

rhinoceros gallery



Press Release

PABLO PICASSO
GIOVANE DONNA, 1909

FROM THE STATE MUSEUM OF THE ERMITAGE OF ST. PETERSBURG
ON EXHIBITION IN ROME

IN THE RHINOCEROS GALLERY OF THE RHINOCEROS PALACE
DESIGNED BY ALDA FENDI AND DESIGNED BY JEAN NOUVEL
in via del Velabro 9A

Roma, 15 february 2022 – 15 may 2022

Presentation by invitation: 14 february 2022

Open to the public: 15 february 2022

After Michelangelo, *Saint Peter*, and *Saint Paul* of Greek's adolescent years, a new masterpiece from the collections of the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Peterburg in Russia is on display in Rome thanks to the cultural patronage of the Alda Fendi Foundation – Experiments. It is **Young Woman by Pablo Picasso, a cubist painting from 1909 never exhibited in Italy before.**

Starting from February 15th, 2022, the painting will be presented to the public at the *rhinoceros gallery* exhibition spaces inside the *rhinoceros* building, the cultural center overlooking the Arch of Janus and designed by Jean Nouvel, the heart of the Foundation's artistic and cultural experiments. Alda Fendi – Experiments.

Raffaele Curi, who traces the artistic line of the foundation, builds a wide experiential map around Picasso's painting with an immersive and multimedia approach, in a path capable of mixing music, dance (from the National Ballet of

rhinoceros gallery

Spain to the ballet Parade by Erik Satie) and photographic memories of the painter's life, also dedicates a focus in the exhibition to the relationship between the Spanish artist and the Italian actor Raf Vallone.

Promoted by the Alda Fendi - Experiments Foundation and the Ermitage State Museum and organized by Il Cigno GG Edizioni in collaboration with Ermitage Italia and Villaggio Globale International, the exhibition is open until May 15, with free admission. It is the new, precious piece of a multi-year collaboration between the Alda Fendi - Experiments Foundation and the famous Russian museum which, on the occasion of the two previous exhibitions dedicated to Buonarroti and El Greco, was crowned by an extraordinary success with the public.

YOUNG WOMAN BY PICASSO

Young woman, oil on canvas from 1909, belongs to the preeminent works of Pablo Picasso and is a peculiar example of the painter's research in the phase of analytical Cubism. The painting has participated in international exhibitions but has never been exhibited in Italy before, which makes the exhibition event of the Alda Fendi Foundation – Experiments, extraordinary.

Posing for Picasso is the model, his lover for almost 8 years, Fernanda Olivier. The painting openly refers to the tradition of the parlor portrait, from which however the artist departs, coming to paint the woman as the idol of an unknown and mysterious cult. Outside the canonical representation of an ideal beauty, the naked woman is seated in an armchair of complex shape and stands out against a neutral, dark and abstract background. Her eyes are closed, she seems to be sleeping or dreaming and her head is slightly tilted. There is no light source and the parts in which her body breaks down seem to light up with an internal light. The corporality described by Picasso is atypical and sculptural. The extreme simplification of the form that unravels into multiple facets is the essential component of a painting that gets rid of all secondary details, celebrating the triumph of drawing with lines that are now straight and now rounded. "The artist rejects material rigidity and palpability", written in the critical text accompanying the exhibition Olga Leontjeva, curator of French painting of the second half of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the State Hermitage Museum. "Her character becomes almost ephemeral, it dissolves in the play of the facets, of the light spots, it blends with the background".

The painting belonged to Sergej Shukin, a famous Moscow collector and merchant of works of French Modernism and was bought by him directly from the artist.

The title *Young Woman*, like that of other Picasso paintings that always belonged to Shchukin, was given by the same collector and is in keeping with the taste of his time and the prudence with which, in the milieu of the Moscow merchants of the early twentieth century, nudity was treated. Sergej Ščukin became acquainted with Picasso's art in Paris, where the painter had moved to live in 1904, frequenting the apartment of Leo and Gertrude Stein in Rue Fleurus which housed the most representative collection of the artist's works produced until then.

It was Matisse in 1908 who accompanied Ščukin to Picasso's atelier for the first time, where he could admire *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*. It took a year to overcome the initial

rhinoceros gallery

hesitation, but when the collector bought his first Cubist work, he was soon fascinated by this new painting, previously incomprehensible to him, to the point of wanting the whole series of paintings by Picasso from 1908.

On display at the *rhinoceros gallery* is a rare photograph of the room of the Ščukin palace dedicated to Pablo Picasso in 1914, in which we also see the work *Young woman*: in an environment of just twenty-five square meters with white walls and a domed ceiling, crowded fifty-one works arranged in several rows belonging to the painter's blue, pink and cubist period.

Starting in 1909 Sergei Shchukin **began to open his residence every Sunday to the Russian artistic *intelligentsia*, including young painters who would otherwise never have been able to see the landmark canvases in his collection. This vision was fundamental for the birth of the Russian avant-garde.**

Requisitioned by the state following the Revolution of 1917, all the works of the extraordinary **Ščukin** collection were nationalized and kept for over thirty years in the deposits, branded as "decadent". In 1948 a part of them were destined to the Hermitage and only in the 1950s did it finally begin to be exhibited.

The Picasso collection of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg with its thirty-eight paintings - and among these parts of the works collected by Shukin - is rightly considered one of the most important in the world for its rare completeness and extreme quality.

THE FITTING, FROM *PARADE* TO RAF VALLONE

The Hermitage painting stands out in the exhibition space of the *rhinoceros gallery*, offering itself to the gaze of visitors with an irresistible magnetic power. Raffaele Curi conceives the exhibition as a theater, in which a single protagonist dominates: he, Pablo Picasso, with his *Young woman* seated and decomposed according to the ingenious rules of his artistic invention, Cubism. The painting emerges from the black of the walls and seems illuminated by an interior and precious light. A single very strong sign, to tell Picasso in the round.

Raffaele Curi says: "Pi-cas-so the fate of a man in a surname! I was a seven-year-old child when my teacher first gave the concert sound of Pi-cas-so, an artist strongly linked to music. And his pictorial revolutions from figurative to analytic cubism follow Satie's classic quasi-jazz, Ravel's pavane, Stravinsky's golden steel. For me it has always been music: PI-CAS-SO".

The interpretation proposed by Raffaele Curi throughout the exhibition itinerary is musical, aimed at enhancing the intimate harmony of Picasso's art. The leitmotif of Curi's installation intervention is dance. It starts with an enveloping video projection of the rehearsals of the show *La Templanza* of the National Ballet of Spain, in which the audience is directly immersed in the choreography of Miguel Angel Berna, between the rhythms of castanets and lively indications given to the dancers, and we arrive at the images of *Parade*, the famous ballet in one act of 1917 by the company of Russian Ballets by Sergej Djagilev, with music by Erik Satie, subject by Jean Cocteau, choreography by

Rhinoceros gallery

Léonide Massine, program by Guillaume Apollinaire and with the artistic direction of Pablo Picasso, who designed the curtain, the sets and the costumes.

All the rooms of the *rhinoceros gallery* are contaminated by Picasso suggestions that alter the perception of the volumes. Leaving behind the vestiges of ancient Rome that surround the palace, visitors suddenly find themselves catapulted into the Paris of the early twentieth century, in front of the historic *Café de Flore* on boulevard Saint-Germain, a meeting place for artists, writers, philosophers, intellectuals. The *café* is evoked on display with a window video, like a dream in which the voices of Edith Piaf and Charles Trenet echo.

A focus in the exhibition shows the relationship between Picasso and the actor Raf Vallone, one of the few Italian characters of whom the artist was a friend, through photographs from the archive of his son Saverio Vallone. An international figure, not only an actor but also a partisan, footballer and journalist, Raf Vallone was a true intellectual with a very original profile. A photo shows him at Picasso's home in Paris. In another from 1958, taken in his dressing room, Vallone is in the company of the painter, Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Prévert, after his Parisian debut in Arthur Miller's play *A Look from the Bridge*, directed by Peter Brook, which had an audience success of as many as six hundred replicas.

Alongside the photographs of Vallone, a selection of images from the exceptional private life of Pablo Picasso: shots that see him alongside many personalities of the time, belonging to the world of art, cinema, literature, politics and who tell the story of constellation of his friendships, his loves, worldliness and intimacy.

GERTRUDE STEIN E ALDA FENDI

A red thread links the Rome of today and the Paris of the early twentieth century: the very precious one of patronage. Through the artistic experiments of her foundation, Alda Fendi, a rebellious patron in love with the Eternal City (who with this exhibition gives her fellow citizens the extraordinary opportunity to admire Pablo Picasso's *Young Woman* for the first time in Italy), promotes **a broader reflection on the role and importance of cultural patronage**. For this reason, along the exhibition path, Alda Fendi is ideally reflected in the portrait of Gertrude Stein painted by Picasso in Paris between 1905 and 1906, immediately after their first meeting, and evoked in the exhibition on the large *video wall* that welcomes visitors. With her brother Leo, the poetess and writer Gertrude Stein was the patron saint of artists and in their studio in Montparnasse, a veritable cultural cenacle among the liveliest of her time, one of the first admirable collections of cubist art in history found its place: not only Picasso, but also Matisse and Derain.

Alda Fendi declares: "Gertrude Stein with her welcoming gesture chooses Picasso's talent, she is his muse and sometimes adviser, and perhaps the favorite among the numerous women loved by the painter. Strength of patronage and merciless law of talent, so sparkling with forgiveness and folly. Picasso, Stein's diamond, gives, through her, the radiation that only genius can give, denying himself to the world".

A love, that of Alda Fendi for Paris, which becomes a novel, more and more compelling to the extent that her apartment in the French capital, where she loves to stay during her travels across the Alps, is the one in rue Bonaparte 42 that belonged to Sartre.

rhinoceros gallery

In a continuous game of reflections, if Alda Fendi (awarded the *Legion of Honour* by President Macron) imagines herself French and plays the role of Stein, in the same way Pablo Picasso temporarily takes up residence in Rome in the *rhinoceros gallery*.

Alessia Caruso Fendi, director of the gallery, underlines the importance of the third appointment with the Hermitage. "The *rhinoceros gallery* is unique: a space that presents works by artists, cultural evocations, conceptual junctions rendered through digital transformations, musical inspirations. It is a container of artistic inspiration with multiple faces ". And, in this sense, the exhibition of another masterpiece, after Michelangelo and El Greco, from the prestigious Russian museum institution once again enhances the extreme versatility of this place of culture that is not only Capitoline, but open to the world.

INFORMATION:

rhinoceros gallery

Address: Roma, via del Velabro 9A

The exhibition is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 11.00 to 24.00.

Free entry. Reservations are required rhinocerosroma.com

For information:

(+39) 340.6430435

gallery@rhinocerosroma.com