

## **Picasso: new exhibition gives insight into his pioneering sculpture techniques**

*Club members enjoyed a visit to the Museum Beelden aan Zee, Scheveningen, to view sculptures and ceramics by Pablo Picasso. MOIRA HOLDEN reports.*

Picasso had reached the height of his fame in the mid 1940s, but he was still striving for innovative ways to progress as an artist. He moved to the south coast of France to begin a new professional phase and the stunning results of it are now on display at the Dutch coastal museum of Sculptures by the Sea. The Malaga-born painter's foray into the world of sculpture and ceramics began with a chance meeting on the beach with the owners of a pottery factory in the village of Vallauris, near Antibes, on the Mediterranean coast. This friendship with Suzanne Douly and Georges Raine was to prove crucial to a new development in his work. 'In his life, he was always looking for new directions and new ways of doing things,' says Lyke Burger, guide at the Museum Beelden aan Zee. 'Every time there was a great change in his life it was seen in his work.'

The pottery factory owners offered Picasso a workshop and it was here that he embarked on the next stage of his life and his career. He was already 65 by this time and lived here with Francoise Gilot – their son, Claude, was born in 1947, and daughter, Paloma, two years later. Picasso was drawn to the pinky-red clay of the region. 'It became a new inspiration,' says Burger. 'Ceramics interested him and he was attracted by the great simplicity of the clay.' He had complained about the transience of paint, so the durability of ceramics appealed to him. At first, he chose the conventional shape of a vase as a starting point and imposed 'flat' images around the vase.

He was a fan of bull-fighting, so many of his designs included bulls, picadors and bull fighters. Several of the artworks on show today at the museum are a homage to his enthusiasm for the pastime. Other themes include women, animals and birds. When he was at work, a small, injured owl flew into his workshop; the little bird was nursed back to health by Picasso, became a pet and featured heavily in his work.

Today's display has been gathered from both private and museum collections in Europe. Many art experts feel Picasso's legacy of sculptures and ceramics have been overlooked in comparison to his paintings. 'Picasso was one of the first people to think of gathering objects and to use unusual materials and waste in his artwork,' says Burger. The most striking sculpture in the museum is La Chevre (The Goat) and is evidence of his newfound idea of utilising objets trouvés.

The 1950 sculpture is based on Esmeralda, a goat owned by Picasso. He uses bronze and many other inventive materials to create the astonishing likeness of the creature. The udders are made from milk cans, the structure of the back includes a palm leaf and a wicker basket is also used in the construction. He was not afraid to replace the traditional sculpting materials of stone and wood with tin, iron and found objects.

Picasso's new artistic venture spilled over into his private life when he met Jacqueline Roque at the pottery - Francoise soon left with the children. Picasso married the woman who was 40 years younger than him and she stayed with him until his death in 1973 at the age of 91.

Many of the exhibits in the museum are being shown in the Netherlands for the first time. Picasso was no stranger to the region and had previously stayed in North Holland in June and July of 1905. October saw the 125th anniversary of the great painter's birth. The huge interest in his work displayed at Scheveningen is a testament to his continuing appeal today.