

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

PICASSO AT MOMA

Collection of sculptures makes for an exhibit that's not to be missed

By Karen Campbell
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NEW YORK — As self-taught art lovers, my husband and I always make time for gallery and museum visits during jaunts to New York City, and the Museum of Modern Art is a perennial favorite. We hit the mother lode with our most recent trip. MoMA's new "Picasso Sculpture" (through Feb. 7) is not just a casual encounter with great art but a total revelation, in and of itself well worth a pilgrimage to the Big Apple.

The largest US museum exhibition of Picasso's sculptures in half a century, the exhibit fills MoMA's entire fourth floor — 10 sections — with 140 of the artist's three-dimensional works. Many are being shown in the United States for the first time, with 50 sculptures on loan directly from the Musée national Picasso-Paris, whose curator Virginie Perdrisot helped organize the show with MoMA curators Ann Temkin and Anne Umland. Featuring works created between 1902 (when Picasso crafted his very first sculpture at age 20) to 1964, the exhibit spans nearly the entirety of the Spanish artist's career. It showcases a remarkable spectrum of stylistic invention and improvisation involving unconventional techniques and materials, from traditional media, such as ceramic, wood, and bronze, to flamboyant assemblages from scavenged objects — cardboard, children's toys, metal pieces. There are portraits of friends and lovers, still life creations, animals, and eye-popping hybrid figures.

Picasso (1881-1973) was trained as a painter and didn't formally study sculpture, which gave him freedom from the confines of traditional expectations and seemed to inspire a deep pleasure in unfettered experimentation. He sculpted episodically and kept most of his works in his private collection, populating his houses and studios like old friends. Though far less exposed than his paintings, Picasso's sculptures were tremendously influential to the development of art throughout the 20th century.

MoMA offers an audio tour that places many of the works in context. However, we were more interested in simply diving in, wandering slowly from room to room, pausing to revel in the works that caught our eyes and fired our imaginations. Each gallery focuses on a specific era of Picasso's artistic life, and in each, we saw people circling around and around the works, bending down and stretching up on tip toe to catch subtle, intricate details and fanciful elements.

The exhibit highlights Picasso's innovative spirit, ranging from stark power to charming whimsy. "Head of a Woman" (1909) vividly

shows in three dimensions the fractured planes and jutting crags that typify Picasso's Cubist paintings. The monumental figures from the early 1930s, when Picasso lived in the Château de Boisgeloup outside Paris, suggest the artist's fascination with combining male and female qualities. The chilling "Death's Head" (1941) reflects the grim period of World War II — Picasso was one of the few Nazi-designated "degenerate" artists to continue working in Paris during the occupation. We were especially taken with sculptures from the late '40s and '50s, most created in the town of Vallauris, where Picasso bought an abandoned perfume factory. Works like "Baboon and Young" (1951), with a toy car as the monkey's head, and "She-Goat" (1950), with its wicker ribs and udders of ceramic vessels, are both expertly crafted and accessible.

The vast scope of materials, content, and technique on display in "Picasso Sculpture" make it a compelling exhibit for kids as well as sophisticated art lovers. But plan ahead. Timed tickets are required, and only a limited number are available for same-day visits. Don't miss this one!

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Picasso's
"Vase:
Woman."

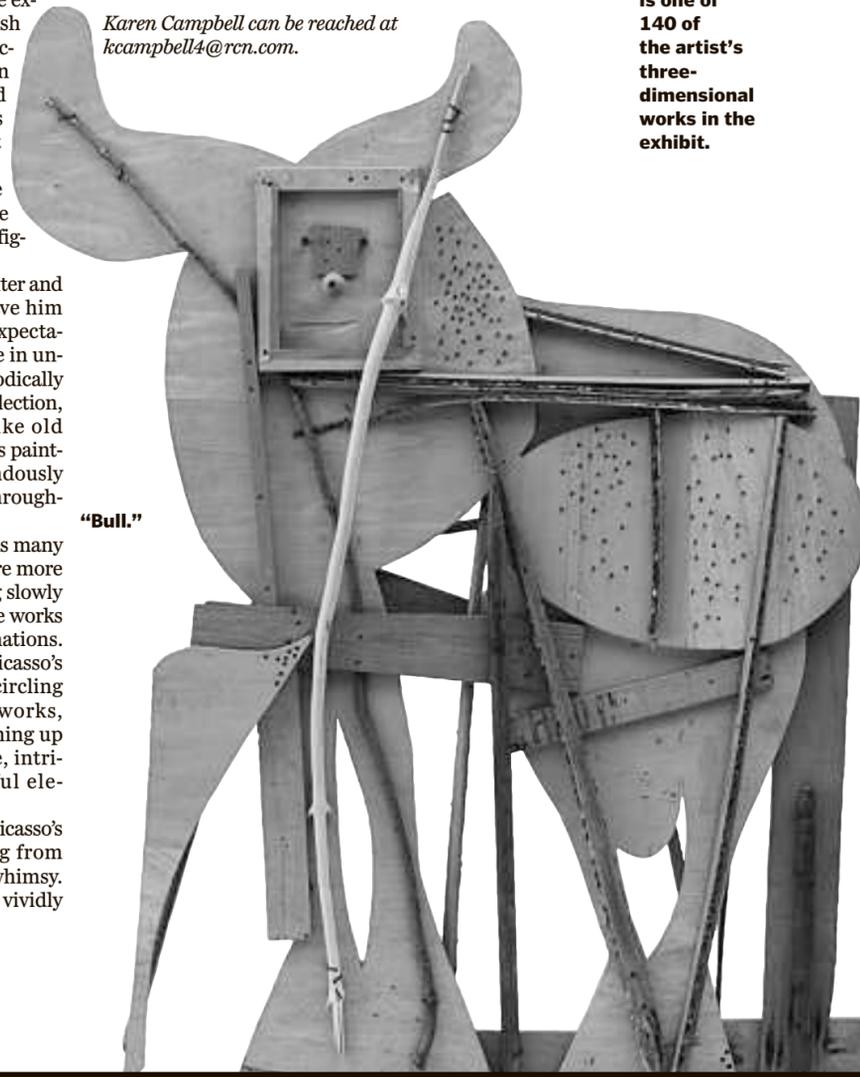


"Glass of Absinthe" is one of 140 of the artist's three-dimensional works in the exhibit.

"Chair."



"Bull."



HERE

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THERE

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EVERYWHERE

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