



Picasso on the Riviera

Picasso spent time in various towns like Antibes, Vallauris, and Mougins, and even became an honorary citizen of Antibes. His time in the South of France was a period of great artistic production, particularly in Vallauris, where he explored ceramics. He was inspired by the light, landscapes, and culture of the Côte d'Azur, and his works reflected this influence.

First Trip to the Riviera

Pablo Picasso visited the Riviera in 1923 with his Russian wife, Olga, and Gerald and Sara Murphy, wealthy American expatriates who, like many of the “Lost Generation,” had flocked to Paris in the 1920s. It was the Murphys who persuaded the owners of the *Hotel du Cap* to open their doors year-round, thus changing the Côte d’Azur from a winter to an all-season destination. They and the Picassos, along with other artists and writers such as Marc Chagall, Jean Cocteau, Henri Matisse, Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein, found the tranquil waters, lucid light, rugged coastal cliffs, and charming small towns in this French province impossible to resist. Many bought homes and set up studios.



Antibes, 1946



In 1946, after the end of the Second World War, Picasso moved from Paris to Antibes with his new lover and muse Francoise Gilot. This period proved to be one of the happiest in his life, and it can be clearly seen in the art that he created.

The museum is housed in the Grimaldi Castle, which at the time was the Antibes Museum. Picasso didn't have a studio and was looking for somewhere to paint. He met the museum curator, who suggested that he could use part of the castle as his workshop.

He spent five months here and produced over sixty new works, including paintings, ceramics, drawings, and sculptures. What is unique about these works is that they have never left the castle, meaning that they are also less widely known than many of his other works. There is something very special about seeing the art in the rooms in which it was created.



La Joie de Vivre, 1946
oil on fiberboard panel
42 x 98in

At the end of World War II, rejuvenated by a new love affair, Picasso returned to the French Riviera. After depicting the dark tragedy of Guernica, his palette explodes in a firework of colors, happiness, and hope.

It refers to the story of Antipolis (the Greek name for Antibes) and is also a homage to Gilot, his muse of the time. *La Joie de Vivre* hangs on the second floor of the museum, in the space that became Picasso's studio.



La Joie de Vivre (Cont.) and Matisse's Bonheur de Vivre

This joyous work, itself an homage to Matisse's own 'Joy of Life', was painted in 1906. Picasso's work can be read as a celebration of peace, and is much more overtly mythological than Matisse's account, with its pipe-playing fauns and dancing creatures.

Here is a photo of Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre* (Joy of Life). This work is also quite large (6 x 8 feet).

In the Studio with *La Joie de Vivre*

Picasso and Jaume Sabates ((Picasso's personal secretary)

Francoise Gilot in the studio

Photos by Polish sculptor Michel Sima



Vallauris and Ceramics



Picasso moved to Vallauris in 1947 and became interested in the production of ceramics. In 1946, Picasso and Françoise Gilot ventured to the Annual Pottery Exhibition in Vallauris, where Gilot introduced Picasso to Suzanne and George Ramie, owners of the Madoura Ceramic Workshop. Upon meeting the famed artist, the couple gifted their resources to him completely. While living in Vallauris, Picasso produced over 4,000 ceramic pieces, each with over 100 editions. Suddenly, people all over the world were able to afford his work. The Madoura workshop shipped thousands of Picasso ceramics internationally.



La Guerre et la Paix

In 1952, in his studio at Fournas in Vallauris, Picasso created two very large painted panels: *La Guerre et la Paix* (*War and Peace*). Dealing with a subject directly linked to the post-war period and the numerous international calls for peace throughout the world, this work retains an undeniably allegorical dimension. Much like Guernica, this creation represents Picasso's manifesto for peace, an end to war, regimes, and dictatorships in the world. Preceded by some 300 preparatory drawings made over the previous months, the work required numerous hardboard panels, which were erected vertically on a specially designed wooden structure inside an abandoned 12th century chapel in the Vallauris Castle. The back wall of the chapel bears the work called *The Four Parts of the World*.

The panels were installed in 1954, donated to the State in 1956 (but remain *in situ*), and officially inaugurated in 1959.

Picasso in Mougins

While working on ceramics in Vallauris, Picasso met and fell in love with his second wife, Jacqueline Roque, who was 46 years his junior (although he had many lovers and partners, he was only married to Olga and Jacqueline).

Picasso had originally wanted to settle at Vauvenargues, but as he was nearing his 80s and needed to see his doctors based in Cannes, he began searching for a new home closer to the city. Eventually, he found a beautiful 35-room property on a hillside above Mougins, called *Notre Dame de Vie*. He lived at *Notre Dame de Vie* for his last 12 years.

Although Jacqueline Roque was, by all accounts, not the easiest of women to be with (she later prevented two of his children from attending his funeral), there is no doubt that she loved Picasso. She later shot and killed herself, unable to cope with the loneliness of life without Picasso.



Picasso's Late Paintings, created in Mougins

Picasso produced over 400 drawings and paintings of Jacqueline during their 20 years together. He also produced 70 portraits in one year alone, more than he had produced from any of his previous relationships.

Picasso's time in Mougins coincided with the height of his fame and wealth. Although his productivity slowed, this period coincided with some important artworks from his 'later period'.

Among the famous pieces of work produced during his time in Mougins were The Dance of Youth, 1961; Nu assis dans un fauteuil, 1963; The Chicago Picasso, 1967; and Femme nue au collier, 1968 (pictured left), a painting of Jacqueline Roque.



Sources

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