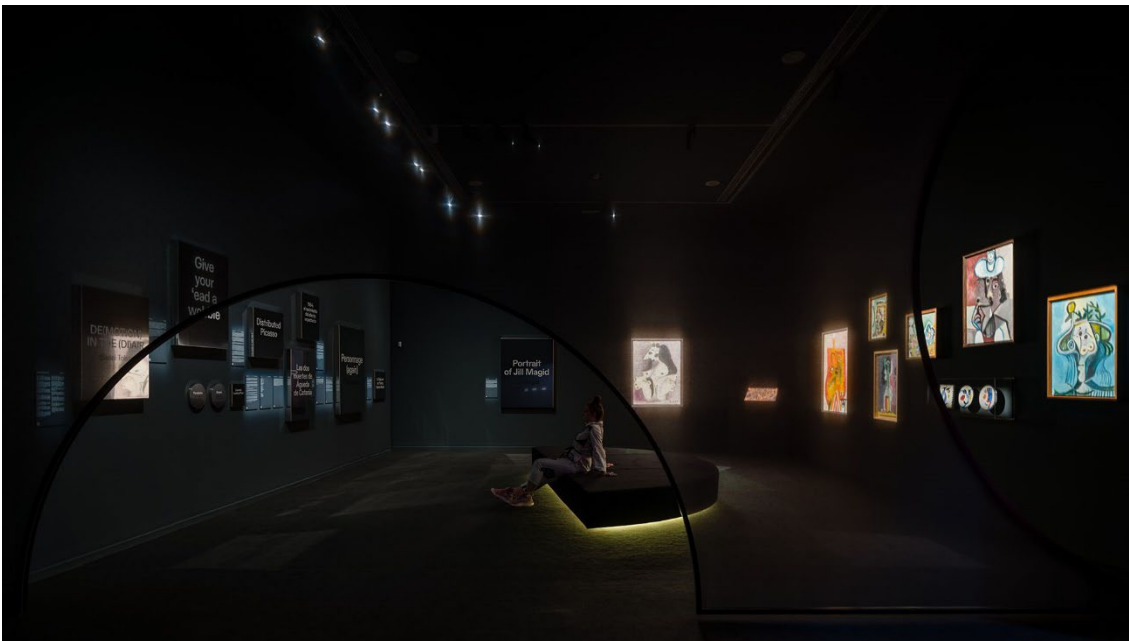


Until 7 January 2024

Picasso: Untitled

Chiaroscuro effects, beds and mirrors to challenge the legend and our own gaze



Picasso: Untitled. La Casa Encendida / ImagenSubliminal (Miguel de Guzman + Rocio Romero).

*Picasso almost never titled his works;
his friends, agents and curators did it for him.*

Bernard Ruiz-Picasso

Picasso: Untitled is an exhibition at La Casa Encendida curated and designed by Eva Franch i Gilabert. It features fifty works from Picasso's final period (1963–73) with new interpretations and titles proposed by fifty selected contemporary artists. Of the fifty works on display, twelve have never been shown to the public before and twenty-three are being shown for the first time in Spain.

Renaming something is an act of love, and it is also a political act. “Curating the exhibition consisted in designing an encounter that would permit criticism, analysis, argument or even the possibility of a dialogue between Picasso and the fifty selected artists,” says Eva Franch. “So we paid tribute to the works while opening the door to difficult conversations related to power, gender and race, all of which have gained force in the fifty years since Picasso’s death and are now at the centre of artistic and cultural debates.”

The encounter between Picasso and each of the artists therefore offers a new approach to understanding this legendary figure from every angle, but it also sheds light on what our perception says about our own times.

And crucial to this approach, as well as the texts, is the design of the exhibition that currently occupies four of the rooms at La Casa Encendida, a building from 1913 in the Neo-Mudejar style of the period that invites us to immerse ourselves in a space of observation, reflections and questions.

In a departure from the usual exhibition device of the white cube, all the architecture in the space has been covered in black, including the floor, walls and ceilings. In contrast to this darkness, the lighting is directed at four vital elements: Picasso’s original works, the new titles and descriptions, the beds and recliners arranged to invite reflection by viewers, and the original titles of the works.

Site map and statement

On entering the exhibition, viewers find themselves in a dark space tinged with fluorescent pink by the LEDs. An enormous mirror that hangs over the stairwell connecting the two levels of the exhibition reflects their gaze back at them. Edged in neon pink with the exhibition title, *Picasso: Untitled*, the mirror serves as an experiential curatorial text that reveals the meaning of this show to visitors: they themselves, their own gaze.

Transitions and thresholds

At the entrance to each room, viewers encounter a border area framed by a translucent wall that sets it apart from the works and the new titles created by the artists. The walls in this interstitial space display the original titles (in French) of Picasso's works in the manner of traditional museums, with the same geometric layout as the works themselves in the main room adjacent. These titles, most of which were given by curators, archivists and acquaintances of Picasso, are therefore presented alone, with their own autonomy, like floating punctuation marks in a past we have left behind.

The dark translucent wall that delimits this 'border' opens onto thresholds with the same circular or rectangular geometries as the ceramics and paintings in the exhibition.

Beyond the threshold, visitors enter the room containing twelve or thirteen works, their new titles and their interpretations.

Light box effect

While the museums and galleries of the 20th century were designed as white cubes with natural light or diffused artificial light, and the exhibition spaces of the 21st century designed for experimental and immersive art have tended towards black boxes for film, video and performance, this exhibition adopts a different format.

Shunning both white cube and black box, the show presents a system of light galleries (with almost complete darkness except for the art works) in which visitors move through spaces, with as little lighting as possible, before 'frame-lit' works. Only the art and the accompany texts have a visible presence.

The lighting design illuminates each work to the limit of its frame, often producing the illusion that the work is a light box rather than an oil painting or ceramic object. Because of the contrast between light and dark, the retina perceives colours more vividly, so the art works acquire an appearance that is rarely observed otherwise. The visual experience for

viewers is extremely rich. While cameras are unable to capture the subtle overall chiaroscuro effect, the human eye is capable of registering it.

Disruptive symmetry

Every time visitors enter a new room, they immediately perceive the contrast between the two wider walls on each side of them: one shows Picasso's works, alone, with no supports; on the wall opposite, reflective metal panels with the same dimensions and geometries as the displayed works present the new titles, the names of the artists who proposed them, and the labels with the explanatory texts and new interpretations of each work. As Jordi Costa pointed out on his visit, this arrangement forces anyone interested in the contemporary interpretations to keep turning their back on Picasso himself.

The rear wall opposite the entrance serves as an example and reading guide for the exhibition: while a Picasso work is displayed alone and illuminated in the darkness to enable viewers to observe and 'read' it without interference, a few metres away on the same wall is a metal picture with the new title for the work and the name of the artist who assigned it, accompanied by a label with an explanatory text.

Reflections

Each metal panel—a mirror and twin of each Picasso work, with the title in white letters and the name of the artist who proposed it in black letters—is made of silver-coloured aluminium.

As visitors wander around the room, the black letters of the artists' names blend into the overall darkness and reappear when the light projected onto the art works on the opposite wall bounces back and is reflected in the metal panels. As in a mirror game, the new names of the works and their reflections are overlaid, constantly appearing and disappearing in a flowing movement where the art works, light, texts and names interact with the viewers' movements.

Beds

With the exception of the screening rooms, the benches in museums are circumstantial, provided for visitors to sit down for a moment. They rarely contain purposely designed spatial conditions or objects that invite us to rest, doze or even dream about the art works. In *Picasso: Untitled*, enormous 'beds' in the rooms invite us to lie down, sit down, rest, close our eyes and simply 'be' with the works, with their new titles, with the ideas and thoughts they prompt.

With same geometric forms as the dark translucent thresholds that delimited the border area of the different rooms, each bed we find is illuminated with fluorescent lights—the round bed in pink—and therefore seems to levitate in the darkness. Depending on the number of visitors present, the space sometimes looks more like a night club than a museum.

The last mirror

The last Picasso painting in the exhibition, *Looking at The End Café* according to the title proposed by Ahmet Ögut, shows the portrait of a man in profile on a background of red horizontal lines which are reflected on the wall at the end of the exhibition: once again a mirror. This mirror offers viewers the final encounter with their own gaze, suggesting that what this exhibition proposes they extend and continue: with other works, with other artists, with other visions.

The reading room

Beyond the mirror, we come to a reading room, a space where once again we can sit down and read the quotations on the wall from some of the contributors to the catalogue, or the catalogue itself since copies are distributed on the seats. Picasso's works remain open to conversations, debates and new interpretations.

The artists

The fifty artists invited to take part in the show are: Adrián Villar Rojas, Agnieszka Kurant, Ahmet Ögüt, Albert Serra, Alejandro Cesarco, Antoni Muntadas, Asunción Molinos Gordo, Black Quantum Futurism, Cabello/Carceller, Camille Henrot, Christine Sun Kim, Christopher Kulendran Thomas, DIS, El Conde de Torrefiel, Emilie Baltz, Erwin Wurm, Esther Ferrer, Frida Orupabo, Holly Herndon, Isabel Coixet, Iván Argote, Janaina Tschäpe, Jill Magid, Joy Harjo, Johanna Hedva, Jumana Manna, Klára Hosnedlová, Leonor Serrano Rivas, Lydia Ourahmane, Maria Hassabi, Mercedes Azpilicueta, Niño de Elche, Omsk Social Club, ORLAN, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Pedro Neves Marques, Pol Taburet, Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen, Roméo Mivekannin, Ryan Gander, Sara Ramo, Simon Denny, Simon Fujiwara, Sissel Tolaas, Tala Madani, Taryn Simon, The Otolith Group, Trevor Paglen, Tuan Andrew Nguyen, and Tyra Tingleff.

About La Casa Encendida

La Casa Encendida, now twenty years old, occupies a heritage building from 1913 designed in the Neo-Mudejar style by Fernando Arbós i Tremantí. It is a pioneering project in Spain that combines social and environmental themes with a radically contemporary multidisciplinary cultural programme, support programmes for creation, and spaces and resources for creators.

Picasso: Untitled / With

The public programme *Picasso: Untitled / With* invites different artists to work with the texts generated for the exhibition and translate them into other languages through music, performance and orality. The resulting polyphony overflows the exhibition room, proposing a new, multidisciplinary interpretation of the artist and his work through specific artistic commissions.

The programme continues this 6 October with María Arnal, one of the most acclaimed and ground-breaking voices on the Spanish contemporary music scenes, who will perform a new soundtrack for Picasso's work in an intimate show inside the exhibition space.

From 7 October, visitors will also have the option of using an experimental audio guide, *El vigía* [The Lookout]. Made by the OMSK Social Club collective, it takes listeners on a meditative journey where they can explore the act of capturing the image of another person while simultaneously exploring the exhibition as a complex device of power, history and personal fiction.

On 13 October the Afro-American collective Black Quantum Futurism presents *Warping Canvases*, a performative lecture about the text the collective wrote for the exhibition.

In November and December, respectively, Lucrecia Dalt and Niño de Elche will give performances in the exhibition space.

Other artists taking part in the public programme activities for *Picasso: Untitled* are María Hassabi, repeating her performance in October, and Sofie Birch and Antonina Nowacka.

The catalogue

The exhibition is also accompanied by a bilingual catalogue that reproduces the fifty works displayed and the new titles assigned by the fifty contemporary artists, as well as their texts and reflections on the work and its meaning from today's perspective. The catalogue also includes reflections by Elvira Dyangani Ose, Juan José Lahuerta and Andrea Lissoni.

Eva Franch i Gilabert, curator and designer of the exhibition

Eva Franch i Gilabert is an architect, curator, critic and educator working between Barcelona, Prague and New York. Franch was director of the Architectural Association in London and Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York, and she curated the US pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2014 with the project OfficeUS, leading to three publications with Lars Muller: *Agenda*, *Atlas* and *Manual*.

Franch is the co-founder and art director of *Model. Festival de Arquitecturas de Barcelona* promoted by Barcelona City Council, teaches at UMPRUM (Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague), and is a visiting lecturer at Princeton and Cooper Union universities in the US.

With a focus on curatorial activism and planetary pedagogies and practices, her work articulates global desires from local perspectives through the generation of new histories and potential futures.

About Celebration Picasso 1973–2023

Celebration Picasso 1973–2023 marks the fiftieth anniversary on 8 April 2023 of the death of Pablo Picasso and features around fifty exhibitions and events at renowned cultural institutions in Europe and the United States. The initiative provides a historiographical analysis of Picasso's work, highlighting the career of an artist who created universal symbols like *Guernica*, today a collective emblem of defence of human rights.

The celebration is promoted by the governments of Spain and France, working jointly through a bi-national commission that brings together the cultural and diplomatic administrations of both countries.

Accompanied by official celebrations in France and Spain, the commemoration provides an opportunity to review the state of research and understanding of Picasso's work, most notably in October 2023 through a major international symposium and the simultaneous opening of the Centre d'Études Picasso in Paris.

The Musée national Picasso-Paris and the Spanish National Commission for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Pablo Picasso are proud to support this exceptional programme, which in Spain also has the inestimable support of Telefónica as sponsor of the initiative.

***Picasso: Untitled* is a project of La Casa Encendida and the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso (FABA), curated by Eva Franch i Gilabert.**

La Casa Encendida fundación montemadrid

The exhibition has the support of the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Death of Pablo Picasso and the collaboration of the Regional Government of Madrid. The exhibition is part of the official programme of Celebration Picasso 1973–2023, sponsored in Spain by Telefónica.

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Picasso
Celebración
— 1973.2023

