

Introduction

Picasso's return after the Second World War to the south of France, where he had spent numerous summers since 1919, signalled important changes both in his life – he would eventually give up Paris for the Midi – and, significantly, in his artistic preoccupations and activities, in which he embraced Mediterranean tradition and explored it with a wide range of media. As a native of Málaga, he felt a strong identification with the ancient traditions associated with the Mediterranean, and his decision to spend more and more time on its shores meant that his work became ever more imbued with the spirit of the place. His visit to the Madoura pottery in Vallauris in 1946 piqued his curiosity about the possibility of taking up ceramics, and the invitation by owners Suzanne and Georges Ramié to collaborate with them and their craftsmen at Madoura led to a whole new range of experimentation in Picasso's art of his last years.¹ When he returned from Paris to work at the pottery the following year, he embarked on what would become a deep fascination with one of man's oldest artistic expressions – an art that drew on the earth itself, water and fire for its realisation.

In the first months (autumn-winter 1947–48) that Picasso worked in earnest at Madoura, he tried his hand at realising some of his own designs, collaborating with the master thrower Jules Agard. At the same time, he studied the properties of ceramic materials, including slips, oxides and glazes, and he entered fully into his experiments by working on the different plates, bowls and jugs that were in regular production at the factory. Suzanne Ramié also provided him

¹ The name of the Madoura pottery is a combination of the first letters of *Maison*, Douly (Suzanne's maiden name) and Ramié.



1.
Edward Quinn
Picasso at work at Madoura,
with Suzanne Ramié in the background
23 March 1953
silver gelatin photographic print

with some of her own designs, which were based on ancient or traditional forms. Her advanced studies at the Musée de Céramique at Sèvres had acquainted her with the great traditions of ceramics, and she was especially interested in reviving some of the most ancient shapes that she had studied, especially those from Cyprus.

All of the ceramics produced at Madoura were low-fired earthenware, and, in the beginning, there was a wood-fired ‘Roman’ kiln, although electric kilns later replaced this.² The village itself had been a centre of ceramic production since Roman times – the name Vallauris derives from ‘valley of gold’, because of the local pinkish-red clay – and up until the early twentieth century there had been a lively trade and export of local ware from nearby Golfe-Juan. A few of the factories still produced traditional cooking vessels, known as *pignates*, but most of these enterprises had been abandoned in the early twentieth century when metals (and later plastics) replaced the demand for ordinary ceramics. When in the late 1930s the Ramiés took over one of the old factories and established Madoura, they hoped not only to revive the flagging industry but also to produce art pottery and studio ceramics, for which finer clay was also imported from other regions. The arrival of Picasso on the scene could not have been more propitious.

In return for the use of the materials and facilities of the pottery, Picasso agreed that they could produce replicas of his designs in limited editions. Artists and craftsmen, led by

² The kilns at Madoura are fully described in Jean Ramié’s posthumous ‘Précis technique’, *Picasso. Céramiste à Vallauris. Pièces uniques* [exh. cat.]. Vallauris, Musée Magnelli/Musée de la Céramique, 2004, pp. 61–7.



2.
Edward Quinn
Picasso with Georges Ramié at Madoura
1953
silver gelatin photographic print

Suzanne Ramié, made copies of Picasso's prototypes, which were sold as *Éditions Picasso*. Some of the editions were made from plaster matrices carved by the artist, and these were issued as *empreintes originales* (see p. 99). However, Picasso made very many individual pieces that were never intended or used for editions, and the works in the Jacqueline Picasso donation to the Museu Picasso are all unique pieces.

Picasso was so enthusiastic about working in ceramics that in 1949 he acquired the villa La Galloise in Vallauris, where each year he spent much of his time. He could walk to the pottery, where he worked on the numerous objects available to him as they came off the wheel or from moulds. We can get an idea from the dates on his ceramics of the great commitment of time and energy he spent there, producing hundreds of pieces in a relatively short period.³ He was intrigued by ceramic techniques and processes, especially the unpredictable nature of the firing process and the idea that the colours of what appeared as grey slips or glazes during the decoration phase only revealed themselves in the kiln. While some pieces cracked or broke during the firing, including a number of his own designs, he did not necessarily discard them; instead, he embraced the aspect of chance in his work.

3 In October 1947 he spent at least 20 days at Madoura, and a further 12 days in January 1948. The first account of his work in ceramics, in *Cahiers d'art* in spring 1948, illustrates some 450 individual pieces, as well as others stacked in the warehouse.

In 1952 Picasso met the young Jacqueline Roque Hutin at Madoura, and over the course of almost two decades she would become his constant companion, principal muse and model. In some respects, pottery remained at the heart of their relationship: they first met at Madoura, and Picasso's activity in ceramics continued throughout the time they were together. Jacqueline had recently moved to the Côte d'Azur with her young daughter Cathy, and they lived in the holiday apartment called Le Ziquet, which Jacqueline and her first husband had acquired earlier, located on the Chemin des Eucalyptus, not far from Vallauris. She enjoyed visiting Madoura and would go from time to time to buy ashtrays and other small objects. On those occasions, she became friendly with the Ramiés' daughter-in-law, Huguette, who worked as a salesgirl at the pottery and was married to Georges's son (from a previous marriage), Jean.⁴ Huguette Ramié has recalled that when she was pregnant with her third child in 1952, Jacqueline had come by Madoura and asked her who would fill her job after the baby was born.⁵ Huguette approached Suzanne Ramié and suggested that Jacqueline would make a perfect replacement: she was 'très intelligente, très musicienne' and she spoke Spanish as well as French. Although Suzanne usually employed no one out of season, she found Jacqueline charming and attractive and took her on as a *vendeuse* once Huguette had left.

Over that winter, Picasso courted Jacqueline, and their relationship blossomed. The first photograph of them together (fig. 3, p. 38) was taken in December 1953 in the courtyard at Madoura,⁶ with Georges and Suzanne Ramié and others from Madoura surrounding the couple. They moved in together in Paris during the winter of 1954–55. On their return the following spring they looked for a permanent home, and in June 1955 settled in the villa La Californie in Cannes. Their lives would now be centred in the south of France, where Picasso would also acquire the Château de Vauvenargues near Aix-en-Provence in 1959. His art over the last twenty years of his life would reflect their happiness and, especially, her devotion to him. They married in 1961, the year in which they moved to their final home and studio, Notre-Dame-de-Vie in Mougins, once again not far from the pottery at Vallauris.

4 In Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964, p. 358, it is mistakenly stated that Jacqueline was Suzanne Ramié's cousin; Huguette Ramié was Suzanne's niece, which may account for the confusion.

5 Conversation with Huguette Ramié, Vallauris, 12 May 2012.

6 See Markus Müller, 'Interview mit André Villers', *Pablo Picasso und Jacqueline: Vorletzte Gedanken* [exh. cat.]. Bielefeld, Kerber, 2005, pp. 90–1.



3.
André Villers
Picasso and Jacqueline with the Ramiés
and Madoura craftsmen
December 1953
silver gelatin photographic print

Jacqueline's presence in Picasso's life is reflected in his work in all media, including ceramics, in which plates or tiles were often transformed into her face or head (figs. 5 and 7). At La Californie Picasso set up sculpture, painting and print studios, and he also worked on pottery in the kitchen. Jean Ramié would deliver pieces from Madoura by car for the artist to decorate, a practice he continued after they moved to Mougins, and, on other occasions, Picasso would order commercially produced tiles for decoration (many of these appear in photographs of the studios in La Californie). Jacqueline was thus an ever-present witness to all his creative undertakings, and she served as his inspiration up until the end of his life. Over the years he gave Jacqueline many drawings and paintings that he dedicated to her (fig. 9), and he also made her gifts of ceramics. The artist never threw anything out, and, according to Huguette Ramié, he kept many ceramics that had cracked or were deformed in the kiln, and some of these made their way into Jacqueline's collection.

After Picasso's death in 1973, which was followed by the deaths of both Suzanne and Georges Ramié (in 1974 and 1976), Jacqueline kept in touch with one of the craftsmen, Dominique Sassi, who over the years had assisted Picasso at Madoura.⁷ Sassi was responsible for organising at least three

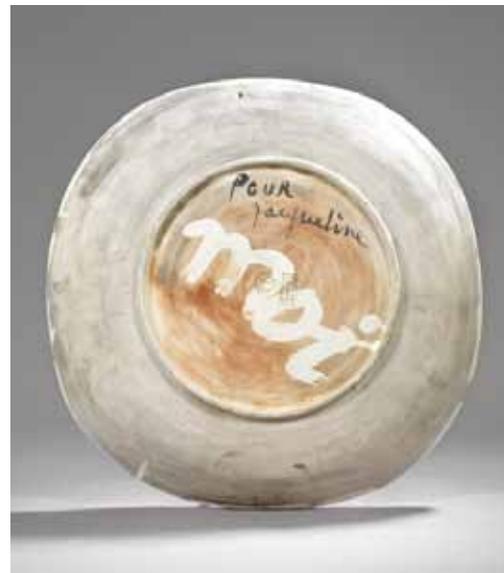
⁷ Suzanne Ramié had originally hired Sassi, who had studied at the lycée in Cannes, where she was an examiner.



4.
Head of Jacqueline
 22 January 1956
 round/square dish, 41 × 41 cm
empreinte originale: white
 earthenware
 Private Collection

5, 6.
Head of Jacqueline (recto and verso)
 22 January 1956
 round/square dish, 41 × 41 cm
empreinte originale: white
 earthenware, decorated with
 coloured slips, glazed
 verso: inscribed by Picasso *pour*
Jacqueline moi
 Private Collection

7, 8.
Head of Jacqueline (recto and verso)
 22 January and 18 September 1956
 round/square dish, 41 × 41 cm
empreinte originale: white
 earthenware, decorated with
 coloured slips, glazed
 verso: dated and inscribed by
 Picasso 18.9.56. *pour Jacqueline*
 Private Collection



exhibitions of ceramics from her collection, including the 1981 show at Balingen, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of Picasso's birth. The whole of this show travelled to Barcelona (1982) and constitutes her donation. In this instance, Sassi and Jacqueline worked together on the selection of the Balingen exhibition and collaborated on the catalogue. Sassi later presented a different group of works from Jacqueline's collection at the Atelier Sassi-Milici in Vallauris in 1986 and a further selection in 1990.

The choice of works that Sassi and Jacqueline made together for the 1981 Balingen show not only reflects her taste in ceramics but to a large extent Picasso's own preferences for certain effects, including the dull and 'dirty' appearance of patinas. Sassi recalls that Jacqueline would bring out individual pieces that she chose from a large room full of ceramics and ask him to give his opinion on each one: 'She had very good taste. She had a huge admiration for pieces that were very plain and natural, not glazed too much. She didn't much like glazes. And [in the Balingen exhibition] the natural quality of the pieces was evident.'⁸

Jacqueline's relationships with Picasso's Catalan friends, as discussed elsewhere by Margarida Cortadella (see pp. 17-33), led to her decision to give the contents of the Balingen show to the city where Picasso had launched his artistic career. The publisher Gustau Gili and especially his wife Anna Maria, who had visited Picasso and Jacqueline on various occasions at Notre-Dame-de-Vie, had stayed close to Jacqueline, and it was at their urging that an invitation to show ceramics from her own collection was extended to Jacqueline by the Mayor of Barcelona. Her decision to make the donation of these works to the city was, according to Sassi, a further reflection of the personal importance that ceramics had for Jacqueline. The value that ceramics had for Picasso himself was tied to his delight at living once more by the sea that surrounded the classical world. It provided him with a way to reaffirm his identification with the most ancient of artistic traditions: the earth itself provided the material, and the mythological notion of transformation was at the root of his activity as an artist. As H el ene Parmelin recalled at the time she and her husband were living above Picasso's studio Le Fournas in Vallauris,

I began to understand the hold pottery had on Picasso; the frenzy it induced in him to work, by taking him away from canvas, only to lead

8 Interview with Dominique Sassi, Antibes, 10 July 2012.



9.
*Jacqueline seated
in an armchair*
26, 27, 28 February
- 1 March 1964
oil on canvas
194.7 × 130 cm
inscribed on upper left
corner: *Pour Jacqueline*
Private collection

him back to it; the pleasure he derived from changing materials, and the joy of painting by handfuls, as it were. For painting is everywhere, even in sculpture, above all in sculpture. And the kiln, which produced supplementary emotions either by destroying everything or embellishing everything, which changed the colours, and dared to cook painting.⁹

The fact that the oldest ceramic painting is still as fresh now as it was when the Greeks were employing red and black slips on their vases and plates, and the traces of the makers of the most ancient of pots can still be found in fingerprints baked into the clay, meant much to Picasso. By working in ceramics himself, he could establish a direct connection with the past – in many ways for his art as a whole. Jacqueline Picasso's gift of Picasso ceramics to Barcelona will ensure that these pieces have a life in the future, to be understood and appreciated in the context that she envisioned.

⁹ Hélène Parmelin, *Picasso Plain* [trans. Humphrey Hare]. London, Secker & Warburg, 1963, p. 48. Parmelin is writing about the winter 1953–54.



10.
Edward Quinn
Picasso with Jacqueline wearing
a ceramic necklace
1 May 1957
silver gelatin photographic print