

bernard jacobson gallery

The Three Giants of 20th Century Art at Bernard Jacobson Gallery

Open from 9th October 2024

Bernard Jacobson Gallery presents 'Braque, Matisse, Picasso: Prints'. The revolutionary ideas of these three giants reshaped art in the 20th century. They challenged conventions and ignited a revolution that continues today.

In this exhibition, works in aquatint, etching, linocut and lithograph show the final subject matters chosen by each master: Georges Braque's poetic interpretation of birds in flight, Matisse's calligraphic aquatints of faces, and Picasso's expressive portraits of his second wife Jacqueline Roque. These three subject matters have become world renowned and are some of the most identifiable images associated with each artist.

Braque, Matisse and Picasso not only transformed painting but also revolutionised printmaking, exploring new techniques and pushing artistic boundaries. Their prints are not reproductions, they are unique works on their own terms, and the postwar growth of printmaking allowed these artist's images to be disseminated worldwide!

It was at the turn of the twentieth century where the paths of Braque, Matisse and Picasso first crossed. Braque was first exposed to Matisse and his Fauvist work in 1905 at Salon d'Automne in Paris. Drawn to Matisse's wild colour and fluid form, Braque used these elements as the building blocks of his greatest invention, Cubism which he went on to develop with Picasso. A year later, Matisse and Picasso were first introduced by the writer and collector Gertrude Stein in 1906. Although they both admired each other, their sheer artistic talent at times bumped heads resulting in an underlying rivalry throughout their lives.

Georges Braque's (1882-1963) late prints focus on birds which has become one his most enduring motifs and one so recognisable of being 'a Braque.' Works including L'Ordre des Oiseaux (1962) and L'oiseau bleu (ca. 1960), reflect his shift from the analytical nature of early Cubism to a more contemplative and poetic engagement with themes of nature and

spirituality. Braque once poignantly declared that “Art is a wound turned into light”. The recurring motif of birds in Braque’s prints serve as a metaphor for freedom and transcendence, evoking a sense of movement and ethereality which seems less pronounced in his earlier, more structured compositions. Works such as L'Ordre des Oiseaux demonstrate Braque’s adept use of etching and aquatint to explore depth and texture, creating images that are both visually delicate and symbolically profound.

Henri Matisse’s (1869-1954) aquatints, such as Nadia au profil aigu (1948) and Bédouine - Souvenir de Manon (1947), illustrate a transition from the vibrant, colourful canvases of his Fauvist years to works of radical simplicity. With reference to his late period, Matisse commented, “I have always sought the essential character... everything that is not useful in the picture is detrimental”. In these works, Matisse’s mastery of aquatint allows for an expressive play of light and shadow, where every stroke is intentional and charged with meaning, distilling the human figure to its most elemental form.

Jacqueline met Picasso whilst working as a saleswoman at the Madoura pottery in Vallauris, where the artist had been creating ceramics; she quickly became his preferred model, muse and wife. Portraits of Jacqueline highlight her wide eyes which are the most identifiable feature in all the prints on display and in each of the colour plates of Portrait de Jacqueline au Fauteuil. This set of 4 linocuts reflects Picasso’s confidence in this medium, one which Picasso had only worked with occasionally over four years to this point. The superposition of the plates to build the multicolour linocut is experimental and as such there was no edition made, which makes this group exceptionally rare (indeed probably unique) in this form as the progression of the subject can be traced and clearly understood. Through each line and layer of colour, he weaves together technical innovation with personal insight, creating a work that stands as both an artistic milestone and a deeply intimate portrayal of the woman who shaped his later life and career.

The exhibition celebrates the culmination of three illustrious artistic careers. It highlights the final subjects of these visionaries, showcasing their experimental and innovative practices. Even today, these artists continue to inspire new generations, with their distinctive styles making their works instantly recognisable worldwide.

FOR ALL PRESS ENQUIRIES

mail@jacobsongallery.com | +44 (0)20 7734 3431

bernard jacobson gallery | 8 golden square, london w1f 9hy
+44 (0)20 7734 3431 | mail@jacobsongallery.com
www.jacobsongallery.com