

# Bloomberg

---

## Radical Braque Painting Boosts Acquavella Galleries Attendance to 16,000

By Katya Kazakina - Nov 22, 2011

The morning after [Acquavella Galleries](#) opened its “Georges Braque: Pioneer of Modernism” exhibition last month, some of the top [modern-art](#) dealers rushed to see the French painter’s first major New York retrospective since 1988.

By the end of last week, the show’s attendance totaled about 16,000.

“This is definitely one of our most popular exhibitions,” said Michael Findlay, director at the gallery. Acquavella’s “Picasso’s Marie-Therese” in 2008 drew about 25,000 people.

About 400 to 600 are seeing the show on weekdays. The number swells on weekends to 1,000, with a line forming outside the French neoclassical townhouse on [Manhattan](#)’s Upper East Side.

The exhibition, ranging from 1906 Fauvist paintings to complex, moody compositions of the mid-1950s, presents Braque as a modern master whose achievements extend beyond his well-known Cubist collaboration with [Pablo Picasso](#).

Austrian curator Dieter Buchhart has included loans from the [Museum of Modern Art](#), the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in Manhattan, [London](#)’s Tate Modern, the [Beyeler Foundation](#) in [Basel](#), [Norway](#)’s Bergen Art Museum, and Vienna’s [Albertina](#).

“You can see Braque is a giant,” said modern-art dealer David Nahmad. “He can be considered among the three most important French artists, along with Matisse and Leger.”

The show starts with Braque in his mid-20s, part of the Fauvist movement along with Matisse and Derain. On the second floor, his 1906 landscapes painted in the south of [France](#) are full of light and dazzling combinations of green, purple, yellow and red.

### Experimentation

Paintings and collages from Braque’s Cubist period (1908- 1914) pulsate with experimentation. The artist’s “papier colle” technique incorporated cut-up newspapers, wallpaper and pieces of cardboard into his fragmented compositions.

When World War I began, Braque enlisted with the French Army. He suffered a head injury in 1915 that delayed his return to painting.

His postwar pieces are initially dark and heavy, but by the mid-1930s the color and innovation return. In still-life work, Braque created unusual spatial relationships between ordinary objects, mounting, suspending and intertwining chairs, billiard tables, vases, lamps, brushes and easels. He filled his canvases with myriad patterns and mixed sand and grit into the paint to beef it up.

“Vlaminck and Derain, their finest hour was Fauvism,” said Acquavella’s Findlay. “Braque and Matisse moved way beyond to become major artists in the subsequent visual revolutions of the 20th century.”

### Boosting Prices

Although no works are for sale, the show can boost the artist’s market, Nahmad said. Braque’s prices are a fraction of Picasso’s. Both artists achieved their auction records in the same Christie’s sale on May 4, 2010. Picasso’s “Nude, Green Leaves and Bust” fetched \$106.5 million; Braque’s still life “La Treille” sold for \$10.2 million.

“The market does not see great Braques often at auctions,” said Nahmad. “Acquavella Galleries gathered a fantastic group that puts Braque in a different perspective.”

“Georges Braque: Pioneer of Modernism” runs through Nov. 30 at 18 E. 79th St.; +1-212-734-6300;  
<http://www.acquavellagalleries.com>.

(Katya Kazakina is a reporter for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are her own.)

To contact the reporter of this story: Katya Kazakina in [New York](#) at [kkazakina@bloomberg.net](mailto:kkazakina@bloomberg.net).

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Manuela Hoelterhoff at [mhoelterhoff@bloomberg.net](mailto:mhoelterhoff@bloomberg.net).

---

©2011 BLOOMBERG L.P. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.