

## Love at First Bite

When **Picasso** visited Surrealist painter **Roland Penrose** and his wife, the fashion and war photographer **Lee Miller**, he quickly hit it off with their three-year-old son, **Antony**. During the 1950 encounter at the couple's farm outside London, the toddler loved to watch Picasso carouse on the floor like a bull—and scratch the farm's real bull behind the ears, talking to it in French.

Now Antony Penrose has documented his remarkable friendship with Picasso in *The Boy Who Bit Picasso*, a children's book illustrated with Miller's photographs and Picasso's drawings, including one he did of the family's bull in the form of a grasshopper. The book, published by Thames & Hudson in England and to be released by Abrams in the United States in February, is a testament both to Picasso's

playful genius and the way children can form relationships with grown-ups.

"I had no concept of his fame as an artist," says Penrose, who still lives on the farm where he was raised and runs the Lee Miller Archive. "I knew he was well-known, but I was drawn to him because he had this intense warmth. It just felt good being around him. As a child, you deal with people on an intuitive level, rather than a rational or cognitive level, and that's what happened between Picasso and me."

The depth of Picasso's feelings for Antony became clear when, during one of Roland Penrose's visits to his home in



**Antony Penrose and Picasso in Cannes, 1957, photographed by Penrose's mother, Lee Miller.**

the south of France, Picasso asked about the boy. Roland replied that his son was struggling at a strict boarding school. Picasso, dismayed by the news, made a drawing of a centaur entertaining a bull with a flute, and wrote on it, "Pour Toni Penrose."

"Picasso thought it was a

terrible idea, sending me to that school. He didn't believe children should be forced into things," says Penrose, who knows now why he had such trouble at school—he had severe undiagnosed dyslexia. He still owns the drawing Picasso dedicated to him, and it appears in the book.

The title comes from an incident Penrose does not remember but which became part of family lore. When he was three, Penrose bit Picasso, and Picasso bit back—hard. Before the boy could scream, the artist exclaimed, "Gosh, that's the first Englishman I've ever bitten!"

—**Roger Atwood**

## ARTnews Retrospective

### 100 Years Ago

It falls to the lot of few to read their own obituaries, and the last personage to be accorded this opportunity is none other than John S. Sargent, the eminent Anglo-American artist. A Topeka, Kansas, newspaper recently devoted a half column of eulogy of and regret on the passing of the painter. It gives us pleasure to state that Mr. Sargent is very much alive, that Carroll Beckwith met and talked with him in Florence a few weeks ago, and that he is now hard at work at his Chelsea studio in London. —*"A Premature Obituary," December 3, 1910*

### 75 Years Ago

Probably the most encouraging aspect of the rules and regulations which now govern the Frick Collection is that they are experimental and subject to change. It would be ungracious to quibble at certain restrictions which the administration feels it necessary to impose. . . .

It is at once apparent that under present conditions the museum is not actually the "public gallery of art to which the entire public shall forever have access" as specified in the will of Henry Clay Frick. The schedule of hours now automatically excludes from the collection that large slice of the populace which lives by working six full days a week.

—*"The Green Line," December 21, 1935*

### 50 Years Ago

He loves to draw and for him drawing is learning. Yet when painting, even directly from the living model, his paintings seem more conceptual than his drawings. The image of the nude model becomes a type, and it is this type which he finds in the faces he sees. He is a master at evoking the strange reds and greens of factories working in the day by artificial light. For him New York is where people seem rather separate and alone from each other. . . and there is a feeling of romantic lassitude and sadness. Raphael Soyer is often on the edge of sentimentality, but it is sentiment which brings out the best in him.

—*"Raphael Soyer's Own Brand of Realism,"*  
by Lawrence Campbell, December 1960

### 25 Years Ago

To appreciate the art scene in Paris, one has to remember that for every artist there are now two arts administrators, plus a string of state-funded national and regional collection funds. . . . While the public is genuinely interested in art and is, as ever, on the lookout for outrageous wit, the administrators are moving in the opposite direction, trying to turn neo-anachronists into national status symbols, new Poussins and new Davids.

—*"Will Neo-Anachronism Rebuild Montmartre?"*  
by Thomas West, December 1985