

Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

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Unseen Picasso

May 15–October 19, 2020

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents *Unseen Picasso*, a small exhibition featuring 16 exceptional prints made between the 1930s and 1960s that illustrate Pablo Picasso's bold experiments, technically and stylistically, in the graphic arts.

For most of his long career and life, Picasso (1881–1973) engaged in printmaking with a gusto and freedom of expression that is thrilling to experience. No print medium intimidated him, and his prodigious facility in intaglio (etching, drypoint and aquatint), lithography and linocut inspired him to deconstruct and reinvent customary practices. *Unseen Picasso* examines a select group of iconic and lesser-known prints of enduring subjects from the artist's repertoire, including his muses and the nude. The exhibition looks at the singular characteristics that make these prints rare or unique and therefore infrequently seen in exhibition or publication.

Further, it invites visitors to look closely at the characteristics in each impression that distinguish the Norton Simon print from others produced in the edition.

Though prints are usually produced in multiples, one-of-a-kind impressions are sometimes pulled in the course of a print run. They may be proofs or undescribed states in an edition (a *state* is any stage in the development of a print at which impressions are pulled). A telling case is the 1946 lithograph *Two Nude Women*, a consuming subject for Picasso that compelled him to transform a recognizable subject into a minimalist abstraction. The Museum's unique impression of the eighth state—Picasso created 21 states exploring this composition—is also noteworthy as the sole print from this campaign to be printed in



Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973)
Woman with a Hairnet, 1956
Color transfer lithograph, 4th state, Bon à tirer
The Norton Simon Foundation, Gift of Mr. Norton Simon
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New York

color. Picasso's ambitious four-color lithograph *Woman with a Hairnet* illustrates another critical classification in printmaking. Here, the artist's inscription "*Bon à tirer*" (ready to print) authorizes the printer to "pull" an edition. Picasso's signature identifies this trial proof as the model of perfection that the small edition would have to match.

At work in the printer's studio, Picasso used whatever papers were on hand to evaluate his progress. For one proof representing his lover, Dora Maar, the artist used japan paper. Though it is unknown whether he chose this support for aesthetic reasons, the proof occupies a singular status on account of it. Japan paper has long been prized among printmakers for its thickness, slight sheen and ecru coloring, and for *Dora Maar* (1939), it provides a suitable foil to the Prussian blue ink adopted for this aquatint (an intaglio technique that produces effects similar to a wash drawing). By annotating this print "*épreuve d'état*" (artist's proof), Picasso indicated that it was to be reserved for his own use.

In 1958, Picasso dove headlong into producing linocuts, a type of relief printing that uses a linoleum block. The pliant nature of linoleum offered little resistance to cutting, and it served as a good vehicle for Picasso's impulse to create compositions in which color and line were nearly inseparable. Over time, pigments can change, lighten or darken, affecting the artist's original intent for the linocut. This is the case with certain blues. *Bacchanal with Goats and Spectator* (1959) is a standout in this context on account of the stability and vigor of its palette. The royal blue—seen in the mountain lake and the sky that peeks through the decorative pattern of clouds—remains vibrant. This vitality is important in an animated composition in which color forms communicate a sense of spatial depth.

Unseen Picasso is organized by Curator Gloria Williams Sander. It is on view in the Museum's small exhibition gallery on the Main Level from May 15 through October 19, 2020.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free but limited, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.

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