

**THIS EXHIBITION IN THE SCHIRN IS THE FIRST PRESENTATION IN GERMANY
THAT HIGHLIGHTS PICASSO'S WORKS FOR THE THEATER**

PICASSO AND THE THEATER

21 October 2006 – 21 January 2007

Press preview: Friday, 20 October 2006, 11.00 a.m.

Even in his early work, Picasso found a source of inspiration for his art in the theater. With changing priorities, this fascination runs all the way through his œuvre. Of his many motifs from the world of traveling and popular theater, the figures of the commedia dell'arte like the harlequin and Pierrot played a key role. Picasso's interest in the theater is reflected not only in the motifs of countless paintings and drawings, but also resulted in the creation of a number of famous stage sets and costumes. The commitment to the stage proved to be an extraordinarily fruitful field of experimentation for the universal artist Picasso that manifested itself in both his paintings and his sculptures. The exhibition in the Schirn Kunsthalle centers on the period between 1900 and 1926, the crucial years of Picasso's lifelong love for the world of the stage, and, presenting more than 140 works, photographs, and documents, demonstrates how passionately Picasso was attached to the theater.

"Picasso and the Theater" has been sponsored by Citroën Deutschland AG. Additional support comes from the Dorint Novotel Frankfurt City and Mercure Hotel & Residenz Frankfurt Messe.

Max Hollein, Director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: "Exactly twenty years after the major opening exhibition 'Painters and Theater in the Twentieth Century,' we again center on this subject to present Picasso's contribution to the theater and examine the role of the theater for his work in a comprehensive manner – which is a premiere in Germany. The show also confronts works by Picasso with other works by him developed in the context of stage projects and thus visualizes how inseparably interwoven his theater works are with the rest of his œuvre."

Olivier Berggruen, curator of the exhibition: "Picasso was a nimble mind throughout his life, always looking for new solutions and extraordinary formal answers. The universal genius realized that the theater, and especially stage design, offered him an intriguing metaphor for the method of fitting things together – a practice he had developed in his cubist constructions and employed in his paintings as well as in other unusual works. Thanks to his boundless energy, his work for the stage became a valuable instrument with which he explored innovative ideas and forms of representation."

We know about Picasso's interest in the popular theater, the nomadizing fairground showmen and clowns, the harlequins and Pierrots, whom he portrayed especially in his early years and

repeatedly used as emotionally charged identification figures, as did numerous artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Less known is how important his artistic involvement in the theater was for him.

The production of the ballet "Parade" in Paris in 1917 marked the beginning of an extraordinarily prolific period of collaboration between Picasso and Sergei Diaghilev, the Russian impresario of the Ballets Russes founded in Paris in 1909. "Parade," a rather avant-garde and sensational dance piece at its time, was Picasso's first work for the theater. Picasso now designed stage sets, costumes, and several monumental curtains for a number of major choreographies like those for "Le Tricorne" (1919) and "Pulcinella" (1920). The stage sets and costumes for these two productions show that he had mastered the art and craft of theater design for the ballet. In his inexhaustible productivity and eagerness to experiment, Picasso made a considerable number of sketches and studies before he arrived at a solution for stage set, costumes, and an adequate interplay between the two. These works bear evidence of his enthusiastic discovery of a new artistic terrain which he made his own within a very short time.

During this immensely productive period, Picasso fell in love with one of Diaghilev's dancers, Olga Koklova, whom he married in Paris on 12 July 1918. Yet, the relationship broke up when Olga found out that he had had a mistress for years. Though she filed for divorce, Picasso's first marriage lasted legally until Olga's death in 1954 because Picasso did not want to share his possessions. Further encounters with dancers, musicians, and choreographers and, above all, his collaboration with Jean Cocteau, Léonide Massine, Erik Satie, and Igor Stravinsky provided Picasso with a strong inspiration and challenge. His passion for the motley milieu of the Ballets Russes, which the exhibition examines in a special section, has found its expression in numerous outstanding drawings – portraits of his artist friends and pictures of dancers which he repeatedly studied on and behind the stage.

What about the possibilities of presentation for an exhibition that concentrates on Picasso's works for the theater? Many original stage sets and costumes have been destroyed, are considered to be lost, or are in a condition prohibiting their transport. Often, only a few black and white photographs of the original choreography have been preserved. Nevertheless, the Schirn has succeeded in assembling an important part of these photographs, surviving sketches, and designs – which have fortunately remained in Picasso's possession. His spectacular curtain for the ballet "Mercure" will be presented to the public for the first time in Germany. The show will also include a number of paintings and drawings that grant an enthralling look at Picasso's exploration of the stage and reveal how he came up with a new and completely original answer for each production. In various cases, the presentation elucidates the context between these works and others Picasso created in vicinity to his stage projects. Thus, the exhibition also illustrates how closely related Picasso's works for the theater are with what he did apart from it.

Investigating the terms of the stage and the forms of expression characteristic of the medium provided the artist with a worthwhile point of departure for manifold experiments. Thus, he was

able to combine apparently contradictory formal and stylistic approaches in a unique manner and test new forms of expression that are also reflected in his work as a painter and sculptor. A crucial aspect is the interaction of two- and three-dimensional elements on the stage. Another essential feature is the confrontation with the large format the stage calls for which, not incidentally, was accompanied by the emergence of a monumental classicism in the early 1920s.

Picasso's outstanding works of that period comprise studies of bathing women on the beach in pencil or ink on paper. The fresh linear style and the range of postures inspired by the theater were to recur in many of the extraordinary works he produced in the following years. Flowing lines giving an impression of movement certainly stem from Picasso's familiarity with the ballet. Equally, the gestures in the astounding masterpiece "Two Women Running on the Beach (The Race)" radiate a definite rhetoric and careful choreography. His cubist still lifes also breathe a theatrical presence. In his compositions from Saint-Raphaël, Picasso focused on everyday objects for which he invented sophisticated mise-en-scènes usually associated with stage sets. Movement, choreography, and music from his practical theater work thus found a brilliant expression in his extensive œuvre.

CATALOGUE: "Picasso und das Theater / Picasso and the Theater". Edited by Olivier Berggruen and Max Hollein. With a preface by Max Hollein and texts by Olivier Berggruen, Asya Chorley, Douglas Cooper, Marilyn McCully, Esther Schlicht, Alexander Schouvaloff, Ornella Volta, Diana Widmaier Picasso. German/English edition, 280 pages, 192 color and 59 b/w illustrations, Hatje Cantz Verlag, ISBN 978-3-7757-1872-1, bound trade edition with dust jacket, softcover museum edition: 29,90 €.

VENUE: SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt.

EXHIBITION DATES: 21 October 2006 – 21 January 2007. **OPENING HOURS:** Tue, Fri–Sun 10 a.m.–7 p.m., Wed and Thur 10 a.m.–10 p.m. **INFORMATION:** www.schirn.de, e-mail: welcome@schirn.de, phone: (+49-69) 29 98 82-0, fax: (+49-69) 29 98 82-240. **ADMISSION:** 7 €, reduced 5 €, family ticket 15 €, combined ticket 12 €, reduced 9 €. **CURATOR:** Olivier Berggruen (New York). **PROJECT MANAGEMENT:** Esther Schlicht. **EXHIBITION ARCHITECTURE:** element, Basel. **MEDIA PARTNERS:** Cicero – Magazin für politische Kultur, hr2-kultur.

PRESS: Dorothea Apovnik (head), Simone Krämer.
**SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg,
D-60311 Frankfurt, phone: (+49-69) 29 98 82-118,
fax: (+49-69) 29 98 82-240, e-mail: presse@schirn.de,
www.schirn.de (texts and images for download under PRESS).**