



Opposite: Picasso, Portrait of Gertrude Stein, 1906. Oil on canvas, 100×81.3cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Gertrude Stein, 1946.



Opposite Picasso, *Self-Portrait with a Palette*, Paris, 1906. Oil on canvas, 95x73 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection.

One evening at the rue de Fleurs, Picasso would remark, "Everybody thinks she is not at all like her portrait but never mind, in the end she will manage to look just like it," and that is true. By the time she died, no one said any longer that Gertrude's portrait did not look like her, but then just as long-married people grow through the decades to resemble one another more and more, so was Gertrude married to the image Picasso had been able at last to offer her.

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During those months of sittings between Stein and himself, he was having his night life in Montmartre. One of the secrets of Picasso's longevity must lie in this ability to inhabit separate worlds, much as though he lives not as one individual but two.

In Picasso and His Friends, Fernande is ready enough to describe the more casual occasions during their first years together at the Bateau Lavoir.

All the artists used to gather at the Lapin à Gill: on the terrace on summer evenings, in the dark, smoky room inside during the winter.

Frédé, the patron, used to pay return calls on Picasso. I can still see him arriving at the painter's house, escorted by his donkey, Lolo; the famous Lolo. . .Frédé used to bring the good, simple creature right into Picasso's studio, which was not difficult as the studio was on the ground floor. While we were drinking the aperitif Frédéric had brought with him, Lolo would be tied up in one corner and nibbling at everything within reach. One day he devoured a packet of tobacco and two silk scarves, which had been left on the sofa.

Picasso loved animals; they always found favour in his eyes. He would have liked to possess a cock, a goat and a tiger, but he contented himself with dogs and cats, and later a donkey. There was a time, I think, when he had three cats, two dogs, a tortoise and a monkey. [Picasso and his Friends, p. 80]

Bohemian life depends for its existence on war-stories, and Lolo had already become famous. A couple of art students had tied a paintbrush to Lolo's tail and used the donkey's swipings on a canvas (with, presumably, an occasional change of pigment) to produce a work that was accepted by the Société des Indépendents.

On the several occasions when he had fired his revolver, Picasso became equally celebrated. No wonder Fréde had brought Lolo over for a visit. Telling actions were the most life-giving elements in bohemian life and, in the face of collective poverty, gestures took on the rich ambiance of old songs. Under it all, Fernande confesses, "There was very little variety to our amusements and distractions. . .evening followed evening with little to distinguish one from another."

Picasso didn't like the theatre; he found it boring. As for orchestral music, he might perhaps have liked it if he'd not been afraid of making foolish judgments, for he knew nothing about it at all. . .and he never went to a concert. Perhaps he's changed since.

What he did like was the guitar, guitarists, Spanish dance and dancers and gypsies, everything which reminded him of Spain. He was always moved by the women dancers, [who] manipulated fan and castinets with such skill and elegance. Every time he listened to the guitarists he marveled afresh. He had never been an exuberant person, but he was capable of intense concentration. Feelings like these would transmute themselves into an expression of tenderness, which could illuminate his whole face. . .

Picasso always seemed drawn to those things which he would never be able to do himself, and people who were totally different from him. He

loved risque cabarets and music-halls. . .anything with strong local colour, and a characteristic smell could fill him with ecstasy. It seemed as though nothing abstract or intellectual could move him. . .How foreign he was in France, this Andalusian with Italian blood. . .

He was always attracted by anything which reflected that quality of harshness which seems to go with being poor and is often accompanied by a special sort of naivete in Latin countries.

One thing he really loved in Paris were the clowns. . .On evenings we went to the Médrano circus Picasso would spend all the time at the bar, which was always thick with the hot, slightly sickening smell which seeped up from the stables. He would stay there all evening. . .talking to the clowns. He enjoyed their oddness, their speech, their jokes; though they were usually pretty feeble when they weren't actually performing. He admired them and had real sympathy for them. . .

His love for boxing was of a different order. Physical strength. . .compelled his admiration. He was affected by the beauty of a fight as by a work of art. He liked boxers as much as he liked clowns, but differently. They seemed to awe him. He would have been proud to make friends with a boxer. [Picasso and His Friends, pp. 125-127]

The prevailing legend of Picasso is that he was a formidable stud, but there is more evidence that he was not macho so much as an acolyte of machismo.

Today in a world of feminist edicts, machismo is scorned. Yet, few men are able to sneer at it with absolute confidence. The case for machismo, its extravagances and violence put to the side, is that it is not an easy way to live. When one invests in personal honor and its concomitant physical bravery, day-to-day security is mortgaged for life. Few men, therefore, are honestly macho--most depend on their ability to play a role rather than to embody it at all costs. If, even in our time, in the face of contemporary ridicule, men still strive for machismo, it is because that speaks to a primitive certainty in male gender, even as the same might be said for elegance in women. Men can scorn the first, and liberated women repudiate the second, but the ridicule remains subtly uneasy. Not many have a conscience so comfortable or so blind that they can condemn either without a backward look.

If that is true today, what is to be said of the force of machismo upon Picasso's values at the turn of the century? He came from Andalusia where men prided themselves, often over a lifetime of inflated and frequently absurd postures, on precisely how macho they were. Picasso began as the most timid, sensitive, and cowardly of little boys, a crybaby in school, a household pet with plump aunts to cozen him. It can be taken as fundamental that every one of his male qualities

was earned in hard fashion, each bold new habit fashioned from his limited store of physical bravery. So he could be sure of none of his acquired macho characteristics. Full-grown, he still was short; well-muscled, he nonetheless was not significantly powerful when compared to painters like Braque and Vlaminck and Derain.

[They] made an astonishing and certainly imposing trio. People would turn around to look at them in the street. All three of them were very tall, with big shoulders. and they gave an unusual impression of sheer physical power.

Derain was the tallest of the three. He was slim and elegant, with brilliant coloring and smooth black hair. His elegance was English and slightly over-done. He wore elaborate waistcoats and green or red ties. His pipe was always in his mouth; an essential feature of his phlegmatic, mocking, cold and argumentative nature.

Braque was shorter and heavier, with a powerful head which made him look like a white negro. He had the shoulders and the neck of a boxer, very brown skin, curly black hair, and a clipped moustache. There was something a little affected about the brutality of his expression and the coarseness of his voice and gestures. . . .

[Picasso and His Friends, pp. 102-104]

Vlaminck was massive with red hair:

brutal, stubborn expression, which made one think that he knew what he wanted. . . .He had once been a racing cyclist and he was so strong that he believed he was naturally invincible. When occasionally, owing to lack of money, he had to walk all the way back to Chatou at night, he told us that he was sometimes obliged to defend himself on the way against various forms of aggression, and that he always emerged victorious from such encounters because of his superior physical strength.

He used constantly to deny the efficacy and value of boxing, as opposed to simple brute force, until that day when Derain and Braque, both of whom boxed regularly, beat him, one after the other, and conclusively. We met him as he was leaving Derain's studio, his nose swollen like a potato and in a pretty sad state, although totally convinced.

Picasso was attracted by boxing. He enjoyed going to fights and he used to follow them keenly. He would have liked to box himself, but he hated being hit, though he liked the idea of dispensing blows himself. He had one lesson with Derain, but that was enough to last a lifetime.

The four of them used often to go out together, Picasso looking very small beside them, but being thick-set he gave a quite illusory impression of physical strength. He delighted in the thought that he might be taken for a boxer because of his three companions.

The fact is that Picasso, though he always wanted fame and glory, longed to achieve it in spheres outside his own. Max Jacob once said of him that he would rather have won fame as a Don

Juan than as a great artist. [Picasso and His
Friends, pp. 103-104]

Yes, next to them, Picasso was a spoiled darling. It helps to explain his infernal possessiveness concerning Fernande. Doubtless, he had some cause to be insecure, but his jealousy smacks of a man who is always aware of his own sexual lacks--he seems to believe that any stud could come along and steal her. They are close, however; they are, according to Fernande, very close:

Our amorous life doesn't seem in any way diminished. To the contrary, I believe that more and more the ties deepen between us, the ties of our entire nature, physically, morally, and sentimentally, we are in accord. There are wounds--our characters, our natures are too large not to cause that occasionally--but what is that? ... I know to what a degree he regrets that he is not able to offer me all that I could desire, but I don't ask anything, and keep jealously to his tenderness. [Souvenir Intimes, p. 201]

Nonetheless, he rarely trusts her. And then, of course, it is never so simple as that. Orgies, if on a local Bateau

Lavoir scale, had to be part of the game, and orgies rarely fail to be a study in prowess and so a jealous drama.

Drugs continued to play a role. . . An entry in the Gosol sketchbook-- "opio, azafran, alcool, laudano"--suggests that such things were still on Picasso's mind. But to what extent? Apart from Fernande, the only witness we have is Alice Toklas's cousin Annette Rosenshine, a clever San Francisco girl handicapped by a cleft palate and harelip. She had arrived in Paris at the end of 1906, to be instantly enslaved by Gertrude Stein. Every afternoon Gertrude would take her out, often to artists' studios. Annette particularly remembered going to see Picasso at the Bateau Lavoir. Fernande was lying on the bed with Picasso on one side and a second man on the other, none of them in a state to rise for guests. Recovering "from a bohemian revelry the night before," Annette thought. More likely smoking opium or hashish, I would have thought, especially in view of the "luminous penetrating quality of Picasso's eyes"---something Annette never forgot. [R. p. 464]

Yes, it is better not to look at Picasso with too cold a judgment. He was a man who could not dance, and could not box. (Doubtless his one session with Derain convinced him that his hands and his eyesight might be endangered.) Nor could he swim. In later years on the Cote d'Azur he would clown away at it, standing waist-deep in water, bent over from the hips and moving his arms at a great rate while he remained in place. Neither could he drive a car. Four decades later, he would be enraged when his son Paolo,

looking to be superior to his father on precisely one of papa's weak links, would put his motorcycle through a series of stunts while riding in front of Picasso's chauffeur-driven Hispano-Suiza.

It was as if in compensation for avoiding all sport with hazard, Picasso would take his exceptional reflexes of hand and eye and give them over to his painting and to his fucking. Naturally, his impulse in those early years was to lock the door and keep Fernande inside. He had, doubtless, a large gift for love-making but it was circumscribed by all the ways he could not protect it from other men. So, Fernande was well-loved but under lock and key.

There will come a period, nonetheless, in the spring of 1906 when Pablo and Fernande are blessed with a windfall and they use it to take a trip to Barcelona and the Pyrenees where they have an idyll and he does a considerable amount of work and even seems confident in the possession of her.

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Picasso had come to Paris in the spring of 1904. Now, two years later, he would still hear several times each week from his mother--a copy of the Barcelona newspaper El Noticiero, and an all-but-daily letter to accompany it. She was more than curious about Fernande. If Picasso had no great funds of affection left for his father whose spiritual generosity was obeying the law of mediocrity--it shrank into more and more narrow-mindedness each season--his mother

seemed to blossom as she grew older, and her admiration for her son, his value, his genius, his intellectual splendor, increased all the time whether she comprehended his work or not.





The artist's mother, c 1906.
Musée Picasso, Paris.

Poverty and pride had hitherto prevented Picasso from returning "home." After his previous setbacks in Paris, he could go back to Barcelona only as a success. All of a sudden he was a success--not just critically, but, in a modest way, financially. At the beginning of May, Vollard. . .for two thousand francs. . .purchased twenty of his most important early paintings. . . Besides Apollinaire, Salmon and Jacob were witnesses to this transaction. Salmon remembered that Vollard carried off all the paintings and gouaches with him in the cab; they took up so much room that Vollard had to sit up front with the driver. "[Max] clasped my hand without saying a word, without looking at me, utterly content, his eyes like seascapes full of tears." . . .

Two thousand francs was more money than Picasso had ever possessed--enough to get married on, except that Fernande was not divorced; enough to last a thrifty couple two or three years, except that they were not thrifty; enough to travel to Barcelona in style, which they proceeded to do. Besides wanting to prove to his parents and cronies that he had made good as an artist, Picasso was eager to show off his beautiful "fiancée." [R., pp. 433-34]

Fernande's voice reminds us that this is the first long trip she has ever taken:

I passed the night without sleeping. Exhausted and ill at ease in our third class compartment, I was waiting for sunrise with an impatience that tired me even more than the bumps and jolts of the train with its bad springs. I didn't sleep either when day came for I was charmed by the countryside unrolling before my new eyes... I was [however] worn out, and sadness filled me.

In Spain, in a first-class compartment, since it was impossible to travel in any of the lower classes without large inconvenience, I found again a little of my first excitement, but toward evening, 7 o'clock, coming into Barcelona in the middle of a noisy and tumultuous Catalan manifestation, I felt despair surrounding me and, beginning to weep, I begged Pablo to take me back to Paris. He loved me and couldn't bear to see me cry. I believe, if there had been a train ready at that hour to leave for France, we would have gotten on it. Happily, there wasn't.

In La Place Catalan, at the Hotel D'Angleterre, after having taken a bath, I allowed myself to rest under the hopeless look of Pablo, and slept, without dinner. I awoke the next day, relaxed and happy, and was ready to stay. Dear Pablo, full of anticipation, had only been thinking of seeing me happy at the expense, even, of his personal pleasure. Except for his work, I think the most important thing in the world to him was the woman that I then represented. I would like to say that he loved me, because I believe that, despite all that followed, I was the great love of his life, as I was also his great torment. [Souvenir Intimes, pp. 211-212]

They spend a couple of exciting weeks in Barcelona, impressing his family and friends with her beauty and sophistication. Fernande is not without a new gown or two and her perfume precedes her entrances and extends her farewells like a movie star ensconced in all the powers of fade-in and fade-out.



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Fernande Olivier,
Pablo Picasso and
Catalan writer Ramón
Reventós, 1906

Picasso, Soviet Museums p 59

She is also seeing a side of Picasso she has not glimpsed before. In Paris, he had been morose

. . . and inhibited by an atmosphere which was totally alien to him.

The Picasso I saw in Spain was completely different; he was gay, less wild, more brilliant and lively and able to interest himself in things in a calmer, more balanced fashion; at ease, in fact. He radiated happiness . . . (Picasso and his Friends, p. 93]

Out of this splendid mood comes a desire to work again in the unique Spanish countryside.

Pablo decided to go to Gosol, a little village in the Pyrenees, near the valley of Andorra. . . It was necessary, in order to get there, to take a trip for several hours on muleback. Sometimes, going along paths bordered on one side by a mountain wall so near that one rubbed one's knees and one's hands, and on the other an immense drop, forced me to close my eyes in order to avoid vertigo. . .

Once at Gosol, it was enchanting. Very high, with an air of unbelievable purity, above the clouds, surrounded by amiable natives, hospitable

innkeepers. . . .Nearly everybody did contraband.
We had found happiness, perhaps. [Souvenir
Intimes, pp. 213-214]

The town with a population of seven hundred people had survived for centuries on its agriculture, its sheep, its goats, its cattle, a place not unlike Horta, and it had only one inn, the Can Tempanada, where Picasso and Fernande would stay, but he had the pleasure of being again with people who only spoke Catalan.

Horta had left the deepest impression on him and this was essentially the same unchanging, timeless life, with the additional [element] of bears, boars, wild cats, the Pyrenean chamois, and even lynxes as well as wolves. He understood the people, their work and play, their relationship to the land, and the rhythm of their days. His health, which had been much tried by the last years in Paris, was restored by the clean sharp air, the exercise, and the simple, copious food . . . he made friends with the villagers, particularly with one ancient, savage mountaineer, a smuggler by trade; and above all he worked. At intervals of roaming about the Sierra del Cadi and the lower valley with its astonishing geology of blood-red soil and great shattered rock with bands of native vermilion and coal, he turned out a great number of pictures and drawings. [O'Brian, p. 146]



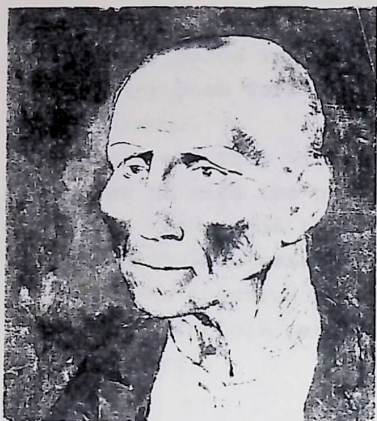
Maisons de Gosol, huile - 1906

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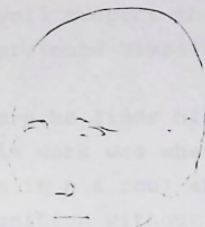
Richardson expands the theme of the smuggler:

The locals were enchanted by us,"
Fernande writes; "they sought out our
company, brought us partridges and thrushes
to vary our diet of cocida [bean and sausage
stew]; and they made us play the peculiar
games of the region." Picasso, who boasted
of being a good shot, would also go shooting
in the mountains. . . These expeditions were
more intriguing for being a cover for
smuggling--a major local industry. Smuggling
is the activity Picasso remembered most
vividly about Gosol. The risk, excitement,
and profit; the way it pitted noble outlaws.
. . against the inimical forces of law and
order: all this made the smuggler someone
with whom he could identify--a fellow outlaw.
[R. p. 451]

Indeed, the smuggler, Josef Fontdevila (who was also
his landlord) a ninety-year-old man, became his closest
friend in Gosol.



1906



Far left: Picasso, Head of Joseph Fontdevila Gósol, 1906, Oil on canvas, 45.1 x 10.5 cm. Private collection.

Left: Picasso, Head of Joseph Fontdevila Gósol, 1906, Pencil on paper, 45 x 32.5 cm. Marina Picasso collection.

Rarely in his life would Picasso experience such well-being. The air of the mountains replaced the cigarette smoke of the poets, and he was alone for the first in years with his instincts. Much of his well-being had to be a reflection of his confidence in work; we can well suspect that he saw good uninterrupted work as the most profound blessing he would ever experience.

To say that within his labors he finds his strength is almost to miss the point. In his work was where he found the surest sense that there was iron in his soul and nothing would stop him--a necessary self-recognition without which one is no more than a genius to one's friends, and soon a genius manque. The work in this period certainly reflects his calm and his certainty:



Abore, Picasso, *Two Brothers*, Gösol,
1906. Gouache on cardboard,
80x59 cm. Musée Picasso, Paris.



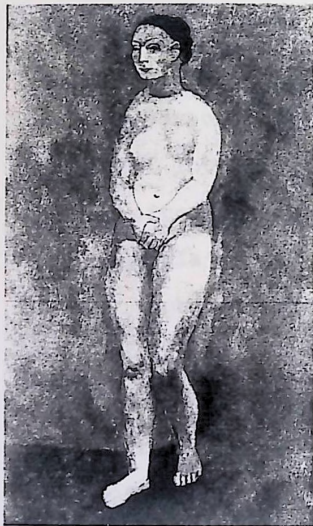
Belen, Picasso, *Two Brothers*, Gösol,
1906. Oil on canvas, 112x97 cm.
Kunstmuseum, Basel.



Picasso. *La Toilette*. Gösol, 1906. Oil on canvas. 151x99cm. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo. Fellows for Life Fund.



Picasso. *Woman with Boy and Goat*. Gösol, 1906. Oil on canvas. 146x114cm. Barnes Foundation, Merion Station, Pa.



Picasso. *Standing Nude (Fernande)*. Gösol, 1906. Oil on canvas. 153x94cm. Collection William S. Paley, New York.



Picasso. *The Harem*. Gösol, 1906. Oil on canvas. 154.3x109.5cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna, Jr.

Compared to the startling new directions that will commence not long after his return to Paris, it is difficult not to assume that in Gosol Picasso is taking artistic farewell of all that he has learned about painting in his first twenty-five years. While one can find a few hints of the startling direction soon to emerge, there is no prominent indication of the prodigious breakaway he will undertake in Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. It is rather as if he is enjoying a sensuous collaboration with all he has achieved up to this point, is gathering about him those images and techniques of which he is supremely confident. He is further away from the lip of the morbid than at any time since he entered the Blue Period.

An event occurs, however, which shatters every security he has enjoyed in Gosol. If his fundamental belief is that one's personal life is but a prelude to catastrophe, this fearful intuition is activated again. And at a stroke! Soon after completing a portrait of the smuggler Fontdevila's granddaughter, a ten-year-old, she came down with typhoid! We can guess at the depth of Picasso's conviction that paintings were not only magical shields against ugly forces, but, if a magical error had been committed, could become traps as well, traps for oneself, and for

one's friends. He was wholly panicked by the child's illness. The death of his sister Conchita must have come back to his dreams: did he begin to see again the dead girl in Horta, struck by lightning, her head sawed down the middle for her autopsy?

They had to take care of [the sick child] with tobacco leaves that had been marinated in vinegar. There was no doctor in this far-off village, and so it was necessary to go several hours on muleback to bring one back from the nearest village. In the winter, one would die if one were truly sick, because it is impossible because of the snow and the glaciers, to cross the mountain.

To my great unhappiness, we had to leave. Picasso, having a fear almost morbid of sickness. [Souvenir Intimes, pp. 215-216]



Picasso, *Josep Fontdevila Nude*.
Gósol, 1906. Conté crayon on paper.
25.7×20cm. Private collection.

That problem somehow settled, Picasso and Fernande set out before dawn by mule-back for a town called Bellver. There they could obtain a coach, and go on to Aix where there would be a train to Paris. They did not, however, make it to Bellver until late in the afternoon:

. . .their mule train encountered a herd of wild mares. Some of the mules bolted, and their loads tumbled to the ground, leaving a trail of suitcases, sculpture, rolls of canvas and drawings. Miraculously, nothing was lost or damaged [but] by the time they reached Puigcerda, Picasso felt ill and exhausted, so they stayed there overnight. [R., pp. 452-3]

Fernande takes up the narrative:

Returning to Paris at last, we found the studio stifling in the August heat. The mice had come out in force and chewed up everything under their teeth. For want of anything better to eat, they had torn into confetti the yellow cloth of a parasol and a long shirt forgotten on my departure that I'd liked very much for its chic. I was very upset, but even more a little later when, lying down, we discovered that the bedbugs had also

profited from our absence to take over the bed in our little room. Emigrating then to the divan, they found us there as well, which obliged us to take refuge I no longer remember where, and after getting some sulphur to burn, we were able to clean up our studio. [Souvenir Intimes, p. 216]

Most striking is the way Picasso now finds himself in a good mood. If his hasty flight suggests a retreat in panic from a curse so pervasive that it may be capable of following him--as witness the stampede of the mules--then, how cheap a price to pay now. Fernande loses a shirt and a parasol, and he is obliged to fumigate his studio. An acceptable loss!

Soon after their return, he virtually gives Gertrude a mask for a face. Her portrait is done. He will use masks in place of faces many times over the next six and a half decades. If a single form can represent more than one object, so can a mask serve for a multitude of men and women, and, for that matter, for archetypes in nature as well. A face, once distorted, can also look like a teapot or a torso, or a misshapen rock. Soon, in Paris, he will draw again the face of the old smuggler Fontdevila--as a mask. The Demoiselles d'Avignon comes nearer. But then, Picasso is so fascinated by the striking form of the old man's bone structure that it will

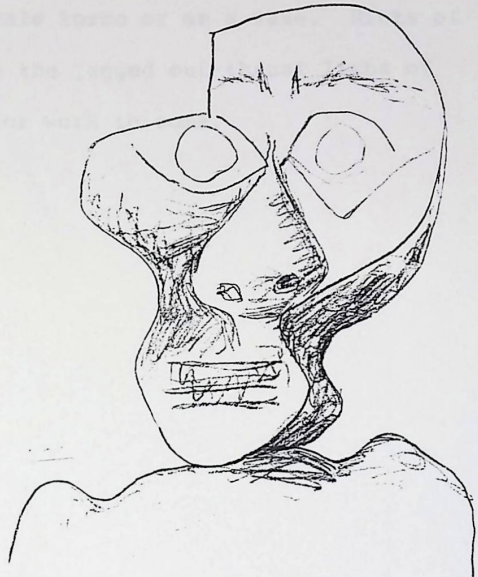
be repeated sixty-six years later when Picasso, after every delay and evasion, is now close to ninety years old and is facing into his death.



Below: Picasso. *Head of Josep Fontderida*.
Paris, 1907. Charcoal on paper. 63×48cm.
The Menil Collection Houston.



Below: Picasso. *Self-Portrait*. Mougins,
July 1972. Pencil and white chalk on
paper, 65.7×50.5cm. Private collection.



All but obsessively, that canted drawing of Fontdevila will reappear in other sketches through the following year. As Picasso's style grows bolder and more harsh, intimations of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon begin to appear, and Fontdevila's face emerges in new guise as a female torso or as a vase. Hints of his cheekbones can be seen in the jagged out-thrust limbs of the early sketches of the major work to come.



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*Below: Picasso, Head of Joseph Fontdevila.
Paris, 1907. Charcoal on paper, 63 x 48 cm.
The Menil Collection, Houston.*



Z-VI P119 → 987 ^{watercolor 1907} 22.4 x 11.5 cm

aqueo rullo



Z-VI 119 991 1907 22.4 x 11.5 cm



91

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Study for *Demoselles d'Avignon*
pencil, Paris 1907 19.5 x 24.5 cm.

We are faced with the enigma of the old man. Obviously, he presents many a theme to the painter. A smuggler--which is to say, an agreeable criminal--he manages to live to an old age; that obviously satisfied much in Picasso. To be free of society and yet to endure, to be respected. That is a feat, a successful marriage of opposites.

In any event, Picasso is fascinated by the form of Fontdevila's face. The distortion of the facial bones intrigues the painter endlessly. It is as if the angles of that carbuncular cheekbone hint of future distortions of form that Picasso will not use to full effect for another twenty-five years, of faces drawn as if we were walking around them, so that where successively one used to see a profile, a three-quarter view, and a full face in series, all three can be perceived at once.

Here are paintings from 1932, 1939, 1943.

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Part VII:

The Brothel

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The radical shift in style now approaching will come in the main from the best of his impulses but also from the most calculating. Given the seriousness of his talent, his motives can be respected as aesthetic--but all the same, a part of his ambition had to be profoundly dissatisfied at this time--he was doing so well what he could already do, yet was he conquering any new worlds? Could he still believe that he was the most exciting young painter in Paris?

Writing some five decades later, Fernande reflects on this period of 1906-1907 as if it were still evolving before her, still outraging her conservative instincts in art:

Among the drawings he has done of me, there is one which surprised me and made me reflect. The portrait was classic in style, and revealed a mastery in a genre altogether opposed to his new explorations. This study that he never shows to anyone, that he puts away carefully in a cupboard reserved for secret works, this portrait, calm, sensitive, and severe in line. . . Oh, I like it so much. What has become of it? Without doubt, it's still in a cupboard.

At this moment I ask myself whether he isn't really a repressed person who won't accept this form of art, [and sees it as] opposed to his desperate will to become chief of the most adventurous school in order that others would have to follow him.

A great ambition excites him. He has always refused to show in exhibitions, to become part of the artistic movement of his time. He wants to create a new form, be an innovator rather than a follower of great traditions. . . he wishes to subject his art to new laws. So, he struggled against all his human sentiments. If his eye captured something, he distrusted his eye. His spirit alone, his sense of fantasy, his will must guide him. His facility irritated him. He will oblige his hand to upset a harmonious and musical design. He will wildly deny such music, destroy

the harmony in it, rip apart the features, the volumes, the tones. . . in order to arrive at a synthesis that he has willed--perhaps incoherent to ordinary people--but illumined with his inspiration. [Souvenir Intimes, pp. 222-223]

There is no record of his feelings toward Apollinaire in this period, but Picasso could have been wondering whether his poet-friend, by inspiring the Rose Period, had steered his painting into a cul-de-sac. If his ambition as he expressed it in Gosol was to be the tenor who hits the highest note, he now has a formidable rival, Henri Matisse, twelve years older than himself, and most impressive in person.

They were brought together by Gertrude Stein who characterizes their relations with her predictably synoptic and determinedly casual air:

Matisse and Picasso then being introduced to each other by Gertrude Stein and her brother became friends but they were enemies. Now they are neither friends nor enemies. At that time they were both.
[Alice B. Toklas, p. 79]

Fernande gives a more useful description of her reactions to the meeting:

There was something very sympathetic about Matisse. With his regular features and his thick,

golden beard, he really looked like a grand old man of art. He seemed to be hiding, though, behind his thick spectacles, and his expression was opaque, gave nothing away, though he always talked for ages as soon as the conversation moved on to painting.

He would argue, assert, and endeavor to persuade. He had an astonishing lucidity of mind, precise, concise, and intelligent. . .

He was. . .very much master of himself, Unlike Picasso, who was usually rather sullen and inhibited at occasions like the Steins' Saturdays, Matisse shone and impressed people. [Picasso and his Friends, p.]

Richardson takes it further:

Picasso was still far from fluent in French and was self-conscious about his Spanish accent, especially when Matisse was present. Leo Stein is our witness. At Durand-Ruel's exhibition (late 1906) of Manet and Redon, Stein had come upon Matisse who claimed that Redon was vastly superior to Manet and that Picasso shared this peculiar preference. When Stein challenged Picasso on this point, he burst out angrily, "Nonsense! Redon is an interesting painter, certainly, but Manet, Manet is a giant." If he had agreed with Matisse, Picasso said, it was only because, "Matisse talks and talks. I can't talk, so I just said oui, oui, oui. But it's damned nonsense all the same. [R. p. 416]

Thanks to the Steins, Picasso and Matisse began looking apprehensively over their shoulders, accelerating their creative pace and discreetly jockeying for position. The competitiveness probably originated at the famous Salon D'Automne of 1905, when the Salle des Fauves--the gallery at the Salon devoted to Matisse and his followers: Derain, Vlaminck, Puy, and briefly, Rouault--was greeted with an outburst of philistine rage that had not been equaled since Manet

showed his Olympia. Picasso was envious of all this opprobrium, envious that it should be lavished upon the king of the fauves instead of on Harlequin Trismegistus, Succes de scandale put Matisse very much ahead. [R., p. 411]

Richardson goes on to delineate the conflict exactly:

Matisse, Picasso realized, was already developing into one of the most inventive colorists in the history of art; one who knew how to evoke not just light but space and form and atmosphere through color. Matisse's sense of color was far more instinctive than Picasso's. But then a sense of color had seldom been a Spanish painter's strongest suit. [Picasso] was apt to use color as an additive, independently, of form, hence his habit of plotting his major works diagrammatically. Picasso was very conscious of this limitation. "I've mastered drawing and am looking for color; you've mastered color and are looking for drawing," he told Matisse many years later. [R., p. 417]

We can be certain that Hemingway and Faulkner never had anything like that exchange. "I will give you short sentences, if you will lend me long ones," one would like Hemingway to have said to Faulkner. But then he never did. Great artists, like common folk, usually give a wide berth to their weaknesses--one can even argue that the lacks themselves keep them focussed in their strength right on to greatness.

"Friends. . .but enemies," said Gertrude. Picasso and Matisse are, of course, more than that. Artistic rivals at the highest level, they would, through the years, illumine each other and infuriate each other, stimulate the talent of the other, galvanize the ambition of the other. As Picasso would say to Pierre Daix fifty years later:

If only everything that Matisse and I did at that period could be put side by side. Nobody ever looked at Matisse's work as thoroughly as I did. And he at mine. [Daix, 1987, p. 74]

They were each determined to become the greatest painter alive, and neither was unrealistic. It could be done. It must have been an exquisite and agonizing emotion to know that there was one man in the world who might, or might not be, a better painter than oneself; such emotion, doubtless, commenced early. Picasso must have been hearing about Henri Matisse from the time he came back to Paris in 1904. By 1906, he had to recognize that Matisse had done as much as any painter to metamorphose --nothing less than this verb can serve--the use of color into a presence powerful enough to dominate form. In counterpoint, Picasso, when he reached Cubism, would banish a lively palette from his researches and would demonstrate how luminous a limited palette could become when concentrated wholly on revelations of form.

How much of Cubism is a reaction against Matisse! As early as 1905, Matisse's paintings had color speaking "for itself with a directness previously unknown in Western painting." [John Elderfield. Matisse. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978.] The painter was declaring that color was

supposed to excite the emotion of the viewer more than to aid in depicting the object. One could, if necessary, change "the color of the world the better to render that emotion." [Ibid.] Color could be set free of the object from which it originated; indeed, but color no longer would be obliged to obey the shifts of tone that are found in shadows or in modelling--none of that modulation by which the Impressionists had created an illusion of light; instead, Matisse and the fauves looked to obtain their painterly light through the impact of one bold pigment next to another. To the eye coddled by Impressionism, it had to seem a visual explosion. A crude green was now forced to sit beside a full red with a primary blue slammed in above both, a ferocity of contrasts that in Matisse's hands was able to produce a dazzling light. The subject matter was no longer important; an apple need no longer look like an apple so much as an ellipse of color able to palpate one's eye. Matisse, during his fauve period, wanted his paintings to look alive rather than to represent life. To obtain such an effect, he would often leave the spaces between broad passages of color undrawn, undefined, uncolored, as though to free the colors of context, yet dramatize their readiness to breathe. In 1905 and 1906, Matisse was working, therefore, in complete opposition to what Picasso was doing in the same two years. A measure of the difference: one

can study black and white reproductions of Picasso's work during this period and have a reasonable appreciation of his intent whereas reproductions of Matisse's paintings have not much to tell us until they are in color-- then, they astound us. One can make the point by offering a painting as well known as the First Version of The Dance done in 1909.

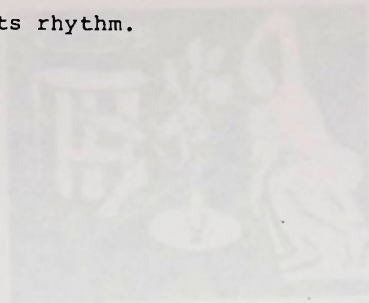


as much as The Dance still gives some sense of movement
in black and white, the point may be better made by Goldfish
and Swimming, still, which, here, stripped of color, gives up
nearly all of its rhythm.



52 on canvas 5'6 1/2" x 2'9 1/2"
p. 10/17

Inasmuch as The Dance still gives some sense of movement in black and white, the point may be better made by Goldfish and Sculpture, 1911, which, here, stripped of color, gives up nearly all of its rhythm.



Handwritten notes in cursive script, mostly illegible due to fading.



Matisse: Goldfish and Sculpture

October 1911

Oil on canvas 45 3/4" x 39 1/2"

Jessy-des-Moulinsaux

We can, of course, not be certain that Picasso felt less important than Matisse when they met, yet the relative standing of their careers at this hour suggests as much. The Salon des Indépendants had opened on March 20, 1906, and Picasso had, as usual, not submitted any work, whereas Matisse had dominated the occasion with a large canvas, Le Bonheur de Vivre, huge in its scope and its ambitious intent.

The painting was remarkable for its unloosed sensuality, its unloosed color, its unloosed physical scale, its unloosed imagination (for the first time Matisse transported himself out of the present tense and into a totally imaginary world) and its unloosed eclecticism. The painting represented a kind of release from past constraints, an act of expansion into a greater sense of self-realization. . . That this single large painting was meant as a kind of manifesto was not lost on the critics. Charles Morice, who had strong reservations about the work, nonetheless referred to it as "la question du salon". . . and Louis Vauxcelles, who had a few reservations, nonetheless wrote: "There are great qualities here: the masses are rhythmically balanced, the green of the trees, the blue of the sea, the pink of the bodies [are] closely enveloped in a halo of complementary violet, harmonize and blend, and there emanates from this canvas a sensation of refreshing joy. . . he has wanted to obtain the highest synthesis I know." [Flam, p. 163.]

Salon crowds found the work extreme and strange, even hilarious, and these reactions must have impressed Picasso,

as did the intensity of the vituperation.

Matisse's desire to exhibit this painting at the Salon des Indépendants, which was in effect Signac's salon, appears to have been an overt act of defiance, of public repudiation of neo-impressionism. Signac was so angry that he picked a fight with Matisse at the café where the exhibitors and members of the hanging committee met after the opening. Even Leo Stein was shaken by the painting. But, still open-minded and eager to expand his horizons, Stein went back to study it numerous times, and eventually came to feel that it was "the most important painting done in our time," and eventually bought it. [Flam. p. 163]



Matisse, *Le Bonheur de Vivre*, 1905-06.
Oil on canvas, 171 x 238 cm. Barnes
Foundation, Merion Station, Pa.

All of this, most notably Leo Stein's purchase with its accompanying remarks, had to be a factor pushing Picasso toward the radical departure of Les Femmes d'Alger. If Matisse was arousing prodigies of attention among his fellow artists and the critics by what he could accomplish with color, Picasso now had to show what could be done with form--even more, the destruction of form, at least, as everyone understood it. If painting, for centuries, had hitherto rested upon an interplay of color with form, and Matisse had now liberated the first, the Spaniard was bound to canonize the second; color need be no more than a parenthesis; yes, he would add color to composition "the same way one puts salt in soup," a remark he made to Georges-Michel in 1954, but then, speaking of the days when he was too poor to buy paints, he said to Teriade in 1932, "How often haven't I found that, wanting to use a blue, I didn't have it. So I used a red instead of the blue."

For that matter, he was known to remark that "color weakens," and "If you don't know what color to take, take black," remarks made in his seventies, but the attitude was always there, part of his covert feud with Matisse. So, the early Picasso who had managed to infuse circus people with a universal tenderness, would over the next half-century tear apart the world of appearances and leave us with a secret fear that the soul behind the face of each person we meet is

more hideous than any tale told by their features might suggest for he would depict the savagery of the form beneath the form in lines and angles as independent of color as the fauves had been free of form.

IN those early years, however, friendship and anxious antipathy take their turns with each painter's attitude toward the other. After Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Matisse--or so Alfred Barr would estimate--was in fear that "his position . . . at the very heart of the school of Paris was threatened. The rival star--or dynamo--was Pablo Picasso." [Barr, 1951, p. 83]

Fernande takes it further. She states that Matisse was so stirred out of his normal and usually pervasive calm by the beginnings of cubism that he "talked of getting even with Picasso, of making him beg for mercy." [Picasso and His Friends, p. 88]

Earlier, in 1907, they had exchanged paintings, a still-life by Picasso for a portrait of Matisse's daughter, Marguerite.



Picasso, *Pitcher, Bowl and Lemon*. Paris, 1907. Oil on panel, 64 x 48 cm. Private collection. The painting Picasso exchanged for Matisse's portrait of his daughter, Marguerite.



Matisse, *Marguerite*. 1907. Oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm. Musée Picasso, Paris.

Behind the sign RENDEZVOUS DES POETES tacked to the door of Picasso's studio, Salmon informs us that they now included Matisse among their games (Matisse, of course, being not present) and indulged the little ritual of throwing small gobbets of bread at the portrait of Marguerite as a follow-up to calling their shot: "Bam, right in the eye of Marguerite." "Direct hit on the cheek." Et cetera. They had heard that Matisse,

already classified as a great man, was conducting a discreet inquiry to find out who was writing on the walls and embankments of Montmartre, "Matisse is nuts," "Matisse is more dangerous than booze," "Matisse is worse than war. . ." [Souvenirs Sans Fin, p]

As Gertrude was to write in a notebook, "Pablo and Matisse have a maleness that belongs to genius. Moi aussi, perhaps."

-2-

Picasso now conceived of a large ambitious canvas. It would be a scene in a bordello, and, in fact, he called it El Bordel. Since he was recalling of a brothel he used to frequent on the Carrer d'Avinyo in the Barrio Chino of Barcelona, the canvas, years later in 1916, would be renamed Les Demoiselles d'Avignon by Andre Salmon and that title, despite Picasso's announced distaste for it, became the one by which it was thereafter known.

If Picasso now determined to produce a masterpiece (and indeed one of the marks of a great artist is that they dare to think that they have the will to do more than they have ever done before) he had a few practical problems on his

hands, and the first was that he did not have enough room in his studio. After all, he was most certainly not living alone, and Fernande decided they must adopt a child. If they did, and Picasso was at least of two minds about this, he would then face the problem of trying to paint in the midst of a strew of toys and Fernande's cache of acquisitions, gowns, perfume, jewelry, and her own hardly insignificant presence. Living so closely together, how ^ould she fail to ask a question or two at the worst possible moment?

Gertrude, out of generous or wicked motives, or both, came up with the rent for an additional studio in the Bateau Lavoir, and Picasso, fortified by Vollard's ourchase for 2500 francs of a number of canvases from the Blue and Rose periods, an agreeable increase over the 2000 francs he had given him last year for the trip to Gosol, was ready to begin this major work, that he had determined, absolutely in advance, would be a major work.

He ordered a large, especially fine canvas, more or less the same size as El Greco's Apocalyptic Vision that he so much admired. . . Out of conviction that he was embarking on a masterpiece, he had it relined. Leo Stein had just had this done to one of his paintings, and Picasso had been much impressed. [R. p. 474]

Pierre Cabanne gives a vivid portrait of the artist at work:

It is the spring of 1907. In the Bateau Lavoir studio, Picasso paints. Around him his

monsters, women with unhealthy flesh, Negroid heads with broadly striated cheeks, masks shaped as by scythe strokes with empty sockets, pink and gray nudes strong as tree trunks, . . .totems of some barbaric cult of which he is the high priest. Fernande, nonchalantly sprawled on the couch, looks on.

It was a fantastic spectacle: the stocky little man in front of the picture, a huge canvas he had been fighting with for months, in which [were] disjointed women. . .with unbelievable faces and erratic arms, a tohubohu of shapes. . . reminiscent of nothing known, unless perhaps the targets in carnival games of skill. The bodies with their broad flesh-pink planes were. . . chiseled with frigid violence, unrestrained fury. Here and there, on each disjointed torso, a terrifying mask with a madwoman's eyes. [Cabanne, p. 113]

Roland Penrose wrestles with the dichotomy in the work:

The figure on the extreme left holds a red ochre curtain so as to display the angular forms of her sisters. Her appearance, particularly in the grave profile of her face, is unmistakably Egyptian, whereas the two figures she reveals in the center of the picture, their tender pink flesh contrasting with the blue of the background, have more affinity to the medieval frescoes of Catalonia.

There is no movement in the three figures. Although singular and lacking in conventional grace, they are poised and serene, making a strong contrast with the two figures on the right, which, placed one above the other, complete the group. Their faces show such grotesque distortion that they appear to have intruded from another world...It can be seen at a glance that the two right-hand figures are totally different in treatment from the others. Ghoulish and sinister, they make the already forbidding features of their companions appear dignified, almost gentle. . .

Rather than suppress the evidence of conflict between his two stages of thought, he left it unfinished, allowing us to see clearly the evolution of ideas in his own mind. It is in fact our best clue in bridging the gulf that seems to separate the bewitching charm of the Rose period from the severity of the task on which he was about to embark. The barbarous appearance of the heads on the right and their disregard for all classical canons of beauty give the lie to statements such as "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," because no human face, and these must be recognised as human, could ever assume such monstrous proportions. . .

[Penrose, pp. 124-130]

Penrose, who is Picasso's all but officially approved biographer, immediately goes on to say "yet their powerful presence speaks profoundly and truthfully to our sensibility."

Of course, such words as "profoundly" and truthfully" are there to employ when emotions are uneasy, and one no longer necessarily knows what one is talking about.

Even today, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon is a most peculiar painting. Since it was first donated in the 1930's to the Museum of Modern Art, several generations of art students have wrestled, doubtless, with their aesthetic conscience before agreeing that it was, yes, indeed, great. One can think of Fidel Castro in the wilds of Eastern Cuba in 1956 a few days after the disastrous ambush he ran into on debarking from his boat Granma; four-fifths of his entire force of eighty men were killed. Down to sixteen barbudos, he is reputed to have said in the jungle, "The days of the dictatorship are numbered," and one of the band later confessed, "I thought our leader was mad." Indeed, if he had been killed the next day in a skirmish, few would have disagreed--one more fever-distorted insurrectionist, now dead.

So it is with Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. If Picasso had perished of a brain hemorrhage a short time after finishing it, the art-world would still have discovered his earlier work and he would rest today in a much-admired and doubtless expensive collector's niche, and might even arouse compassion as the

pathétique of his last ambitious painting was talked about, the crazy one he had done of women in a brothel, a dreadful failure, an inchoate confusion of means, an apocalypse of the deranged. It would not be too difficult to believe that the canvas had either brought on his terminal stroke, or was the direct prediction of it.

At the time, it is certain that friends and sympathetic critics had most negative reactions. Matisse thought it was a hoax, a mockery of the best advanced work then current, and made his dire comment to Leo Stein that he would make Picasso pay for it. Apollinaire, who was never an art critic of real insight, was dreadfully confused at the lack of poetry in this huge manifesto, and could find no better encomium than "revolutionary" which for Apollinaire was equal to saying "good try." Bewildered, he brought Felix Fénéon, a leading art critic, with a reputation for uncovering new talent, over to the Bateau Lavoir and Fénéon, also confused, told Picasso to devote himself to caricature. Vollard now had no interest in buying any more of his work, and Derain was full of morose anticipation: "One day we shall find Pablo has hanged himself behind his great canvas." That may well have been a reflection of the gloom Derain sensed in the work. By dint of having advanced so far out into uncharted terrain that no one could

follow him, he had left himself wholly alone. Georges Braque, who in two years would be at work every day with Picasso in their mutual exploration into Cubism, was harshly bewildered by the canvas: "It's as if you are making us eat rope and drink turpentine," he said. Legend has it that shopkeepers in Montmartre looked at Fernande with pity; the word was out that her lover had gone mad. Leo Stein said: "Now I know what you were trying to do--paint the fourth dimension--how funny." In her turn, Gertrude, obviously bewildered, never spoke to Picasso about it at all. That was an event in itself. Gertrude, like Leo, looked to have the final comment.

The only people who seemed to approve of the canvas were two young German art dealers, Wilhelm Uhde and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, but Picasso would have been ready to doubt the purity of their reaction--they were looking for talented young artists on the cheap, after all.

In two interviews fifty-four years later, Kahnweiler offers his impressions of that period:

[Wilhelm Uhde] first told me about a strange picture that the painter Picasso was working on. A picture, he said, that looked Assyrian, something utterly strange. I wanted to see it.

I did not know Picasso, but I had heard his name, and I had seen many of his drawings in the front window of the shop of an art dealer named Clovis Sagot. . .

So one day I set off. I knew the address, 13 rue Ravignan. For the first time I walked up those stairs on the place Ravignan, which I tramped up and down so many times later, and...thus I arrived at the door I had been told was Picasso's. It was covered with the scrawls of friends making appointments: "Manolo is at Azon's. . .Totote has come. . .Derain is coming this afternoon..."

I knocked on the door. A young man, barelegged, in shirt sleeves, with the shirt unbuttoned, opened the door, took me by the hand, and showed me in. . .

So I walked into that room which Picasso used as a studio. No one can ever imagine the deplorable misery of those studios in rue Ravignan. The wallpaper hung in tatters from the unplastered wall. There was dust on the drawings and rolled-up canvasses on the caved-in couch. Beside the stove was a kind of mountain of piled-up lava, which was ashes. It was unspeakable. It was here that he lived with a very beautiful woman, Fernande, and a huge dog named Fricka. There was also that large painting Uhde had told me about, which was later called Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and which constitutes the beginning of cubism. I

wish I could convey to you the incredible heroism of a man like Picasso, whose spiritual solitude at this time was truly terrifying, for not one of his painter friends had followed him. The picture he had painted seemed to everyone something mad or monstrous.

CREMIEUX: Do you remember your first conversation with Picasso in front of that picture?

KAHNWEILER: No, I don't. I only remember that I must have told him immediately that I found his work admirable, for I was overwhelmed.

CREMIEUX: Did this first meeting mark the beginning of your unwritten contract with Picasso?

KAHNWEILER: Oh, no, that came much later. Picasso was, and still is, for that matter, much too suspicious a man to make a deal immediately with some young man who appeared out of the blue and whose business--which might well seem mad--he had no way of knowing would last. No, I immediately bought some of Picasso's pictures, for which, if I may say so, there was no competition. There was no need to draw up a contract or anything of the sort, since no one else was buying from him any more.
[Kahnweiler and Cremieux, 1961, My Galleries and My Painters, pp. 38-39]

In his interview with Pierre Cabanne in 1961, Kahnweiler adds:

"I did not find the painting 'Assyrian,' but I could not put a label on it. It was something mad and monstrous at the same time. I was deeply and violently moved, and immediately thought it was an important work. It was Les Demoiselles d'Avignon."

"What made you immediately feel it was important?" I asked.

"I don't know. I might say it was because of its absolute novelty, but that's not exactly it. I could not define just where and how the novelty showed itself, yet I could feel it bursting out."

"It was an intuition, not an analyzed aesthetic feeling?"

"Exactly. I think it's something one might call aesthetic conscience. There is an ethical, moral conscience that determines what is good and what bad; I think such a conscience exists for the fine arts as well. It said to me, 'This is fine. This is important.'" [Cabanne, p. 122]

The flavor of Kahnweiler's remarks suggests that his first reaction was authentic, but we have to remind ourselves that he could not speak otherwise. By 1961 when the interview was given, he was Picasso's foremost dealer.

In any event, we can look at Les Demoiselles d'Avignon today and honor it without ever having to enjoy it. For we know that Cubism is going to emerge from it, and Cubism will stimulate Picasso over the next sixty years into an unparalleled career of major periods and astonishing works. Les Demoiselles stands before us, therefore, in all its immense implications: We are looking at nothing less moving than a prodigiously important historical artifact--comparable to a rock brought back from the moon by astronauts.

Richardson, who ends the first volume of his monumental biography "as Picasso is about to conjure up a quintet of Dionysiac Demoiselles on his huge new canvas," will offer a more-elevated verdict: ". . .the most innovative painting since Giotto. . . Les Demoiselles d'Avignon is the first unequivocally twentieth-century masterpiece, a principal detonator of the modern movement, the cornerstone of twentieth-century art. [R. p. 475]

Nonetheless, its success still relies on our knowledge of all the forces it would liberate in Picasso, and soon enough, in other painters by means of the Cubist works that come after. So we can now comprehend from our historical vantage the profundity of his impulse. Yet, taken by itself, regarded in passing by any museum-goer who has not lived in the shifts of twentieth-century art, Les

Demoiselles is still a gnomic, repellent work, not unlike an obscure poem that will never repay one without a solemn search into the poet's notes and--only intuition can here provide the real detection--into his unspoken ambitions and themes.



Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.). (Paris, spring 1907). Oil on canvas, 96 x 92". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest

What, then, was he attempting? What were the new themes? The answer is that he was doing several things at once, and he changed his mind in the middle, even left it on record that he never figured out how to unify the two halves of the work. Still, he suggests that he had the instinct not to try. So he lived with unresolved questions for months, and every day he must have looked every day at that canvas eight feet by eight feet square. His mental balance may have tilted often toward the eerie. He and Fernande were taking opium regularly and if it was not in large amounts, still, not a great deal is necessary when you have visual insights as exquisite and as overpowering as Picasso's. Poets know the anguish of too much rich language that will not stop racing through the brain even as it is being lost forever, especially when the rush manifests itself on drugs. Picasso's recurrent complaint about opium is that it gave him extraordinary images while taking away much of his desire to paint--so, too, could many a young artist or writer file a similar brief against marijuana.

What we can surmise is that Picasso's inner life was hardly in order during this period. His perceptions had to be inflamed by Apollinaire's and Max Jacob's insights fully as much as by opium. (If he had felt relatively calm in Gosol the previous summer, there had been, after all, no drugs, no poets,

and no studs lurking around to snag Fernande.) Jacob, exploring deeply into kabbala and mystical Catholicism, into astrology and Tarot, had talents for the occult. Picasso, drenched in anticipation of oncoming if nameless catastrophe, had to find himself both drained and illumined by bouts of opium during those drug-taking years from 1905 to 1908. The fundamental premise of magic, "As above, so below," would have had endless application for him. He would have felt no dislocation in seeing the visible world as a thicket of interconnections.

To this amalgam of magic, distorted vision, and intense dread, add his competitive ambition; add, too, his urge to be more profound than Matisse. Leo Stein was steeping himself in his own wit when he commented that Picasso was looking for the fourth dimension, but as we shall see, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity was present as an overarching metaphor in Picasso's consciousness; Einstein, already moving on from the Special Theory toward a General Theory of Relativity that would seek not only to connect space and time, but gravity as well, was thereby attempting to bring a sense of unity to his conception of the universe. Picasso, obsessed with form as the categorical answer to Matisse's mastery of color, may have been looking for a general theory of form that would connect apples

and horses, forests and women, a complete reconstruction of the visual world whereby forms need no longer be part of landscapes, or figures, or still-lives, but exist first as forms coalescing into one another on a field of ambiguous magnitude.

Given his visceral detestation of any ridicule that might be addressed toward himself, it is certain he would never voice such private insights. Let others discover the intent in his work. Failing that, let others discuss his work with the jargon of art, let them wrestle with three-dimensional plasticity extracted from the two-dimensional plane; he knew better.

We can attempt, however, to speculate on what was in his mind, and look to the two painters who influenced Les Demoiselles d'Avignon most directly. There can be little question that its composition pretty directly reflects El Greco's Apocalyptic Vision and Cézanne's Five Bathers and Three Bathers and then his Women Bathers; Picasso's earliest sketches reinforce the comparison.

El Greco, *Apocalyptic Vision*
1608-14. Oil on canvas, 225 x 193 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York. Rogers Fund, 1950.



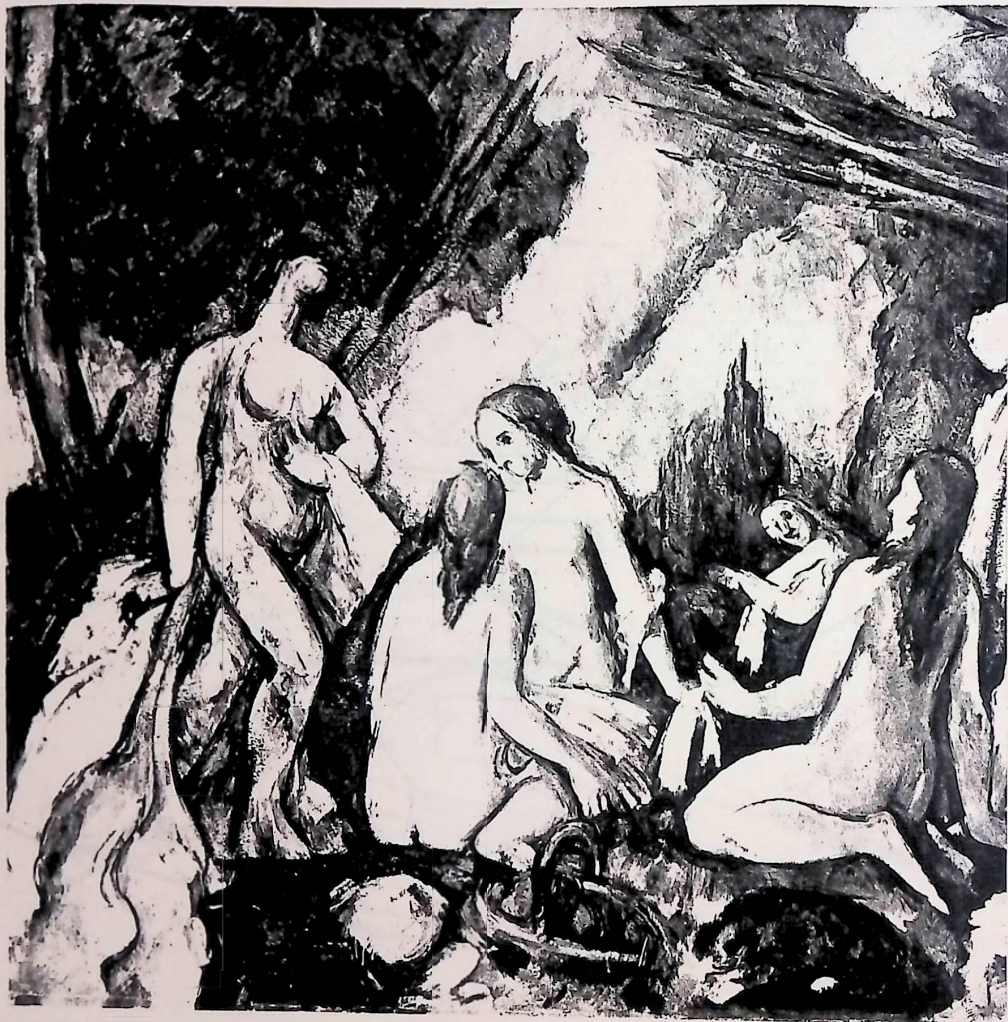
Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger*
Paris, 1907. Oil on canvas,
213.9 x 233.7 cm. The Museum of
Modern Art, New York. Acquired
through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.



Cézanne, *The Bathers*, c.1877-78.
Oil on canvas, 158 x 55 cm. Musée
Picasso, Paris. Formerly owned
by Picasso.



Cézanne, *The Bathers*, c.1881-82.
Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm. Musée du
Petit Palais, Paris. Formerly owned
by Matisse.



88. WOMEN BATHERS. 1800-06



69





40



41

42 - 2nd version of the painting
the figures are more
relaxed and the composition
is more balanced
the figures are more
relaxed and the composition
is more balanced
II

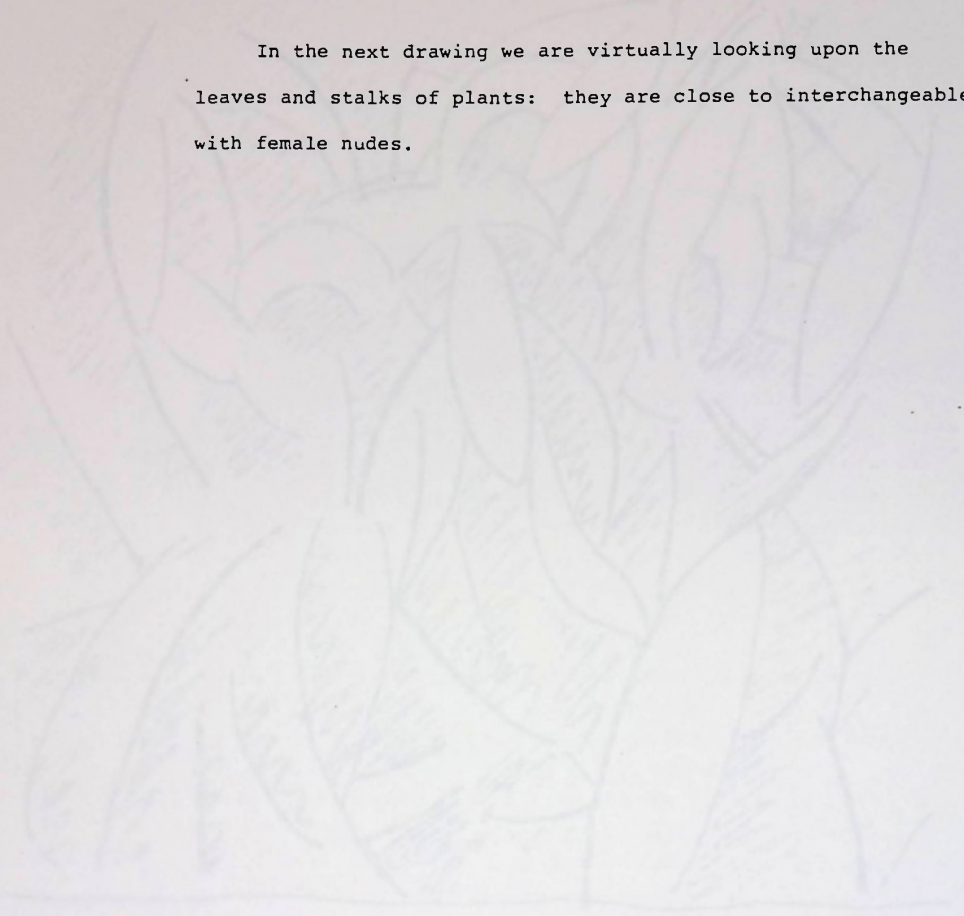
Indeed, Picasso, acknowledging the influence, would remark that a painter needed a father and a mother, and to fulfill the requirement, his artistic parents were Cézanne and El Greco.

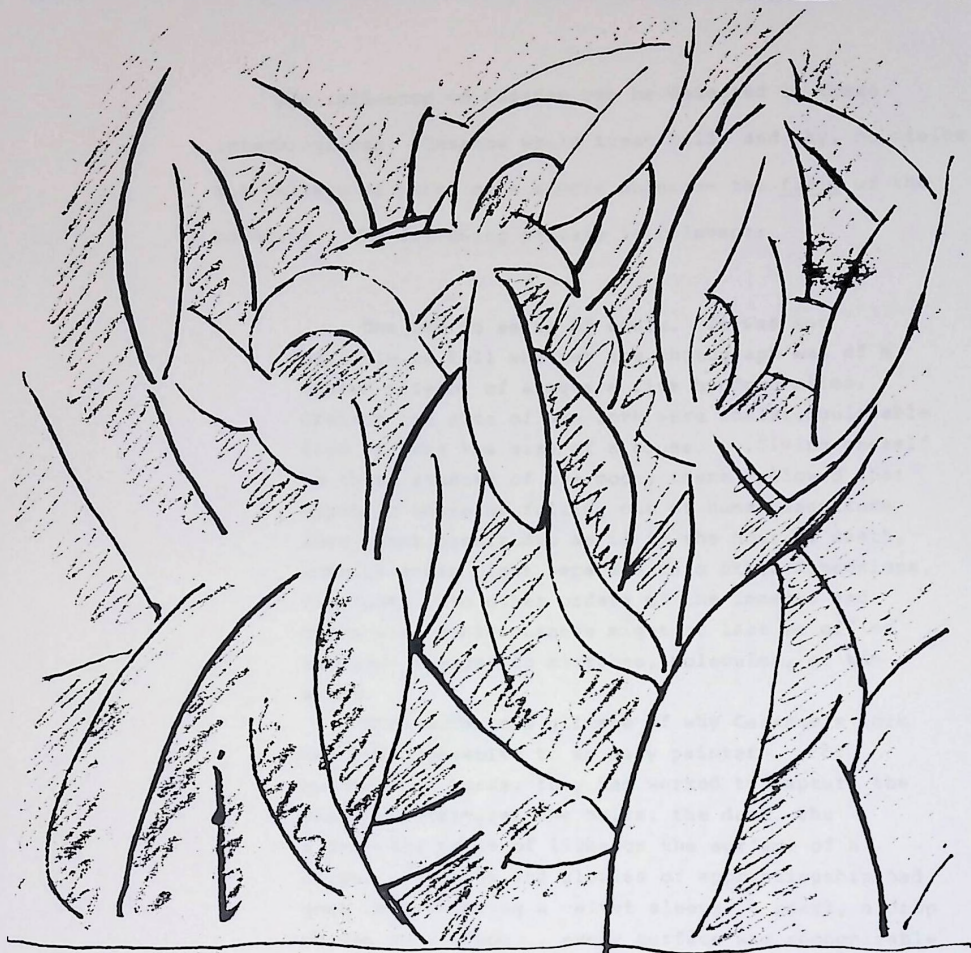
They are certainly the godfather and godmother of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. The composition of Apocalyptic Vision all but produces the forms on the left and the right of Picasso's canvas; in the various Bathers, Cézanne's nudes blend into the forest, even as Picasso's figures turn into the shards, fronds, and jagged limbs of a composition that offers the illusion one is confronting some ladies in a cactus patch. The heads may come forth as faces or masks, but the arms and legs present the organic independence of plant forms thrusting every which way. A comparison of a nude and a tree in a landscape on the next page may help to make the point:

Even the distortion of the nose in the next study gives a powerful impression of a branch being bent. The face seems made of wood, not flesh.



In the next drawing we are virtually looking upon the leaves and stalks of plants: they are close to interchangeable with female nudes.





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The influence of Cezanne can be detected in these interminglings. Cezanne would treat hills and sky, mountains and valleys as parts of a single object-- the field of the painting. The following passage is relevant:

One had no sense of scale. It was not possible to tell whether the photograph was of a square mile or of a square five hundred miles. Craters the size of New York were indistinguishable from craters the size of a house. . . Giving oneself to these studies of the moon, there followed that hypnotic sense of falling out of human magnitude into other magnitudes as if in the hour of death, consciousness might separate into other dimensions, dissipate into other orders of the immense and miniscule, consciousness might at last be off on terminal voyages to microbes, molecules, or the stars.

That offered a glimpse of why Cezanne's work had been obsessive to so many painters. For hundreds of years, they had worked to capture the sheen and texture, the hairs, the dust, the flickering motes of light on the surface of a drape. Miseries and glories of apprenticeship had gone into painting a velvet sleeve, a pearl, a drop of dew on a grape... every surface was recognizable in its own right. Did a painter work a canvas properly? Then one could cut out a square inch of canvas, show it to an unfamiliar eye, and the response would be that it was a piece of

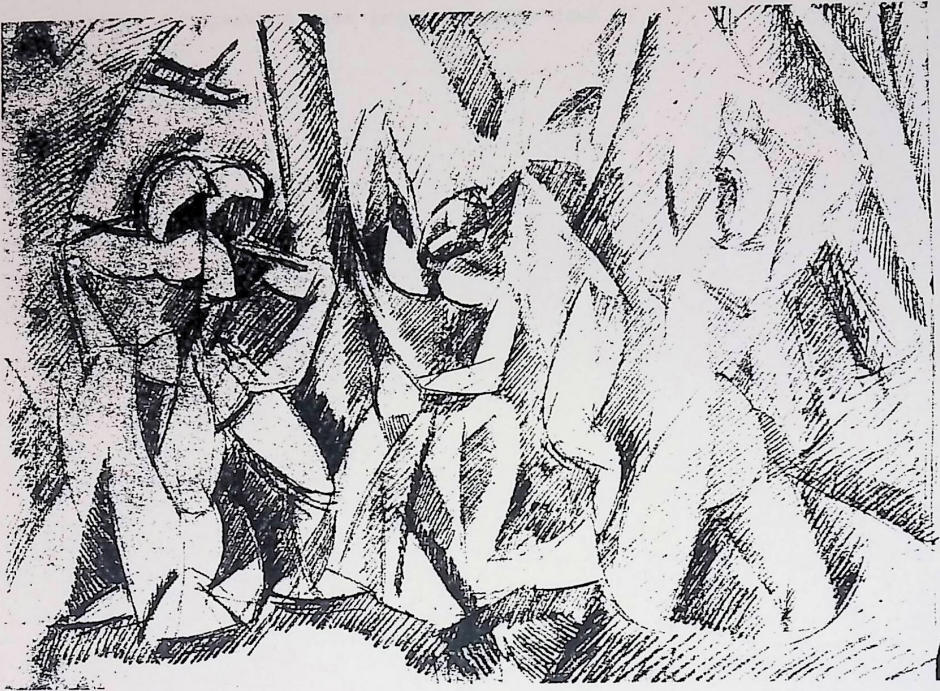
lace, or a square of velvet, for the canvas had been painted to look exactly like lace or velvet.

Cezanne, however, had looked to destroy the surface. A table cloth in any one of his still lifes, taken inch by square inch, resembled the snowfields of mountains; his apples could be the paint-stained walls of a red barn, or the clay roundings of a rock; the trunks of his trees were stems, or pillars, or hairs beneath a microscope. His skies, patch by patch, could be taken for a sea as easily as a light-blue throw cloth; the skin which ran from a man's eye to the corner of his mouth was like the sun-beaten terrain of his hills.

. . so the orders of magnitude vanished in his painting, and one could not know, looking at a detail, whether he was representing the inside of a flower or the inside of a tent. Something in that vision spoke like the voice of the century to come, something in his work turned other painters out of their own directions and into a search for the logic of the abstract. Picasso and Cubism would pour through that hole in the old love of surface until one could not tell which wall was near and what floor had begun to recede. It was as if the century to come was already anticipated in the veins of its artists, as if the century to come would go out to explore the dissolution of all orders of magnitude and so begin a search into the secrets and unwindings of birth and death. [Author not located]

The sketch that follows is immersed in precisely such a search for a new logic. The sense of surface and to a great

degree the sense of magnitude have not so much disappeared as
been converted into figures that are hardly more human than
trees.



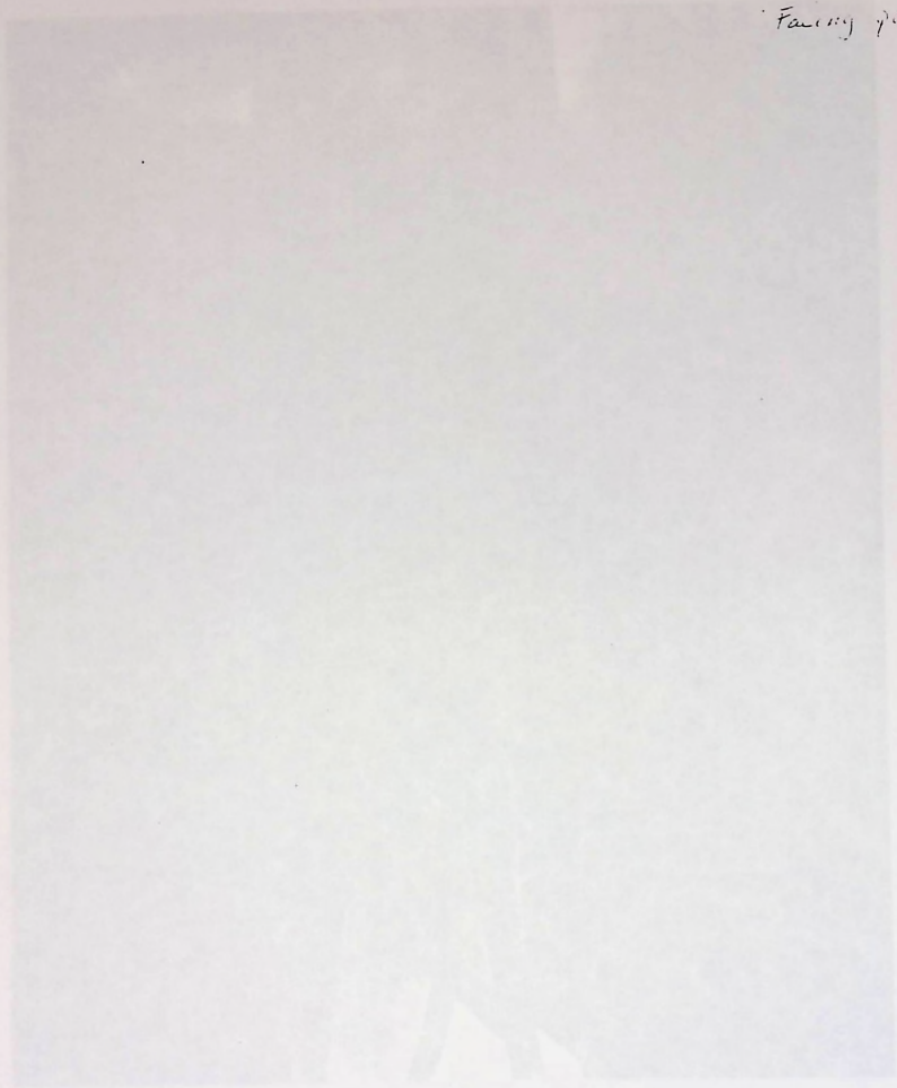
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A year later, he is determinedly trying to interchange torsos and trees. To heighten the similitude, the painting of trees is here printed upside-down.

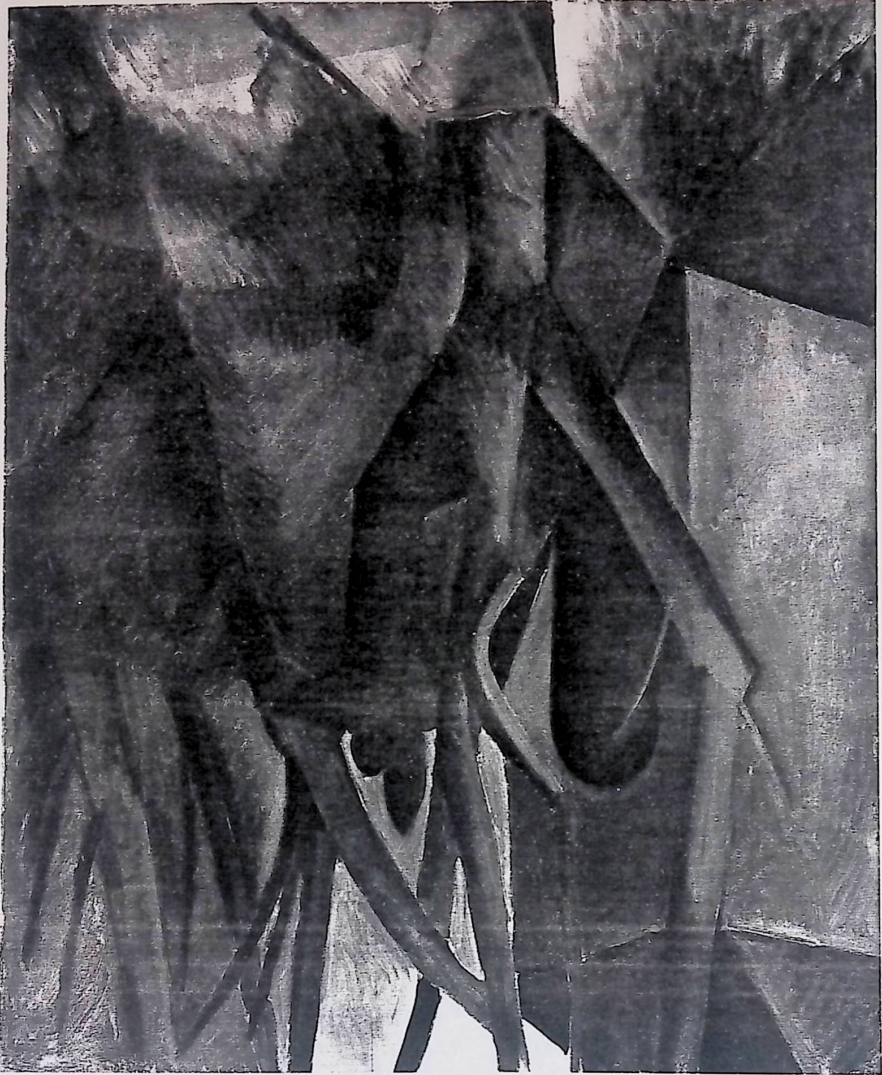
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Facing pages



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Picasso, *Landscape* (Paris, autumn) 1908
Oil on canvas, 59 1/2 x 52 x 100.8 x 81.5 cm
Date 1911, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Gift of David Rockefeller

Mounted upside down for purposes of contrast
with The Dryad



Picasso, *The Dryad*, Paris, [spring-autumn] 1908
Oil on canvas, 72 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (185 x 108 cm)
Daix 153. The Hermitage Museum, Leningrad

P+B 9103

That is still a year away and by then, the perceptions first glimpsed in Les Demoiselles d'Avignon are much refined, and there is a unity absent now that was absent in the earlier work where he was not only presenting two paintings at once, but two contradictory impulses. If the lower two-thirds of Les Demoiselles portrays women's breasts, torsos and limbs as forms not signally distinguishable from a cactus garden, the masks and faces, by contrast, are preternaturally vivid--they certainly smash the illusion that one is looking at a scene whose objects can no longer be separated from one another. Moreover, the faces on the right of the canvas are painted in a style that is at odds with the faces on the left.

Somewhere in the mid-weeks of working on it, some time in the spring of 1907, Picasso "discovered" African art, which is to say that although he had seen it before, there arrived the moment when he had a revelation:

One day, coming out of the Museum of Comparative Sculpture, then in the left wing of the Palace of the Trocadero, out of curiosity he opened the doors across the hall that led into the rooms of the old Ethnographical Museum. Even today, Picasso speaks with deepest emotion of the shock he received that day on seeing the African sculptures. [Cabanne, p. 116]

Decades later, he would certainly speak to André Malraux of the impact of that visit upon him, and indeed so tellingly and so volubly that Malraux gave to the book he wrote about his conversations with the painter, no less a title than Picasso's Mask.

When I went to the old Trocadero, it was disgusting. The Flea Market. The smell. I was all alone. I wanted to get away. But I didn't leave. I stayed. I stayed. I understood that it was very important: something was happening to me, right? The masks weren't just like any other pieces of sculpture. Not at all. They were magic things. . . The Negro pieces were intercesseurs, mediators; ever since then I've known the word in French. They were against everything--against unknown, threatening spirits. I always looked at fetishes. I understood; I too am against everything. I too believe that everything is unknown, that everything is an enemy! Everything! Not the details--women, children, babies, tobacco, playing--but the whole of it! I understood what the Negroes used their sculpture for. . . They were weapons. To help people avoid coming under the influence of spirits again, to help them become independent. They're tools. If we give spirits a form, we become independent. . . I understood why I was a painter. [Picasso's Mask, p.

It was as if one not only looked for the key to form, but for the form that would confuse the Creator of forms--in short, one looked for a mask, an intercesseur.

Cabanne establishes the effect of his visit to the museum:

This [event] very likely took place before the summer break of 1907, as other points of reference allow us to conclude. . . the part of the Demoiselles he was then working on was transformed by his replacing the faces on the right by "African masks." This is the belief of experts as distinguished as Alfred Barr, Jr., John Golding, Jean Laude, and Andre Fermigier... John Richardson boldly writes that Picasso redid the two right hand figures of the Demoiselles in a style that cannot be anything but that of "Negro" art. [Cabanne, op. 116]

If he chose then at mid-passage in Les Demoiselles to perform an exorcism, just what was he exorcising? While it is not certain that the following episode took place in the spring of 1907, Richardson places it there and the inner logic of events makes the date likely:

. . .briefly the story is this: Fernande Olivier, unable to have a child herself, went to look at the orphanage at the nearby rue Caulaincourt. There she found a girl of about eight or ten: the child hated spinach, but was obliged to eat it. Fernande hated spinach too, and in her indignation she adopted the child out of hand, bringing it back to the Bateau Lavoir. For some time the little girl was fed with sweetmeats, given dolls and toys: Picasso and everyone else in the Bateau Lavoir was kind to her, particularly Max Jacob. Then Fernande suddenly grew tired of it: she decided that she had nothing maternal in her composition and asked Max Jacob to return the little girl to the home. This he did; but in the course of the formalities an official stated that once relinquished the child could never be taken back; at this, she burst into tears, threw her arms around Jacob's neck, and begged him not to leave her. He could not bear it; he led her away, fed her at a restaurant, and took her home.

"I can't keep you," he observed.

"Why not?" said the little girl. "No one will want to take me away. I am only a waif."

"I too am a waif," said Max Jacob, weeping.

In the end, he placed her with a local concierge. Picasso's share in all this, apart from general kindness and the provision of dolls, is not recorded. [O'Brian, p. 175]

If this is the least attractive anecdote we have yet heard about Fernande, it can nonetheless be accounted for: Given the

mean hours of her childhood, she must have wished to transcend that stunted past by offering kindness to another waif. Her own childhood bore down on her, however; come the test, the iron laws of deprivation were in effect--she had too much bitterness and too little compassion to raise someone else's child.

For Picasso, however, what a disaster! It must have taken no small march over the rocks in his Spanish soul to accept the idea of raising another man's child with his barren mate, yet he came that far. Then Fernande gave the child away. Speak of curses. He was ready to practise exorcism.

Nothing in this story is of immediate relevance to the Negro masks unless both events did take place in the spring of 1907, but if so, not only is much accounted for, but it can also explain why, in that summer of 1907, as we shall soon see, Picasso decided to separate from Fernande.

Of course, other large anxieties were certainly present. In March of 1907, Picasso bought two Iberian heads from a Belgian named Gery Pieret, who was Apollinaire's friend and part-time secretary. Pieret, as a lark, had stolen these small pieces of sculpture from the Louvre to demonstrate that it could be done. These are the years, let us not forget, when Gide is writing L'Immoraliste [CK date] and crime-as-a-gesture

is beginning to present its claims as an advanced art-form. Picasso may have been pleased to acquire the two pieces but could now have been suffering all the bourgeois anxiety of receiving stolen property; we know that he kept these heads hidden from view. He could not, however, hide^e them in the painting. The second and third women in Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (reading from left to right), remain even after Picasso repainted the two figures on the right, and substituted African masks for faces after his visit to the old wing of the Trocadero. His exercises in exorcism had commenced.

"If we give spirits a form," said Picasso to Malraux, "we become independent." Yes. Exorcism seeks to domicile the perverse, and ugly representations can be set out as warnings to keep evil impulses at bay.

In the Trocadero museum, Picasso may have had a recognition: Even as Fontdevila's face looked to be composed of bone alone, and thereby took forms more appropriate to bone than to flesh, so did Africans see faces as extensions of wood, of trees. Their masks were not only carved from wood, but took forms appropriate to wood, not flesh. To Africans, forests were, when all is said, vastly more awesome than animals or humans, and so, presumably, were closer to the gods.

As Picasso told Zervos in 1935:

How can you expect a spectator to live my picture as I lived it? A picture comes to me from far away. Who can say how far away? I have guessed it, seen it, done it, and yet, the next day, I myself cannot see what I've done. How can one get into my dreams, my instincts, my desires, my thoughts that have taken so long to shape up and come to light especially so as to grasp what I may have put in in spite of my own will.

I had finished half the picture. I felt: this is not it! I did the other half. I wondered whether I ought to redo the whole thing. Then I thought, "no, they'll understand what I wanted to do."

It is worth taking another look at the great dichotomy in the canvas, that gaping hole, that refraction of light and cracking of planes so much like shattered glass that lies between the left half of the picture and the right. On close examination, it is an incredible terrain. The shards of Cubism are there. No wonder that Picasso could not bring the two halves of the picture together. An act of vast artistic appropriation still remains to be created in the no-man's-land between. Yes, it is certainly worth taking another look at the picture: