

Kirchner. Picasso **(26.9.2025–18.1.2026)**

Münster (Iwl). The LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur in Münster presents the exhibition 'Kirchner. Picasso' from 26.9.2025 until 18.1.2026. It is the first show to explore these two singular artists and their surprising parallels in such depth.

From the vibrant life of the big city to the intimacy of the studio and the stillness of the mountains: At the beginning of the 20th century, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Pablo Picasso bore witness to a new era, with their works speaking of change, crisis and passion. Though they never met in person, their pictorial worlds and styles converged. 100 works from major European museums will highlight the similarities and contrasts between two of the most important modernist artists.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Pablo Picasso were born just one year apart, in the German Empire and in Spain. Their paths to art differed widely, yet both shared a passion for innovation and continually reinvented their artistic expression. The exhibition opens with the biographies of Kirchner and Picasso, intertwining the lives of the two artists not only with each other, but also with the events of contemporary history. At the same time, Kirchner and Picasso are placed within the wider context of Franco-German artistic exchange.

In their works, both artists depict people in the big city: while dancing, making music, or at variety shows. It is about glamour, speed and ecstasy – but also about the hard life behind the scenes, about loneliness and poverty. The exhibition tells of both – of the fascination of the stage and of what remains hidden from the audience.

Among the most well-known works by both artists are their expressive portraits. The focus is on the likenesses of their respective life partners. These portraits also clearly illustrate the stylistic developments of Kirchner and Picasso. The subject of the bather, a symbol of insouciance and joie de vivre, is also a recurring theme in both artists' works. Whether in the studio or in nature – the nude is a recurring subject in the work of both Kirchner and Picasso. The view of naked female bodies contrasted with partially clothed men raises questions about the relationship between painter and model. The studio itself also plays an important role: it is more than just a workspace – here, famous works were created, here, ideas were toyed with, life was lived, and sometimes convivial time was spent.

Finally, the exhibition sheds light on the self-staging of both artists. Kirchner in particular regularly depicted himself in self-portraits, which offer a glimpse of his personal situation at various points in time. His life as an artist, as well as his struggle with physical and psychological health, are made visible in these works. Picasso, on the other hand, used the mythological figure of the Minotaur for his self-staging and mastered the art of presenting himself through photographic self-portraits.

An exhibition by the LWL Museum für Kunst und Kultur, Münster, and the Kirchner Museum Davos (15.2. – 3.5.2026).

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