(PaP-59)

Like it or not, most of Picasso's female partners were subjected to constant representation in his art, although they seldom posed as models considering how Picasso worked from imagination predicated as much on memory as on immediate observation. Jacqueline Roque began to appear ubiquitously in Picasso's works of art beginning in 1954. Her looks reminded him of models immortalized by the leading nineteenth-century French painters, Eugène Delacroix and Édouard Manet, and she became his second wife in 1961.

*Already by the 1930s Picasso's repertoire as a figure painter consisted primarily of portrait-format images of women: the largest-format works show them seated, the medium-format ones are half-lengths ("bustes"), and the smaller-format paintings are merely heads or even faces, sometimes unconventionally close-up, hardly the sort of item successful in the market for most artists. Pointing out the "face" he saw in a flower, the ninety-year-old Picasso explained his preference to his secretary Miguel Montañés, "If the petals of a flower can suggest a human face, how many things can a face suggest?" The quasi-hieroglyphic face in *Portrait of Jacqueline's Face* is intensely expressive, but no less mysterious for it.*

Excerpt from *Imaging Backwards* catalog by Charles Stuckey

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Pablo Picasso

Vénus Foraine , December 5, 1966

etching, drypoint with scraper on Rives wove paper

19 3/4 x 23 1/4 inches

Edition 1 of 15

Signed by the artist in pencil, lower right

(PaP-62)

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Pablo Picasso

Picasso, son oeuvre, et son Public, March 16-22 1968

etching printed on Rives wove paper

Framed Dimensions:

27 3/8 x 33 3/4 inches

Edition 26 of 50

Signed by artist in pencil, lower right

(PaP-65)