

PRESS DOSSIER

PORTRAITS: MASTERPIECES FROM THE CENTRE POMPIDOU

Recoletos Exhibition Halls

The Instituto de Cultura of FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE is pleased to invite you to the press conference which will be held on **24 September 2012** at **12 noon** in the **FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE AUDITORIUM** (Paseo de Recoletos 23) in connection with the exhibition *PORTRAITS: MASTERPIECES FROM THE CENTRE POMPIDOU*. Participants will include Alberto Manzano Martos, chairman of FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE and its Instituto de Cultura, Pablo Jiménez Burillo, director of the institute, and Jean-Michel Bouhours, curator of the exhibition.

Opening	25 September 2012 at 8 pm
Press conference	24 September 2012 at 12 noon
Dates	26 September 2012 – 6 January 2013
Place	Recoletos Exhibition Halls, FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE. Paseo de Recoletos 23
Curator	Jean-Michel Bouhours, curator at the MNAM-CP
Produced by	FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE Exhibition organised in association with the Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou, Paris
Website	http://www.exposicionesmapfrearte.com/retratos

Introduction

The exhibition *Portraits: Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou* invites us to take a fascinating journey through the rich, complex genre of portraiture as interpreted by the various art movements of the 20th century. To this end, Fundación MAPFRE has selected eighty exquisite masterpieces by some of history's greatest artists from the collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou (MNAM-CP) in Paris.

Portraiture is one of the mainstays of art history, a genre in which tradition converged with new formal proposals following the advent of modernism in the late 19th century. In addition to generating some of the quintessential icons of



contemporary art, portraiture has proven receptive to the formal discoveries made by the historical avant-garde movements and has been used to reflect on the human condition and the perspective of the other, as well as to explore the very essence of the artist.

Pablo Picasso, *Mujer con sombrero*, 1935 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP / Georges Meguerditchian © Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012

Curated by Jean-Michel Bouhours, curator at the MNAM-CP, the show spans a time period that begins with the portrait of Erik Satie painted by Suzanne Valadon in 1892-93 and ends with John Currin's *The Moroccan* from 2011. Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon, Henri Matisse, Robert Delaunay, Antonio Saura, Jean Dubuffet, Joan Miró and Amedeo Modigliani are just some of the artists represented here, whose works comprise a remarkable collection of high-quality oil paintings and sculptures brought together for the first time in Spain.

The Exhibition

Portraits: Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou revolves around a single question: of all the pictorial genres derived from academicism, why has

portraiture been the one in which receptiveness to formal breakthroughs has produced the majority of our 20th century icons? To answer this question, the show offers a chronological overview that allows visitors to perceive the changes in style and form that the portrait has experienced over the course of the century, keeping pace with the efforts to explore and define the human essence. Portraiture cannot be properly appreciated without taking into account a whole series of philosophical, religious, mythical and metaphysical premises, or without considering the particular aesthetic embraced by each artist. Moreover, one of the portrait's defining traits in the contemporary period is the indelible presence of a certain pathos which, bound up with history, has embodied the violence, barbarity and tragedy of the human condition.



Constantin Brancusi, La musa dormida, 1910 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP / Philippe Migeat © Constantin Brancusi, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012

The exhibition begins with a portrait gallery featuring some of the most familiar faces from the Montmartre scene circa 1900, all of which explore the dark side of human personality. This historical period was marked by the appearance of psychoanalysis and its theories about the subconscious, and of faddish pseudo-sciences such as physiognomy, which sought to assess a person's character by examining his/her facial features. The exploration of the "inner self" and the quest for the human soul were new obsessions that appealed to the artists of the day. The bags under the eyes of the women depicted by Auguste Chabaud



and Alexej von Jawlensky seem to be a metonym for their own darkness: femmes fatales or fallen angels, transformed into the idols of a new urban, electric world through painting. The melancholy of Amedeo Modigliani's *Dédie* and the distant, distorted gaze of Chaïm Soutine's bellboy or Marc Chagall's poet accentuate the almost supernatural presence of the sitter's inner universe.

Pierre Bonnard, *La blusa roja*, 1925 © RMN-GP (Musée d'Orsay) ©Pierre Bonnard, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012

Visitors to the show are also able to venture into the deepest, darkest corners of the personalities of artists who portrayed themselves, projecting their own essence and self-perception as well as their fears and phobias onto the works. This is particularly evident in the case of Henri Matisse and Francis Bacon's self-portraits. For many artists, representing their innermost selves was one of the most complicated tasks they could undertake. This difficulty, combined with the exercise in introspective searching, makes each self-portrait a metaphysical and pictorial manifesto. Like Narcissus in Ovid's tale, the artist gazes at his reflection in the mirror and attempts to reproduce that image of himself on the canvas, one stroke at a time. The author thus becomes both subject and object, an instrument of his own endeavour. The self-portraits of Van Dongen, Matisse, Vlaminck, Pougny and Foujita are excellent examples of this internal exploration.



Alexej von Jawlensky, *Bizantina [Labios pálidos]*, 1913 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP / Derechos reservados

Through the genre of portraiture, artists have been able to engage in formal investigations and reflect on modes of representation associated with mimesis. The isolation of the face from the rest of the body and the simplification of human morphology towards abstraction confirms the contemporary artist's desire to convey an idea rather than create an imitation of life. The works in the show by Joseph Csaky, Henri Laurens, Robert Delaunay, Max Ernst and Pablo Gargallo testify to that quest for the ideal form, far removed from the psychological carcass.

Francis Bacon, *Autorretrato*, 1971 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP / Philippe Migeat © The Estate of Francis Bacon, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012



In this quest, pursued with particular intensity by the historical avant-gardes, the debate on the role of the mask came to the fore thanks to a newfound fascination with primitivism. Accurate resemblance to the model ceased to be a requirement for portraits, which instead resorted to devices such as the abstraction of the face's morphological features and the translation of personality into a plastic language in order to achieve greater expressiveness, as exemplified by the work of Juan Gris, Fernand Léger and Julio González.

The women painted by Pablo Picasso boldly proclaim the beauty of the imperfect, in contrast to the traditional extolment of classical perfection. Some of the portrayed subjects are transformed into beings on the verge of collapsing, cracking, caving in on themselves. Sometimes the artist interprets this complex character as a shattered mirror, a clear allusion to the fragmentary makeup of human personality, as in Gino Severini's self-portrait; at others, he views it as a grotesque, tangled web, as Jean Dubuffet did. Sometimes the artist resorts to deconstruction or decomposition, coming within a hair's breadth of destroying the portrayed subject, a yawning chasm that is apparent in the work of Francis Bacon and Alberto Giacometti. In all of them we detect a final, desperate attempt: the impossible struggle to conquer death through art.



Julio González, *Cabeza llamada "El Túnel"*, [1932-1933] © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP / Philippe Migeat © Julio González, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012

Pablo Picasso, Retrato de mujer, 1938 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP / Derechos reservados © Sucesión Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012



The appearance of photography altered the course of contemporary portraiture in painting. At first photography borrowed the codes of pictorial art, offering a new guarantee of objectivity and faithfulness to the original in exchange. However, as the two media settled into coexistence, painting also borrowed other qualities from photography, such as posing or the low-angle perspective, while simultaneously defending the plasticity of the pictorial or the motif. Against all odds, the painted portrait maintained its autonomy and reasserted itself by broadening its horizons and aesthetic possibilities, as the

last section of the show featuring the most contemporary artists clearly reveals.



Avigdor Arikha, Marie-Catherine, 3 de enero de 1982 © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-GP © Avigdor Arikha, VEGAP, Madrid, 2012

The Catalogue

A scientific catalogue has been published to accompany this exhibition which contains essays by the show's curator, Jean-Michel Bouhours, and by the renowned aesthetics and art historians Jean Clair, Rafael Argullol and Itzhak Goldberg. Thanks to the rich variety of perspectives, interpretations and variables drawn from the contemplation and study of this splendid group of works, the catalogue offers a number of interesting details that are certain to enrich the visitor's experience: reflections on the mysteries of the soul, the contemporary self-portrait, formal experimentation, the representation of the most chaotic and disorderly part of the human essence, and the dialogue between painting and photography. The volume also features reproductions of

all eighty works on display, each with complete catalogue specifications and expert analyses, as well as a brief biography of every artist in the show.

Educational Programme

As it has been doing for the past several years, the Instituto de Cultura of FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE will offer workshop-tours of *Portraits: Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou* for schools and families.

WORKSHOP-TOURS FOR SCHOOLS: for pupils enrolled in preschool, primary, middle and upper secondary school and other programmes.

PRESCHOOL (ages 4 and 5) and PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS 1 & 2

Portraits and Self-portraits (Art Workshop): A workshop where children will discover the genre of portraiture. Basic elements such as the different types of portraits, poses, facial symmetry and resemblance to the model will be explained, and the children will make fun portraits out of everyday objects.

Dates: Tuesdays and Thursdays, term time (26 September 2012 – 6 January 2013)

Time: 10 – 11.45 am

PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS 3 – 6

Portraits for Posterity (Art Workshop): The invention of photography forever changed the way artists see the world, but portraiture is still one of the most popular genres with painters and sculptors. Through the works in the exhibition, workshop participants will discover what motivates artists to make a portrait, and then they will use what they have learned in the show to create their own photo collage self-portraits.

Pupils must bring an A4-size photograph of themselves to use in the workshop (B/W photocopies are valid).

Dates: Wednesdays, term time (26 September 2012 – 6 January 2013)

Time: 10 am – 12 pm

MIDDLE AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Identifying Features (Art Workshop): As the popularity of photography grew in the 19th and 20th centuries, it seemed that painted portraits were doomed to disappear, and yet they have passed the test of time. Participants in this workshop will discover works by different artists who sought to devise their own particular language and experimented with formal elements in order to explore the issues of identity and the human condition. Each pupil will then be invited to think about his/her own identity and create photographic portraits.

Dates: Wednesdays and Fridays, term time (26 September 2012 – 6 January 2013)

Time: 11.30 am – 1.30 pm

Where: RECOLETOS EXHIBITION HALL. Paseo de Recoletos, 23. 28004 Madrid

Practical details and further information: www.fundacionmapfre.com. Tel. (+34) 91-3232872

WORKSHOP-TOURS FOR FAMILIES:

FOR CHILDREN AGES 4 – 6

Portraits and Self-portraits (Art Workshop): A workshop where participants will discover the genre of portraiture. Basic elements such as the different types of portraits, poses, facial symmetry and resemblance to the model will be explained, and participants will make fun portraits out of everyday objects.

Dates: Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 12 noon

Days: 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 October; 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24 and 25 November; 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30 December; 5 January.

FOR CHILDREN AGES 6 – 12

Portraits for Posterity (Art Workshop): The invention of photography forever changed the way artists see the world, but portraiture is still one of the most popular genres with painters and sculptors. Through the works in the exhibition, we will discover what motivates artists to make a portrait, and then we will use what we've learned in the show to create our own photo collage self-portraits. Don't forget to bring a photo of yourself to create a very special work of art.

Dates: Sundays, 4.30 – 6.30 pm

Days: 7, 14 and 21 October; 4, 11 and 18 November; 2, 9, 16 and 30 December

FOR CHILDREN AGES 12 – 16

Identifying Features (Art Workshop): As the popularity of photography grew in the 19th and 20th centuries, it seemed that painted portraits were doomed to disappear, and yet they have passed the test of time. Participants in this workshop will discover works by different artists who sought to devise their own particular language and experimented with formal elements in order to explore the issues of identity and the human condition. We will then take a moment to reflect on our own identity and create photographic portraits.

Dates: Sundays, 4.30 – 6.30 pm

Days: 28 October; 25 November; 23 December.

Where: Recoletos Exhibition Hall. Paseo de Recoletos, 23. 28004 Madrid.

Practical details and further information: www.fundacionmapfre.com . Tel. (+34) 91-3232872

Audio Guides

For this exhibition FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE will offer:

Audio guides in Spanish and English, as well as:

Audio guides with an audio description feature, with a script and production designed specifically for visually-impaired visitors to allow them the greatest

possible degree of autonomy as they move through the facilities, using vivid description techniques to transform images into audible explanations.

Sign guides, portable multimedia devices equipped with a display screen that shows a video explaining the works in the exhibition with sign language and subtitles.

Website

FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE has developed a website dedicated solely to this exhibition in order to provide additional information on the contents of the show and make them available to the general public:

<http://www.exposicionesmapfrearte.com/retratos>