

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF KEY CUBIST PAINTING BY PICASSO

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 9, 1973. The acquisition of Pablo Picasso's Femme Nue, the key work of the artist's analytical cubist period, has been announced today by the National Gallery of Art. It was acquired through the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund.

The painting, generally considered one of the greatest cubist paintings, is on view in a newly-installed gallery (seventy-six) which includes fourteen additional Picassos and a selection of paintings by his close friend Braque. Among the Picassos are the Family of Saltimbanques (1905), the work that best summarizes his Rose period; Le Gourmet (1901); The Tragedy (1903); Lady with a Fan (1905); and The Lovers (1923), an important work of his classical phase.

This installation is one in a suite of galleries on the main floor that documents the birth of twentieth-century art. Some of the paintings in this new arrangement will eventually be rehung with other contemporary works in the East Building when it is completed, probably in 1976.

Femme Nue is the largest (73 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches) of Picasso's analytical cubist paintings. In this period Picasso restricted his palette to a very subtle and narrow range of buffs, greens and blues.

The painting was done in the Spanish coastal village of Cadaqués, where Picasso, his mistress Fernande Olivier, and the painter Derain, spent the summer of 1910.

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In the work done at Cadaqués, Picasso finally and completely broke through traditionally closed contours and forms, coming as near to total abstraction as at any point in his career. As Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, his dealer, later emphasized, this was the crucial moment in the development of cubism. Other exponents have used the term "hermetic" in reference to the great paintings of this period.

At the time Picasso was moving toward greater distillation of traditional forms. In contrast to earlier cubist works, here the nude figure has been replaced by a painting of geometrical forms and their facets, which the artist saw in the model. The interaction of geometric surfaces, to some degree appearing to be translucent, fully dominate the composition.

Femme Nue was an important work for Picasso, as a large number of preparatory drawings indicate. The documents, done in Paris during the winter and spring of 1910, illustrate the extraordinary transformation of the figure from a pictorial, rounded form to an almost complete abstraction expressed in fragmented planes.

This is the only analytical painting by Picasso for which a series of preliminary studies is known. A similar series exists for Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, the summary work of his proto-cubist period.

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