

# 1907

With the stylistic inconsistencies and primitivist impulses of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Pablo Picasso launches the most formidable attack ever on mimetic representation.

Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* [1] has acquired a mythical status: it is a manifesto, a battlefield, a herald of modern art. Fully conscious that he was producing a major work, Picasso threw everything into its elaboration: all his ideas, all his energy, all his knowledge. We now know *Les Femmes d'Alger* as one of the "most worked-upon" canvases ever, and due attention is paid to the sixteen sketchbooks and numerous studies in various media that Picasso devoted to its making—not counting the drawings and paintings produced in the picture's immediate wake, in which Picasso further explored a whole range of avenues opened up by the painting during its fast-paced genesis.

But if no modern picture has been as much discussed during the last quarter of a century—with book-length essays and even an entire exhibition with a two-volume catalogue glorifying it—this plethora of commentary follows a striking dearth of discussion. Indeed, the painting long remained in quasi obscurity—one could even say that it was *resisted*. (A telling anecdote of this resistance: it seems that at the end of the twenties, two decades after *Les Femmes d'Alger*'s completion, the collector Jacques Doucet intended to bequeath the picture to the Musée du Louvre, but the museum refused the offer, as it had done with the Cézannes of the Gustave Caillebotte bequest in 1894). Late recognition is the stuff of which legends are made, but what is so particular in this case is that the painting's deferred reception is not just linked to but also commanded by its subject matter and formal structure: *Les Femmes d'Alger* is above all a work about beholding, about the trauma engendered by a visual summons.

Circumstances played a role in this spectacular delay. To begin with the painting had almost no public life for thirty years. Until Doucet bought it from Picasso for a song in 1924—at the urging of André Breton and to the immediate regret of the artist—*Les Femmes d'Alger* had moved out of the artist's studio only once or twice, and then only during World War I: for two weeks in July 1916, in a semiprivate exhibition organized by the critic André Salmon at the Salon d'Antin (during which the painting acquired its present title), and possibly in the joint exhibition of Matisse's and Picasso's work in January–February 1918, organized by the dealer Paul Guillaume and with a catalogue prefaced by Guillaume Apollinaire. In the fall and winter of 1907, friends and visitors had seen the

painting in Picasso's studio immediately after its completion, but access to it had rapidly dwindled (because of Picasso's numerous moves, often to cramped quarters, and his understandable desire always to show the latest crop of his protean and ever-changing production, the canvas was rarely on view even for the circle of the artist's intimates, which accounts for the paucity of their comments). Once in Doucet's possession, the painting was visible only by appointment, until it was sold by his widow to a dealer in the fall of 1937. Immediately shipped to New York, it was then bought by the Museum of Modern Art, where it became the museum's most precious fixture—the end of *Les Femmes d'Alger*'s private life.

The literature roughly follows a similar pattern. The painting was not even specifically named in the rare early articles that devoted a passage to it (by Gelett Burgess in 1910, André Salmon in 1912, and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler in 1916 and 1920). Furthermore, it was only very rarely reproduced before its landing in New York: after Burgess's journalistic piece ("The Wild Men in Paris," in the May 1910 issue of the *Architectural Record*), its reproduction was not published until 1925, in the journal *La Révolution surréaliste* (by no means a bestseller), and to appear in a monograph on the artist it had to await Gertrude Stein's [2] *Picasso* of 1938. Shortly thereafter, Alfred H. Barr's *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art*, which functioned as the catalogue of the Museum of Modern Art's 1939 Picasso retrospective, began the process of *Les Femmes d'Alger*'s canonization. But Barr's seminal account, which received its definitive touch in 1951, when his text was revised for the publication of *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, and which became the standard view of the painting, consolidated rather than broke down the walls of resistance that had encircled the work since its inception. Barr's view was not fundamentally challenged until Leo Steinberg's (born 1920) groundbreaking essay "The Philosophical Brothel" appeared in 1972. No previous text had done as much to transform the status of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, and all subsequent studies are appendages to it.

## A "transitional picture"?

Before the publication of Steinberg's study, the consensus was that *Les Femmes d'Alger* was the "first Cubist painting" (and thus, as Barr puts it, a "transitional picture," perhaps more important for what it

1900–1900

▲ 1911, 1912

▲ 1927c

● 1960b





1 • Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, June–July 1907

Oil on canvas, 243.6 x 233.7 (80 x 78)

announced than as a work in itself). Barr had ignored the corollary of this notion in Kahnweiler's account, namely that the picture had been left unfinished, but this idea was nevertheless accepted by everyone else, and most authors marked it by criticizing the picture's "lack of unity." The stylistic discrepancy between the canvas's left and right sides was seen as a function of Picasso's rapid shift of interest from the archaic Iberian sculpture that had helped him finish his *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* [2] in the late summer of 1906 to

African art, which he had finally encountered with a new impact and coherence during a visit to the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro midway through the elaboration of *Les Femmes d'Alger*. The quest for sources did not stop there: Barr had named Cézanne, Matisse, and El Greco; others would add Gauguin, Ingres, and Manet.

Though Barr had published three of Picasso's preliminary studies for *Les Femmes d'Alger*, he had merely paid lip service to them and no attention at all to the many others already made available in





2 • Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Gertrude Stein*, late summer 1906

Oil on canvas, 100 x 81.3 (39 3/4 x 32)

Christian Zervos's *catalogue raisonné* of Picasso's work, then in progress. In its early state, the composition consisted of seven figures in a theatrical arrangement derived from the Baroque tradition, replete with the usual curtains opening onto a stage [3]. In the center, a clothed sailor was seated among five prostitutes, each of whom was turning her head toward an intruder, a medical student entering at the left holding a skull in his hand (replaced by a book in some studies). For Barr, this morbid scenario, which he saw as "a kind of *memento mori* [reminder of death] allegory or charade" on the wages of sin, could be all the more easily dispensed with since Picasso himself had quickly dropped it. In the final version, Barr wrote, "all implications of a moralistic contrast between virtue (the man with the skull) and vice (the man surrounded by food and woman) have been eliminated in favour of a purely formal figure composition, which as it develops becomes more and more dehumanized and abstract."

In his essay, Steinberg dismissed most of these views, which by then had turned into clichés. The picture could not be reduced to a "purely formal figure composition" that would make it (according to the rather unsophisticated view offered of Cubism at the time) a mere forerunner of things to come. Picasso had indeed abandoned the "*memento mori* allegory," but not the sexual thematics of the painting (which is undoubtedly why Steinberg borrowed as the title of his piece one of the first names given to the picture by

### Gertrude Stein (1874–1946)

The youngest child of an upper-middle-class, American-Jewish family, the writer Gertrude Stein spent her first years in Europe, her youth in Oakland, and her university time at Harvard and The Johns Hopkins Medical School, before joining her older brother Leo in Paris in the winter of 1904–5. Buying Matisse's *The Woman with a Hat* from the 1905 Salon des Indépendants, she and Leo began avidly to collect advanced painting and to entertain artists and writers at their home on the rue de Fleurus. Deeply influenced by her sense of modernist composition, which, following her understanding of Cézanne, she saw as creating a uniform emphasis, without internal hierarchy, center, or "frame," she determined to capture the "object as object" with each aspect of it equally compelling and alive: "Always and always, Must write the hymn of repetition." Between 1906 and 1911, corresponding to the development of Cubism, she put this formal principle to work in her massive novel *The Making of Americans*. By 1910, Leo had turned against Picasso and his Cubist "funny business," and by 1913 he had separated his half of their collection to move to Florence. Gertrude continued to live on the rue de Fleurus with her lifelong companion Alice B. Toklas. Her accounts of her special friendship with Picasso are found in *Matisse, Picasso and Gertrude Stein* (1933), *Picasso* (1938), and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933).

Picasso's friends, "Le Bordel philosophique" [The Philosophical Brothel]). Furthermore, *Les Femmes d'Alger*'s lack of stylistic unity was not an effect of haste but a deliberate strategy: it was a late decision, to be sure, but in keeping with the elimination of the two male figures and the adoption of an almost square, vertical format, less "scenic" than that of all the studies for the general composition of the picture. And the primitivizing appeal to African art was not just happenstance (Picasso had been introduced to African art by Matisse in 1906 [4]), months before his decision to shift the mask-like faces of the two *demoiselles* on the right from an "Iberian" to an "African" model [5]): it shared in the thematic organization of the painting, even if Picasso later denied its significance.

Rejecting Barr's "*memento mori*," Steinberg changed the terms of the allegory put aside by Picasso from those of "death versus hedonism" to those of "cool, detached learning versus the demands of sex." Both the book and the skull present in Picasso's studies indicate that the medical student is the one who does not participate; he does not even look at the *demoiselles*. As for the timid sailor, he is there to be initiated by the fearsome females. His androgyny in many sketches sharply contrasts with his phallic attribute; the *porron* (a wine flask with an erect spout) on the table. Soon the sailor disappeared and the student underwent a gender switch. In the completed canvas he is replaced by the standing nude opening the curtain on the left. Conversely, the bodies of several



Below left

4 • Photograph of Picasso in his studio in the Bateau-Lavoir, Paris, 1908

Below

5 • Pablo Picasso, *Study for the Head of the Crouching Demoiselle*, June–July 1907

Gouache on paper, 63 x 48 (24 1/4 x 18 3/4)

3 • Pablo Picasso, *Medical Student, Sailor, and Five Nudes in a Bordello* (composition study for *Les Femmes d'Alger*), March–April 1907. Crayon drawing, 47.6 x 76.2 (18 3/4 x 30)



1900–1909



*demoiselles* were masculine in many drawings. There is enough cumulative evidence, then, to determine that while he was working on the picture Picasso's thematic concern revolved around the primordial question of sexual difference, and that of the fear of sex. So his problem seems to have been how to hold onto this theme while relinquishing the allegory.

This is where the stylistic disjunction of the final canvas comes into play, and not only that but also the utter isolation of the five prostitutes vis-à-vis one another, and the suppression of clear spatial coordinates. (On close inspection, the discrepancies are even stronger than Barr had noted, and they do not concern only the right-hand "African" side of the picture: the hand of the standing *demoiselle* who replaced the student at the far left seems severed from her body, and the sketchbooks reveal, as Steinberg notes, that her immediate neighbor, most often read as standing, is in fact lying down even though she has been verticalized and made parallel to the picture's surface.) Whereas in the first scenario the characters react to the student's entrance and the spectator looks on from outside, in the finished painting "this rule of traditional narrative art yields to an anti-narrative counter-principle: neighboring figures share neither a common space nor a common action, do not communicate or interact, but relate singly, directly, to the spectator.... The event, the epiphany, the sudden entrance, is still the theme—but rotated through 90 degrees towards a viewer conceived as the picture's opposite pole." In other words, it is the work's lack of stylistic and scenic unity that binds the painting to the spectator: the core of the picture is the frightful gaze of the *demoiselles*, particularly those with the deliberately monstrous faces on the right. Their "Africanism," according to the ideology of the time that made Africa the "dark continent," is a device designed to fend off the beholder. (An old word derived from the Greek and meaning "having the power to avert evil" describes the intimidating glare of Picasso's nudes particularly well: it is *apotropaïc*.) The picture's complex structure, as William Rubin showed in the longest study ever devoted to the work (which emphasized Picasso's deep-seated death anxiety), concerns the link that ties Eros to Thanatos, that is, sex to death.

### The trauma of the gaze

- ▲ We are now moving into Freudian territory, a fairly recent step in the literature devoted to the painting. Several psychoanalytic scenarios dealing with the "primal scene" and the "castration complex" apply amazingly well to *Les Femmes d'Alger*. They help us understand both the suppression of the allegory and the brutality of the finished picture. One thinks, here, either of the remembered childhood dream of Freud's most famous patient, Sergei Pankejeff (1887–1979)—the "Wolf-Man" [6]—in which the boy found himself petrified as his window opened and he was stared at by motionless wolves (the dream being the aftereffect of the shock of the primal scene [his witnessing parental intercourse])—or of Freud's short text on the head of the Medusa, with all its multitude of mean-

ings. These include the notion that the Medusa's head is the female sex organ—the sight of which arouses castration anxiety in the young male; the image of castration itself (decapitation); and the denial of castration, on the one hand by a multiplication of penises (her hair consists of snakes) and, on the other, by its power to turn the spectator to stone, in other words, into an erect, albeit dead, phallus.

In front of Picasso's painting, too, the beholder is nailed to the floor by the whores who address him more violently, as Steinberg points out, than by any picture since Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. In switching from the "narrative" (allegory) to the "iconic" mode, to use the terms employed by Rubin, that is, from the historical tone of stories ("Once upon a time") to the personal threat ("Look at me; I'm watching you"), Picasso both revealed the fixity of the viewer's position as established by the monocular perspective on which Western painting had been based and, by recasting it as petrification, demonized it. The undiminished power of *Les Femmes d'Alger* lies in this very operation, called the "return of the repressed": in it, Picasso highlighted the contradictory libidinal forces at work in the very act of beholding, making of his whole picture the Medusa's head. Bordello pictures are part of a long tradition within the genre of erotic art (a tradition that Picasso knew well: he had long admired Degas's monotypes and for years had yearned to collect them—a dream he could fulfill only late in life). These soft-porn scenes are meant to gratify the voyeurism of male, heterosexual, art lovers. Picasso overthrows this tradition: interrupting the story, the gaze of his *demoiselles* challenges the (male) spectator by signifying to him that his comfortable position, outside the narrative scene, is not as secure as he might think. No wonder the painting was resisted for so long.

One of its early adversaries no doubt understood, at least partially, what was going on. Matisse was furious when he saw the painting (some accounts say he was in stitches, but this amounts to



6 • Sergei C. Pankejeff's sketch of his remembered childhood dream (c. 1910), published in Sigmund Freud's "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," 1918

▲ Introduction 1, 1900a





1900-1909

7 • Pablo Picasso, *Three Women*, 1908  
Oil on canvas, 200 x 178 (78 3/4 x 70 1/8)

the same thing). He was a bit like Poussin saying of Caravaggio (to whom we owe the best representation of Medusa's head, and who was criticized in his time for being unable to "compose a real story") that he had been "born to destroy painting." Undoubtedly, rivalry was a sting that sharpened Matisse's perception (just as it had stimulated Picasso's), for just a year and a half earlier Matisse had completed his breakthrough canvas *Le Bonheur de vivre*, whose thematic is in many ways very close to that of Picasso's picture (one detects in it the same conflictual imagery revolving around the castration complex). Matisse knew that this canvas (which Picasso saw every time he went to dinner at the house of Gertrude and Leo Stein) had strongly impressed the younger artist, notably for its syncretic cannibalizing of a whole array of historical sources. For Picasso, one of the most devastating challenges must have been the forceful way in which Matisse had co-opted Ingres's *The Turkish Bath*, which had struck both artists at the 1905 Salon d'Automne: how tame was the Ingrisme of his own Rose period, by comparison, particularly of *The Harem*, painted in Gosol in the summer of 1906, just a few months before he tackled *Les Femmes d'Alger* and only a few weeks before he "painted in" the face of Gertrude Stein's portrait! Meanwhile, Matisse had also thrown in another challenge: shortly after introducing Picasso to African art he had painted his *Blue Nude*, the first canvas ever to de-aestheticize the traditional motif of the female nude explicitly by way of "primitivism." And now Picasso was combining both acts of parricide against the Western tradition: juxtaposing contradictory sources into a medley that annulled their decorum and their historical significance, and at the same time borrowing from other cultures. In both *Le Bonheur de vivre* and *Les Femmes d'Alger*, the parricide was astutely linked to an Oedipal thematic, but Picasso, in focusing his attack on the very condition of beholding, had carried the struggle against mimesis much further.

### The crisis of representation

We can now return to the standard, pre-Steinberg assumption that *Les Femmes d'Alger* was the "first" Cubist painting. While certainly wrong if one reads early Cubism as a kind of geometric stylization of volumes, this assumption makes sense if Cubism is understood as a radical questioning of the rules of representation. In grafting an Iberian masklike face onto the bust of Gertrude Stein, in conceiving of a face as a given sign that could be borrowed from a vast repertory, Picasso had called the illusionistic conventions of depiction into question. But in *Les Femmes d'Alger* he pushed the idea that signs are migratory and combinatory, and that their signification depends upon their context, even further, though he did not fully explore it. This would be the work of Cubism as a whole, whose origin can then be located in *Three Women* of 1908 [7], in which Picasso strove to display a single signlike unit (the triangle) for every element of the painting, whatever it was supposed to depict. But several studies for the face of the crouching *démouille* at the lower right—the site of the most startling attack on the very idea of

beauty in relation to woman—reveal that he had sensed the endless metaphoric possibilities of the sign system he was inventing: in these studies, we can see that face is in the process of being transformed into a torso [5]. Yet these amorphic experiments were put aside and one had to wait for Picasso's second examination of African art in his collages, in 1912, for the full implication of his semiological impulse to be reached. Thus *Les Femmes d'Alger* was a traumatic event; and its profound effect was deferred for Picasso as well: it took him the whole adventure of Cubism to be able to account for what he had done.

#### FURTHER READING

William Rubin, "From 'Narrative' to 'Iconic' in Picasso: The Buried Allegory in *Bread and Fruit-dish on a Table* and the Role of *Les Femmes d'Alger*," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 65, no. 4, December 1983

William Rubin, "The Genesis of *Les Femmes d'Alger*," *Studies in Modern Art* (special *Les Femmes d'Alger* issue), Museum of Modern Art, New York, no. 3, 1994 (chronology by Judith Cousins and Hélène Seckel, critical anthology of early commentaries by Hélène Seckel)

Hélène Seckel (ed.), *Les Femmes d'Alger*, two volumes (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1988)

Leo Steinberg, "The Philosophical Brothel" (1972), second edition *October*, no. 44, Spring 1988

▲ 1906 ● 1903

▲ 1912



# 1911

Pablo Picasso returns his “borrowed” Iberian stone heads to the Louvre Museum in Paris from which they had been stolen: he transforms his primitivist style and with Georges Braque begins to develop Analytical Cubism.

**D**uring 1907, the year in which the poet-critic Guillaume Apollinaire employed him as a secretary, the young rascal G ry Pieret would regularly ask Apollinaire’s artist- and writer-friends if they would like anything from the Louvre. They assumed, of course, that he meant the Louvre Department Store. In fact, he meant the Louvre Museum, from which he had taken to stealing various items displayed in undervisited galleries.

It was on his return from one of these pilfering trips that Pieret offered two archaic Iberian stone heads to Picasso, who had discovered this type of sculpture in 1906 in Spain and had used it for his portrait of the American writer Gertrude Stein. Substituting the prismatic physiognomy of its carving—the heavily lidded, staring eyes; the continuous plane that runs the forehead into the bridge of the nose; the parallel ridges that form the mouth—for the sitter’s face, Picasso was convinced that this impassive mask was “truer” to Stein’s likeness than any faithfulness to her actual features could be. He was thus only too happy to acquire these talismanic objects; and “Pieret’s heads” went on to serve as the basis for the features of

• the three left-hand nudes in *Les D moiselles d’Avignon*.

But in 1911, when Pieret disastrously popped back up in the lives of both Apollinaire and Picasso, primitivism had been left behind in the artist’s development of Cubism, and thus the heads had long since vanished from his pictorial concerns, if not from the back of his cupboard. Picasso’s sudden problem was that at the end of August 1911 Pieret had taken his latest Louvre “acquisition” to the offices of *Paris Journal*, selling the newspaper his story about how easy it was to filch from the museum. Since the Louvre had just suffered, one week earlier, the theft of its most precious object, Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa*, and a dragnet was being set up by the Paris police, Apollinaire panicked, alerted Picasso, and the two of them handed Picasso’s Iberian heads over to the newspaper, which, publishing this turn of events as well, led the authorities to both poet and painter. They were taken in for questioning, Apollinaire being held far longer than Picasso, but were eventually released without charge.

## The rise of analysis

The artistic distance that separated Picasso in late 1911 from the primitivism for which the heads had served him earlier was enormous.

The Iberian heads and African masks that Picasso had used as models in 1907 and 1908 had been a means of “distortion,” to use the term of art historian Carl Einstein when, in 1929, he tried to understand the development of Cubism. But this “simplistic” distortion, Einstein wrote, gave way “to a period of analysis and fragmentation and finally to a period of synthesis.” *Analysis* was also the word applied to the shattering of the surfaces of objects and their amalgamation to the space around them when Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Picasso’s dealer during Cubism’s development, sat down to write the most serious early account of the movement, *The Rise of Cubism* (1920). And so the term *analytical* got appended to Cubism, and “Analytical Cubism” became the rubric under which to contemplate the transformation Picasso and Georges Braque had achieved in 1911. For by that time, they had swept away the unified perspective of centuries of naturalistic painting and had invented instead a pictorial language that would translate coffee cups and wine bottles, faces and torsos, guitars and pedestal tables into so many tiny, slightly tilted planes.

To look at any work from this “analytical” phase of Cubism, Picasso’s *Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler* of 1910 [1], for instance, or Braque’s *The Portuguese (The Emigrant)* from 1911–12 [2], is to observe several consistent characteristics. First, there is a strange contraction of the painters’ palettes, from the full color spectrum to an abstemious monochrome—Braque’s picture is all ochers and umbers like a sepia-toned photograph; Picasso’s, mainly pewter and silver with a few glints of copper. Second, there is an extreme flattening of the visual space as though a roller had pressed all the volume out of the bodies, bursting their contours open in the process so that what little surrounding space remains could flow effortlessly inside their eroded boundaries. Third, there is the visual vocabulary used to describe the physical remains of this explosive process.

This, given its proclivity for the geometrical, supports the “Cubist” appellation. It consists, on the one hand, of shallow planes set more or less parallel to the picture surface, their slight tilt a matter of the patches of light and shade that flicker over the entire field, darkening one edge of a given plane only to illuminate the other but not doing this in any way consistent with a single light source. On the other, it establishes a linear network that



scores the entire surface with an intermittent grid: at certain points, identifiable as the edges of described objects—Kahnweiler's jacket lapels or his jawline, for instance, or the Portuguese sitter's sleeve or the neck of his guitar; at others, the edges of planes that, scaffoldlike, seem merely to be structuring the space; and at still others, a vertical or horizontal trace that attaches to nothing at all but continues the grid's repetitive network. Finally, there are the small grace-notes of naturalistic details, such as the single arc of Kahnweiler's mustache or the double one of his watch-chain.

Given the exceedingly slight information we can gain from this about either the figures or their settings, the explanations that grew up around Picasso's and Braque's Cubism at this time are extremely curious. For whether it was Apollinaire in his essays collected as *The Cubist Painters* (1913), or the artists Albert Gleizes (1881–1953) and Jean Metzinger (1883–1956) in their book *On Cubism* (1912), or any of the critics and poets gathered around the movement, such as André Salmon (1881–1969) or Maurice Raynal (1884–1954), all the writers attempted to justify this swerve away from realism by arguing that what was being delivered to the viewer was *more* not less knowledge of the depicted object. Stating that natural vision is impoverished since we can never see the whole of a three-dimensional object from any single vantage point—the most we see of a cube, for example, is three of its faces—they argued that Cubism overcomes this handicap by breaking with a single perspective to show the sides and back simultaneously with the front, so that we apprehend the thing from everywhere, grasping it conceptually as a composite of the views we would have if we actually moved around it. Positing the superiority of conceptual knowledge over merely perceptual realism, these writers inevitably gravitated toward the language of science, describing the break with perspective as a move toward non-Euclidean geometry, or the simultaneity of distinct spatial positions as a function of the fourth dimension.

### The laws of painting as such

Kahnweiler, who had exhibited the 1908 Braque landscapes that gave Cubism its name (the journalist-critic Louis Vauxcelles wrote that Braque had reduced “everything to geometric schemas, to cubes”), and who had been active as Picasso's dealer since 1909, had a very different argument to make about the inner workings of Cubism, one far easier to reconcile with how the paintings actually look. Cut off by the outbreak of World War I from his Paris gallery and the pictorial movement he had followed so closely, Kahnweiler used his time in Switzerland to reflect on the meaning of Cubism, composing his explanation in 1915–16.

Arguing that Cubism was exclusively concerned with bringing about the unity of the pictorial object, *The Rise of Cubism* defines this unity as the necessary fusion of two seemingly irreconcilable opposites: the depicted volumes of “real” objects and the flatness of the painter's own physical object (just as “real” as anything in the world before the artist), which is the canvas plane of the picture. Reasoning that the pictorial tool to represent volume had always



Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918)

Born the illegitimate son of a member of the lesser Polish nobility, Guillaume Albert Apollinaire de Kostrowitzky grew up on the French Riviera among the cosmopolitan *demi-monde*. At seventeen, deeply affected by the poets Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, he composed a handwritten anarcho-symbolist “newspaper” filled with his own poems and articles. Apollinaire soon became an active figure in a Parisian avant-garde that included Alfred Jarry and André Salmon, and he met Picasso in 1903. Together with Salmon and Max Jacob, he formed the group known as the *bande à Picasso* (the Picasso gang). Having started to write art criticism in 1905, he steadily campaigned for advanced painting, publishing *The Cubist Painters* in 1913, the same year in which he published the major collection of his poems *Alcools*. At the outbreak of World War I, Apollinaire enlisted in the French Army and was sent to the front in early 1915. From there, he mailed a stream of postcards to his friends containing his notes and *calligrammes*, the typographically experimental poems he published in 1918.

Hit by shrapnel in the trenches in early 1916, Apollinaire was trepanned and returned to Paris. In 1917, he delivered the lecture “L'esprit nouveau et les poètes,” and in 1918 he staged the play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, both of them anticipating the aesthetics of Surrealism. Weakened by his wounds, he succumbed to an influenza epidemic that swept Paris in November 1918.

been the shading that brings forms into illusionistic relief, and that shading was a matter of the gray- or tonal-scale alone, Kahnweiler saw the logic of banishing color from the Cubist “analysis” and of solving the problem in part by using the shading tool against its own grain: creating the lowest possible relief so that depicted volume would be far more reconcilable with the flat surface. Further, he explained the logic of piercing the envelopes of closed volumes in order to override the gaps opened up between the edges of objects and thus to be able to declare the unbroken continuity of the canvas plane. If he ended by declaring that “this new language has given painting an unprecedented freedom,” this was not as an argument about conceptual mastery over the world's empirical data—as in Apollinaire's notion of Cubism keeping up with



1910-1919



1 • Pablo Picasso, *Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Fall-Winter 1910*  
Oil on canvas, 100.6 x 72.8 (39 1/2 x 28 3/4)



modern science—but one of securing the autonomy and internal logic of the picture object.

This explanation, dismissing extra-pictorial motivations for Cubism, accorded with the understanding of those who used the new style, as Piet Mondrian would, as the basis for developing a purely abstract art. Not that Mondrian was disengaged from the world of modernity, such as developments in science and industry, but he believed that for a painter to be modern he needed first and foremost to understand the logic of his own domain and to make this understanding evident in his work. Such a theory would later emerge as the doctrine of “modernism” (as opposed to modernity) that the American critic Clement Greenberg would enunciate in the early sixties by arguing that modernist painting had adopted the approach of scientific rationalism and of Enlightenment logic by limiting its practice to the area of “its own competence” and thus—exhibiting “what was unique and irreducible in each particular art”—to demonstrating the laws of painting rather than those of nature.

It is not surprising, then, that Greenberg’s discussion of how Cubism developed would reinforce Kahnweiler’s. Tracing an unbroken progression toward the compression of pictorial space, beginning with *Les Femmes d’Alger* and ending with the 1912 invention of collage, Greenberg saw Analytical Cubism as the increasing fusion of two types of flatness: the “depicted flatness” by which the tilted planes shoved the fragmented objects closer and closer to the surface; and the “literal flatness” of that surface itself. If by 1911 in a picture such as Braque’s *The Portuguese* [2], Greenberg said, these two types of flatness threatened to have become indistinguishable, so that the grid would seem to be articulating only one surface and one flatness, the Cubists responded by adding illusionistic devices, only now ones that would “undeceive the eye,” rather than, as in traditional practice, continuing to fool it. Such devices consisted of things like a depicted “nail” seeming to pierce the top of a canvas so as fictively to cast its shadow onto the surface “beneath” it; or they are to be found in the stenciled lettering of *The Portuguese*, which, by demonstrably sitting on top of the canvas surface (the result of the letters’ semimechanical application), pushes the little patches of shading and the barely tilted geometric shapes back into the field of depicted relief just “below” that surface.

### A mountain to climb

In pointing to the fact that Braque adopted these devices earlier than Picasso—not only the stenciled lettering and the nails illusionistically tacking the whole canvas to the studio wall but also the wood-graining patterns employed by house painters—Greenberg set up an internal competition between the two artists, thereby rupturing their “cordée,” or self-proclaimed posture of having been roped together like mountaineers as they explored their new pictorial terrain (their collaboration was so shared that they often did not sign their own paintings). This vision of a race toward flatness was further enhanced by the question of which of the two first



2 • Georges Braque, *The Portuguese (The Emigrant)*, Fall 1911–early 1912  
Oil on canvas, 114.6 x 81.6 (45 1/8 x 32 1/8)

internalized the lessons of late Cézanne by adopting the practice of visual slippage between adjacent elements (called *passage*, in French) that was an early version of the Cubist piercing of the spatial envelopes of objects.

Yet as our eyes become increasingly accustomed to this group of paintings, we realize that the works of the two men are consistently differentiated by the greater concern for transparency in Braque’s and the denser, more tactile quality of Picasso’s—something underscored by the latter’s interest in exploring the possibilities of Cubism for sculpture. This compressed sense of density, this interest in the experience of touch, made art historian Leo Steinberg protest against the merging of the two artists’ concerns and thus the blurring of our vision of individual pictures.

Indeed, Picasso’s overwhelming concern with a vestigial kind of depth—manifested most dramatically in the landscapes he painted in Spain at Horta de Ebro in 1909 [3]—makes the whole schema of Cubism’s development by a progressive flattening of pictorial space seem peculiarly incomplete. For in these works, where we seem to be looking upward—houses ascending a hill toward the top of a mountain, for example, their splayed-apart roof and wall planes

▲ 1913, 1917, 1944a

● 1942a, 1960b

■ 1907, 1912

▲ 1907, 1960b





3 • Pablo Picasso, *Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro, Summer 1909*  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 81.5 (25 1/4 x 31 3/4)



4 • Pablo Picasso, *Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier), Spring 1910*  
Oil on canvas, 100.3 x 73.6 (39 1/2 x 29)

1910–1919

allying them with the frontal picture surface—and yet, in total contradiction, to be precipitously plunging downward through the full-blown spatial chasm opened between the houses, it is not flatness that is at issue but quite another matter. This could be called the rupture between visual and tactile experience, something that had obsessed nineteenth-century psychology with the problem of how the separate pieces of sensory information could be unified into a single perceptual manifold.

This problem enters the writing on Cubism as well, as when Gleizes and Metzinger say in *On Cubism* that “the convergence which perspective teaches us to represent cannot evoke the idea of depth,” so that “to establish pictorial space, we must have recourse to tactile and motor sensations.” However, the idea of a simultaneous spatial composite, the solution they thought Cubism had reached, was very far from Picasso’s results at Horta, where, as ▲ Gertrude Stein insisted, the style was born. For the Horta paintings tear the composite apart. They make depth something tactile, a matter of bodily sensation, a vertiginous plunge down through the center of the work. And they make vision something veil-like (and thus strangely compressed to the flatness of a screen); the array of shapes hung always parallel to our plane of vision to form that shimmering, curtainlike veil that James Joyce called the “diaphane.”

Thus, if for his part Picasso was interested in late Cézanne, his focus was on something different from Braque’s interest in the reconciliatory effect of *passage*. It was, instead, on the effect of divisiveness to be found in Cézanne’s late paintings, as when in many still lifes the objects on the table hang decorously in visual space but, as the floor on which that table sits approaches the position of the painter/viewer, the boards seem to give way beneath our feet. In doing so, the works dramatize the separation of sensory channels of experience—visual versus tactile—thereby bringing the painter up against the problem of visual skepticism, namely that the only tool at his or her command is vision, but that depth is something vision can never directly see. The poet and critic Maurice Raynal had touched on this skepticism in 1912 when he referred to “Berkeley’s idealism” and spoke of the “inadequacy” and “error” of painting dependent on vision. As we have seen, the consistent position of such a critic was to substitute “conception” for vision, and thus “to fill in a gap in our seeing.” Picasso, however, seemed not to be interested in filling in this gap, but instead, in exacerbating it, like a sore that will not heal.

Unlike Braque’s attention to still life, Picasso therefore returned again and again to the subject of portraiture. There he pursued the logic of the way his sitters—his lovers and closest friends—were fated to vanish from his tactile connection to them behind the visual veil of the “diaphane” with its frontalized shapes; but at the same time he expressed his dismay at this fact by the display of gratuitously “helpless” pockets of shading, a velvety voluptuousness increasingly detached from the volumes they would formerly have described. This is to be found behind the right arm and breast of Fanny Tellier (the sitter for *Girl with a Mandolin* [4]) or in the area around Kahnweiler’s chin and ear.





5 • Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912

Oil and pasted oilcloth on canvas, surrounded with rope, 27 x 34.9 (10% x 13%)

And nowhere is this disjunction between the visual and the tactile as absolute and as economically stated than in the *Still Life with Chair Caning* [5] that Picasso painted in the spring of 1912, near the very end of Analytical Cubism. Affixing a length of rope around the edge of an oval canvas, Picasso creates a little still life that appears both to be set within the carved frame of a normal painting, and thus arranged in relation to the vertical field of our plane of vision, and to be laid out on the surface of an oval table, the carved edge of which is presented by the same rope and the covering for which is given literally by a glued-on section of printed oilcloth. Like the downward plunge at Horta, the table-top view is presented as one alternative here, a horizontal in direct opposition to the "diaphane's" vertical, a bodily perspective declaring the tactile as separate from the visual.

Braque's commitment to transparency declares his fidelity to the visuality of the visual arts, his obedience to the tradition of painting-as-diaphane. His *Homage to J. S. Bach* (1911–12) places a violin (signaled by the telltale "f"-holes and the scroll of its neck

on a table behind a music-stand holding the score titled "J. S. BACH" (a slant rhyme on Braque's name). Because of the patchy shading, each object reads clearly behind the other and the still life falls before our eyes like a lacy curtain.

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# 1912

Cubist collage is invented amid a set of conflicting circumstances and events: the continuing inspiration of Symbolist poetry, the rise of popular culture, and Socialist protests against the war in the Balkans.

If modernism consistently allied itself with “the shock of the new,” the form this took in poetry was expressed by Guillaume Apollinaire in the summer of 1912 as he abruptly changed the title of his forthcoming book of poems from the Symbolist-sounding *Eau de vie* to the more popularly jazzy *Alcools* and hastily wrote a new work to add to the collection. This poem, “Zone,” registered the jolt that modernity had delivered to Apollinaire by celebrating the linguistic pleasures of billboards and street signs.

Apollinaire’s announcement came at the very moment when a former literary avant-garde was transforming itself into the establishment through the newly formed magazine *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (N. R. F.) and its championing of writers such as André Gide, Paul Valéry, and most importantly—with Albert Thibaudet’s scholarly study now devoted to him—Stéphane Mallarmé. But what Apollinaire was signaling was that the barricade that Symbolism—and Mallarmé in particular—had tried to erect between newspaper journalism and poetry had now broken open. One had only to look at “Zone” to see this. “The handbills, catalogs, posters that sing out loud and clear,” it proclaims, “that’s the morning’s poetry, and for prose there are the newspapers ... tabloids lurid with police reports.”

Newspapers, which “Zone” celebrated as a source for literature, proved the turning-point for Cubism as well, particularly Picasso’s, as, in the fall of 1912, he transformed Analytical Cubism into the new medium of collage. If collage literally means “gluing,” Picasso had, of course, already begun this process earlier in the year with his *Still Life with Chair Caning*, an Analytical Cubist painting onto which he had glued a swathe of mechanically printed oilcloth. But the mere attachment of foreign matter to an unchanged pictorial conception—as in the case of the Futurist painter Gino Severini, who, in 1912, fixed real sequins onto his frenetic depictions of dancers—was quite distinct from the path Cubism was to follow once Braque introduced [1], and Picasso took up, the integration of relatively large-scale paper shapes onto the surfaces of Cubist drawings.

With this development—called *papier collé*—the entire vocabulary of Cubism suddenly changed. Gone were the little canted planes with fractured patches of modeling, sometimes attached at their corners, sometimes floating freely or gravitating toward a

section of the picture’s gridded surface. In their place now were papers of various shapes and descriptions: wallpapers, newspapers, bottle labels, musical scores, even bits of the artist’s old, discarded drawings. Overlaying each other the way papers would on a desk or work table, these sheets align themselves with the frontality of the supporting surface; and beyond signaling the surface’s frontal condition, they also declare it to be paper-thin, only as deep as the distance from the topmost sheet to the ones below it.

Visually, however, the operations of *papier collé* work against this simple literalism, as when, for instance, several papers combine to force the background sheet to read as the frontmost element by defining it—against the grain of its material position—as the surface of the leading object on the still life’s table, a wine bottle, perhaps, or a musical instrument [2]. The visual play of such a “figure-ground reversal” had also been a staple of much of Analytical Cubism. But collage now went beyond this into the declaration of a rupture with what could be called—using the semiological term for it—the “iconic” itself.

Visual representation had always presumed that its domain was the “iconic,” in the sense of the image’s possessing some level of resemblance to the thing it portrayed. A matter of “looking like,” resemblance could survive many levels of stylization and remain intact as a coherent system of representation: that square attached to that inverted triangle joined to those zigzag shapes producing, say, the visual identities of head, torso, and legs. What seemed to have nothing to do with the iconic was the domain the semiologists call “symbolic,” by which they mean the wholly arbitrary signs (because in no way resembling the referent) that make up, for example, language: the words *dog* and *cat* bearing no visible or audible connection to the meanings they represent or to the objects to which those meanings refer.

## Swept away

It was by adopting just this arbitrary form of the “symbolic” that Picasso’s collage declared its break with a whole system of representation based on “looking like.” The clearest example brings this about by deploying two newspaper shapes in such a way as to declare that they were cut, jigsaw-puzzle fashion, from a single



original sheet [2]. One of these fragments sits within a passage of charcoal drawing to establish the solid face of a violin, the paper's lines of type functioning as a stand-in for the grained wood of the instrument. The other, however, gravitating to the upper right of the collage, declares itself not the continuation of its "twin" but, instead, the contradictory opposite, since *this* fragment's lines of type now appear to assume the kind of broken or scumbled color through which painters have traditionally indicated light-filled atmosphere, thereby organizing the newsprint piece as a sign for "background" in relation to the violin's "figure."

▲ Using what semiologists would call a "paradigm"—a binary opposition through which each half of the pair gains its meaning by *not* signifying the other—the collage's manipulation of this pair declares that what any element in the work will mean will be entirely a function of a set of negative contrasts rather than the positive identification of "looking like." For even if the two elements are literally cut from the same cloth, the oppositional system into which they are now bound contrasts the meaning of one—opaque, frontal, objective—with that of the other—transparent, luminous, amorphous. Picasso's collage thus makes the elements of the work function according to the structural-linguistic definition of the sign itself as "relative, opposite, and negative." In doing so, collage seems not only to have taken on the visually arbitrary con-



2 • Pablo Picasso, *Violin*, 1912  
Pasted paper and charcoal, 62 x 47 (24 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ )

dition of linguistic signs but also to be participating in (or, according to the Russian-born linguist Roman Jakobson, even initiating) a revolution in Western representation that goes beyond the visual to extend to the literary, and past that into the political economy.

### Off the gold standard

For if the meaning of the arbitrary sign is established by convention rather than what might seem the natural truth of "looking like," it can, in turn, be likened to the token money of modern banking systems, the value of which is a function of law rather than a coin's "real" worth as a given measure of gold or silver or a note's redeemable relation to precious metal. Literary scholars have thus set up a parallel between naturalism as an aesthetic condition and the gold standard as an economic system in which monetary signs, like literary ones, were understood to be transparent to the reality that underwrote them.

If the point of this parallel is to prepare the literary critic for the modernist departure from the gold standard and its adoption of "token" signs—arbitrary in themselves and thus convertible to any value set by a signifying matrix or set of laws—no one effected this break with linguistic naturalism as radically or as early as did Stéphane Mallarmé, within whose poetry and prose the linguistic



1 • Georges Braque, *Fruit Dish and Glass*, 1912  
Charcoal and pasted paper, 62 x 44.5 (24 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ )

▲ Introduction 3

▲ Introduction 3, 1915



sign was treated as wildly “polysemic,” or productive of multiple—and often opposed—meanings.

Just to stay with the term *gold*, Mallarmé used it not only to explore the phenomenon of the metal and its related concepts of richness or luminosity but also to take advantage of the fact that the word in French for gold (“*or*”) is identical to the conjunction translated as “now”; it is thus productive of the kind of temporal or logical deflection of the flow of language that the poet went on to exploit, not just at the level of meaning (that is, the signified) but also at that of the material support for the sign (the signifier). Thus in the poem titled “Or” this element appears everywhere, both freestanding and embedded within larger signs, a signifier that sometimes folds over onto its signified—“*trésor*”—but more often one that does not—“*dehor*,” “*fantasmagorique*,” “*horizon*,” “*maïore*,” “*hors*”—seeming thereby to demonstrate that it is the very uncontrollability of the physical spread of *or* that makes it a signifier truly cut free of the gold standard of even its most shifting signified.

There is of course a paradox in using this example within the larger account of modernity—including that of Picasso’s collage—as something established by the arbitrariness of the token-money economy. For Mallarmé deploys the very marker of what token-money set out to replace, namely (outmoded) gold, to celebrate the freely circulating meaning of the new system. Yet the value he continues to accord to gold is not that of the old naturalism but rather that of the sensuous material of poetic language in which nothing is transparent to meaning without passing through the carnality of the signifier’s flesh, its visual outline, its music: /gold/ = sound; *or* = *sonore*. This was the poetic gold that Mallarmé explicitly contrasted with what he called the *numéraire*, or empty cash value, of newspaper journalism in which, in his eyes, language had reached its zero point of being a mere instrument of reporting.

### Prospecting on the fringes

The interpretation of Picasso’s collage is, within art-historical scholarship, a battleground in which various parts of the foregoing discussion are pitted against one another. For on the one hand there is the bond between Picasso and Apollinaire, the painter’s great friend and most active apologist, which would support the model of Picasso’s having a “make it new” (or, as Apollinaire called it, an *esprit nouveau*) attitude toward journalism and the newspaper—almost, as it were, throwing “the morning’s poetry” in Mallarmé’s face. Emphasizing Apollinaire’s exultation in what was modern, both in the sense of what was most ephemeral and what was most at odds with traditional forms of experience, this position would ally Picasso’s use of newsprint and other cheap papers with a willful attack on the fine-arts medium of oil painting and its drive for both permanence and compositional unity. The highly unstable condition of newsprint condemns collage from the outset to the transitory; while the procedures for laying out, pinning, and gluing *papiers collés* resemble commercial design strategies more than they do the protocols of the fine arts.



3 • Pablo Picasso, *Table with Bottle, Wine Glass, and Newspaper*, Fall–Winter 1912  
Pasted paper, charcoal, and gouache, 62 x 48 (24 3/4 x 18 3/4)

This position would also see Picasso, like Apollinaire, as being caught up in a drive to find aesthetic experience at the margins of what was socially regulated, since it was only from that place that the advanced artist could construct an image of freedom. As the art historian Thomas Crow has argued, this drive has consistently led the avant-garde toward “low” forms of entertainment and unregimented spaces (for Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec [1864–1901] this had been the twilight-zone nightclub; for Picasso, it was the working man’s café), even though, ironically, such prospecting has always ended by opening up such spaces for further socialization and commodification by the very forces the advanced artist sought to escape.

If these arguments posit Picasso’s embrace of both the “low” and the “modern” values of the newspaper, there are also those commentators who picture his reasons for exploiting this material as primarily political. Picasso, they say, cut the columns of newsprint so that we can read the articles he selected, many of which in the fall of 1912 reported on the war then raging in the Balkans. This is true, of course, at the level of the headlines—an early collage [3] presents us with “*Un Coup de Thé[âtre], La Bulgarie, La Serbie, Le Monténégro sign[ent]!*” (“A Turn of Events, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro Sign”)—but also in the small type where battlefield reports are grouped around a café table that faces accounts of a social antiwar rally in Paris [4]. In giving what she sees as Picasso’s reasons for





1910-1919

4 • Pablo Picasso, *Glass and Bottle of Suze*, 1912  
 Pasted paper, gouache, and charcoal, 65.4 x 50.2 (25 7/8 x 19 3/4)





5 • Pablo Picasso, *Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, and Newspaper*, 1913  
Charcoal and pasted and pinned paper, 63 x 49 (24 7/8 x 19 1/4)

this, art historian Patricia Leighton has argued, variously, that he is bringing the reader/viewer into contact with a politically charged reality in the Balkans; or that he is presenting the reader/viewer with the kind of heated discussion that would be going on in a Parisian café where workers, unable to afford a newspaper subscription, would go for their daily news; or again, that Picasso is taking apart the managed cacophony of the newspaper—with its interests in serving up news as so many disjointed entertainments—and is using collage as a means of “counterdiscourse” that will have the power to rearrange the separate stories into a coherent account of capital’s manipulation of the social field.

With these propositions we have come progressively further away from the idea of collage as performing a rupture with an older naturalistic, “iconic” system of representation. For whether we imagine Picasso deploying newspaper reports to picture a faraway reality, or using them to depict people conversing in a café, or making them into a coherent ideological picture where previously there had been nothing but confusion, we still think of visual signs as connecting directly to the things in the world they are supposed to be depicting. Picasso’s only innovation would be, then, to replace his disputants with speech-balloons for their arguments as he seats them with perfect representational decorum around a more or less conventionally drawn café table. We have, that is, an example of the politically committed artist (although Picasso’s

politics during this period are themselves open to dispute), but we have lost Picasso as the artistic innovator at the level of importance to the whole history of representation with whom we were engaging at the outset.

This is where the claims of Mallarmé begin to challenge those of Apollinaire, even the Apollinaire who seemed to respond to Picasso’s collage by inventing his own fusion of the verbal and the visual in the *calligrammes* he began to fashion in 1914. For constellating written signs into graphic images, the *calligrammes* become doubly “iconic”: the letters forming the graphic shape of a pocket watch, for example, merely reinforce at the level of the visual what they express in textual form: “It’s five to noon, at last!” And if they thereby take on the graphic excitement of advertisements or product logos, the *calligrammes* nonetheless betray what is most radical in Picasso’s challenge to representation: his refusal of the unambiguous “icon” in favor of the endlessly mutational play of the “symbol.”

Like Mallarmé’s mutational play, where nothing is ever just one thing—as when signifiers divide, doubling “son or” (his or her gold) with “son or” (the sound “or” and by implication the sonority of poetry)—Picasso’s signs mutate visually by folding over onto one another to produce the oppositional pair of the paradigm. As in the earlier *Violin*, this is apparent in the *Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, and Newspaper* [5], where a toqueli-like shape, cut from a sheet of wallpaper, reads as *transparency* by articulating both the lip of the wine glass and its liquid contents, while below, the upside-down silhouette left by the “toque’s” excision from the sheet registers the *opacity* of the stem and base of the object, declaring itself a figure (no matter how ghostly) against the wallpaper’s tablecloth ground. The paradigm is perfectly expressed, as the signifiers—identical in shape—produce each other’s meaning, their opposition in space (right side up/upside down) echoing their semantic reversal.

If the play of visual meaning in the collages is thus mutational, the textual play mobilized by Picasso’s use of newsprint is also cut free from the fixity of any one “speaker” to whose voice, or opinion, or ideological position we might attribute it. For no sooner do we decide that Picasso has cut an item from the financial pages to denounce the exploitation of the worker, and thereby to “speak” through the means of this clipping, than we have to remember that Apollinaire, from his perch as writer for a half-fraudulent financial magazine, was famous for handing out spurious advice about the stock market and that the voice the collage plants here could just as easily be “his.”

Picasso had, indeed, let Mallarmé himself speak from the surfaces of various of these collages, as when “*Au Bon Marché*” doubles a voice like Fernande Olivier’s (Picasso’s ex-mistress)—speaking of white sales and a trousseau—with the various voices that Mallarmé used as pen-names in his elegant fashion magazine *La Dernière Mode*, or when the headline *Un coup de dés* sounds the title of Mallarmé’s most radical poem: “*Un coup de dés.*”

Much has been made of Picasso’s recourse to the models of dis-

▲ 1907



insisted, however, that it was a particular mask in Picasso's collection that "opened these painters' eyes." This mask from the Ivory Coast tribe called Grebo is a collection of "paradigms."

Picasso's own venture into constructed sculpture shows the effect of the Grebo example. Made of sheet metal, string, and wire, ▲ his *Guitar* of 1912 [6] establishes the instrument's shape through a single plane of metal from which the sound-hole projects, much like the eyes of the Grebo mask. Each plane hovers against the relief-plane as figure against ground, a form of paradigm which the earlier *Violin* had so brilliantly explored. The earliest collage to reflect the lesson of the Grebo mask is *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Glass* [7], in which each collage piece reads as hovering against the flat sheet of the background, the black crescent of the guitar's lowest edge doubling as its shadow cast on the supporting table; its sound-hole seeming to project as a solid tube in front of the instrument's body.

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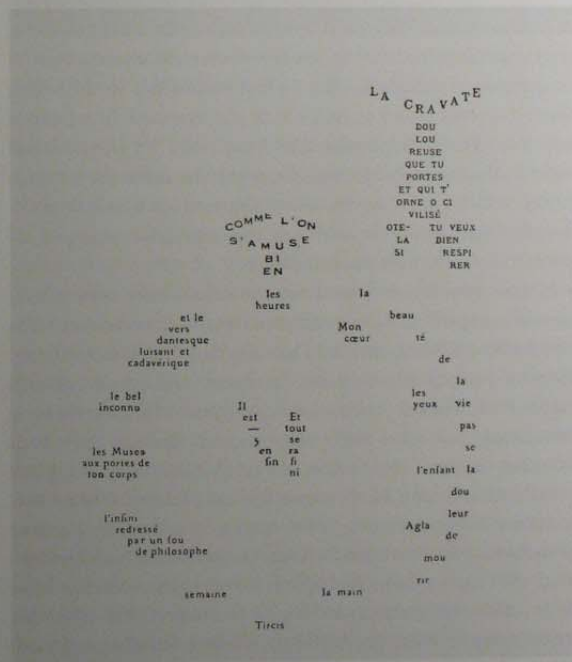
7 • Pablo Picasso, *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Glass*, Fall 1912

Pasted paper, gouache, and charcoal, 47.9 x 36.5 (18 3/4 x 14 1/4)



6 • Construction mounted in Picasso's studio at 5 bis, rue Schoelcher, 1913

Includes cardboard maquette for *Guitar* (destroyed)



8 • Guillaume Apollinaire, "La Cravate et la montre," 1914

From *Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre, 1913-16, Part I: Ondes*, 1925

1910-1919



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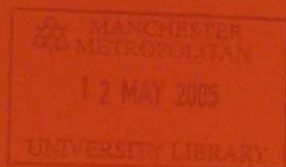
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To Nikos Stangos (1936–2004), in memoriam

With love, admiration, and grief, we dedicate this book to Nikos Stangos, great editor, poet, and friend, whose belief in this project both instigated and sustained it through the course of its development.

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- 40 Poststructuralism and deconstruction

## 1900–1909

- 52 **1900a** Sigmund Freud publishes *The Interpretation of Dreams*: in Vienna, the rise of the expressive art of Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, and Oskar Kokoschka coincides with the emergence of psychoanalysis.
- 57 **1900b** Henri Matisse visits Auguste Rodin in his Paris studio but rejects the elder artist's sculptural style.
- 64 **1903** Paul Gauguin dies in the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific: the recourse to tribal art and primitivist fantasies in Gauguin influences the early work of André Derain, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.  
box • The exotic and the naive
- 70 **1906** Paul Cézanne dies at Aix-en-Provence in southern France; following the retrospectives of Vincent van Gogh and Georges Seurat the preceding year, Cézanne's death casts Postimpressionism as the historical past, with Fauvism as its heir.  
box • Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury Group
- 78 **1907** With the stylistic inconsistencies and primitivist impulses of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Pablo Picasso launches the most formidable attack ever on mimetic representation.  
box • Gertrude Stein

- 85 **1908** Wilhelm Worringer publishes *Abstraction and Empathy*, which contrasts abstract art with representational art as a withdrawal from the world versus an engagement with it: German Expressionism and English Vorticism elaborate this psychological polarity in distinctive ways.

- 90 **1909** F. T. Marinetti publishes the first Futurist manifesto on the front page of *Le Figaro* in Paris: for the first time the avant-garde associates itself with media culture and positions itself in defiance of history and tradition.  
box • Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey

## 1910–1919

- 100 **1910** Henri Matisse's *Dance II* and *Music* are condemned at the Salon d'Automne in Paris: in these pictures, Matisse pushes his concept of the "decorative" to an extreme, creating an expansive visual field of color that is difficult to behold.
- 106 **1911** Pablo Picasso returns his "borrowed" Iberian stone heads to the Louvre Museum in Paris from which they had been stolen: he transforms his primitivist style and with Georges Braque begins to develop Analytical Cubism.  
box • Guillaume Apollinaire
- 112 **1912** Cubist collage is invented amid a set of conflicting circumstances and events: the continuing inspiration of Symbolist poetry, the rise of popular culture, and Socialist protests against the war in the Balkans.
- 118 **1913** Robert Delaunay exhibits his "Windows" paintings in Berlin: the initial problems and paradigms of abstraction are elaborated across Europe.

- 125 **1914** Vladimir Tatlin develops his constructions and Marcel Duchamp proposes his readymades, the first as a transformation of Cubism, the second as a break with it; in doing so, they offer complementary critiques of the traditional mediums of art.  
box • The "Peau de l'ours"

- 130 **1915** Kazimir Malevich shows his Suprematist canvases at the "0,10" exhibition in Petrograd, thus bringing the Russian Formalist concepts of art and literature into alignment.

- 135 **1916a** In Zurich, the international movement of Dada is launched in a double reaction to the catastrophe of World War I and the provocations of Futurism and Expressionism.  
box • Dada journals

- 142 **1916b** Paul Strand enters the pages of Alfred Stieglitz's magazine *Camera Work*: the American avant-garde forms itself around a complex relationship between photography and the other arts.  
box • The Armory Show

- 148 **1917** After two years of intense research, Piet Mondrian breaks through to abstraction, an event immediately followed by the launching of *De Stijl*, the earliest avant-garde journal devoted to the cause of abstraction in art and architecture.

- 154 **1918** Marcel Duchamp paints *Tu m'*; his last ever painting summarizes the departures undertaken in his work, such as the use of chance, the promotion of the readymade, and photography's status as an "index."  
box • Rose Sélavy

- 160 **1919** Pablo Picasso has his first solo exhibition in Paris in thirteen years: the onset of pastiche in his work coincides with a widespread antimodernist reaction.  
box • Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes  
box • *Rappel à l'ordre*