

PALAZZO TE

FONDAZIONE

**Fondazione Palazzo Te
in collaboration with the Musée national Picasso-Paris
presents**

PICASSO AT PALAZZO TE. POETRY AND SALVATION

Curated by Annie Cohen-Solal

Palazzo Te, Mantova
5 September 2024 - 6 January 2025

"If all the ways I have been along were marked on a map and joined up with a line, it might represent a minotaur".

Pablo Picasso, *Minotauromachia* (1935)

The exhibition ***Picasso at Palazzo Te. Poetry and Salvation***, curated by Annie Cohen-Solal, in collaboration with Johan Popelard, is the key event of the 2024 cultural programme featuring the theme of Metamorphosis, and in particular the relationship between Giulio Romano and the poem by Ovid that inspired the construction of Palazzo Te between 1525 and 1535.

Presented by the Fondazione Palazzo Te in partnership with the Musée National Picasso in Paris and the artist's family, a collection of approximately 50 works by the iconic 20th-century artist will be showcased at Palazzo Te **from 5 September 2024 to 6 January 2025**. Some pieces are being **exhibited in Italy for the first time**.

In 1930, four hundred years after the creation of the Room of the Giants in Mantova, Picasso made a series of engravings inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This fascinating project offers a direct dialogue with Giulio Romano and the Renaissance paintings in the palazzo. Behind the artist's engagement with the mythological tradition, however, there lies a remarkable adventure.

Emigrating to France in 1900, branded by the police and the Académie des Beaux-Arts as a foreigner, an anarchist and avant-garde artist until 1944, Picasso was initially welcomed by a small group of marginal poets. It was through poetry and these poets that he found the means to overcome the challenges of being a foreign artist in French society. This led to his innovative use of metamorphosis as a creative strategy, positioning him as a mercurial artist that few critics, particularly in France, could fully comprehend.

Ufficio stampa

Fondazione Palazzo Te - Federica Leoni
T. +39 0376 369198 - M +39 339 7442616
E. ufficiostampa@fondazionepalazzote.it

Lara Facco P&C - Lara Facco
M. +39 349 2529989
E. lara@larafacco.com

PALAZZO TE

FONDAZIONE

"Why focus on poetry, a seemingly minor area in the overwhelming body of work of Pablo Picasso? How do we explain the way, from 1935 onwards, poetry became another means of expression for this genius who, upon his arrival in France in 1900, did not speak a single word of French, and when he did, it was consistently poor?"

"The key to understanding Picasso's success," - says exhibition curator **Annie Cohen-Solal**, author of the book "Picasso the foreigner: an artist in France" - "can be found in his unique position as a foreigner in France, his boundless creative energy, his compassion for society's most marginalised individuals, particularly poets, and most importantly, his exceptional political acumen that allowed him to navigate the challenges of French society. Despite facing discrimination and exclusion for half a century, Picasso worked hard at establishing social connections across the country, opting to settle in the provinces in 1955 instead of the capital. He valued artisans over the Beaux Arts academics, embraced the Mediterranean as his cultural home, and achieved global recognition on his own terms - a rebellious response that echoes the spirit of Palazzo Te's history."

The exhibition opens with the **Pablo, Giulio and Ovid** section in a room where a series of drawings that Picasso developed for the *Metamorphoses* is displayed in dialogue with a remarkable and never-exhibited Etruscan vase, on loan from the Fondazione Rovati in Milan. Its subject is metamorphosis and the soul's journey into the world of the dead. Here we are introduced to the origins of Picasso's mythological themes such as the *Fall of Phaeton*, the love between *Jupiter and Semele*, the story of *Cephalus and Procris*, *Hercules and Nessus*, the death of *Orpheus*, *Polyxena at Achilles' tomb*, *Vetumnus and Pomona*.

The second section, **Picasso a Foreigner in Paris... welcomed by Poets**, includes a corpus of drawings, sculptures, objects and documents, such as Guillaume Apollinaire's *Notebook*, which describes the relationship between the artist and a group of poets who, in early 20th-century Paris, represented the city's avant-garde. Max Jacob, of whom there are two portraits, taught him French through the poems of Verlaine and Rimbaud; Guillaume Apollinaire (for whom in October 1928 Picasso made the project for a monument displayed in the exhibition) encouraged him to get to know Paris and win it over; Gertrude Stein, an American expatriate in Paris, wrote her Cubist poems in dialogue with the artist's inspired portrait of her. World War I caused the first disaster in Picasso's professional life when he became a collateral victim of the xenophobic wave sweeping France. Once again, it was a poet, Jean Cocteau, who found him work as a costume and set designer in Sergei Diaghilev's dance company, the *Ballets Russes*.

The third section, **When Picasso Became a Poet: Salvation**, explores how poetry too became a creative practice that would save him in 1935, when he went through a major personal and professional crisis. He wrote in French, Catalan and Castilian, accomplishing with multiple experiments of language what he had produced with painting and sculpture: hybridisations, passages and various intersections punctuate his poems. He inhabited languages while playing with and navigating paradox, using poetry as a means to emerge victorious from this dizzying impasse. In these same years, he set about representing the dazzling mythical images created by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* that we find in paintings such as *Reclining Woman Reading* (21 January 1939), *It is Snowing in the Sun* (10 January 1934) or the bronze *Metamorphosis I* of 1928: examples of the salvific effect of his literary

PALAZZO TE

FONDAZIONE

practice. Poetry allowed Picasso to cultivate a productive relationship with inspiration and ancient themes, creating a dynamic interplay between art and language.

The fourth section, ***Metamorphosis as a Strategy***, includes works of great visual intensity, some of which are on view for the first time in Italy thanks to a generous loan from the Picasso family. The section explores how the theme of metamorphosis influenced not only the artist's practice but also his personal introspection. This is particularly evident in this room, which examines Picasso's dialogue with his Minotaur alter ego – represented by a large tapestry on loan from the Musée Picasso in Antibes that engages with a marble statue from the Museo Nazionale Romano – another way for the great artist to wander in disguise through French society, inspired by antiquity. This theme is already apparent in the frescoes of Palazzo Te, where we see Pasiphae's union with a bull sent by the god Poseidon in the Chamber of Cupid and Psyche.

The exhibition *Picasso at Palazzo Te. Poetry and Salvation* is promoted by the **Municipality of Mantua**, produced and organized by **Palazzo Te** in collaboration with the **Musée national Picasso-Paris**, with the contribution of the **Fondazione Banca Agricola Mantovana**, supported by the **Amici di Palazzo Te and the Musei Mantovani**, with media partnership by the **Gruppo Editoriale Athesis**, and with technical support from **Aermec**, in synergy with **Mantua, City of Art and Culture**.

The exhibition design, lighting, and graphic project are by **Paolo Bertoncini Sabatini** with **Andrea Crudeli**, and the graphic design is by **Raffaele Cingottini**.

The exhibition is part of the collaboration agreement between the **Fondazione Palazzo Te, Musei Civici** with the **Municipality of Mantua**, and **Palazzo Reale** with the **Municipality of Milan**, to promote the **two exhibitions dedicated to Pablo Picasso**.

In Milan, from September 20, 2024, to February 2, 2025, Palazzo Reale will host ***Picasso the Foreigner***, an exhibition co-produced with Marsilio Arte.

The exhibitions in Mantua and Milan – both curated by Annie Cohen-Solal, with catalog by Marsilio Arte – are born from the collaboration with the **Musée national Picasso-Paris** and reveal a radically unknown Picasso, resonating with our contemporary world: the poet and the foreigner.

Visitors will be able to access the second exhibition at a reduced rate with the ticket from the first exhibition.

www.palazzote.it

Press materials: https://bit.ly/Picasso_a_Palazzo_Te

Press office

Lara Facco P&C

Viale Papiniano, 42 – 20123 Milano T +39 02 36565133 | E press@larafacco.com

Lara Facco M +39 349 2529989 | E lara@larafacco.com

Marianita Santarossa M +39 333 4224032 | E marianita@larafacco.com

PALAZZO TE

FONDAZIONE

Fondazione Palazzo Te

Viale Te, 19 - 46100 Mantova

Federica Leoni

T +39 0376 369198 | M +39 339 7442616 | E ufficiostampa@fondazionepalazzote.it

www.palazzote.it