

Pablo Picasso

(PAH-bloh Pih-CAH-soh)

Painter and Sculptor, multiple styles
Modern Period of the Arts

B 25 October, 1881, Malaga Spain

D: 8 April 1973 Mougins, France

Picasso was christened in honor of several family members and saints...LOTS of family and saints: Pablo Diego Jose Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno Maria de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santissima Trinidad Martyr Patricio Clito Ruiz y Picasso.

From his childhood, he loved to draw. His first word was “piz, piz”, short for “Lapiz” the Spanish word for “pencil”. A poor student in class, Picasso enjoyed going to detention in his school, since he was left with pencil and paper in a plain white room to think about what he was doing...which was drawing. In class, in detention, at home, he drew.

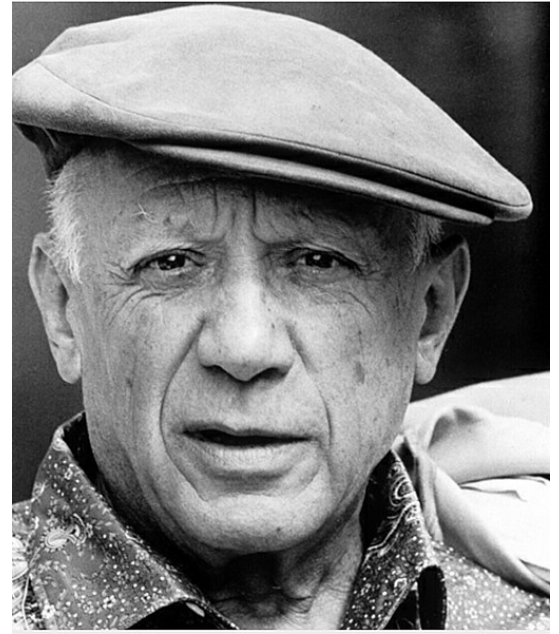
His father, a wildlife painter and drawing instructor, first gave him lessons when Pablo was seven. By 13, Pablo had progressed enough to apply to his father’s school-the youngest student they had ever accepted. There, he studied the Greats of art and Spanish art: El Greco, Velasquez, Michelangelo, and more. He opened his first professional studio at 17, and soon visited France to explore the art world there. He moved to France in 1900, and rarely returned to Spain. There, he was known for his paintings, he also engraved prints, sculpted, drew incessantly, even designed costumes for the Russian Ballet (where he met his first wife Olga).

Picasso is famous for launching multiple styles of art across his lifetime. Rather than focus and perfect a certain style of art, he frequently started new styles of art and new techniques, before going off along a new path, leaving other artists to expand on what he started. Some of his works, like his sculptures, were unknown until after his death, when the full extent of his studios were seen for the first time.

During WWII, Picasso’s art was forbidden by the Nazi regime of Germany, and he was banned from creating, exhibiting, selling, or displaying any art that did not conform to the Nazi ideal of good (AKA: realistic-looking) art. He painted quietly in his home and had many new pieces to display as soon as France was freed.

Today, Picasso is known as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, a man whose work influenced many artists in the abstract and expressionist movements. His most famous style is called Cubism. Cubism was inspired in part by African art and prehistoric Iberian (ancient Spanish) art which were being imported and displayed in museums in France and Spain. Picasso also pioneered “collage” (Coh-LAGHE), an art form where colorful pieces of paper, newsprint, or other items are cut and glued together into a new picture.

Picasso’s paintings continue to fetch the highest prices on the open market. Five of the top twenty most expensive paintings ever sold are Picasso’s, including one which sold for \$179 million dollars!



Picasso

Picasso's Styles of Art

Unlike many painters, Picasso is known for pioneering several styles of art during his 70+ years painting. These are some of the major categories of art by Picasso:



Realistic/Academic Period (1895 – 1901)

When he was young, Picasso learned how to draw and paint realistically from his father and later, his art school. These early paintings look realistic and classical. Picasso won several awards for his work, but wanted to do something different...

To the Left, Picasso's first large-scale Oil painting: "First Communion". Completed in 1896 when Picasso was 15 years old, this shows the first communion of a young lady, the transition from childhood to adulthood in the Catholic Church. The father standing behind the girl is Picasso Sr., young Pablo Picasso's father and first art teacher. This painting is a transition itself, since it was the first painting exhibited publicly and professionally for Pablo Picasso. Despite how he drew later in life, Picasso was fully capable of drawing near-photo realistic works.

166 X 118 cm
Museo Picasso
Barcelona, Spain

BLUE PERIOD (1901 – 1904)

After the death of a close friend, Picasso fell into depression and only painted in shades of blues and greens with slightly exaggerated figures. At this time, Picasso focused on paintings of poverty, loneliness, grief and despair.

This painting, "Melancholy Woman" is most likely the girlfriend of Picasso's friend, mourning her loved one's passing. In this painting, she is wrapped in her shawl, and with her arms around herself. Wrapped in blue, lost in her own sadness, she stares blankly off to the side. At this time, Picasso was also visiting the women's prison of St. Lazare, looking for models, and some historians think this woman looks like she's in that prison as well...perhaps a reflection of the prison of her grief?



Oil on Canvas
39-3/8" by 27-1/4"
Detroit Institute of Arts

Detroit, Michigan, USA



ROSE PERIOD (1904- 1906)

In 1904, Picasso's life changed: He moved to Paris, fell in love, and acquired a patron who supported him financially. His new love, Fernande Olivier, helped pull him out of depression and Picasso began to paint in new colors (pinks, reds, and beiges) as well as new themes: Carnival workers, clowns, parents and children and other happy themes.

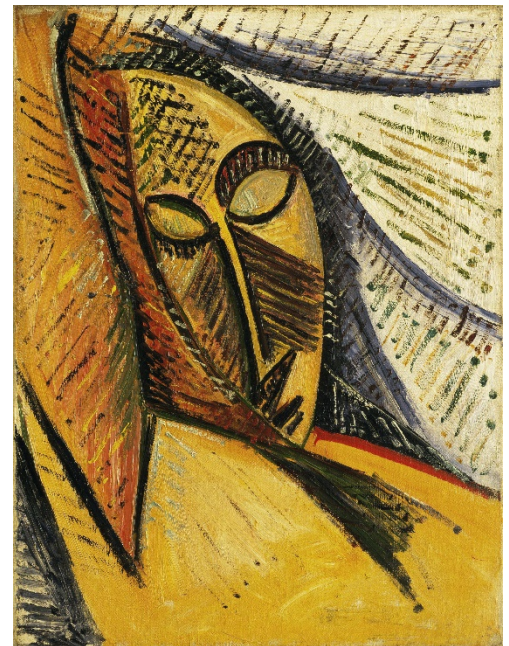
This painting, "Acrobate et jeune Arlequin" (The Acrobat and the young Harlequin) was painted in 1905. Picasso came to like Harlequin's very much and painted them several times throughout his life. The Harlequin was a type of servant character in plays at the time: dressed in a checkered suit and often wearing a mask, Harlequin was nimble, mischievous, and clever, often serving his master while simultaneously pursuing the love of his life, Columbina.

*oil on canvas,
191.1 x 108.6 cm,
The Barnes Foundation,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA*

AFRICAN-INSPIRED PERIOD (1906-1909) (Formerly called his "Black Period")

Due to European Colonization of Africa in the early 20th century, artworks from several African cultures were being shipped, sold, and displayed in museums in Paris. Picasso loved the strong shapes, the sweeping lines, the colors of these pieces. His strongest influences were from Ancient Egypt, the Kingdom of Dahomey (modern-day Benin) and the ancient sculptures from his own Spain. Pieces in this period are gaining a sense of abstraction, but they are still very obviously identifiable.

This 1907 piece, "Head of a Sleeping Woman" was a study for a larger piece, but you can see the changes in how Picasso is drawing a person's head from his previous three styles. Nonetheless, this is still very recognizably a head of a person...he's not crossed to cubism...yet.

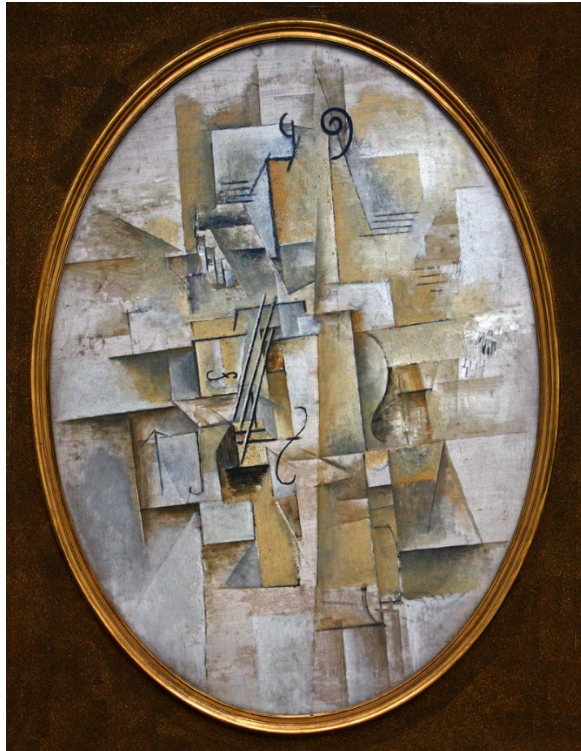


*Oil on Canvas
24 ¼ in x 18 ¾ "*

*Museum of Modern Art
New York City, New York State, USA*

CUBISM

**(Analytic Cubism: 1909-1912);
(Synthetic Cubism: 1912 – 1919)**



Oil on Canvas; 100 cm x 73 cm; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands

Co-created with artist Georges Braque (1882 – 1963), Cubism took a recognizable figure apart and put it back together on the page with different angles showing simultaneously. Some of these works are the most abstract of any of Picasso's works, but Picasso never left realism entirely.

The Analytic Cubism is defined by its mostly monochromatic color schemes. (Monochrome: mono-one; Chrome[a]: color) Sometimes, the subject is so "cut-apart" you can only "see" what Picasso was painting by looking at little clues he left for the viewer to find. To the left, we have Picasso's 1911-12 "The Violin". The sense of the "background" and "foreground" is completely gone, and the Violin is shattered and reassembled....the clues of this being a violin at all were things Picasso called "Attributes" he inserted into the painting.

Synthetic Cubism is defined by its bright, multi-color canvasses. Many times, it included glued-on elements: pieces of other canvas, printed material from other places. This sort of art, where segments of different colors or different papers of printed materials are glued together to make a whole composition, is called Collage (Cohl-AHge) and Picasso invented it.

Here's his Harlequin back again...note how "cubed" the Harlequin is, yet the colors and the pieces fit a little more realistically now than they did before. This painting is Picasso's 1918 "Harlequin Playing a Guitar," which is in a private collection.



NEOCLASSISM (1917 – 1925)



"Femme et enfant au bord de la mer" (Woman and child at the seashore); Oil on Canvas; 143 x 162 cm; Private Collection

Inspired by a post-WWI visit to Italy, Picasso's art took a more realistic turn in the early 1920s. This trip was taken in the company of several artists, musicians and writers, taking in all the art of Italy. Seeing the great Renaissance works of Michelangelo, Raphael, in Rome, the art of Florence, Cradle of the Renaissance, and the art of ancient Pompeii and Herculaneum (frozen in time by a volcano in 79 AD) inspired Picasso into more realistic directions than he'd painted for years. Still, many of these figures look blocky and solid, like heavy statues.

SURREALISM (1925 – 1932)

While never classified as a "surrealist painter" (Like Salvador Dali-the painter who melted clocks) Picasso toyed with surrealism and helped establish the movement that would take off without him. These works are characterized by figures with disorganized or distorted faces and figures and bright, brash, clashing colors...none of which were close to realistic, but neither were they as "cubed" as they were when Picasso was a "cubist" painter.

The painting to the right is entitled "Couple au bord de la mer" (Couple by the Seashore), painted in 1928. Compare this to the painting above, Picasso's "mother and child by the seashore". See how Picasso is really bending reality into...something. Without the title, could you figure out what this was supposed to be?



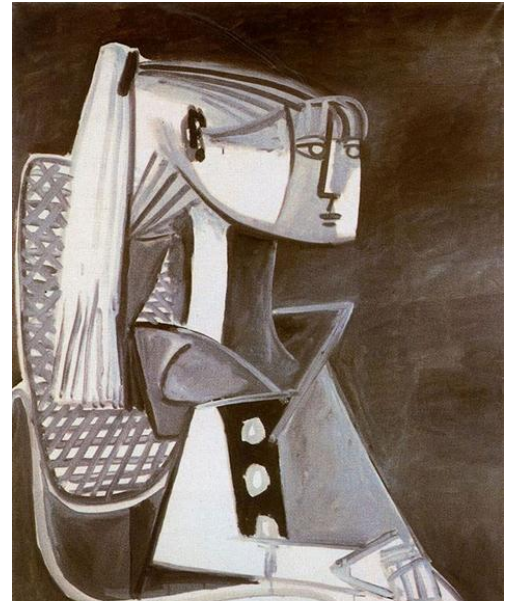
Oil on Canvas, likely in private collection

LATE WORK (1933 – 1973 [Picasso's death])

This type of art is less well-known than his previous works. Work done during this period mixes and matches all of Picasso's previous styles in new combinations. He also played with new mediums (types of art) like engraving and printmaking, as well as sculpture. (His sculptures were unknown outside his friends and family until after his death.)



"Femme au beret et à la robe à carreaux" (Woman in a Beret and checked Dress), 1937; Oil on Canvas; Private Collection;



Portrait of Sylvie David; ca. 1954; Oil on Canvas; 99 x 80 cm ; Pola Museum of Art; Kanagawa Japan



"Seated Man/Self-Portrait of the Artist"; 1965; Oil on Canvas; Museu Picasso; Barcelona, Spain



"Man with a Pipe"; 1968; 146 x 88 cm; Oil on Canvas; Musee Picasso; Paris, France

VOCABULARY:

Cubism (CUBE-ihzm)

An art style from the early 20th century where the recognizable things in the painting are broken up, simplified, flattened, and re-assembled with many different points of view showing simultaneously. (the front of the face, the side of the nose, the lips to the left, the ears on the right...) Some paintings even tried to show more than one time period (past and present or past and future) in the same painting through cubism.

Cubism was very popular in the early 20th century.



Collage: (Coh-LAGHE)

From the French verb “coller,” meaning “to stick,” collage is an art form made by sticking different pieces of material together (fabric, paper, printed material,) to create a whole composition.

While sticking items to paintings for artistic effects had been done for centuries, Picasso and his friend Georges Braque created the modern art form of Collage by gluing various items to a canvas to make a new composition of the parts. Picasso used many items, including sheet music, cardboard box designs, wallpaper, canes of chairs, and more.

“Violin”; 1912; Collage and Oil paint on cardboard; 46 cm x 38cm; likely in a Private Collection

Quotes By Pablo Picasso:

"All children are artists. The Problem is how to remain an artist
once he grows up."

"I begin with an idea and then it becomes something else."



Picasso's "Bather with a Beach Ball", 1932; Oil on Canvas; 146.2 cm x 144.7 cm; Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA

Picasso's Masterpiece: The Guernica Painting



Despite living permanently in France since 1934, Picasso was still, legally and culturally, a Spaniard. In the 1930's Picasso could only watch as his country collapsed into a Civil War. Picasso was asked, as Spain's most famous living painter, to create a mural for the Spanish pavilion in the 1934's World Fair. He tried, but his heart was not in anything and the work stalled.

Then he heard about the bombing of Guernica on April 26, 1937. Guernica was a town in Northern Spain's Basque region. Basque was a stronghold for the democratically-elected Republican side of the war. The Nationalist-Fascist side however, lead by General Francisco Franco, were gaining strength. Franco was friendly with Germany, and "invited" the German Air Force, (Luftwaffe) to "practice" techniques and new bombs on the small town of Guernica.

With many of Guernica's young and strong men away fighting in Spain's civil war, those that were left were the women, the children, and the very old.

It was market day...the streets were packed with the local farmers and food-makers, those buying and those selling and those enjoying a day out. When the German planes plunged out of the sky, there was no where to run through the packed streets. It was the first time peaceful civilians had been deliberately targeted in war.

Picasso heard of the bombing, saw the photos, and heard the stories of the horror of the bombing and knew THIS was the painting for the World's Fair. He worked furiously, allowing people the rare privilege of observing his progress over the 35 days he painted. Then, it was unveiled in the 1937 World's Fair, a fair that included large pavilions devoted to Nazi Germany. Initial reactions were mixed: was it good, or bad? Was it art? What did it say?

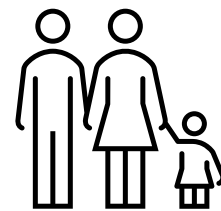
After the World's Fair, the painting went on tour throughout Europe and the United States, ticket sales raised money for the victims of the Guernica bombing and the civil war. But while the painting was gone, Franco took over. Picasso, devastated, decided to have the last word. Spain's Republican government had commissioned the painting, the painting belonged to Spain...but until Franco's government was destroyed, Guernica would never BE in Spain. The guardians of the painting would be the American Museum of Modern Art in New York City. During the decades following WWII, while Franco still ruled over Spain, Guernica toured the world, but never crossed the Spanish border, despite Franco's express invitation.

Picasso's final will stipulated when Guernica could return to the land which had commissioned it: Franco had to be gone, democracy restored, along with all the other "public liberties and democratic institutions" which that would include. Picasso died in 1973, and Franco in 1975.

With Franco's death, Spain became a constitutional monarchy, ratified a constitution, and requested the painting's return. It came home to Spain in 1981, in time to celebrate Picasso's 100th birthday. Today, Guernica resides in a specially built room in the Prado museum, in the same museum which houses the paintings of El Greco and Diego Velasquez, which Picasso once studied.

It is the most recognized Picasso work in the world.

Interesting Facts:



- Guernica is so large, a 6-foot tall person would only come half-way up Guernica's height. Picasso had to stand on ladders to paint it! (See scale above) It was painted in just 35 days.
- Billionaire John D. Rockefeller asked Picasso if he could purchase Guernica. When Picasso turned him down, Rockefeller asked for, and received, permission to have a full-size tapestry copy made instead. In 1985, the Rockefeller estate donated the Guernica tapestry to the United Nations, where it hangs at the entrance of the Security Council room, a reminder of the devastation of war.
- Picasso commissioned special matte paint for this painting. Most oil paints are somewhat shiny; Picasso wanted paint that would reflect no light for this work.
- The Guernica painting has become a symbol for the Basque country, the region around Guernica the city. It has even requested permission to the Guernica painting to their own Museum of Fine Arts, though this quest has been denied. Nonetheless, portions and symbols from the painting are commonly used in symbols throughout the Spanish Basque country.
- Despite being commissioned in the wake of a specific tragedy, the fact that no words or names appear in the painting has made it an anti-war symbol around the world.
- This painting was nearly done in full, vibrant color. The Black-and-White Motif was a reflection of the photos and newsreels that depicted the devastation instead.