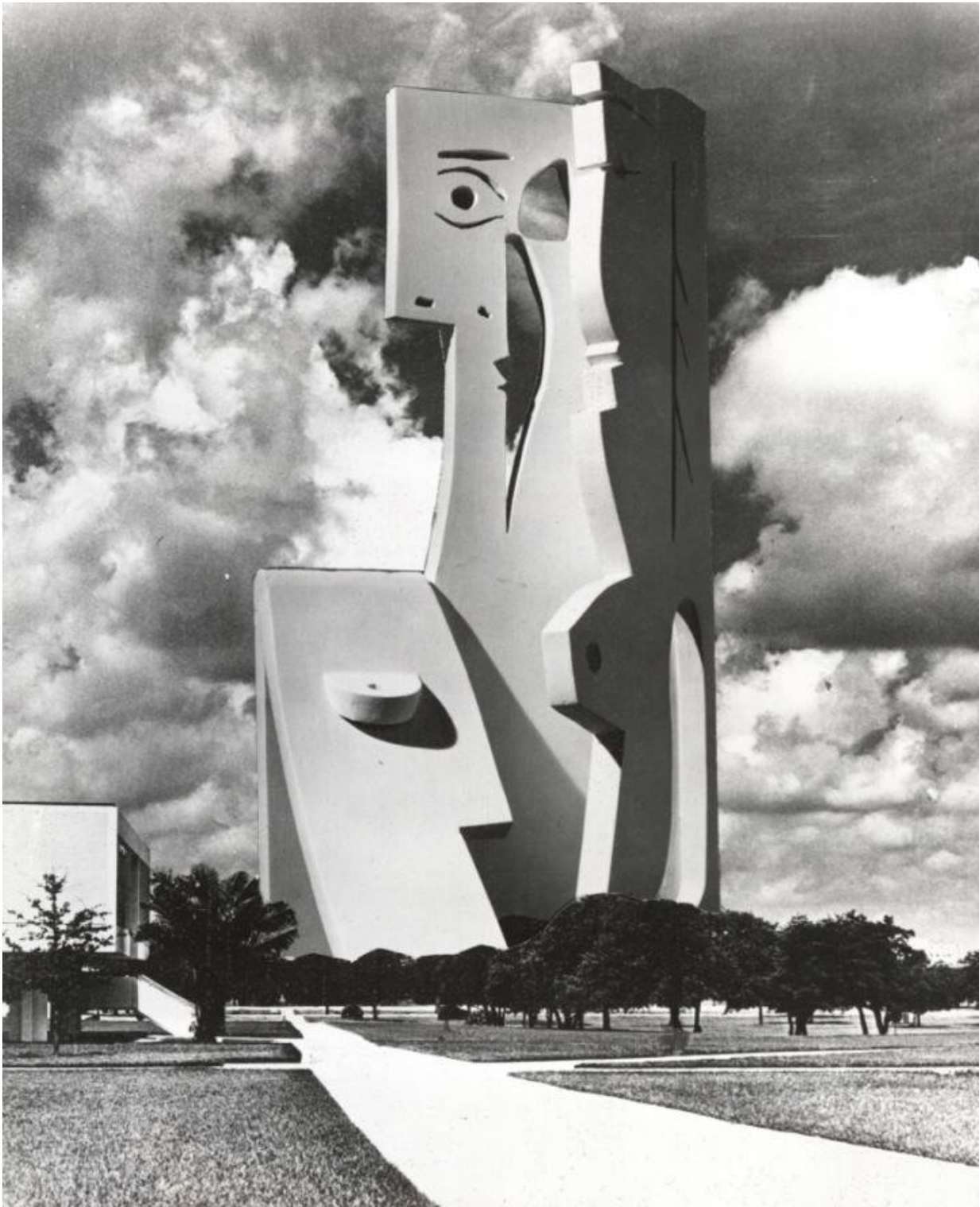


Picasso's plans to build the world's tallest concrete sculpture uncovered in Florida

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World renowned artist Pablo Picasso and fabricator Carl Nesjar's vision to build the world's tallest concrete sculpture on the campus of the University of South Florida in Tampa. Credit: University of South Florida Library

It's been 50 years since world renowned artist Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) announced his vision to create the world's tallest and one of his final sculptures on the campus of the University of South Florida (USF) in Tampa. For the first time, a key researcher at USF has pieced together the project's historical significance with the discovery of a now obsolete audio reel (1/4"x1200' 7"), which included a 1974 recording made by famed collaborator Carl Nesjar.

"When I found the reel, I had a feeling it was going to be a major piece to the puzzle," said art historian and archaeologist Kamila Oles, University of South Florida. "It took a really long time to find a company with the technology to convert it to MP3. When I realized it was Carl Nesjar speaking, my jaw nearly hit the floor."

Nesjar worked with Picasso for 20 years, turning his drawings and models into large public sculptures, such as the 36-foot "Bust of Sylvette," currently displayed at New York University. It predates the 1971 PicassoUSF project, in which he donated a small-scale model of "Bust of a Woman" to the Tampa campus. In addition to Nesjar's oration, Oles discovered a copy of Picasso's approval photograph and sketches, which demonstrated their vision of building a 100-foot sculpture made of reinforced concrete, surrounded by an architectural art center designed by world famous architect Paul Rudolph. Rudolph lived in Sarasota, Florida at the time and had already built several structures throughout the state.

The State Board of Regents approved construction of the massive sculpture and center on April 9, 1973, the day after the artist's death, but never agreed to fund the estimated \$10 million project. It eventually failed due to lack of donations. While PicassoUSF never came to fruition in its form, individuals and researchers across the world will

soon have the ability to study "Bust of Woman" and Rudolph's art and visitor center in its original architectural context through a virtual gallery.

"We are the next artisans who will bring to life the biggest project of the world's most renowned artist by means of new technologies," said Oles. "It is an extraordinary pleasure to realize Picasso's desire. I believe he would be very enthusiastic about our virtual reality methods."

Provided by University of South Florida

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