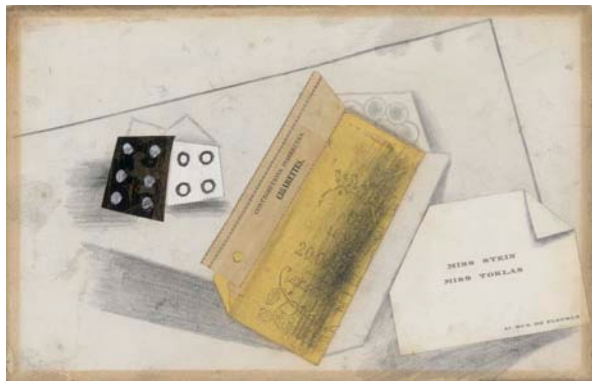


**SPECIAL EXHIBITION EXAMINES DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN THE ART OF PABLO PICASSO AND WRITING**

**Picasso and the Allure of Language** examines previously unexplored aspect of legendary artist's work;  
on view January 27–May, 24, 2009.



Pablo Picasso, *Dice, Packet of Cigarettes, and Visiting-Card*, Paris, early 1914. Painted and printed paper, graphite, and watercolor. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Collection, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. © 2008 Estate of Gertrude Stein. Used with permission of Estate of Gertrude Stein

A groundbreaking exhibition examining Pablo Picasso's lifelong relationship with writers and the many ways in which language affected his work opens at the Yale University Art Gallery on January 27, 2009. ***Picasso and the Allure of Language*** comprises some 70 works in all media by Picasso, as well as select examples by fellow artist Georges Braque, and photographs, letters, manuscripts, and book projects by a diverse group of artists and writers. Together, these works illuminate Picasso's deep and multidimensional interest in writing and language, and challenge the very notion of what

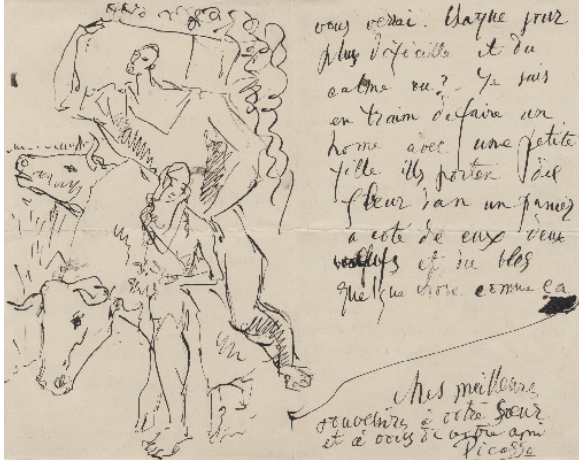
have been considered “highlights” of his oeuvre.

Drawn from the collections of the Yale University Art Gallery and Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, as well as the renowned Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, in Dallas, Texas, from which two sculptures are on loan, the varied works on view span the years from 1900, when Picasso was nineteen years old, to 1969, just four years before his death at the age of ninety-one.

**Jock Reynolds**, the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, observes, “Picasso dubbed his studio a ‘laboratory,’ and today we can still learn from the intense discussion, friendship, and collaboration that went on both inside and outside that studio. Those intellectual exchanges—among artists, writers, and thinkers of many disciplines, during the Cubist years and after—changed Picasso and, ultimately, the course of modern art.”

**Susan Greenberg Fisher**, the Horace W. Goldsmith Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Yale University Art Gallery and organizer of this exhibition, notes, “While Picasso is perhaps best known to the public as the inventor of Cubism, or as the central actor in a flamboyant life, the exhibition focuses on the less known impact of language on his practice as an artist. His keen interest in rethinking painting and drawing as a form of writing structured his most innovative works, from the radical Cubist collages made in the years before World War I to his later print series of the 1950s and 1960s.”

*Picasso and the Allure of Language* remains on view at the Gallery through May 24, 2009. It then travels to the Nasher Museum of Art, at Duke University, in Durham, North Carolina, which collaborated on the organization of the exhibition (August 20, 2009–January 3, 2010).



Pablo Picasso, *Letter to Leo and Gertrude Stein (verso)*, Paris, August 17, 1906. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. © 2008 Estate of Gertrude Stein. Used with permission of Estate of Gertrude Stein

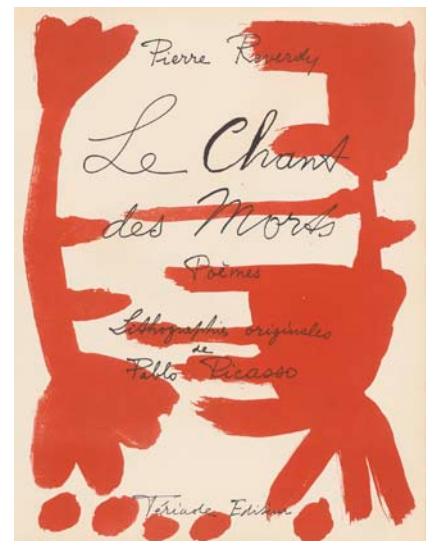
The exhibition marks the first time that works by Picasso originally owned by Gertrude and Leo Stein and now in the Gallery's collection are reunited with materials from the Beinecke Library's Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers. Among the objects drawn from this archive are an intimate 1914 collage made by Picasso from Stein and Toklas's calling card, as well as letters and postcards written from Picasso to the Steins, who together assembled an astounding private art collection that included works by Picasso, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and others. The Beinecke materials also include Stein's original transcripts of her perceptively written "portraits" of Picasso, as well as

audio recordings of Stein reading those writings.

### Picasso and Writers

Picasso's love affair with words began soon after his permanent move from his native Spain to the bohemian Montmartre section of Paris in 1904. It was there, in his studio at the "Bateau-Lavoir," that he formed ardent friendships with a circle of important French writers and poets, including Max Jacob, Pierre Reverdy, and poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire, who encouraged artists of his generation to "innovate violently!" In 1905, Picasso met Stein, an expatriate American writer who, guided in art collecting by her brother Leo, became the artist's principal patron in Paris until 1914. During this remarkable decade, which witnessed the radical invention of Cubism, Picasso's art and Stein's writing were equally informed by a concentration on both visual and verbal language, an interest that endured throughout their lives.

Picasso's intense relationships with other major French writers after the Cubist years, including Surrealists Michel Leiris and Paul Éluard, speak of his fascination with their craft and their inspiration for his own work. Picasso himself turned his hand to writing in 1935 and over the course of 24 years wrote hundreds of poems and two full-length plays. From the late 1920s to about 1950, he also produced strikingly innovative work for numerous illustrated book projects, challenging traditional notions of the relationship between image and text. These ranged from charged interpretations of classical and romantic texts by Ovid and Honoré de Balzac in the late 1920s, to the passionate writings of such contemporaries as Reverdy, Tristan Tzara, and Aimé Césaire.



Pablo Picasso, title page from Pierre Reverdy's *Le chant des morts* (The Song of the Dead). Transfer lithograph. Published by Tériade, Paris, 1948. Yale University Art Gallery, The Ernest C. Steefel Collection of Graphic Art, Gift of Ernest C. Steefel

## Exhibition Overview

*Picasso and the Allure of Language* is organized into four sections, each of which focuses on a specific aspect of the role played by language in Picasso's work. These are enriched by archival photographs, manuscripts, and other documentary materials that further illuminate the artist's relationship to writing and writers.

The opening section of the exhibition, "Conversations," focuses on Picasso's early associations—and collaborations both direct and indirect—with writers and artists like Stein, Apollinaire, Jacob, and Braque, from the early 1900s through the Cubist project. Featured are the celebrated oil painting *Dog and Cock* (1921), in which strange letter-like orbs mix with the dots and dashes of a newspaper on a table; *Four Still Lifes* (1914), an intriguing gameboardlike object made from floor tiles painted by Picasso and André Derain; the majestic collage *Segment of Pear, Wineglass, and Ace of Clubs* (1914), first owned by Gertrude Stein; and several poetic Cubist works by Braque.

The second section, "Fictions," looks at Picasso's lifelong affection for imagined characters and scenarios, beginning with his early, celebrity-like depictions of figures such as Harlequin and Salomé. In the late 1920s, Picasso produced etchings for major illustrated books, working with leading Parisian editors, including the formidable Ambroise Vollard. Highlights of this section include a selection of etchings of the sculptor's studio from the famed *Vollard Suite*, in which Picasso constructs through a classical lens his own life "story" as an artist, and the poignantly introspective painting *Seated Woman* (1936), inspired by his muse Marie-Thérèse Walter.



Pablo Picasso, *First Steps*, Paris, May 21, 1943, revised summer 1943. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903



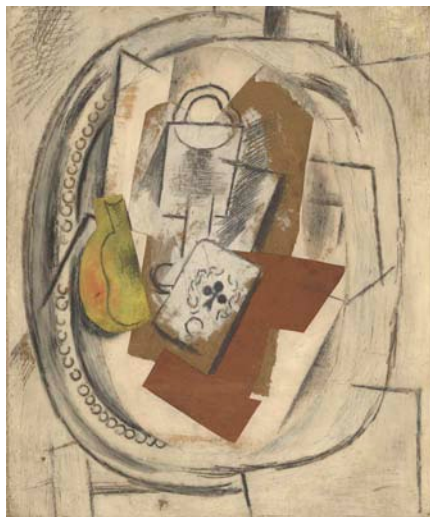
Pablo Picasso, *Dog and Cock*, 1921. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

The third section, "Revisions," examines Picasso's ease with constant revision and, in particular, the writing-over of previously existing works in his poems and drawings of the 1940s. This section presents new research on Picasso's monumental wartime painting *First Steps* (1943), which underwent dramatic revisions, evidenced by at least two earlier compositions extant beneath the final work. The revised chronology of the painting's creation now includes preparatory work on newspaper, signaling Picasso's return to a medium closely linked to the epochal Cubist years and a sign of the continuing importance of language to his thinking and process.

The final section, "Illuminations," corresponds roughly to the years immediately after World War II until about 1950. During this period, in an explosion of creativity, Picasso embarked upon a series of innovative collaborations with important writers and poets, while also experimenting with a multitude of printed and applied media.

Prominent among his collaborators was Pierre Reverdy, with whom Picasso produced a 117-page book of poems, *Le chant des morts* (The Song of the Dead; 1948), which demonstrates these two creators' moving responses to the atrocities of World War II.

Archival materials, which are displayed in a row of library cases extending down the center of the exhibition, expand upon and add depth to the issues explored by the artwork. Each of the six cases is devoted to a single theme: "Picasso and the Steins," including letters, postcards, and drawings from the artist to the Steins; "Literary Portraits of Picasso," with written portraits of the artist by Stein and Apollinaire; "The Poets," with numerous portrait frontispieces created by Picasso for books written by friends; "Picasso *Poète*," including examples of Picasso's own poems and plays; "War and Politics," comprising both clandestine pamphlets and book projects made in collaboration with writer friends who were involved in the Resistance and, after the war, the Communist Party; and "Book Covers," with select examples created by Picasso during and after the 1940s for books about his art.



Pablo Picasso, *Segment of Pear, Wineglass, and Ace of Clubs*, Paris, spring 1914. Pasted paper, distemper (gesso), gouache, and graphite on cardboard. Yale University Art Gallery, John Hay Whitney, B.A. 1926, M.A. HON. 1956, Collection

Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

### **Exhibition Catalogue**

*Picasso and the Allure of Language* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, copublished by the Yale University Art Gallery and Yale University Press (\$40.00; paperback). It contains an introduction by Susan Greenberg Fisher; essays that probe Picasso's lifelong relationship to writers and writing by Mary Ann Caws, Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, English, and French at the Graduate School, City University of New York; and extended catalogue entries that present new scholarship on select objects from the exhibition by modern-art scholars Jennifer R. Gross, the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Yale University Art Gallery; Patricia Leighten, Professor of Art History, and Visual Studies at Duke University; and Irene Small, Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History at the University of

### **Exhibition Support**

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### **Yale University Art Gallery**

The Yale University Art Gallery, America's oldest and one of its most important university art museums,

was founded in 1832, when patriot-artist John Trumbull donated more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then, the Gallery's collections have grown to number more than 185,000 objects, spanning the globe and ranging in date from ancient times to the present day. In addition to its celebrated collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for its important holdings of Greek and Roman art; early Italian paintings; later European art; Asian art; African art; art of the ancient Americas; and Impressionist, modern, and contemporary works.

The Gallery is set to embark on the final phase of a ten-year expansion and renovation project, scheduled for completion in 2011. This includes the renovation of the Swartwout building and Street Hall, the two historic structures adjacent to the Gallery's recently renovated Louis Kahn building.

Located at the corner of Chapel and York Streets in New Haven, Connecticut, the Gallery is open to the public free of charge: Tuesday–Saturday 10:00 AM–5:00 PM, Thursday until 8:00 PM (September–June); Sunday 1:00–6:00 PM. Closed Mondays and major holidays. For additional information, the public may visit <http://artgallery.yale.edu>, or call 203.432.0600.

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