



A Life of Picasso: The Triumphant Years, 1917-1932

By John Richardson



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Now in paperback: the third volume of John Richardson's magisterial *Life of Picasso*.

Here is Picasso at the height of his powers in Rome and Naples, producing the sets and costumes with Cocteau for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and visiting Pompei where the antique statuary fuel his obsession with classicism; in Paris, creating some of his most important sculpture and painting as part of a group that included Braque, Apollinaire, Miró, and Breton; spending summers in the South of France in the company of Gerald and Sara Murphy, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald. These are the years of his marriage to the Russian ballerina Olga Khokhlova—the mother of his only legitimate child, Paulo—and of his passionate affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter, who was, as well, his model and muse.

A groundbreaking contribution to our understanding of one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century.

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- Rank: #402618 in Books
- Published on: 2010-10-12
- Released on: 2010-10-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.99" h x 1.74" w x 7.19" l, 2.52 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 608 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This third volume in Richardson's magisterial biography takes us through Picasso's middle years, as he establishes his mastery over craft, other artists and the women in his life. The story begins the year Picasso falls in love with Olga Kokhlova, a Russian dancer he met while working on the avant-garde ballet *Parade* for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. By the end of the volume, Olga—his first wife—becomes the victim of some of Picasso's most harrowing images. The book elaborates on the details of Picasso's inspirations, with Richardson providing a balance of fact, salacious detail and art-historical critique. He is particularly skilled at evoking the humor and sexuality that imbues Picasso's portraits of Marie-Thérèse, who became his mistress when he was 45 and she 17: As for the figure's amazing legs: the secret of their monumentality had escaped me until Courbet's great view of Etretat gave him a clue: Picasso has used the rock arches of Etretat... to magnify the scale of the bather's legs and breasts.... The artist's entire circle is also here, from Georges Braque to Henri Matisse, from André Breton to Ernest Hemingway. They are jealous collaborators, competitive geniuses, excessive bohemians, dear friends, frustrated homosexuals—while a handful of women come across as essential yet entirely replaceable. 48 pages of color illus., 275 illus. in text. 60,000 first printing. (Nov. 9)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

"My work is like a diary," Picasso often said, and Richardson demonstrates the truth of this in the third installment of his biography. He rejoins Picasso after his Cubist stage, when Picasso is designing costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and entering a primarily neoclassical period. The volume covers the years of his marriage to the Russian ballerina Olga Khokhlova, the mother of his only legitimate child, Paulo, and describes their lavishly bourgeois life style in Paris and their summers in the South of France. The most striking aspect of this surefooted account is the link that Richardson shows between the women in Picasso's life and the direction of his art. We witness the classic representations of his newlywed wife evolve, by the end of the marriage, into bifurcated demonic images; simultaneously, the entry of a teen-age mistress unleashes Picasso's sexuality, which infuses all his future work.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

John Richardson was introduced to Picasso in the 1950s, and that firsthand knowledge of the man and his work buttresses the third volume of this monumental study. Richardson exhibits not only a stunning grasp of the artist's profession, including the iconography, languages, and influences, but also an understanding of how Picasso's private life informed his art. The result is a rare balance of first-rate art criticism and a primer on the energy and chaos that define the modern. Michael Dirda compares the author's vision to the more academic work of E. H. Gombrich and Kenneth Clark, concluding that, in a good way, "Richardson's tell-all biography reads something like a high-brow gossip column." Stay tuned for the fourth, and final, volume.
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