

# CLIL di STORIA dell'ARTE



## a LESSON about PICASSO

Emanuela Pulvirenti

# PABLO PICASSO

Born on October 25, 1881, in **Málaga**, Spain, Pablo Picasso, became one of the **greatest** and most influential artists of the 20th century and one of the creators of **Cubism**.

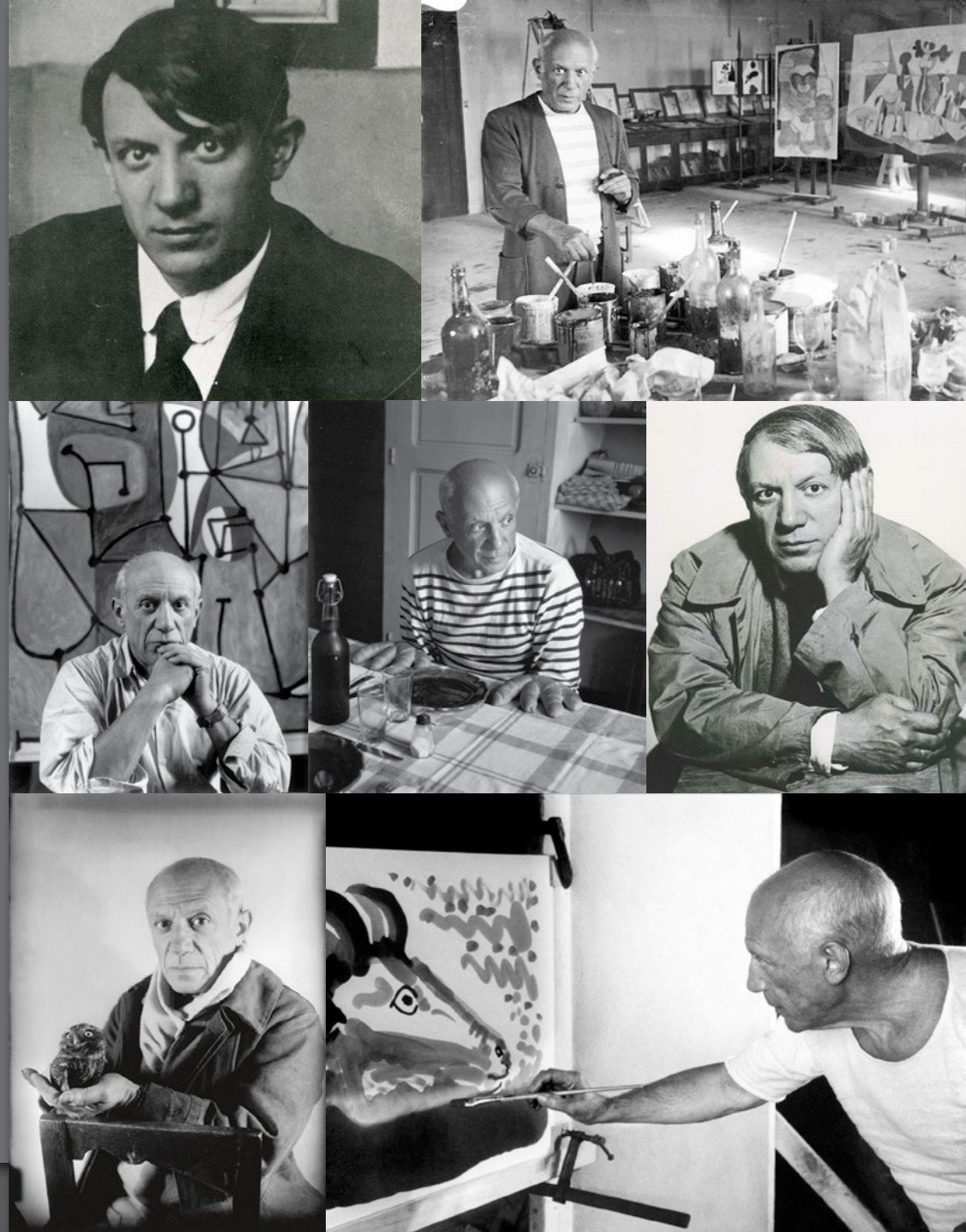
Spanish painter, sculptor and ceramicist, Picasso was considered **revolutionary** in his work.

After a long prolific career, he died on April 8, 1973, in Mougins, France.

The enormous body of Picasso's work remains, however, and the **legend** lives on.

For nearly 80 of his 91 years, Picasso devoted himself to an artistic production that **contributed** significantly to modern art in the 20th century.

He can be compared to **Giotto** and **Michelangelo** for the novelties introduced in art.



Ten famous **Picasso's paintings**

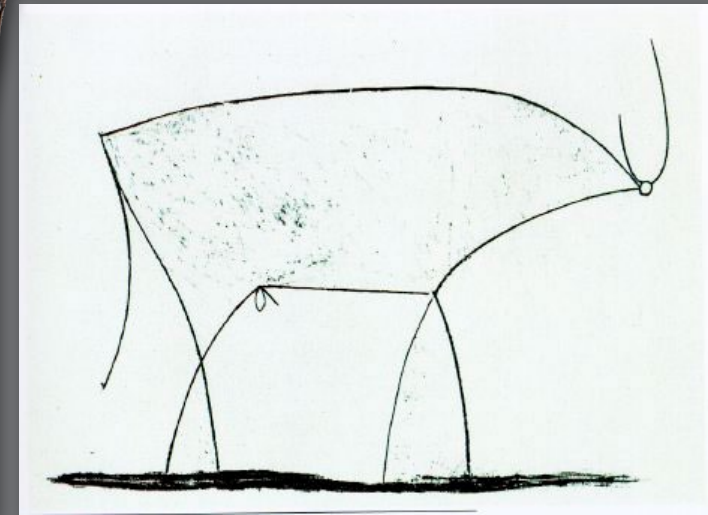
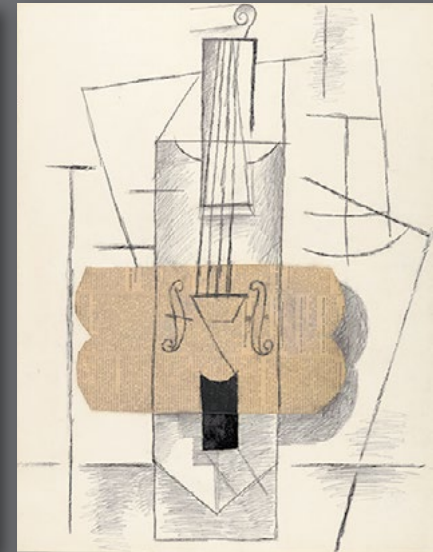
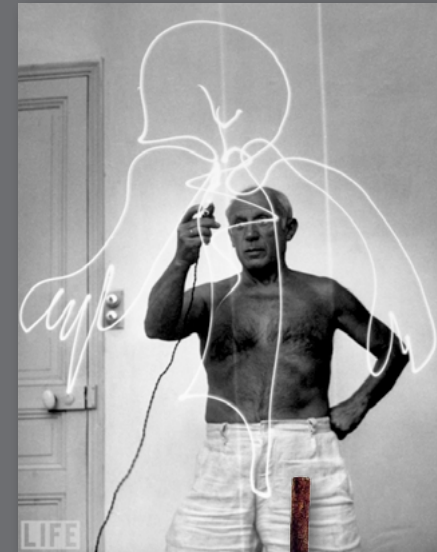


<b>person</b>	<b>object</b>		<b>activity</b>
<b>artist</b>	<b>art</b>		<b>to create</b>
<b>painter</b>	<b>painting</b>		<b>to paint</b>
<b>sculptor</b>	<b>sculpture, statue</b>		<b>to sculpt, to carve</b>
<b>ceramist</b>	<b>ceramic, vase</b>		<b>to mould</b>
<b>scenographer</b>	<b>scenography</b>		<b>to design</b>
<b>costume designer</b>	<b>costume</b>		<b>to design</b>
<b>drawer, sketcher</b>	<b>drawing, sketch</b>		<b>to draw, to sketch</b>

Glossary [test online](#)

Picasso passed through **different styles** and ways of painting. However he maintained some typical characteristics throughout his career:

- **expression strenght** e **spontaneity** of representation
- **balance** and **clearness** in compositions
- **solidity** of shapes and volumes
- great **sense of colour**
- **outline** around the objects
- tendence to **stylization**



**strenght** = forza   **balance** = equilibrio   **clearness** = chiarezza   **shape** = forma   **outline** = linea di contorno   **stylization** = stilizzazione



Pablo Picasso **studied art early**. His father, painting teacher and painter himself, encouraged Pablo's talent. From 1892 to 1900 he attended painting lessons at the **Art Academies** of La Coruña and Barcelona.

From 1895 (when he was fourteen) he began to paint religious scenes and portraits with a **traditional and realistic style**.

In 1999 Picasso started to experiment new ways of representing reality prompted by the **Modernism** of Antoni Gaudì and the French **Post-Impressionism**.

Between 1900 and 1901 he started to travel to **Paris** and began to paint with more **expression**.



Belvedere torso, 1892



Self portrait, 1896



First communion, 1895



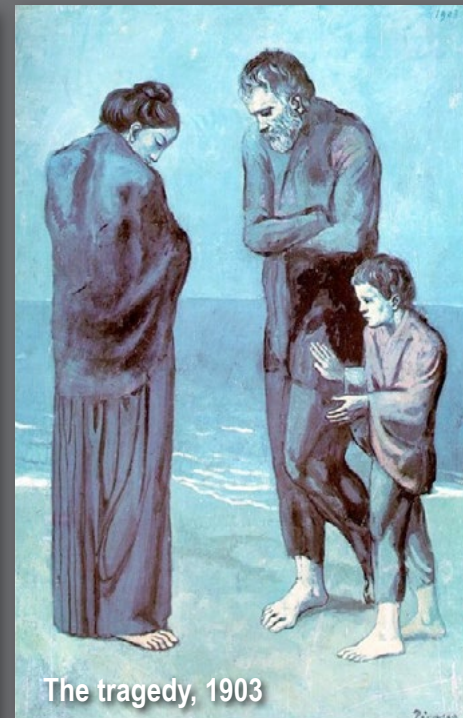
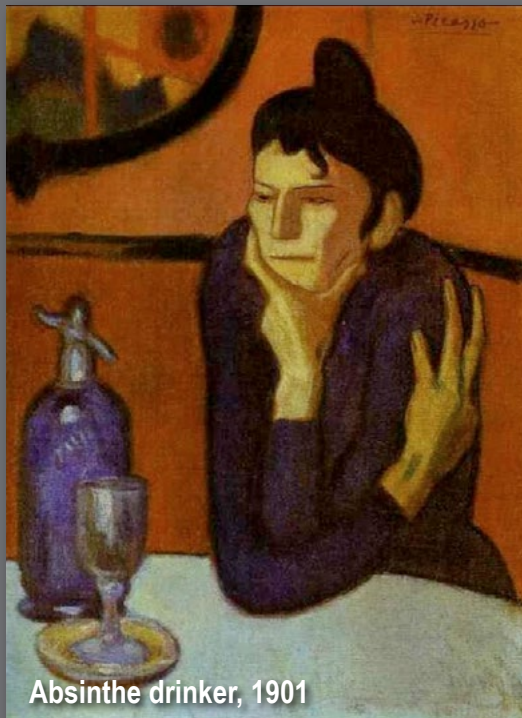
Barefoot girl, 1896

portrait = ritratto



The strong influence of the **impressionist** painters and **Henri de Toulouse Lautrec** and the frequentation of the **parisian environments** brought Picasso to the develop the so-called **blue-period** (1901-1904). In these years he realized impressive and **melancholy paintings**: sad allegories of the hardship of life with a synthetic style and excluded subjects.

Between **1904 and 1906** Picasso passed through his **pink period**. The colours (pastel pink and ochre) are **brighter and warmer** while the favourite subjects are the **circus performers** (acrobats, clowns and dancers).



Content **test online**

**impressive** = suggestivo    **hardship** = durezza, difficoltà    **bright** = luminoso



<b>colour</b>	<b>colore</b>		<b>colour</b>	<b>colore</b>	
ivory	bianco avorio		cerulean	ceruleo	
amber	ambra		turquoise	turchese	
ochre	ocra		azure	azzurro	
coral	rosso corallo		persian blue	blu di Persia	
amaranth	amaranto		cobalt blue	blu cobalto	
carmine	carminio		ultramarine	blu oltremare	
ruby	rosso rubino		prussian blue	blu di Prussia	

Glossary [test online](#)

In 1906 Picasso saw the great exhibition of **Cèzanne**'s paintings, then, between 1907 and 1908, he met **Matisse**, the main representative of the **Fauve** movement, and discovered the **african art**.

In 1907 he met **Georges Braque** with whom Picasso will develop the theory of multiple and simultaneous views.

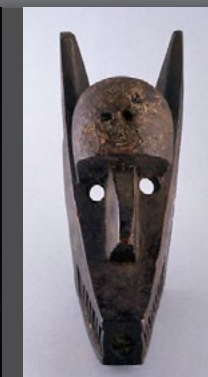
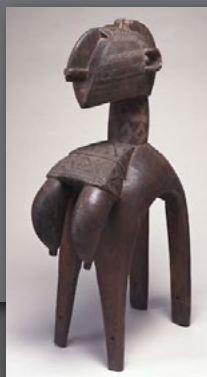
Because of these events he passed through another period of **personal crisis** which will lead him to develop a new style and a new way to conceive art: the **Cubism**.



PAUL CÉZANNE



HENRI MATISSE



AFRICAN ART

exhibition = mostra    to conceive = concepire



## painting genres - generi pittorici

history painting	scena storica		portrait	ritratto	
religious painting	scena sacra		self portrait	autoritratto	
mythological painting	scena mitologica		nude painting	nudo	
literary painting	scena letteraria		interior	interno	
allegorical painting	scena allegorica		landscape	paesaggio	
still life	natura morta		seascape	marina	
genre painting	scena di genere		cityscape	veduta	

Glossary [test online](#)



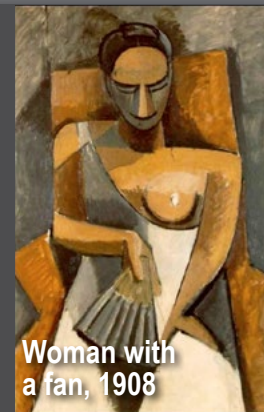
The **Girls of Avignon**, the first cubist masterpiece, was painted 1907. This phase (1907-1908), called **Proto-Cubism** (or early Cubism), is characterized by large shapes, sense of volume and some typical colours such as ochre, dark green, brown and grey.

The Proto-Cubism is followed by the **Analytic Cubism** (1909-1911); here the palette is reduced only to tones of brown and gray and the object are deeply fragmented.

In the last period, the **Syntetic Cubism** (1912-1917), the objects are more recognizable, the colours more various and a new technique, the **paper cut-outs**, began to be used.



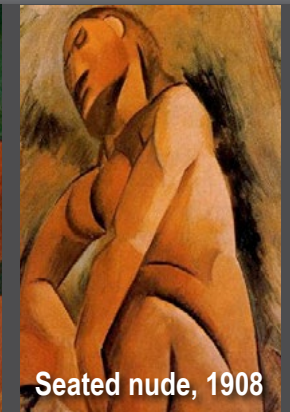
The girls of Avignon, 1907



Woman with a fan, 1908

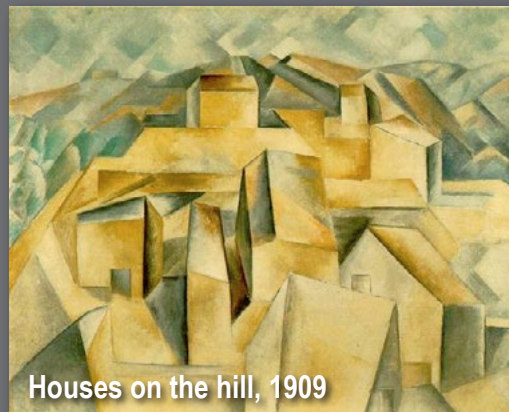


Glass and fruit, 1908

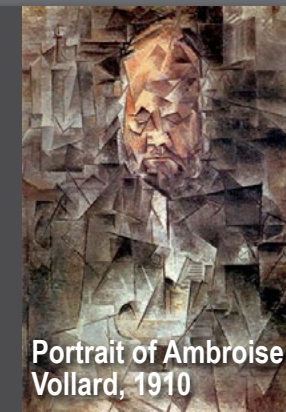


Seated nude, 1908

proto-Cubism



Houses on the hill, 1909



Portrait of Ambroise Vollard, 1910

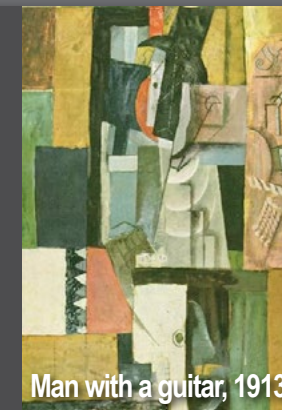


Still life with chair caning, 1911

analytic Cubism



Bottle, glass, violin, 1912



Man with a guitar, 1913



Glass on a table, 1914

syntetic Cubism

Content [test online](#)

palette = tavolozza



Between 1917 and 1924 Picasso introduced classical themes, synthetic images, solid volumes and very balanced compositions. It's the **Classical period**. In those years he worked also as costume and scene designer.



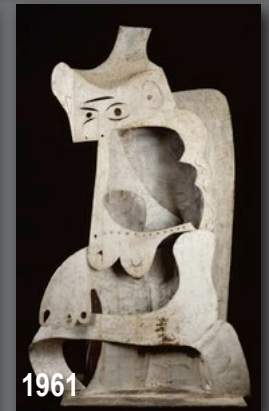
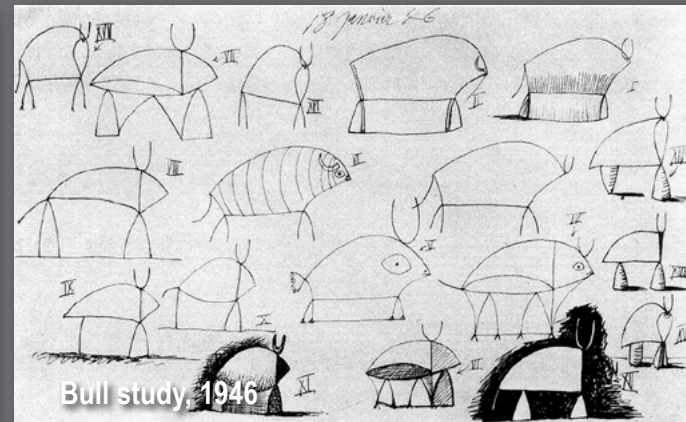
From 1925 to 1937 Picasso painted monstrous figures. This period, called **Age of monsters**, coincides with his social and political commitment.





From 1937 Picasso approached to the **Surrealism**. In this period he painted great masterpieces like **Guernica**. From this moment till his death his production was particularly intense. He was involved also in **drawing**, **ceramics** and **sculpture**.

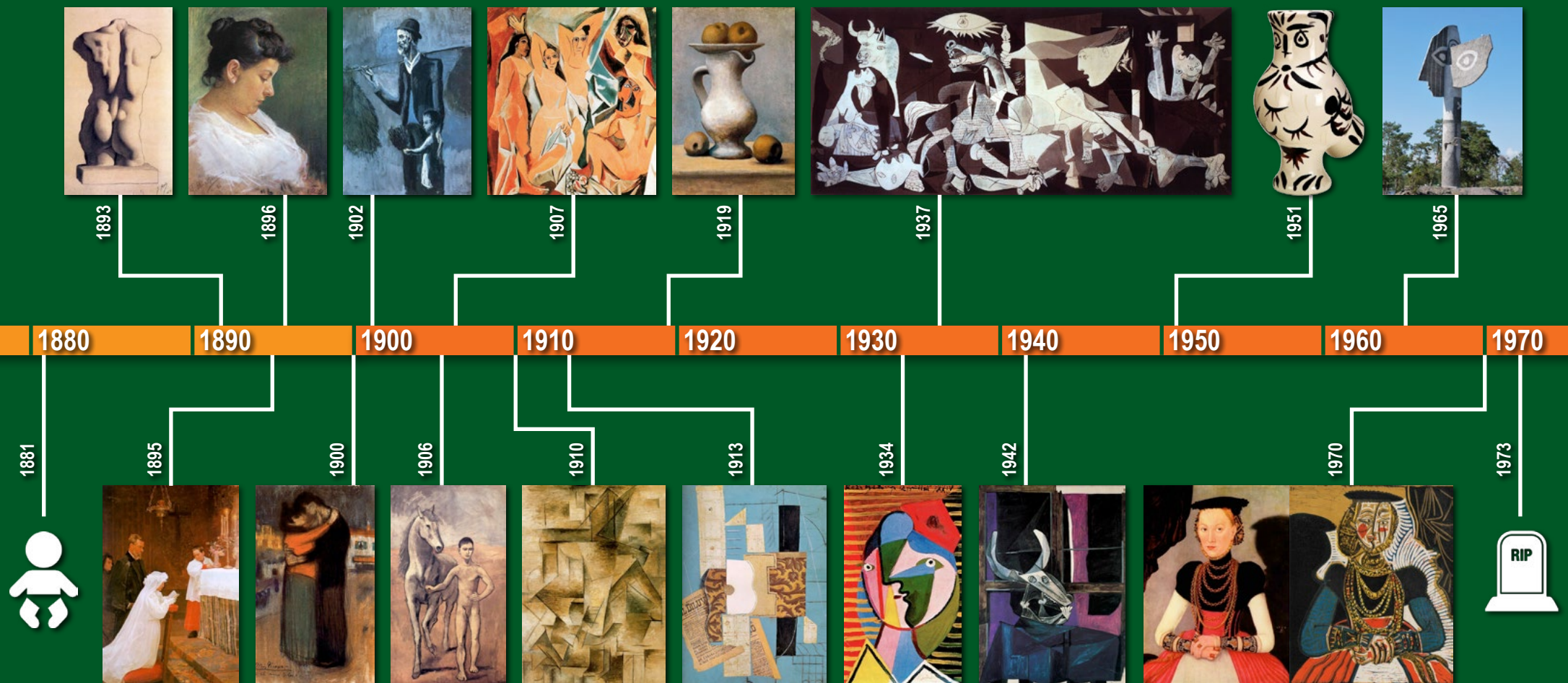
In the 50's he realized the so called **D'après** ("after"), paintings where he made remakes of the great paintings of the past. Picasso died in Paris in october 25, **1973**, at 91 years old.



video about [Picasso drawing](#)



# CONTENT EXERCISE - Describe the periods of Picasso's artistic production using this timeline





## THE GIRLS OF AVIGNON - oil on canvas - 2,33 x 2,43 - MOMA, New York



The painting, one of the first **cubist** artwork, was realized between 1906 and 1907 in Paris.

Now it's displayed at the **Museum of Modern Art** (MOMA) in New York and it's considered by the experts as one of the most important paintings of the **XXth** century.



link to the [Museum page](#)



## TECHNIQUE

Picasso uses the **oil painting** technique with great freedom.

He draws the base with the brush, then he colours in a very uniform way, and finally he overlaps strokes and redefines the outline of the figures.

The colours are mixed on the palette or directly on the canvas.

According to many studies, to X-ray analysis and to the statements of the contemporaries, Picasso painted on the **same canvas many times** because the artist, enchanted by **Cézanne's art** and **african sculpture** tried new ways of expression over the previous ones (today we call it “**work in progress**”)

Therefore the painting isn't a definitive result: at a certain point the artist stopped to work on it and left the picture in his studio for years until, in 1920, it was bought by a french collector and, years later, resold to the MOMA.





## ICONOGRAPHY

The painting refers to one of the most famous **brothel in Barcelona**, placed in Avignon Street, and represents **five young naked women**: four standing (in frontal, three quarters and profile view) and one sitting.

At the beginning the painting title was The Avignon brothel and **two male figures** were part of the group: a student with a packet under his arm and a man sitting in the middle with a skull in his hand. These men disappeared in the following sketches of the artwork.

The only thing which remained from the first drawings was a **red open curtain**, like a theater one, on the left.



video about the [evolution of the painting](#)





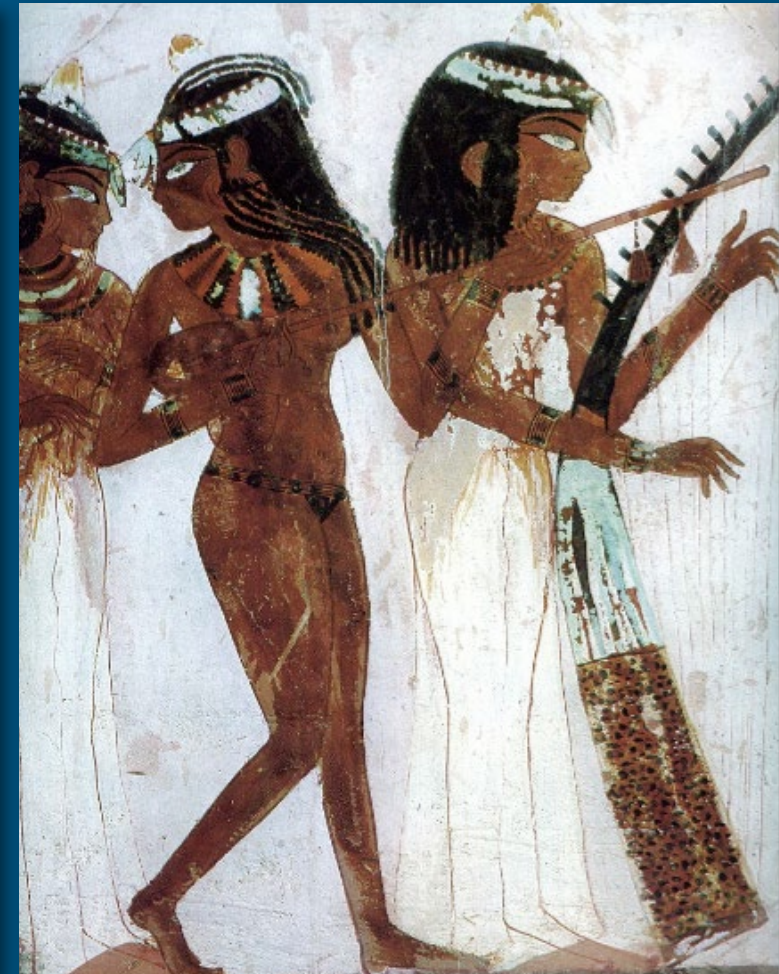
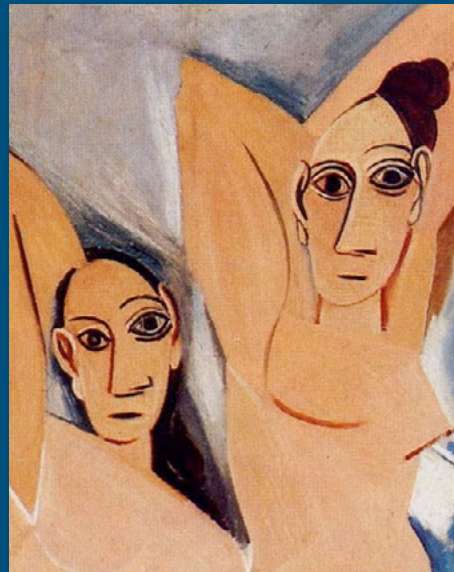
The group composition was influenced by Cézanne's **Five Bathers** (1885-87) that Picasso saw in the retrospective dedicated to the french artist in 1907, in Paris.



Each woman has a **different pose** and some of them wear a drape (maybe a bed sheet).

The central figures are similar to the first sketches, the **spanish faces** are clearly drawn, even if they are stylised.

The presence of **frontal eyes and nose seen in profile**, above all in the girl on the left, recalls the typical **egyptian** way of representing the human figure.



Group of musicians, Nakht tomb, Egypt, XIII dynasty





Venus of Milos, end of II cen. B.C. Dying slave, Michelangelo, 1513



Picasso uses also **classical and Renaissance models**: the central woman reminds the **Venus of Milos** with a projecting leg and the sloping shoulders to balance the posture.

Another reference is that to the **Dying slave** by Michelangelo with an arm behind the head.



The women with the arms behind the head and the presence, on the foreground, of a woman seen from the back, remind also to **The source** and the **Turkish Bath** by Ingres.



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, The source, 1856



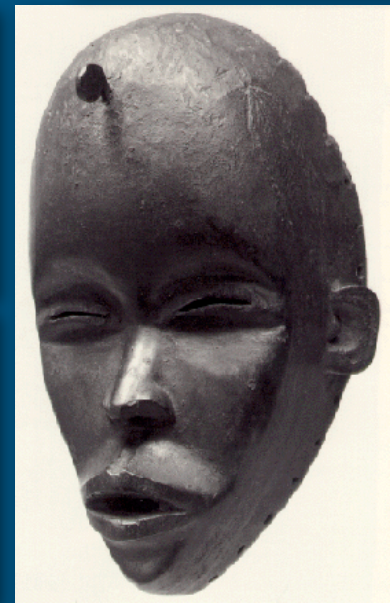
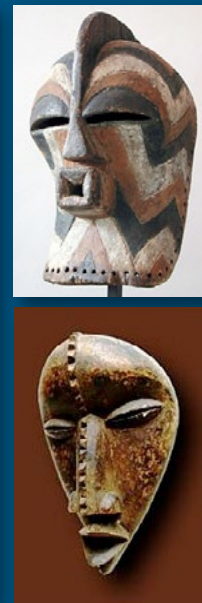
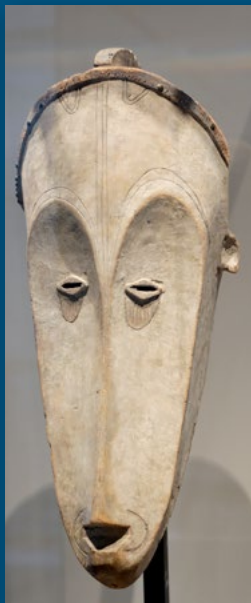
Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, The Turkish Bath, 1863



The two ladies on the right are strongly influenced by the **african sculpture**. Picasso was conquered by the rational character and the **conventional** ways of expressing deep spiritual concepts.

The african art appeared as an **art of the mind** rather than of the eyes: like the Cubism it express **what we know, not what our eyes see**.

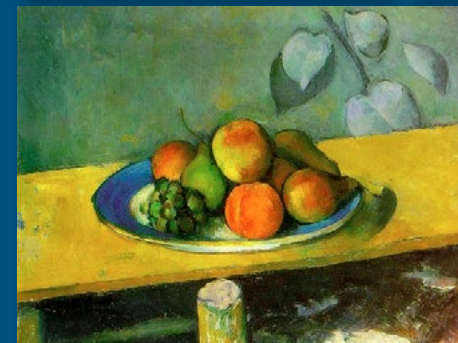
The artist represents on the faces also the typical **scarifications** of african masks using oblique parallel strokes.





Since the first sketches there was some fruit on the foreground, a little **still life** on the corner of the table. The still life was a genre very appreciated by cubist painters because it allowed to **reduce in simple and geometric solids** each object, as in Cézanne lesson.

Here we can see an apple (traditionally symbol of sin), a pear, a grape (symbol of immortality) and a slice of watermelon.



Cézanne's still lives from 1880 to 1900





The last important element, from the iconographic point of view, is the **red curtain**, the only object, together with the little table, remained of a real place.

It's an old trick of painting tradition used, during the centuries, to give time by time **majesty**, **intimacy** or **theatricality** to an interior scene.

Tiziano, Danae, 1545

Rubens, Samson and Delilah, 1609



Raphael, Sistine Madonna, 1512



Caravaggio, Judith and Holofernes, 1596



Caravaggio, Death of the Virgin, 1605



Vermeer, Painter in his studio, 1665



Vermeer, Girl reading a letter at an open window, 1657



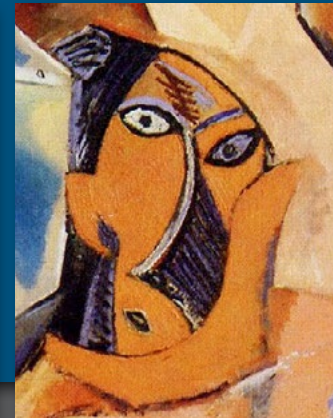
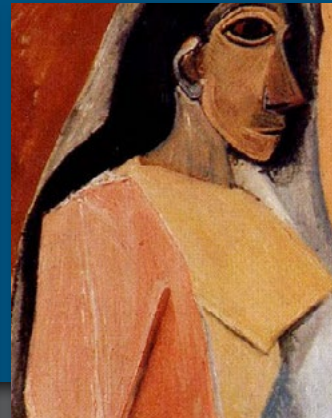
Cézanne, Still life with a curtain, 1899



## STYLE

The painting style is the **cubist** one, although Cubism was not yet born in 1907. We can talk, therefore, of Proto-cubism given that all the typical cubist factors are already present:

- things represented **as we know they are** and not as we see them;
- **simultaneity** of different visions from many point of view;
- end of the distinction between **figure and background**;
- destruction of the **prospectival depth**;
- transformation of the objects and bodies into **geometrical shapes**;
- influence of **african and primitive art**;
- influence of **Paul Cézanne**'s style.





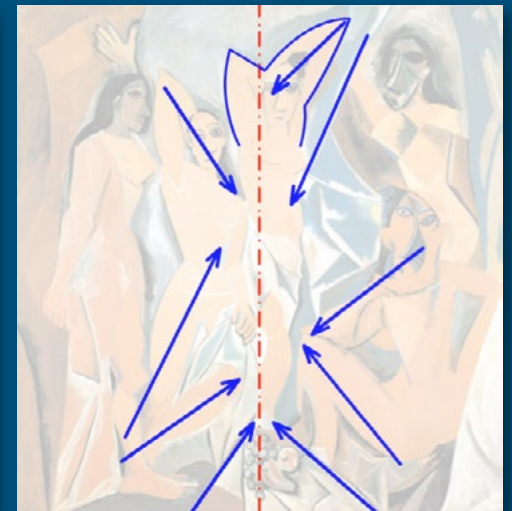
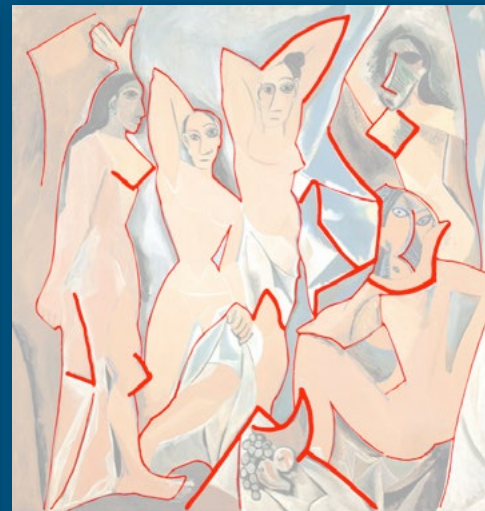
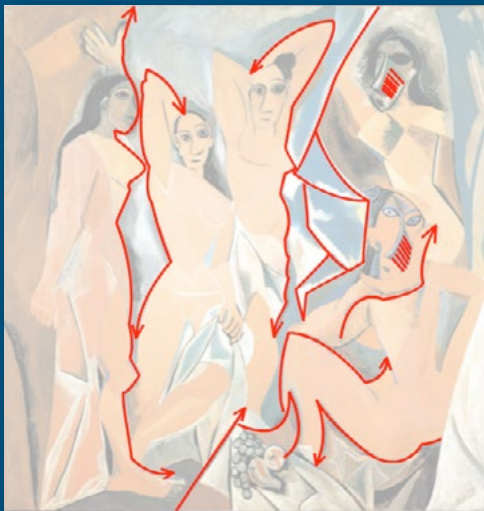
## LANGUAGE

The **line** is more than an outline: oftentimes painted above the colour fillings, it helps to **build the volumes** and makes the space more solid.

The most used colours are **orange and blue**; since they are complementary they strengthen each other appearing rich and bright.

The “space”, traditionally considered as an empty site in which figures stand, doesn't exist any more. Now there's a **solid space** which penetrates among the bodies and sometimes mixes with them.

The composition has got a **central axis** towards whom the limbs converge.





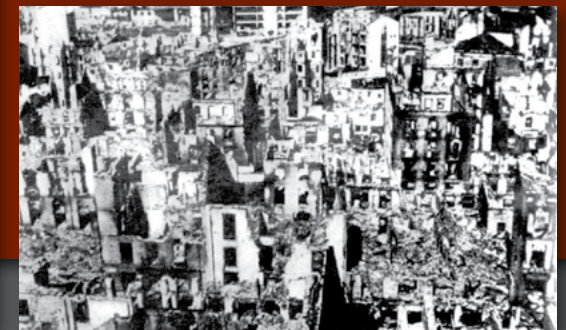
## GUERNICA - 1937 - oil on canvas - 3,5 x 7,82 m - Madrid, Museo Nacional Reina Sofia

It's the artwork that, better than others, represents Picasso's passionate **participation to human suffering** and his severe **moral judgment** toward bloodthirsty violence.

The great picture was inspired by the tragic **bombing** (26/4/1937) of the basque town of **Guernica** during the civil spanish war (1936-1939) due to the nazi-fascist air force.

Like Goya with his "**The third of May 1808**" Picasso too lines up with the oppresseds because "Artists who live and work with spiritual values **cannot and should not remain indifferent** to a conflict in which the highest values of humanity and civilization are at stake".

link to the [Museum page](#)

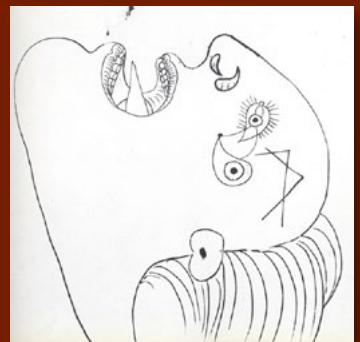
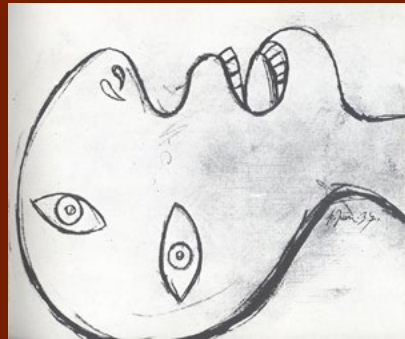
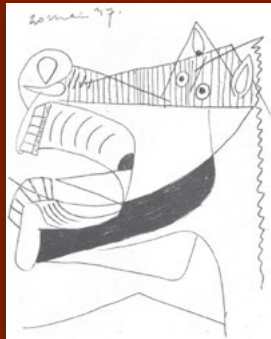




Six days after the bombing of Guernica, Picasso began to work on the **wall painting** for the **Spanish Pavilion** of the International Exposition of Paris expected in the summer.

Picasso had accepted the assignment of painting a great mural in January but, until the dramatic event, nothing had been decided in the matter of the topic.

The bombing happened in April gave to Picasso the **starting point** and during less of a month, pushed by a creative fury, the painter realized more than **fifty sketches and studies**.





The government of the Spanish Republic acquired the mural “Guernica” from Picasso in 1937. But when World War II broke out, the artist decided that the painting should remain in the custody of New York’s **Museum of Modern Art** for safekeeping until the conflict ended.

In 1958 Picasso extended the loan of the painting to MoMA for an indefinite period, until such time that **democracy** had been restored in Spain. The work finally returned to this country in **1981** and is now displayed at the Reina Sofia Museum of Madrid.



Guernica exhibited in Milan in 1953



Guernica in the MOMA



## TECHNIQUE

The technique, oil on canvas, this time is not a work in progress because Picasso had a **deadline** to respect so he worked hardly completing in **two months** the huge painting (he finished it exactly on June, the fourth, 1937).

His work was recorded through an exceptional **sequence of photos** took by his partner **Dora Maar**. In each step many changes are visible. Every element, full of symbolic meanings, has been individually studied and then assembled together.

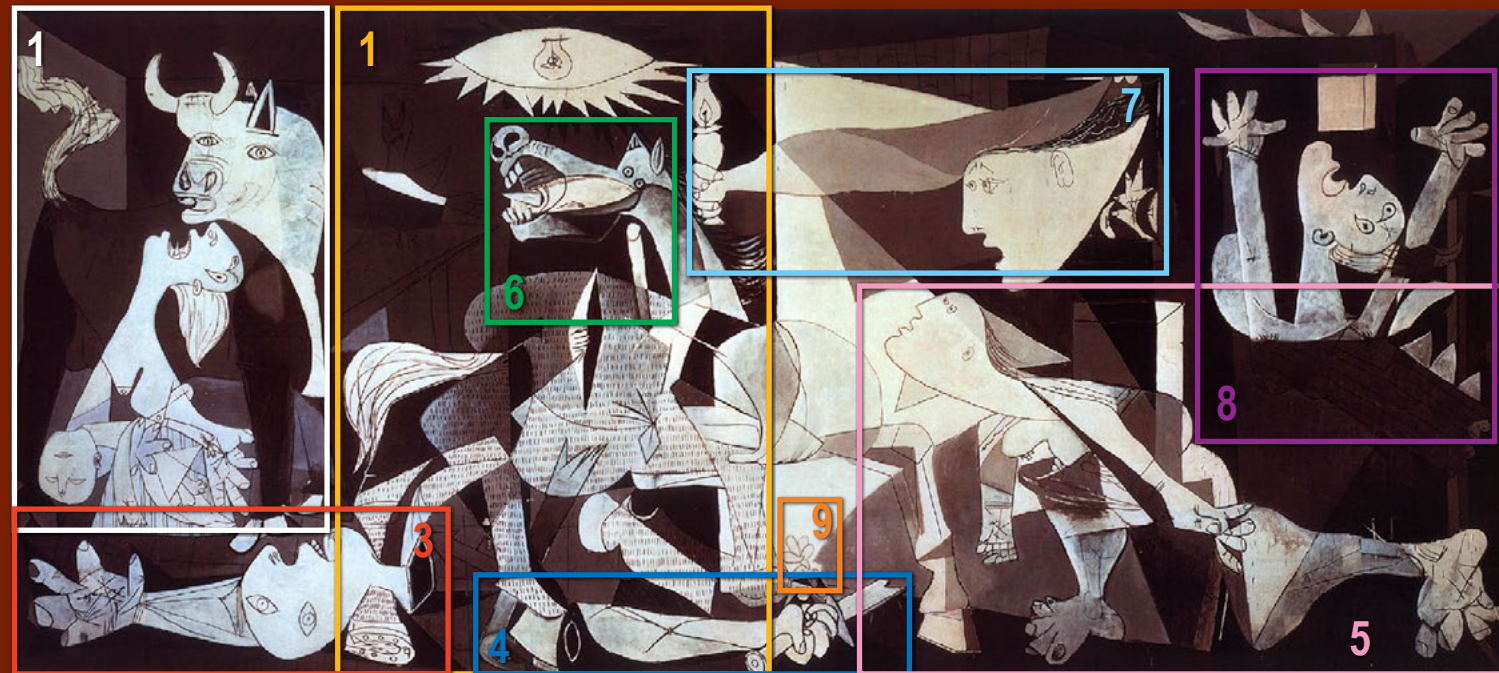




## ICONOGRAPHY

The scene happens in the dark, in an open space: the square surrounded by burning buildings. There are many elements linked together:

- 1) **Bull**, **woman** and dead **child**
- 2) **Horse** and **lamp**
- 3) Dead **soldier** (on the left)
- 4) **Arm** of the soldier
- 5) **Woman** escaping
- 6) Head of a **horse**
- 7) **Woman** with a **oil lamp**
- 8) **Woman** in the flames
- 9) **flower** detail





In Guernica Picasso insert a lot of refers to past paintings like **The fire in the Borgo** by Raphael, **The massacre of innocents** by Guido Reni or Goya's "**The third of May 1808**"  
According to the experts' opinion the horse head recalls the medieval **Triumph of the Death** kept today in Palazzo Abatellis Gallery, Palermo (in 1917 Picasso travelled in Italy, passing through this city)

Figures inspired by The fire in the Borgo,  
Raphael, 1514 - Vatican Rooms, Rome





Figures inspired by The massacre of innocents,  
Guido Reni, 1611



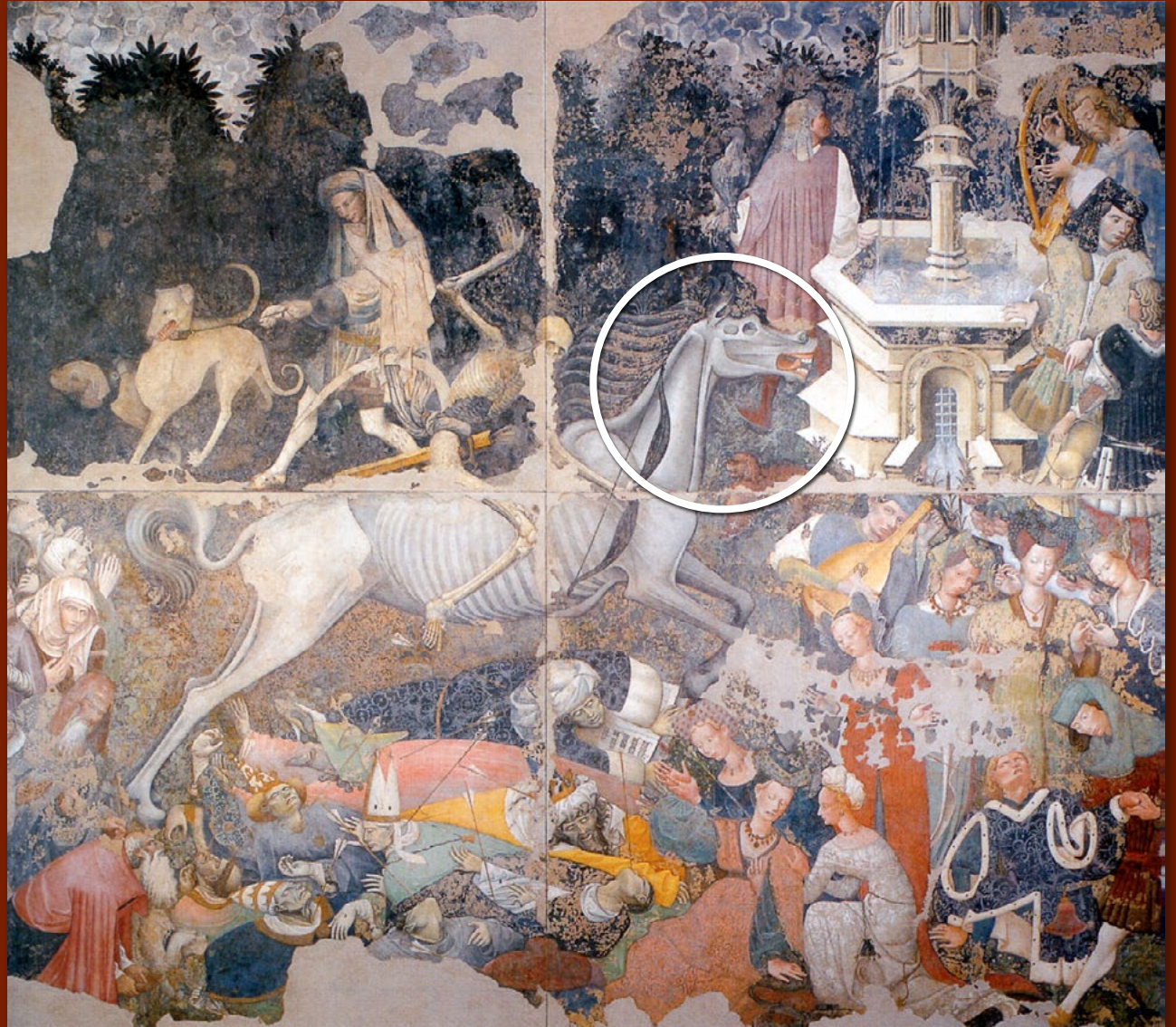


Figures inspired by The Third of May 1808,  
Francisco Goya, 1814





Figures inspired by The Triumph of the Death,  
unknown author, beginning of XV cent. , Palermo

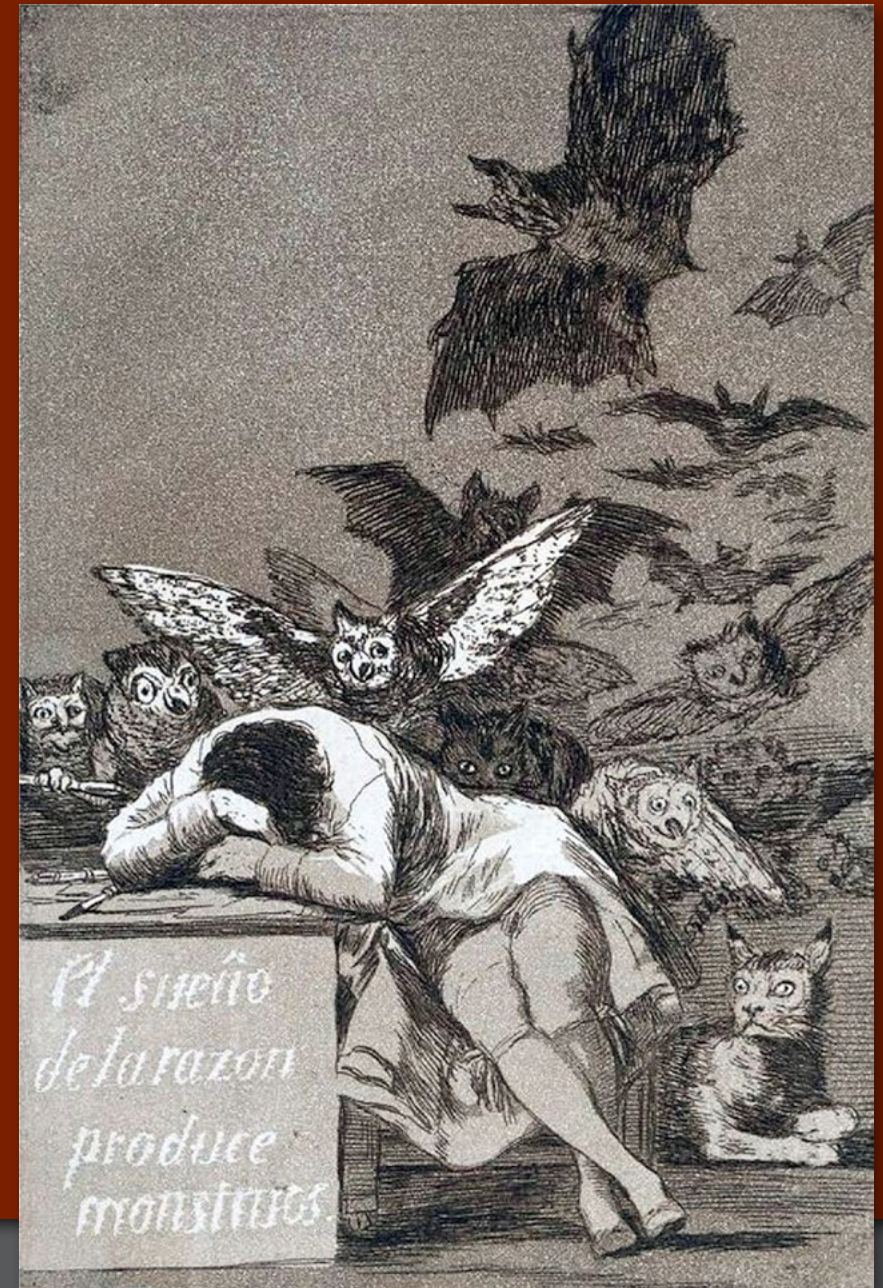




**“I like all painting”,** Picasso often declared.

In all of his his artworks there are many references to other famous paintings but in Guernica this inspiration seems as if the painter would have said: **all the western culture is raped by this brutal action, by the madness of the war.**

Suddenly Goya's thought (the artist admired by Picasso) returns very up to date: **The sleep of reason produces monsters** (1797).





## STYLE

The style can be defined cubist because of the **simultaneous vision** from different points of view although the Cubism wasn't a politically active movement.

The **bodies** are dismantled, simplified. The **space** explodes with them. The details are drawn in a **childish way** after the rediscovery of the **strenght of the naive expression** lost in centuries of academy and artistic perfectionism.

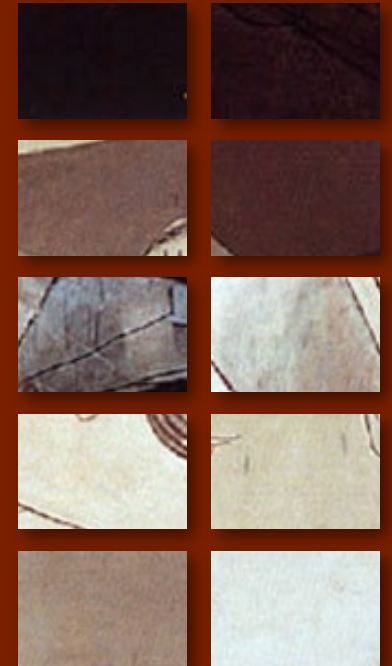




## LANGUAGE

One of the most evident aspects in Guernica is the **lack of colours** and the exclusive use of **grey tones**. Someone says that this choice was suggested to Picasso by the **black and white photos** of the ruins after the bombing.

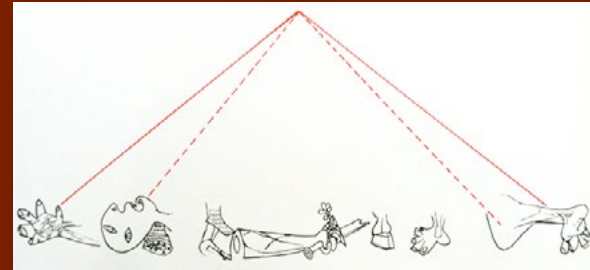
Others, and maybe this is the real reason, affirms that **colours mean life** while non-colours (black in particular) evoke **death**, a death which, according to Argan, is not the natural end of life but the contrary.





The composition, apparently chaotic, is organized in a **traditional** way. Like a **polyptich** it's divided into three parts with the external symmetrical ones more narrow than the central one. These two sides contain the bull and the mother screaming on the left and the figure with the raised arms while, in the central part, there are much more figures.

There's also another **triangular structure** inside the picture; but, on the contrary of a **greek fronton** (where there was usually the victory of civilization against barbarity), here the cruelty wins against the humanity.





The **light** is artificial and comes only by the chandelier creating an **oblique line** which cut the picture. An **oil lamp**, kept by the woman on the right, contrasts with the incandescent light bulb and symbolizes the **involution** of man.

The space behind is totally dark. The scene is contemporary **internal** (the chandelier recall the interior of a room) and **external** (we see the burning buildings on the right). This simultaneity of vision is not only a typical cubist feature but also a means to show the damage caused by the bombing that suddenly destroy entire palaces showing the **intimacy of the interiors**.

The space itself seems to **break into slivers** which penetrates among the figures.

In this chaotic scene men, women and animals escape **overlapping each other**, joined by the same pain and the same violence.





## ICONOLOGY

The sense of this painting was best expressed by the Italian critic G. C. Argan who said: “Guernica is the **vision of the death acting**: the painter doesn’t observe the event with terror or piety, he is inside the fact; he doesn’t remember or commiserate the victims, he is among the victims”, and also: “Guernica which is the only **historical painting** in our century, is so not because it represents a historical event, but because it is a historical event”.

On the left a mother throws her scream to the sky keeping her dead child in the arms. On the right another figure is shouting stretching his hands upside. In the middle an injured horse, symbol of Spanish population, neighs painfully. Another figure is trying to escape. Everywhere there’s **death and destruction**, underlined by a strong drawing.





The bull, with human eyes, remembers a **Minotaur**, symbol of violence and brutality. Another **desperate woman** leans out of a window holding an oil lamp. On the soil, in the ruins, the **lacerated cadavers**. On the left, in the bottom, an open hand with the **line of life** symbolically fragmented in little segments. Exactly in the center of the painting another hand is still holding a **broken sword** and a **little flower**: symbols of death and of that hope which will win against barbarity.





## **FAMOUS QUOTES BY PICASSO (for your diary or Facebook wall...)**

- It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child.
- Good artists borrow. Great artists steal.
- If I spit, they will take my spit and frame it as great art.
- Art is a lie that helps us to realize the truth.
- I paint things as I think of them, not as I see them.
- Why do two colors, put one next to the other, sing? Can one really explain this? No.
- Paintings are but research and experiment. I never do a painting as a work of art. All of them are researches.
- Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.
- One never knows what one is going to do. One starts a painting and then it becomes something quite else. It is remarkable how little the 'willing' of the artist intervenes.