

# Genius: Picasso starts this weekend on National Geographic

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Few painters have been as awe-inspiringly prolific as Pablo Picasso. One of the most influential and celebrated artists of the 20th century, his career spanned more than 80 of his 91 years, during which time he produced an estimated 50,000 works. His passionate nature and relentless creative drive were inextricably linked to his personal life, which included tumultuous marriages, numerous affairs and ever-shifting political and personal alliances. Constantly reinventing himself, Picasso always strove to innovate and push the boundaries of artistic expression, leading to his worldwide renown as a genius.



Premiering with a feature-length episode 22 April 2018 at 20h05, the second season of National Geographic's Emmy-, Golden Globe-, and Screen Actor's Guild Award-nominated 10-part global event series, *Genius: Picasso*, explores the Spanish expatriate's devotion to his craft, his contribution to modern art and his turbulent personal life. The new season, from Fox 21 Television Studios, is executive produced by Brian Grazer and Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment, MWM Studios and EUE/Sokolow Entertainment. Showrunner, executive producer, writer and director Ken Biller also returns.

Antonio Banderas (*The Skin I'm In*, *The Mask of Zorro*) brings to life the artistic career of the titular artist: Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Crispiniano de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz Picasso. Joining him as the younger Pablo is Alex Rich (*Glow*, *True Detective*), who rejects academic study and joins the circle of young bohemian artists and writers struggling to make it in early 20th century Spain and France.

Clémence Poésy (*The Tunnel*, *Final Portrait*) portrays Françoise Gilot, a French painter and best-selling author whose decade-long affair with Picasso yielded two children and who was his only lover strong enough to withstand his ferocious intensity and move on with her life. Sebastian Roché (*Young Pope*, *The Man in the High Castle*) is Emile Gilot, Françoise's tyrannical father. Robert Sheehan (*Fortitude*, *Misfits*), plays Carles Casagemas, a Spanish art student and poet who was one of Picasso's closest friends. Poppy Delevingne (*Kingsman: The Golden Circle*, *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*), portrays Marie-Thérèse Walter, a lover and muse of Picasso, who mothered his first daughter. Aisling Franciosi (*Game of Thrones*) portrays Dora, a young girl who becomes a model for Picasso.

*Thrones, The Fall*) is Fernande Olivier, a French artist and model, of whom Picasso painted more than 60 portraits.

They join returning cast members from the Emmy-, Golden Globe- and SAG Award-nominated first season, Samantha Colley (*The Crucible*) as Dora Maar, a French photographer and painter who was also Picasso's lover and muse; T.R. Knight (*Grey's Anatomy, The Catch*) as Max Jacob, one of Picasso's first friends in Paris; Seth Gabel (*Salem, Fringe*) as Guillaume Apollinaire, one of the foremost poets of the 20th century and a frequent collaborator with Picasso; and Johnny Flynn (*Lovesick*) who makes a special appearance as French actor Alain Cuny.



The second season of the acclaimed series began production last year, filming in many locations where Picasso himself once lived and worked. This included a three-day shoot in Málaga, Spain — birthplace of both Picasso and Banderas — where production filmed in the same house in which Picasso was born, the church where he was baptised and the bullring where he found much inspiration in his youth.

***“Bad artists copy. Good artists steal.”***

Intercutting between Pablo (Rich) as a young man determined to express his own point of view with his art and the technical master and visionary creator known as Picasso (Banderas), *Genius: Picasso* opens in the Spanish coastal town of Málaga. The child Pablo (Alessio Scalzotto) learns to draw under the tutelage of his father, José Ruiz Blasco (David Wilmont, *Anna Karenina, The Guard*), who is an art instructor at a provincial school.

Rejecting his education, paid for by his wealthy uncle, Dr Salvador Ruiz (Jordi Mollà, *Riddick, Knight and Day*), Pablo meets Carles Casagemas (Sheehan) at a tavern in Barcelona where free-thinkers gather. Kindred spirits, the two travel to Paris in search of fame and fortune but are just two of many aspiring Spanish artists drawn to the French capital. Inspired by the Parisian nightlife but dismayed by having to imitate classic styles favoured by art sellers, Pablo sets about creating artwork that will sell, including his depiction of the dance hall, *Le Moulin de la Galette*. But when tragedy strikes, Pablo's work takes a dramatic turn and he adopts a palette devoted almost exclusively to shades of blue.

Living in a tumbledown residence in Montmartre, Pablo frequents the local cabaret, Au Lapin Agile, where his circle of friends, including French poet, painter, writer and critic Max Jacob (Knight), gathers. It is here he meets his mistress Fernande Olivier (Franciosi) and paints her with intimacy, affection and tender eroticism. Abandoning the palette and subject matter of his Blue Period, Pablo turns to images of fairgrounds and circus performers, whom he depicts in a range of chalky pink hues, reminiscent of the poems of Guillaume Apollinaire (Gabel), one of several poets among his closest



friends. His cheerful style attracts the attention of new collectors and patrons, including some wealthy Americans living in Paris: Gertrude (Tracee Chimo, *Bad Jews*) and Leo Stein (Iddo Goldberg, *Peaky Blinders*).



***“Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.”***

Picasso (Banderas), now in his mid-40s, married and with a young son from his first marriage, begins a clandestine affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter (Delevingne), a much younger woman. Picasso and Walter share informal living arrangements for a time after their daughter, Maya, is born. Though Walter’s unassuming and yielding personality provides a haven to Picasso during his tempestuous marriage, her lack of intellectual curiosity and spirit become problematic for him. Picasso soon begins a new affair with the accomplished and beautiful photographer Dora Maar (Colley), who is his equal in drive, intellect and passion. Maar becomes his lover and constant companion, documenting the painting of *Guernica*, his powerful visual statement about the Nazis bombing the small Spanish town just before World War II.

While out to dinner with the soon-to-be-discarded Maar, Picasso flirts with Françoise Gilot (Poésy), who is dining with her school friend and fellow artist Geneviève Aliquot (Stephane Caillard, *Bastille Day*) and the film actor Alain Cuny (Flynn). Although she is 21 and Picasso is 61, the two soon embark upon a partnership that is both romantic and professional, during which time Maar struggles with depression. Picasso has two children with Gilot — son Claude and daughter Paloma — eventually parting ways after more than a decade.

Filmed throughout Europe — including Paris, Málaga, Barcelona, Budapest and Malta — the series features a number of well-known personalities who crossed paths with Picasso, including Coco Chanel, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque and Jean Cocteau. *Genius: Picasso* premieres globally in April on National Geographic in 172 countries and 43 languages.

*Genius: Picasso* is executive produced by Imagine’s Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and Francie Calfo, and co-produced by Anna Culp; showrunner, executive producer, writer and director is Ken Biller. From MWM Studios, Gigi Pritzker and Rachel Shane are executive producers and Melissa Rucker is co-producer. Sam Sokolow and Jeff Cooney from EUE/Sokolow Entertainment are also executive producers. For National Geographic, Carolyn G. Bernstein is executive vice president and head of global scripted development and production. The series is produced by Fox 21 Television Studios, Imagine Television and MWM Studios.

*Genius: Picasso* will start **on National Geographic on 22 April at 20h05 with a double bill of episodes 1 and 2.** (Thereafter it is one episode per week, Sundays at 20h05.)

## **Genius: Picasso descriptions**

### **Series description**

National Geographic's 10-part global event series *Genius* returns to explore the turbulent life of the 20th century's most controversial artist, Pablo Picasso (Antonio Banderas). A child prodigy, Picasso was not satisfied imitating the masters. He set out to create his own style and in doing so changed art forever. *Genius: Picasso* explores the muses, the art, and the complicated man behind the masterpieces.

#### **201**

Pablo Picasso (Antonio Banderas) struggles to bring attention to the rising threat of fascism in Spain. Meanwhile, Young Pablo (Alex Rich) dreams of becoming a great painter. But first he must find his own voice.

#### **202**

WWII rages, but older Picasso (Antonio Banderas) refuses to leave Paris, straining his relationship with photographer Dora Maar (Samantha Colley). Meanwhile, Young Pablo (Alex Rich) finds quick success on his first trip to Paris by imitating the masters, but he struggles to make something truly original.

#### **203**

Pablo (Alex Rich) begins his Blue Period after the suicide of his best friend, and meets his first great love, Fernande Olivier (Aisling Franciosi). Meanwhile, older Picasso (Antonio Banderas) starts an affair with another great love, the young artist Françoise Gilot (Clémence Poésy).

#### **204**

As older Picasso (Antonio Banderas) juggles two love affairs, Young Pablo (Alex Rich) finds inspiration from the legendary poets Apollinaire (Seth Gabel) and Max Jacob (T.R. Knight). He strives to use their ideas to create a masterpiece that will signal his arrival as a great artist.

#### **205**

Picasso (Antonio Banderas) goes to great lengths to convince Françoise Gilot (Clémence Poésy) to move in with him. Meanwhile, Young Pablo (Alex Rich) struggles to match the genius of Matisse. He finds dark inspiration from his souring relationship with Fernande Olivier (Aisling Franciosi).

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