



Fig. 1
Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)
Studio with Plaster Head
 Juan-les-Pins, summer 1925
 Oil on canvas, 97.9 × 131.1 cm
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Picasso Memory and Desire explores the connection between images, the development of the modern subject, and the superimposition of different times in history during years of profound social and cultural transformation.

In the 1920s and 1930s, European society lived with supremacist colonialism, extreme nationalism, the threat of war and constant economic crises. Yet people courageously manifested their own aspirations for emancipation, and a liberating change in mentality developed.

Despite repression from authoritarian regimes, modern art broadly expanded through different social strata. The creative environment became wholly permeated by Surrealism. A new perspective grew towards the inner self and the 'other'. Everything became permeated by a profound dialectic between permanence and change. Desire, as an unbreakable will to live, was in relentless conversation with memory, experienced as a space of certainties in need of redefinition.

Picasso painted *Studio with Plaster Head* [fig. 1] in 1925. In the painting, he pays tribute to the arts; alludes to his father figure, who was a professor of drawing; and also refers to aspects of the academic system. The Classical plaster bust is situated within the present and shatters into doubled contours,



Fig. 2
Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978)
The Nostalgia of the Poet
 1914
 Oil and charcoal on canvas, 89.7 × 40.7 cm
 Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice
 (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York)

casting a mysterious, disturbing shadow. This, for Picasso, is the space of Memory.

The bust or head passed down from Antiquity, and the doubled faces and shadow, all became recurring elements in Picasso's iconography. With them, he could depict the experience of multiple temporality, the vicissitudes of the fragmented subject, and those aspects of inner personality that resist acknowledgement or socialisation.

Picasso metamorphosed the bust, the shadow of the profile, and the divided face through eroticism and sensuality, the encounter with monstrosity, the poetry of the telluric, and the pull of his vernacular culture. This was, for him, the space of Desire. Desire, as the capturing of the flow of life and a continual re-elaborating of the artist's imagery.

The dialectic between memory and desire also shaped the work of other artists. Giorgio de Chirico [fig. 2] anticipated the use of the bust from antiquity and the shadow to express the controversy between modernity and Classical culture. Fernand Léger used the two images to reconcile cultural heritage, scientific progress and the longing for social equality. René Magritte [fig. 3] approached the plaster bust or head as an enigma with traumatic associations.

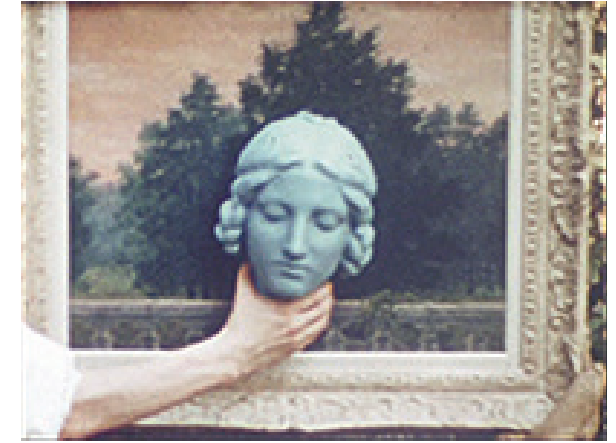


Fig. 3
René Magritte (1898–1967)
Jacques Wergifosse
 June–September 1957
 Silent colour film. 3 min 33 s
 Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium
 Archives of Belgian Art Letters and Documents, Brussels

In 1926, Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca [fig. 4] reinterpreted the different elements in *Studio with Plaster Head*. This became another of the seeds of *Picasso Memory and Desire*. Dalí turned the bust into a severed head and a self portrait, and it became the cornerstone of his paranoiac-critical method. García Lorca used the shadow and divided faces to speak of frustrated love.

Jean Cocteau used the same images in his portrayal of the myth of Orpheus. Man Ray explored the bust as a mirror between reality and its double. Brassäi and Dora Maar rediscovered the bust in the experience of the wonder of the commonplace. Eileen Agar questioned gender roles in art. Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore anticipated transgender thinking. Carl Van Vechten situated the shadow and Classical head in the contexts of the Harlem Renaissance and the *vague nègre*.

Some Spanish members of the 'Arte Nuevo' ('New Art') movement also saw the relationship between memory and desire as a key to the modern artistic consciousness.

In this network of resonances, self-portrayal was also a basis for questioning the true nature of the subject. Some artists linked the modern image with the acceptance and portrayal of otherness. Picasso used the nude as a metaphor for living, creative truth.

This exhibition, which features 111 pieces in different materials and media, is presented as a unified space divided into two exhibition areas, two multimedia tables and an installation. Three consecutive walls are dedicated to the evolution of Picasso's work. The next wall explores the relationship between modernity and its alter ego through the works of Giorgio de Chirico and Fernand Léger. Next, we trace the dialogue in modern art between memory and desire in the works of Jean Cocteau, Man Ray, René Magritte, Jean Metzinger and Felice Casorati. Following that, the 'psychomachia' of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca enter into conversation with works by Picasso, Juan Gris and Jean Cocteau. The itinerary concludes with works by Gregorio Prieto and José Moreno Villa, who were two of the artists to address the dialectic between memory and desire in their 'New Art'.

Lastly, a specific installation groups seminal works by Picasso with Honoré de Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece* and the artist's suite of etchings printed in the 1931 edition by Ambroise Vollard. The two themes were entwined for posterity in Picasso's *Sketchbook 31*. In the same space, Jean Cocteau's film *The Blood of a Poet* is on view. Its content bears a close relationship to *The Unknown Masterpiece*, and also to the grounding principles of *Picasso Memory and Desire*.



Fig. 4
Salvador Dalí (1904–1967)
Still Life by Mauve Moonlight
 1926
 Oil on canvas, 148 × 199 cm
 Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres

For further information about the exhibition, guided tours, hours, cultural and educational programme, please visit our website: www.museopicassomalaga.org



Listen to the Museo Picasso Málaga channels on Spotify, Ivoox and Apple Podcasts



Cover:
Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)
Studio with Plaster Head
 Juan-les-Pins, summer 1925
 Oil on canvas, 97.9 × 131.1 cm
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

© Of the images: © Digital archive The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence / © Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Photo: David Heald / Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium - Archives of Belgian Art Letters and Documents, Brussels / © Image: FotoGasull/Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

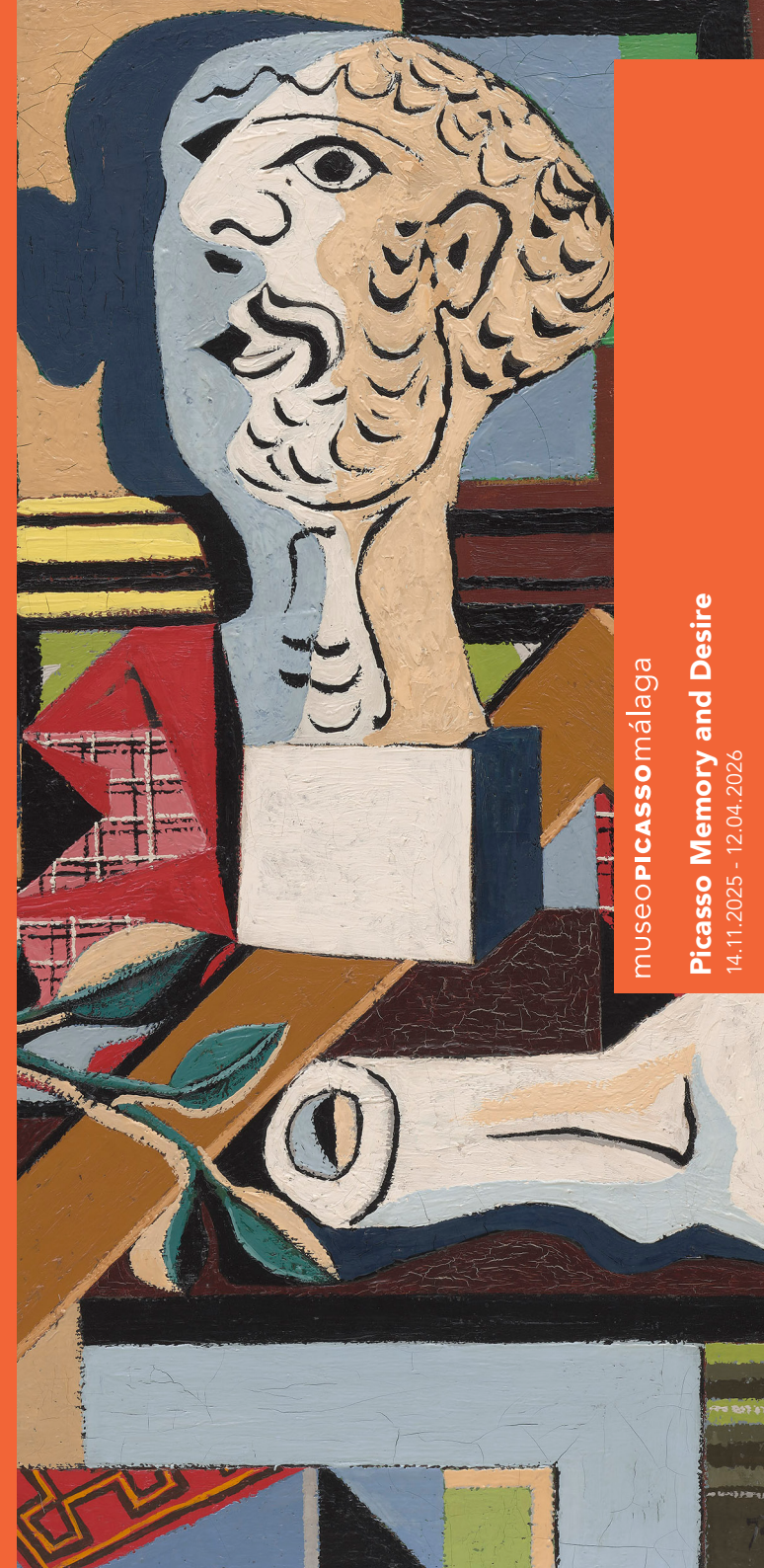
© Succession Pablo Picasso, VEGAP, Madrid, 2025 / © Giorgio de Chirico, VEGAP, Málaga, 2025 / © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, VEGAP, Málaga, 2025 / © René Magritte, VEGAP, Madrid, 2025

Palacio de Buenavista
 C/ San Agustín, 8. 29015 Málaga
 Switchboard: (34) 952 12 76 00
info@mpicassom.org
www.museopicassomalaga.org
[#PicassoMemoriayDeseoMPM](https://www.instagram.com/PicassoMemoriayDeseoMPM)

museoPICASSO**málaga**



SPONSORED BY:



museo**PICASSO**málaga
Picasso Memory and Desire
 14.11.2025 - 12.04.2026