

artnet

## Naomi Campbell Brings a Model's Perspective to Picasso's Intimate Series

The artist spent decades painting models. At a new show in Gstaad, a supermodel gazes back.



Pablo Picasso in his studio at Notre-Dame-de-Vie, Mougins, c. 1963. © Roberto Otero, Museo Picasso Málaga, VEGAP, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York 2026. © 2026 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Pablo Picasso never lacked for models. Wives, lovers, and muses passed through his canvases, captured as sinuous and sensual abstractions. Though they bore the likeness of their sitters, these portraits were often less about the women themselves than about the artist's own gaze. "One looks in such a way at the model," he once reflected, "that he comes and takes a seat on the paper."

Next month, a new exhibition presented by Nahmad Contemporary at Tarmak22 in Gstaad, Switzerland, will probe Picasso's acts of looking and how they produced works that

mingled power, desire, and perception. The show will do so by spotlighting 14 paintings from his 1963–65 series, “*Le Peintre et Son Modèle*” (“The Painter and His Model”). It’s also coming from a surprising perspective—that of British supermodel Naomi Campbell, who will contribute her reflections on the paintings, drawing on her own experience of being seen.

“I’ve lived most of my life in front of the camera, which gives me a singular perspective on the relationship between artist and model,” she said in a statement. “It’s complex, layered, and charged with power.”



Pablo Picasso, *Le Peintre et son modèle* (The painter and his model) (1963). © 2026 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

In “*Le Peintre et Son Modèle*,” Picasso created numerous iterations of the same scene: a nude woman posing for a painter sitting at an easel. In some, she reclines on a lounge chair and in others, she sits upright; in most, he clutches a palette in one hand and a brush in the other. Invariably, through intense brushstrokes, their gazes meet—revealing a tension as much as a sense of self-consciousness.

The artist embarked on the series during his marriage to his second wife Jacqueline Roque, one of his favorite muses. While she rarely sat for his portraits, the artist created hundreds upon hundreds of paintings of her, more so than any woman in his life. Their quiet domesticity—the couple had retreated to the secluded village of Mougins in France—is perhaps reflected in the intimacy of “*Le Peintre et Son Modèle*.” In one 1964 composition, the sitter and the artist’s canvas even meld into a single field.

“Picasso’s paintings remind us that intimacy doesn’t require access,” Campbell said, “and that what is withheld can be even more powerful than what is at times revealed.”



Pablo Picasso, *Le Peintre et son modèle* (The painter and his model) (1963). © 2026 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Picasso, at this later point in his career, was also grappling with the rise of Abstract Expressionism. As a counterpoint, he commenced revisiting and producing numerous deconstructions of seminal paintings, from Édouard Manet's *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe* (1862–63) to Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656). “*Le Peintre et Son Modèle*” follows these experiments in spirit, in Picasso's contemplation of his role in art history. As gallerist Joe Nahmad noted of the series, “Picasso turns the act of painting into a performance.”

“‘*Le Peintre et Son Modèle*’ confronts desire, power, and mortality with an urgency that remains deeply contemporary,” he added. “Naomi Campbell's perspective offers a singular lens on this dynamic, expanding the conversation around the gaze and its implications in a way few voices can.”



Naomi Campbell at the press launch for “*Naomi: In Fashion*” at The Dorchester in London, 2024. Photo: Dave Benett / Getty Images for the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The fashion icon is coming off a major retrospective at London's Victoria & Albert Museum, which opened "*Naomi: In Fashion*" in 2024. The show exhibited couture and personal artifacts from Campbell's archive alongside archival footage of photo shoots and fashion shows, offering an expansive view of a decades-spanning career defined by the camera lens. This latest outing returns that gaze.

"These paintings... speak to the tension between visibility and privacy, between possession and distance," she said. "*Le Peintre et Son Modèle*' reminds us that the greatest power in the act of looking may belong not to the one who gazes, but to the one who remains, unmistakably, just beyond reach."

"*PICASSO | PAINTER AND MODEL, Reflections by Naomi Campbell*" is on view at Tarmak22, Oeystrasse 29, 3792 Saanen, Switzerland, February 14–March 15, 2026.