

“I have the impression that time is passing me by faster and faster. I’m like a river rolling along and carrying trees with it that grew too close to its banks, or dead calves someone threw in, or all sorts of microbes that thrive in it.”<sup>1</sup>

PABLO PICASSO

### The Mougins Period



Fig. 1 Pablo Picasso and Jacqueline Roque in the sculpture room at Notre-Dame-de-Vie. In the background is a model for *Head of a Woman*, October 1966

Our exhibition is devoted to the period Picasso spent in Mougins. It comprises works executed in the spacious country house Notre-Dame-de-Vie, in the hills above Cannes, from 1961 to the artist’s death. The year 1961 serves as a caesura.<sup>2</sup> Picasso began living and working in Mougins in June of that year. He had found himself forced to give up the light-flooded villa La Californie when new buildings went up that blocked his view of the Mediterranean. In March 1961, he had wed Jacqueline Roque (fig. 1). The work pace he developed in his new—and what would be his final—refuge was astonishing. In the ten years he spent on the hill, Picasso drew and painted more than ever before. In November 1965, he was compelled to interrupt his work for a time. The following months were devoted to recovering from an operation to which he had had to submit, at the Hôpital Américain in Paris. Between March and October 1968, there emerged 347 etchings; 194 drawings are recorded for the period December 1969 to January 1971. In addition to hundreds of further prints, over 200 paintings were executed from September 1970 to June 1972. Our information about this period is quite detailed. The diary Picasso kept in the form of pictures, drawings, and prints is precise. As previously, he dated everything he did in Mougins, not only finished works but every note he passed along to Jacqueline or his friends. In a conversation with Brassai on July 10, 1945, Picasso mentioned the reason for this. Dating works precisely was important for an artist, he said, because “You have to know when, why, how, and under what conditions he created them. Someday there will surely be a science, maybe called ‘the science of man,’ that deals with creative people in order to gain new insights into humanity in general.... I often think of this science, and believe it is important to leave a complete as possible record for posterity.”<sup>3</sup> Thanks to this strict bookkeeping, we know that Picasso painted his final canvas, *The Embrace* (cat. no. 188), an intoxicating end-of-the-world tenderness threatened by a giant wave, on June 1, 1972. From this date onwards we find only works on paper. We also know the day on which Picasso worked for the last time. The pen-and-ink drawing that emerged on November 12, 1972 in the house on the hill (fig. 2) shows a strange addition. At the upper right corner of the sheet we discover a profile view of a man’s head, mouth open in a lament, one of the continually recurring