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PICASSO

Protean Picasso: Drawings and Prints from the National Gallery of Canada & Selected Paintings from International Collections

October 15, 2005 to January 15, 2006

Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery will present the largest number of Picasso paintings ever exhibited in Vancouver in combination with Canada’s most significant collection of the artist’s works on paper. *Protean Picasso: Drawings and Prints from the National Gallery of Canada and Selected Paintings from International Collections*, an exhibition that brings together the full scope of the artist’s career through drawings, prints and paintings, opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery on October 15, 2005 and will remain on display through January 15, 2006.

Protean Picasso spans a period of nearly fifty years, from Picasso’s Blue Period of the early 1900s, through the teens and 1920s when he experimented with various aspects of cubism and classicism, to his emotionally intense works from the 1930s, which, in part, graphically portray the artist’s response to the horrifying events of the Spanish Civil War.

“Thirty years after his death, Pablo Picasso’s work continues to have an amazing potency and it is impossible to understand the development of modern art without considering his enormous achievements,” said Kathleen Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “The Gallery is very proud to present this landmark exhibition, including some of the finest examples of Picasso’s extraordinary oeuvre.”

The exhibition features a rare complete set of prints from the *Vollard Suite*. These richly detailed works reveal a mythical world ruled in part by the artist’s intellect, as seen in the classical and contemplative prints that focus on the theme of the sculptor’s studio, and in part by the artist’s body, as seen in the ferocious desire of the characters depicted in such prints as *The Battle of Love* and *The Minotaur*. Paintings such as *The Sculptor*, portraying the artist’s contemplation of a bust while standing on a tall plinth, repeat the theme of the sculptor’s studio, but in a more mythic atmosphere. The sculptor himself sits on a marble block with a red shadow pouring down the side, while his attenuated body oozes around the room.

Also included in the exhibition is *Weeping Woman*, one of a series of works the artist executed in 1937, a time when Picasso’s personal life was in upheaval. The etching, depicting a deeply tormented woman in agony, is symbolic of the impending terrors of World War II and is widely regarded to be among the artist’s most powerful images.

By contrast, the erotic *Sleeping Woman With shutters* presents a female figure resting on folded arms propped against a table in the soft

gloom of a shuttered room. The work is representative of both Picasso's intensely expressive and erotic delineation of the female figure and a favoured theme in his art: that of the sleeping woman sometimes tenderly observed by a male partner. Some prints in the *Vollard Suite* (particularly *Boy Watching over Sleeping Woman by Candlelight*, and *Satyr Unveiling a Woman*) address the theme with a sensitivity that echoes the mood of this painting.

Luncheon on the Grass represents another favoured subject throughout the 1950s and 1960s in which Picasso revisited paintings by artists of the past, in this instance, Edouard Manet. In Picasso's interpretation, the four figures of Manet's famous picture are turned into amoebas cavorting across the canvas. In the same period, Picasso turned his attentions inward with *The Artist*, one of a large number of paintings completed in 1963. Here, Picasso depicts himself at work in deep concentration, brush to canvas, while looking into the distance at the model or the landscape he is painting. Another aspect of the figure that is particularly vivid is the artist's intense gaze, his two eyeballs melded in the form of a single eye-socket like Cyclops.

"*Protean Picasso* is aptly named as a reflection of the artist's extraordinary ability to change, expand and re-invent himself," said Ian Thom, Senior Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery. "Picasso shares many characteristics with Homer's mythic shapeshifter Proteus. He assumed many forms as his personal style evolved throughout his career, but will always be remembered as the creator of the abstract style that came to be known as Cubism."

Members of the media are invited to attend the exhibition opening on Friday, October 14 at 7 p.m. *Protean Picasso: Drawings and Prints from the National Gallery of Canada* is organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada. *Selected Paintings from International Collections* is Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Picasso's Grandson Featured in International Lecture Series

The public is invited to attend the Gallery's International Lecture Series presentation *Picasso: The Real Family Story* on Thursday, October 13 at 7 p.m. at UBC Robson Square Lecture Theatre. Olivier Widmaier Picasso, Pablo Picasso's grandson and author of the best-selling biography *Picasso: The Real Family Story*, will present a candid, intimate portrait of his "very complicated" grandfather. For ticket information, call 604-662-4717.

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