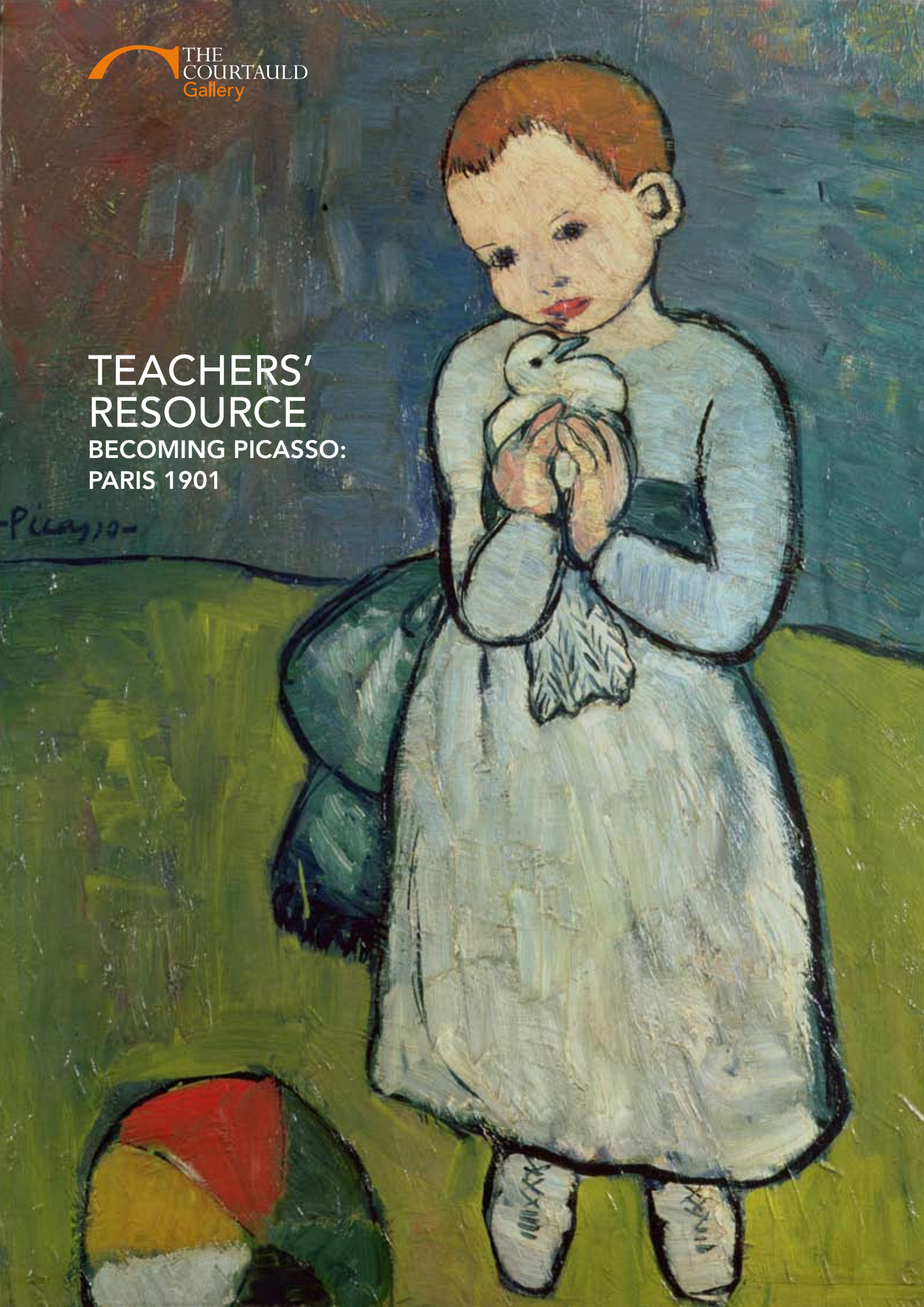
THE COURTAULD Gallery

TEACHERS' RESOURCE

BECOMING PICASSO: PARIS 1901



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Compiled and produced by Sarah Green
Design by Joff Whitten

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM LINKS FOR
EACH ESSAY ARE MARKED IN **ORANGE**

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Cover image:
Pablo Picasso
Child with a Dove, 1901
Oil on canvas
73 x 54 cm
Private collection

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Dwarf-Dancer, 1901
Oil on board
105 x 60 cm
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WELCOME

The Courtauld is a vibrant international centre for the study of the history of art and conservation and is also home to one of the finest small art museums in the world.

The Public Programmes department runs an exceptional programme of activities suitable for young people, school teachers and members of the public, whatever their age or background.

We offer resources which contribute to the understanding, knowledge and enjoyment of art history based upon the world-renowned art collection and the expertise of our students and scholars. I hope the material will prove to be both useful and inspiring.

Henrietta Hine
Head of Public Programmes

The Teachers' Resources are intended for use by secondary school and college teachers. The essays contextualise the Courtauld Gallery's exhibition programme by expanding on key themes and ideas linked to exhibitions. Each essay is marked with suggested links to subject areas and key stage levels. The essays are written by early career art historians and postgraduate students from The Courtauld Institute of Art with the aim of making the research culture of this world renowned, specialist University accessible to schools and colleges.

We hope teachers and educators of all subjects will use these resources to plan lessons, organise visits to The Courtauld Gallery and for their own professional development.

Sarah Green
Gallery Learning Programmer
The Courtauld Institute of Art


Picasso
1901

1: BECOMING PICASSO: PARIS 1901

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition tells the remarkable story of Pablo Picasso's breakthrough year as an artist – 1901. It was the year that the highly ambitious nineteen-year-old first launched his career in Paris at a debut summer exhibition with the influential dealer Ambroise Vollard. Refusing to rest on the success of this show, Picasso (1881-1973) charted new artistic directions in the second half of the year, heralding the beginning of his now famous Blue period. *Becoming Picasso* focuses on the figure paintings of 1901 and explores his development during this formative year when he found his own artistic voice.

1901 was a momentous and turbulent year for the young Picasso. He spent the first part of it in Madrid where he helped to set up *Arte Joven*, an avant-garde journal with ambitions to shake up the reserved culture of the Spanish capital. This role could not hold him for long as Picasso's sights were firmly set upon becoming a great painter in Paris, the 'capital of the arts'. His first visit to Paris, in the autumn and winter of 1900, had fuelled his ambitions and led to the prospect of the 1901 exhibition with Vollard, one of the city's most important modern art dealers. In February 1901, whilst still in Madrid, Picasso received news from Paris that his close friend, Carles Casagemas, had committed suicide in dramatic fashion. Casagemas shot himself in Montmartre's Hippodrome café in front of the young woman who had jilted him and his friends. The tragedy would have a profound impact upon Picasso's art as the year unfolded.

Picasso left Spain for Paris, probably at the beginning of May, with a clutch of drawings and just a few paintings. He had little over a month to produce enough work for his Vollard exhibition. Arriving in Paris, Picasso took a studio in Montmartre at 130ter boulevard de Clichy with Pere Mañach who acted as his agent. The studio had previously been occupied briefly by Casagemas before his suicide. Picasso then painted unstintingly, sometimes finishing three canvases in a single day. This frantic outpouring of creative energy resulted in most of the sixty-four works shown at the Vollard exhibition (24 June to 14 July). They demonstrate Picasso taking on and reinventing the styles and motifs of major modern artists, including Van Gogh, Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. In works such as *Dwarf-Dancer*, we see these influences coming together and being transformed into bold and daring expressions of Parisian night life, captured in showers of broken brushwork and bright colours. These works established Picasso's early reputation and are also among the earliest paintings to bear the famously assertive and singular Picasso signature, which he adopted in 1901.

The Vollard exhibition was a critical success with respectable sales. Reviewers were won over by Picasso's youthful energy, creative powers and insatiable visual appetite. As Gustave Coquiot introduced him:

> "*Pablo Ruiz Picasso – an artist who paints all round the clock, who never believes the day is over, in a city that offers a different spectacle every minute… A passionate, restless observer, he exults, like a mad but subtle jeweller, in bringing out his most sumptuous yellows, magnificent greens and glowing rubies*".

The exhibition effectively launched Picasso's career in Paris but, despite this success, he took his art in daring new directions in the second half of 1901.

Picasso evidently wanted to move away from the belle époque gaiety of the Vollard show paintings, with their exuberant brushwork, towards pictures that expressed a more profound and reflective account of human existence. He was inspired, in part, by the spectre of Casagemas' death. Picasso began to paint using muted colours, tending towards blue, and painted outlines to enclose form giving his figures an almost sculptural effect. These qualities are a defining feature of the celebrated series of paintings of melancholic café drinkers, numbed by *ennui* and absinthe. In other café scenes, such as *Seated Harlequin*, and *Harlequin and Companion*, Picasso introduces the unexpected figure of Harlequin, reinventing this familiar subject in a highly original manner. This is the first appearance of the mischievous harlequin in Picasso's paintings. The character became a recurrent feature of his later art and indeed was adopted as an alter ego for the artist. Related to this group is Picasso's much-loved *Child with a Dove*, which also expresses a sense of melancholy but in relation to the fragility of childhood innocence.

This series of works anticipate his Blue period paintings of the following few years. They demonstrate the early emergence of a number of major themes that preoccupied the young Picasso in the second half of 1901 and would continue to drive his art throughout his long career. The paintings explore the interplay between innocence and experience, purity and corruption, and life and death. These concerns were bound up with Casagemas' death and further inspired by a number of visits Picasso made in the late summer and autumn of 1901 to the Saint-Lazare women's prison where he observed, and subsequently painted, the former prostitutes and their infants who were incarcerated there. Picasso's new pictorial world of innocence and corruption, of prostitutes, melancholic drinkers, mothers and children found its fullest expression in his large-scale *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)*. This 'secular altarpiece' was a valediction to Picasso's dead friend and shows Casagemas ascending to heaven on a white stallion, surrounded by naked prostitutes, playful children, mourners and a madonna and child. This radical and highly unusual painting challenged the conventions of religious art. It demonstrates the scale of Picasso's aspirations, developed in 1901, to reinvent the language and traditions of painting. His ambition and confidence is further expressed in one of his most powerful and famous self-portraits in which he appears lit up against a dark background with a bold inscription proclaiming *Yo - Picasso* literally *I - Picasso*.

Image:
Pablo Picasso
Seated Harlequin, 1901
Oil on canvas
83.2 x 61.3 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3+
Art and Design, History, Art History, and other Humanities

2: *'I WAS A PAINTER AND I BECAME PICASSO'*

Katie Faulkner
Visiting lecturer
The Courtauld Institute of Art

Pablo Ruiz Picasso made his first visit to Paris in October 1900 with his friend and fellow artist and poet Carles Casemegas. One purpose of Picasso's visit to Paris was to see the Exposition Internationale Universelle, where one of his works, *Last Moments*, was on display in the Spanish section of the exhibition of paintings in the Grand Palais. The Exposition was not just an art show. Inside the glass pavilions visitors could marvel at the power of electricity, browse the latest fashions in Art Nouveau furniture, take a ride on a moving electric walkway and witness actors talking on film for the first time. The organisers of the Exposition wanted to frame Paris as the centre of modernity by exhibiting signs of the progress and discoveries made in the previous century together in the city. In letters to his friends from the early 1900s sent from Paris, Picasso would state that he often felt lonely in the 'middle of the commotion and the midst of a crowd'. Although the young artist expressed feelings of alienation in the buzz and thrum of the modern city, metropolitan ideas about authenticity and identity that emerged in the nineteenth century can be closely linked with the formation of Picasso's artistic self-image.

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, philosophers and critics struggled with the problem of how to judge the value of a work of art. One of the most important theories to deal with these ideas came out of Germany in the 1790s, Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) *Critique of Judgement*. Kant argued that works of art are a form of self-expression and therefore allow us to understand how the individual relates to the world and to other people in it. Kant's ideas became central to the understanding of the value of art and gave new importance to the figure of the artist or author in the nineteenth century. Up until fairly recently, we have been taught to think of an artist as a gifted individual, who creates works of art out of the need to express his private thoughts and emotions. Viewers of art were then expected to treasure and admire these works for their beauty. Such expectations of artists were bound up with the Romantic idea of 'genius', or the inherent and otherworldly ability of the artist to create beautiful works of art, music or poetry.

Left image:
Pablo Picasso
Self-Portrait (Yo – Picasso), 1901
Oil on canvas
73.5 × 60.5 cm
Private collection

Right image:
Vincent van Gogh
Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear, 1889
Oil on canvas
60 x 49 cm

THE ARTIST'S BODY STANDS OUT SHARPLY FROM THE DARK BLUE, HIGHLY TEXTURED BACKGROUND. THE BRIGHT WHITE PAINT INDICATING HIS WIDE-SLEEVED SHIRT AND THE STROKES OF YELLOWS AND ORANGES IN THE FACE AND FLAMBOYANT CRAVAT, GLOW AND VIBRATE WITH ENERGY

We can see evidence that Picasso knew how to play with the idea of genius in both his paintings and his life. He cultivated an image of himself as a wild, unconventional, extreme and insatiable character and adopted a **bohemian** lifestyle when he set up his studio in Paris in 1901. This preoccupation with the conventions of genius can also be seen in his work from the early 1900s. He produced a number of sketches and an oil study entitled *The Poor Geniuses* in Barcelona before he moved to Paris. These studies showed an impoverished artist on his deathbed. It was important for a bohemian artist to display signs of poverty, such as working in a dingy studio or wearing old clothes, as this signalled their separation from conventional, **bourgeois** society, with it's obsession with money, possessions and comfort.

Picasso also painted a number of self-portraits in the early 1900s. A self-portrait of 1901, *Yo – Picasso* (I Picasso) was exhibited at the artist's first solo exhibition at the art gallery belonging to the influential art dealer Ambroise Vollard. It is possible to see signs of Picasso's identification with the figure of both the Romantic genius and the bohemian artist in this self-portrait. The artist's body stands out sharply from the dark blue, highly textured background. The bright white paint indicating his wide-sleeved shirt or smock and the strokes of chemical cadmium yellows and oranges in the face and flamboyant cravat, glow and vibrate with energy. This use of contrasting colours was a common strategy of post-Impressionist painters in Paris and there is evidence that Picasso was highly influenced by the work of Vincent van Gogh and Toulouse Lautrec at this time. The extravagant orange scarf, touched with broad brushstrokes of yellow and vermillion red, appears like a flame, illuminating the dark background of the artist's studio. Light was a common metaphor for artistic inspiration in the nineteenth century; artists in literature were often overcome by a burning vision or idea, forcing them to work long into the night. The yellows, oranges and reds also unite Picasso's body, particularly his head, with the paint shown on his palette. The artist and his means of expression – paint – are closely bound together by this colour relationship. His bright white smock, with the smear of yellow paint on the billowing sleeve, was also a costume commonly worn by the bohemian young artist in his studio. Picasso's face, his clothes, his palette and his clever use of colour are all used to project a confident image of the young artist in the role of Romantic genius.

It is clear that from the title of *Yo - Picasso* that Picasso's sense of 'I' or of himself is central to this painting. As explained above, this notion of being an individual set outside of conventional society was key to the genius persona that Picasso was cultivating. The 'cult of the self' and the autonomy of the artist can also be felt in the sense of isolation in *Yo – Picasso*. The self-portrait was not the first painting labelled 'Yo', but it was the first portrait where the young artist used the signature Picasso. Below the bold strokes of 'YO' in the upper left-hand corner, 'Picasso' is spelt out in smaller, well-spaced letters, which must be looked for against the cobalt blue background and the white scratches in the surface of the paint. The painter has removed his father's name 'Ruiz' from his signature, choosing instead to be known by his mother's name 'Picasso'.

A signature stands for more than a name. Signing a contract indicates that we agree to be bound by its terms and conditions. A handwritten signature on a card or a letter can signify respect or affection. Crucially, a signature is an indication that a person was present and that they have left a marker of their identity on the object in question: a letter, a poem or a painting. We also try to read traces of a person's individuality into a signature. It allows us to hold onto and to own an imprint of someone's persona or their physical touch, which is one reason why we collect autographs and signed photographs. Importantly, a signed photograph of a celebrity is more valuable to us, not only in terms of the memories or significance it holds, but also monetarily. An authentic signature will add value to many things, a napkin, a book manuscript or in Picasso's case, a painting.

In a system where the value of an artwork is defined by our knowledge of who created it, a signature becomes important currency. This became crucially significant in the nineteenth century as the market for art works expanded and figures such as the art dealer Vollard were able to earn a good living buying and selling art. Nineteenth-century art historians and art dealers gained their reputations through their judgment on the authenticity and authorship of paintings – who had created the work and was it 'genuine'? Historical information, such as names, dates, and locations, played a part in this art historical detective work or **connoisseurship**, but most important was the ability to judge the quality and stylistic traits of a particular artist's work. There was a desire to emulate scientific methods when identifying an artist's work, decisions had to be rational and based on minute and skillful observations of painting style and technique. While signatures could be faked, if it was possible to prove that the

THE USE OF CONTRASTING COLOURS WAS A COMMON STRATEGY OF POST-IMPRESSIONIST PAINTERS AND THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT PICASSO WAS HIGHLY INFLUENCED BY THE WORK OF VINCENT VAN GOGH AND TOULOUSE LAUTREC

artist's mark was genuine, the market value of the painting could be greatly increased. While Picasso was living the life of a young bohemian artist in Paris, we could also suggest that by developing such a clearly identifiable and individual signature, he was buying into these more conventional ideas about the value of art. It becomes difficult to separate the creatively driven artist from the money-oriented bourgeois art market. Returning to *Yo - Picasso*, we can view Picasso's signature in very stark terms and read it as a logo, or brand name, which can be infinitely repeated. This meaning of his mark may seem appropriate when we consider how financially successful Picasso was to become as artist, and also how his signature is now literally used as a logo on everything from museum signs, to mugs and cars. But it is perhaps more interesting to consider the other reasons why Picasso's signature meant so much to us and to him.

Like the confident brushstrokes that make up the white skirt sleeve, or the dabs of bright colour across the bridge of the nose, the signature in *Yo – Picasso* is a trace of movement and of action. Picasso held the brush loaded with paint and drew the shapes of these letters with his hand. The signature therefore takes on something of the artist's body and touch. If we ran our fingers over Picasso's name, would we able to feel his presence in Paris in 1901? Art historians now attempt to scrutinise and rationalise the power and importance of artistic geniuses like Picasso, as I will explain below, but the emotional power of his signature is still potent.

As we have seen, in the early years of the twentieth-century, Picasso was trying hard to live up to the notion of a nineteenth-century Romantic genius. By 1917, a new generation of young artists sought to challenge the power given to Picasso's signed paintings. The French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) had been experimenting with new ways of making art. He abandoned brushes, canvases and paints in favour of objects he found on the street, using '**ready-made**' items such as bicycle wheels and coat racks to make his art. Beauty and artistic skill took second place to the playful intellectual meanings of the work. In 1917, Duchamp submitted an ordinary urinal to an exhibition in the Grand Central Palace in New York. He gave the work the title 'Fountain' and signed it 'R.Mutt/1917'. This everyday object, with its false signature, asked fundamental questions about how art was defined and valued. If Duchamp had not made the urinal was is still art? Had he used his authority as an artist to transform the urinal into an artwork by signing it and placing it in a gallery?

Although Picasso has been credited with introducing many new techniques and strategies that have defined modern painting and sculpture, it is Duchamp's conceptual artistic jokes that went on to revolutionise how we value and understand art. As the twentieth century progressed, critics and philosophers began to question the role of the artist in wider culture and society. The figure of the artist as an otherworldly outsider, producing work that was free from the real-world concerns of the market and everyday life no longer seemed valid. The individual vision and touch of the artist, symbolised so powerfully in his or her signature, was also set alongside the impressions and reactions of their audience. The artist or author no longer had sole control over the meaning of a work of art, the interpretations of readers and viewers were now taken into account. When Picasso died in 1973, artists found themselves in a '**post-modern**' world. Modern works of art, such *Yo – Picasso* were subjected to new questions in a culture where identity, authority and genius were no longer stable and secure.

Image:
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
Tête-à-tête Supper, c.1899
Oil on canvas
55.1 x 46cm

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3/4+
Art and Design, History, Art History, and other Humanities

3: THE ARTIST AS OUTSIDER:

THE HARLEQUIN IN PICASSO'S EARLY WORK

Vanja Malloy,
PhD student and visiting lecturer
The Courtauld Institute of Art

Breaking with the traditional subject matter instilled by the formal **French Academy**, social scenes of urban life, leisure and entertainment became a popular area of artistic focus in the nineteenth-century. Influenced by photography and photographic **composition**, these paintings offer candid snapshots of bustling bar scenes, intimate cafés, dramatic spot lit operas and ballets, daring acts of circus performers and other spectacles of modern day life. For instance, Edouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (this page) captures the atmosphere of Paris's first music hall, even depicting the feet of its nimble trapeze artist in its upper left-hand corner. Since circus performers were popular forms of entertainment by the nineteenth-century, it is not surprising that the theatrical, comical and at times subversive character of the **Harlequin** was frequently depicted by many artists including Paul Cézanne and Edgar Degas. Yet, no artist identified with, explored and used the Harlequin character as much as Pablo Picasso. In fact, a substantial portion of Picasso scholarship centres on his depiction of the Harlequin in paintings, drawings, and even several sculptures, which span a period of about seventy years. Throughout his career Picasso treats this character as a metaphor through which to explore a variety of topics. This article examines the significance of the Harlequin in Picasso's early work, particularly his 1901 *Seated Harlequin* (overleaf). It will historically contextualise this theatrical character before exploring Picasso's particular and longstanding interest in traveling circus performers who, like many artists, share the status of social outsider.

THE HISTORY OF THE HARLEQUIN AND TRAVELLING CIRCUS

The Harlequin first appeared as a theatrical character in the sixteenth-century *Commedia dell'arte*, the first professional Italian theatre with performances dating back as early as 1551. Unlike the *Commedia Erudita*, which was performed indoors with untrained actors, the Commedia dell'arte was a travelling performance that used *comici*, or trained actors, who played **archetypal** roles and donned character-specific costumes and masks. These performances took place outside on temporary stages and were accessible to the public; they were often attended by the local town or city or even by nobility. Like the traveling circus, the success of the *Commedia dell'arte* hinged on its mobility and capacity to build up a visible

MANET'S *A BAR AT THE FOLIES-BERGÈRE* CAPTURES THE ATMOSPHERE OF PARIS'S FIRST MUSIC HALL, EVEN DEPICTING THE FEET OF ITS NIMBLE TRAPEZE ARTIST IN ITS UPPER LEFT-HAND CORNER.

This page:
Édouard Manet
A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, 1881-82
Oil on Canvas
96 x 130 cm

international reputation in which principal actors often gained a celebrity status and were known to the public by name. The players were highly trained and their performances were often unscripted, based on a loose plot and relying heavily on the development of archetypal characters which embodied different moods such as sadness, happiness, mockery, and confusion. Throughout the following centuries, the *Commedia dell'arte* gained popularity throughout Europe and evolved in different ways in each country. In particular the role of Harlequin and Clown gained a heightened importance in these performances. These Commedia dell'arte characters become absorbed in popular culture and left a lasting impact upon the development of literature, the fine arts and theatre.

The very popular character of the Harlequin was first cast in the *Commedia dell'arte* as a comedic romantic male lead who actively pursued the lovely maiden Columbine. Easily identifiable by his bicorne (two cornered) hat, slapstick and chequered blue, green and red patterned outfit, Harlequin was often depicted as a mischievous suitor in a variety of identities and guises. The interaction of Harlequin and Columbine centres on the classic story of how Columbine's greedy father Pantaloon tries to separate the lovers with the help of the characters Pierrot and Clown. While Pierrot desperately seeks to win over Columbine's affections, he subsequently becomes the subject of many of Harlequin's cruel jokes. On the other hand the character of Clown, who is traditionally portrayed as a daft and unsophisticated buffoon, serves to emphasise Harlequin's sly and witty demeanour. However, the rise of the circus results in the substantial reinvention of this character in later centuries. In these later renditions, Clown becomes the central character of the *Commedia dell'arte*, notorious for his clever practical jokes. As the changes of Clown's character indicate, the international adoption of this basic story has seen many adaptations over the centuries.

PICASSO'S HARLEQUINS

Picasso was very familiar with the characters of the *Commedia dell'arte*, depicting scenes of Columbine and Pierrot performing on a Paris stage in two of his early paintings, which include Blue Dancer 1900. This interest in the characters of the *Commedia dell'arte*, along with the tragic news of his friend Carlos Casagemas death, may in part inform his decision to start depicting Harlequin in his artwork.

The first two works in which Picasso depicts Harlequin are his 1901 *Harlequin and Companion* and *Seated Harlequin*. These two works belong to the series of paintings whose subjects are drinkers in cafés, which Picasso produced in the months following his exhibition at Galerie Vollard. Most of the works from this series depict candid moments of café patrons that are reminiscent of the popular nineteenth-century scenes found in the Impressionist paintings of Degas and his contemporaries. However, these two works break from

> IN CONTRAST TO THE CHEERFUL FLOWER PATTERN OF THE CAFÉ WALLS, THE HARLEQUIN IS SHOWN WITH HIS HEAD STOICALLY RESTING ON HIS HAND AND HIS GAZE STARING OFF INTO THE DISTANCE.

this pattern as they show the costumed character of Harlequin out of context and off-script in a café setting. In fact, *Seated Harlequin* even challenges the immediate identification of the sitter as Harlequin, showing him in an outfit of black and blue chequered squares rather than the more traditional costume made of red, blue and green diamond-patterned fabric. Furthermore, Picasso depicts Harlequin with a white powered face, a black skullcap and a ruffled collar and cuffs; these costume details were usually reserved as attributes to the character Pierrot. Technical analysis also reveals that when painting this work Picasso originally included a bicorne hat on the sofa on the left-hand side of Harlequin, a traditional hat worn by this character. He later painted over this and also replaced a large drinking glass on the table with a match striker. Through these changes, Picasso resists a straightforward representation of this subject as either a café drinker or Harlequin and leaves the work open to discussion. The mixing of these identifying characteristics has resulted in *Seated Harlequin* sometimes being entitled *Seated Pierrot*. Similarly, *Harlequin and Companion* is on occasion titled the *Two Saltimbanques*, since the male sitter wears neither the mask nor hat typically attributed to Harlequin.

Picasso's unclear treatment of costume is not specific to his portrayal of Harlequin and Pierrot, it is also a defining quality of his later depictions of the destitute street performers known as saltimbanques and the free speaking fools of the old European courts. By the turn of the century, the traditional distinction between the different types of clowns had become confused, mainly because the form of entertainment in which these characters existed had for the most part disappeared. To different degrees, Harlequin, Pierrot and Clown, along with fools and saltimbanques, were all assimilated into the clowns and acrobats of the modern circus. However, this does not fully explain Picasso's ambivalent treatment of clowns, as contemporary circus and fairground performers no longer used many of the costume details he includes in his paintings.
The potential meaning Picasso assigns to these characters is not limited to his manipulation of their costume. Despite the well documented differences in rank and social status between these performers, Picasso also choses to depict them with melancholy expressions and emaciated

bodies, as if they all belong to the lowly class of poor saltimbanques. By ignoring the clear distinctions that exist at this time between these performers, especially in terms of social rank, Picasso groups these characters together as social outsiders. This decision, however, was an intentional choice that Picasso made despite his familiarity with the modern circus. Gertrude Stein, the American writer who was one of Picasso's first **patrons**, and Fernande Olivier, Picasso's mistress from 1903 to 1912, have documented how Picasso often frequented the *Cirque Medrano* in Paris. Olivier noted that she and Picasso attended the Cirque Medrano at least three or four times a week and that Stein would join them at least once a week. Stein recalls how they "felt flattered because they could be intimate with the clowns, the jugglers, the horses and their riders." At this time the audience had the ability to go backstage and socialise with the clowns. In fact, Picasso recalls having drinks with some of the most famous clowns of this circus after having watched their shows. Art historian Theodore Reff has speculated that Picasso's attraction to the Harlequin clown is a result of his intimate knowledge of the lives of these performers. Reff asserts that it is exactly because of this personal relationship that Picasso is able to adopt the guise of Harlequin as his alter ego in the *Portrait in Lapin Agile*, 1905, and *Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905.

The sombre portrayal of *Seated Harlequin* has attracted a variety of interpretations, the most popular of which cites Picasso's use of Harlequin as an alter ego and reads this work as a reflection of Picasso's grief over the suicide of his friend Casagemas. In contrast to the cheerful flower pattern of the café walls, the Harlequin is shown with his head stoically resting on his hand and his gaze staring off into the distance. This pensive pose has been interpreted as the private sadness that is so often masked behind the public persona of these types of performers. Here a new theme is revealed, that is, that the circus performer's outsider status mirrors the artist's isolation in modern society. While Picasso's *Seated Harlequin* is one of the first depictions of Harlequin in Picasso's oeuvre, it foretells the significance of these performers in Picasso's later artwork. By 1905, such clowns frequently inhabited his Rose Period pictures of itinerant circus families and the depiction of these clowns and performers even becomes featured in his later period of **Analytic Cubism**. Through their melancholy expressions and altered costumes, Picasso continuously reinvents these characters and casts them as metaphors packed with potential meaning.

image:
Pablo Picasso
Seated Harlequin, 1901
Oil on canvas,
83.2 x 61.3 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3/4+
Art and Design, History, Art History, and other Humanities

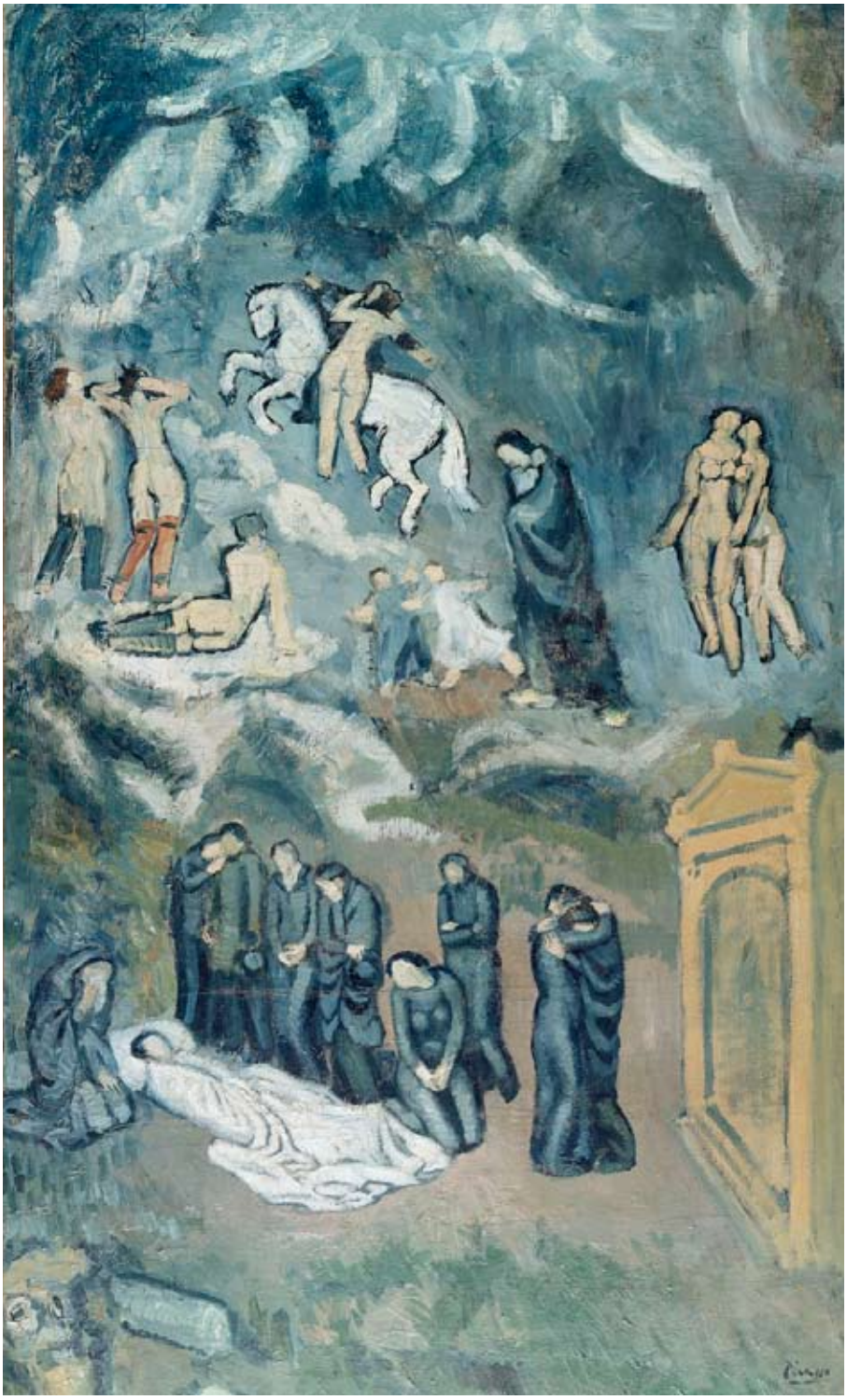
4: PAINTING LIFE AND DEATH:
PICASSO'S SECULAR ALTARPIECE

Jonathan Vernon
MA History of Art
The Courtauld Institute of Art

The young painter Pablo Picasso and his poet friend Carles Casagemas travelled to Paris together for the first time in the autumn of 1900. On the 17th of February 1901 Casagemas committed suicide at the *Café de L'Hippodrome* on Blvd. de Clichy in Montmartre, aged twenty. Casagemas had developed an intense love for a young woman named Germaine Gargallo, but found it to be unrequited. He attempted to shoot her from across a café table under which she then managed to take refuge before turning the gun on himself. Thinking Gargallo dead, Casagemas put the revolver to his right temple and pulled the trigger.

Picasso would later claim that 'it was thinking of Casagemas's death that started me painting in blue'. This event is consequently identified as the emotional spur for Picasso's so-called 'blue period', in which he painted a range of destitute subjects almost exclusively in blue: the proper colour of sorrow. A series of works featuring Casagemas were executed by Picasso in the summer of 1901, after his return to Paris and the Galerie Vollard exhibition, in the apartment his friend had inhabited before his death. They appear to confirm this understanding. For example, *Casagemas in His Coffin* is notable for the blue pigment that covers its surface, suggesting a significant association between the colour of paint and that which it is made to represent: the state of death. Similarly, the *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)*, is dominated by blue. Did the painter return to Paris to work from his friend's former lodgings in order to reconnect with or exorcize his memory? Was he working through trauma? Were these paintings monuments to Casagemas, substitutions for a future he was now denied? These are important questions. But it must be noted that they are also questions that risk oversimplifying these pictures – as well as the blue period itself – as responses to a single event.

The implications of such a simple assumption are manifold. For one, the works of the blue period often appear to be about the persistence of life, rather than its absence. Many of the paintings produced by Picasso at this time depict those belonging to cultures outside or



A HANDFUL OF DUST CAN HAVE NO QUARREL TO PICK WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS, OR COMPLAINT TO MAKE AGAINST PROVIDENCE, AND MIGHT WELL EXCLAIM, IF IT HAD BUT AN UNDERSTANDING AND A TONGUE, 'GO THY WAYS, OLD WORLD, SWING ROUND IN BLUE ETHER, VOLUBLE TO EVERY AGE, YOU AND I SHALL NO MORE JOSTLE!'
William Hazlitt
On The Fear Of Death, 1822.

subordinated to the mainstream. The same can be said of the impoverished people that populate so many of his canvases from 1901 onwards. These figures suggest that during this period Picasso was exploring a variety of themes around the fragility of life, rather than simply death, through the increasing dominance of blue. Destitution is not just communicated using colour, with blue standing for sorrow, but in the external and unmistakeable signs of poverty: emaciated torsos, hollow faces and spartan interiors. These are not inventions of a traumatised mind, but observations of the world into which Picasso and Casagemas had first been plunged. They mark out the necessity to consider what happened outside of the fateful February night, between the arrival in Paris of two young Spaniards and the period of creative activity that ensued for Picasso after his friend's death.

– by Lorenzo Lotto and Peter Paul Rubens (next page) will make this point clearer. Both paintings depict the aftermath of the crucifixion. In Lotto's picture (c. 1550-55, this page), Christ is being carried by two anonymous men dressed in turbans down a wooded path towards his tomb (just visible at the lower right). The moment Rubens shows in his version (c. 1615-16, fig. 3) takes place later in the biblical story, and with an altered group of attendants; the body here is being lowered down the stone steps leading into the tomb by key figures from Jesus's life. In both, a female group including the Virgin Mary follows the procession. Most importantly, the body of Christ is given central focus, and its specific treatment is fundamental to understanding how each picture works within a religious narrative. The crucifixion story consists of the sacrifice of a **deity** (Jesus Christ) for human sin. By undergoing the pain

John Berger has noted in *The Success and Failure of Picasso* that, unlike Picasso's native Spain, France had witnessed an **industrial revolution**, and its cities had accordingly been rapidly restructured. Along with modernisation – urban development, industrialised labour, and new class formations came the poverty and suffering of a new underclass. Poverty was no longer a symptom, or side effect, of economic conditions; rather, its existence was a necessary component of the social structure. In other words, the material facts of wealth and poverty were a reality of modern life. Picasso would go on to live and work amongst this section of society, named the ***lumpenproletariat*** – a loosely-formed class of outcasts and degenerates that developed in urban and industrial centres – for many years after 1901. This is not to say that Casagemas's death had nothing to do with the blue period; rather, that Picasso's creative response to that crucial event had *everything* to do with the concerns that had begun to germinate from the moment of his arrival in Paris, and would go on to characterise much of his work from 1901.

A comparison of Picasso's *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)*, to two paintings of a similar subject – *The Entombment of Christ* of torture and death only possible in a material body, Christ offered himself as a scapegoat, taking the sins of mankind upon himself. Christ's body in this way becomes the key motif within the **symbolic** language of this genre of painting.

This use of Christ's body as a symbol relies, crucially, on the way such a painting is received by the viewer within a religious context. Lotto was a deeply religious man; he died with close ties to the monastic community and professed absolute dedication to the service of god in his life. Before painting *The Entombment*, Rubens had completed several altarpieces, made as ritual objects to aid an audience of worshippers. Both artists make Christ's body in *The Entombment* the instrument of a similar ritual purpose. In both paintings, the skin has a pallor that serves as an unmistakeable sign of death. The body is carried in Lotto's picture so as to face the viewer encouraging the viewer to identify with Jesus's physical suffering. In the Rubens, the exertion of Christ's attendants – typified by John the Baptist, who grips between his teeth a corner of the sheet upon which Christ is being lowered into the tomb – is set against the rigidity and dead weight of Jesus's body, beautifully evoked by the taut sheet. Its sheer physical

Left image:
Pablo Picasso,
Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas), 1901
Oil on canvas
150 x 90 cm.
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris.

Right image:
Lorenzo Lotto,
The Entombment, c. 1550-55,
Oil on canvas
36.4 x 54.7 cm

The Courtauld Gallery, London

presence makes the distance between life and death, and thus the extent of Christ's sacrifice, evident.

The second interpretation of Christ's body is one not found in the physical presence of Jesus, but in the attempt to communicate his immaterial spirit. This can be identified in the **composition** of Lotto's painting. A break in the canopy of trees above the female group in the upper left of the picture, at the top of the path, is suggested by their illumination in contrast to the body of the deity himself. This light not only picks out the Virgin's anguished expression, but also the brilliant whites of her headdress and robes. The gradient of the path, leading down to darkness, thus becomes emblematic of both Christ's suffering and the earthly sin he has taken upon himself by way of it. Here, divine light dissolves in the face of barren, debased material, so that it may be restored to god's living creations above. This is the essence of Christ's sacrifice; a symbol of spiritual presence made over into the physical form of light. In either case, the ability of these pictures to communicate a divine, immaterial spirit is achieved by how *real* they look, how authentic the illusion. This is how they make the suffering of Christ felt. This is how each picture claims to bear witness to the miracle as a historical event.

These are conventions that Picasso, in his own burial scene, flatly flouts. *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)* declares, in both name and form, its conjuring of the divine to be the invention of the artist. The lower half of the composition depicts the burial, with a flock of mourners, including Picasso himself, surrounding the body on a flat plane of earth, and a golden crypt nearby locating the scene in a cemetery. Unlike Lotto and Rubens, Picasso prevents the viewer identifying with the body's painful passage into death. Casagemas is cloaked in a sheet of the same brilliant white used by Rubens but, instead of cradling the visible body, in *Evocation* the cloth smothers it. The face, equally, is blank, permitting no expression of agony or ecstasy. Picasso's treatment depersonalises the body to the extent that its previous, living animation is unimaginable. But for a few strands of hair, it could be a felled column, a swaddled statue, a thing that was never living and breathing, a wholly physical body.

The upper half of the composition, meanwhile, provides a possible reason for this absence of spirit, as it appears to represent the ascension of Casagemas's soul to heaven. The bodies in Rubens and Lotto's works are made to encompass both the spirit and the body as part of a biblical narrative; the full horror of the crucifixion and the sins of the world are carried in its flesh, and Christ's resurrection and humanity's salvation is imminent in the presence of divine light. Picasso, however, paints the body in both realms simultaneously, but in doing so the attempt to represent spirit through a bodily presence becomes absurd. This second body of Casagemas ascends only with the aid of a white horse. His decidedly limp body is posed, arms outstretched, in the manner of a crucifixion, and attended by a host of prostitutes as well as a black-cowled Madonna and child. Marrying the sacred and profane, Picasso provides an ironic alternative to the scene depicted by Rubens. The disciples that followed Jesus until his death are replaced by a cast of figures from the Paris brothels and bars Casagemas frequented during his decline. They stand as tokens of the earthly, carnal desires denied to him in death.

The handling of paint is as crude and base, moreover, as its subject matter. Indeed, this is a crucial question for *Evocation*. It is a painting that exhibits the process of its making. Its finish, made up of thick paint, has left the surface lightly cracked, and evidence of thick brushwork has been left visible, particularly in the swathes of blue that make up the ethereal landscape of clouds which dominates the top half of the picture. Unlike the break in the canopy that permits divine light to enter into Lotto's scene, Picasso's clouds are knotted and unbroken, denying access to another realm. Picasso makes a mockery of the metaphysical, both in his figuration of a religious subject and his emphasis of the material he used: paint. He subverts the symbolic power achieved by Lotto and Rubens, and by doing so Picasso undoes the spirit of illusion and the religious function of these paintings. Picasso saw resistance of the transcendental ideal as essential to commemorate his friend. This mourning is not invested in the religious, but anchored in the objective material reality of poverty and excess which Picasso and Casagemas found to be the sum of the modern city. In what would have been considered a highly shocking and blasphemous painting to many viewers in 1901, Picasso suggests that there is no life beyond that lived on earth. By recasting and subverting the conventions of the entombment subject he is able to paint a **eulogy** befitting of a friend who exhausted the debased pleasures of earthly, modern, life.

Image:
Peter Paul Rubens,
The Entombment, c. 1615-16,
Oil on panel
83.1 x 65.1 cm

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3/4+
Art and Design, History, Art History, Religious Studies and other Humanities

5: THE SECRET LIFE OF A PAINTING:

CHILD WITH A DOVE

Child with a Dove (fig. 1) is one of Picasso's best known and much-loved early paintings. The sentimental and tender subject of a young girl holding a dove to her cheek has ensured its popularity and extensive reproduction. However, it's easy appeal today obscures the complexities of its making and the new direction Picasso was taking when painting it. The canvas belongs to a major group of paintings that Picasso produced in the months following his Galerie Vollard exhibition, which closed on 14 July 1901. This new group marks a bold change of style and emotional register. In contrast to the lively brushwork, high-keyed palette and *belle époque* gaiety seen in his Vollard show and paintings such as *Dwarf Dancer*, works like Child with a Dove are defined more sculpturally and solidly by strong outlining and broader areas of restrained and sober colour, tending towards sombre blues. Picasso focused upon single figures, or sometimes pairs, often seated at café tables or, as in this case, in what seems to be an empty landscape. The prevailing mood is one of melancholy and loneliness. The group is usually seen as the immediate precursor to Picasso's famous Blue period when, between late autumn 1901 and the end of spring 1904, his work became dominated by mournful or melancholic figures shrouded in blue tones.

Child with a Dove is distinct from others in this post-Vollard group. Its mood, palette and assertively frontal treatment of an isolated figure make it part of the series. But its subject is unique and carries a different and more explicitly symbolic theme, the virtue and fragility of childhood innocence. The motif grew out of Picasso's recent Parisian paintings of bourgeois children observed at play and with their mothers in the Tuileries gardens. But now Picasso takes the child out of this comfortable bourgeois setting, abstracting the public gardens into what appears to be an empty landscape with a brooding sky. He transforms the infants at play into a single soulful, monumental and symbolic figure. Wise beyond her years, the child forgoes the fun of the colourful ball to tend to the dove that Picasso places in her hands. *Child with a Dove* and the young girl emerges as a symbol of vulnerable innocence and purity.

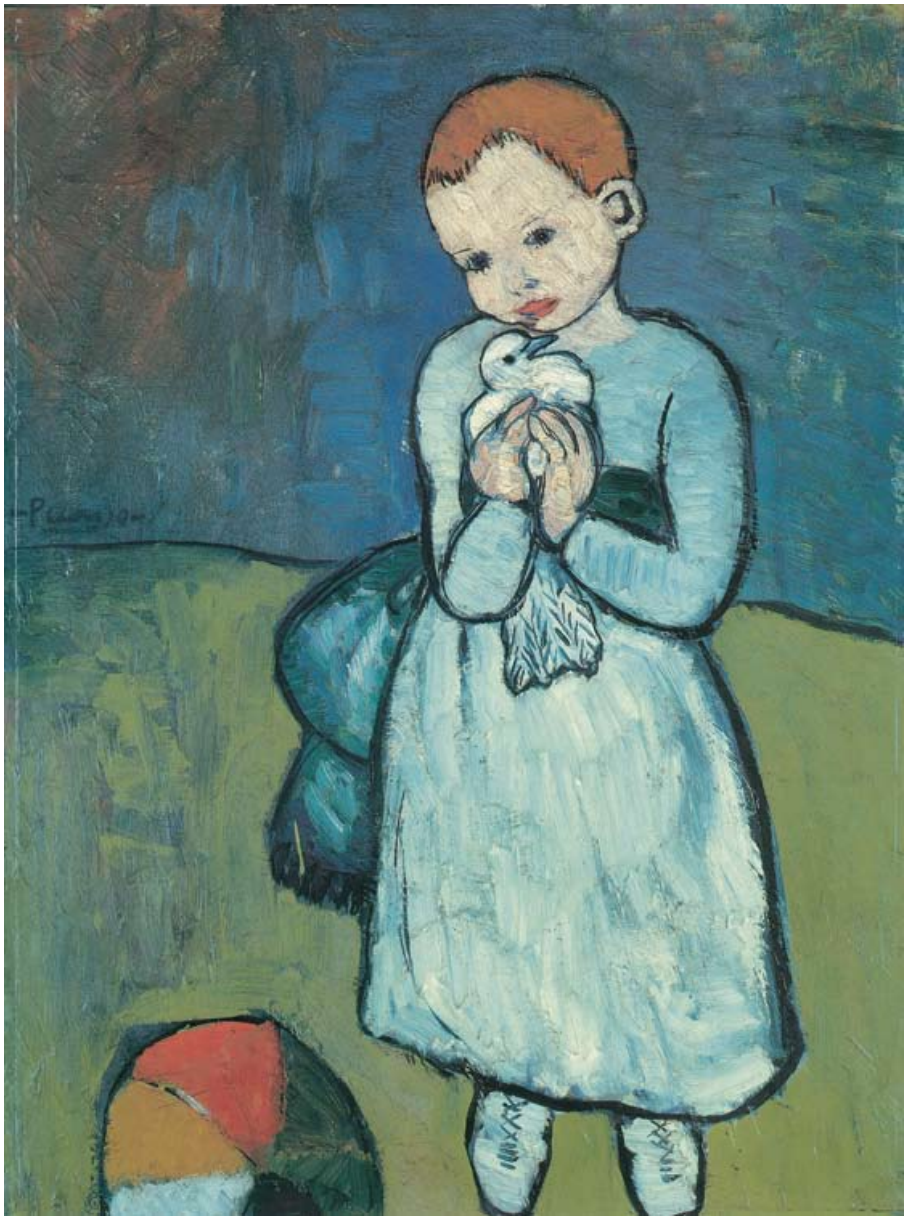


Image:
Pablo Picasso
Child with a Dove, 1901
Oil on canvas
73 x 54 cm
Private collection

In finding a new direction for his art it is possible that in this work Picasso drew upon his own childhood. As Pierre Daix has suggested, the painting's "intensity of tenderness" grew from "a return to his childhood and memories of his little sister Conchita", who had died in 1895 aged just seven. The fifteen-year old Picasso was deeply affected by her death, which remained a painful memory throughout his life. The late summer and autumn of 1901 was a period when Picasso reflected on the recent suicide of Carles Casagemas and it is possible that the two deaths came together in his thoughts. It is interesting to note that two young children, one in a white dress, appear in his *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)*, which he produced around this time.

Physical observation suggests that this painting has a past life. Dots of red paint in the upper right-hand corner along with the pattern of brushwork in the upper left, for example, suggest that there may have originally been floral motifs in these parts of the composition, but they are now almost all covered over. The painting's surface has a particularly coarse appearance and microscopic examination of the overlays of paint also suggests that parts of the canvas's top layer were made when the underlying paint surface was quite dry; only in some areas is there evidence of wet paint on wet.

An x-radiograph of the canvas reveals that there is in fact an earlier composition underneath it, and possibly more than one. This technical analysis gives us the opportunity to explore and think about Picasso's making process in more detail. The x-radiograph of the canvas clearly shows a figure, to the left-hand side of the child, which seems to be a seated woman, perhaps a nude. At this time Picasso often painted over previous compositions. No doubt lack of funds was one reason for this. Reusing **supports** was most likely a practical necessity for the young, relatively poor and resourceful artist. Nevertheless, this recycling of canvases was also prompted by his change in approach and subject matter following the Galerie Vollard exhibition. Here Picasso seems to be physically replacing and covering his previous work, demonstrating a desire to move beyond his previous styles. This gives rise to some interesting questions. Was Picasso's practice of recycling canvases purely down to financial necessity? Or was this process of transforming one **subject** into another, a creative strategy? More interesting still, as with other paintings at the time, Picasso did not paint a new **ground** layer before beginning work on *Child with a Dove*. Instead he opted to paint directly onto the previous composition. The child was painted directly on top – or rather to the side – of his previous female figure. At some point during the production of the 'new' image it is likely therefore that the canvas would have featured a weird hybrid of one figure emerging from the other. If the earlier work was indeed a nude, perhaps comparable with his provocatively louche nude *La Gommeuse*, then her miraculous' transformation into an embodiment of childhood purity must have carried a particularly strong creative charge for Picasso.

PHYSICAL OBSERVATION SUGGESTS THAT THIS PAINTING HAS A PAST LIFE

Image:
X-radiograph of *Child with a Dove*,
Produced 1960,
Department of Conservation and Technology,
The Courtauld Institute of Art, London

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3/4+
Art and Design, History, Art History, and other Humanities

6: PAINTING THE FIGURE:

A CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE

Matthew Krishanu
Practising artist and artist educator

Broadly speaking, there are three approaches to painting figuratively: from life (having a model present in the room throughout the painting process); from photographs (both 'found photographs' and those taken specifically for the purpose); and from memory / imagination. This essay is about the strategies I use as a contemporary painter, when painting the figure.

Over my career I have employed all three approaches. How a painting is painted has a direct bearing on how it will finally look. Moreover, each approach has a context within contemporary painting, affecting how a work is read and what traditions it relates to.

Rather than writing in the abstract about the three approaches, I will illustrate the processes with examples from my practice.

LIFE

Painting the figure directly from life, rather than from a photograph, is increasingly rare among contemporary artists. Over the last thirty years the most influential painter working directly from the model was Lucian Freud, who died in 2012. David Hockney continues to paint portraits from life, but over his career has explored a great range of approaches, including working from photographs, from a **camera lucida**, and from memory. On the whole, contemporary painters have eschewed working directly from the model in favour of using photographs as a starting point for their work.

For my MA show (Central Saint Martins, 2009) I decided as an experiment to work entirely from life — with oil paints and canvas, on an easel. I visited the bedrooms of friends and family, and worked in their rooms, painting them alone in their personal space. I asked sitters to recall a memorable event or incident that occurred in that space; often this was the basis for the **composition** and mood of the painting.

The Wedding Dress was painted of my wife, about a year after our marriage. I asked her to recall a memorable incident — she remembered waiting for her mother to collect her for the church, and the half-hour wait as her mother was late. Recreating the scene for this painting was the first time she had worn her dress since the wedding, and seeing her wearing it again created a particular emotional charge.

Working from life means you are bound in a temporal relationship with the sitter. The longer the painter spends, the longer the sitter has to stay still. There is an unspoken obligation to work quickly, and not to put the sitter through unnecessary discomfort.

Working from photos I had found the endless time one could spend on any work problematic. It took the edge of concentration away (unless I was working to a deadline), and meant I would often over-work a piece, or keep polishing it until it became more photographic but lost vitality as a painting.

I chose to work on The Wedding Dress in one sitting. It meant working fast and intuitively, and accepting any distortions or representational inaccuracies, rather than trying to correct them. The legs of the chair and the pointing feet splay out somewhat incongruously. There is something awkward about the way this area is resolved, which adds a playful air to the work. The painting does not aim at **photorealism** — which might have given a more commercial cast to the piece (akin to wedding photography). Here the intention is to capture the intensity of waiting, rather than to catch the likeness of the sitter.

I was working during the afternoon, in a

> HERE THE INTENTION IS TO CAPTURE THE INTENSITY OF WAITING, RATHER THAN TO CATCH THE LIKENESS OF THE SITTER.

Images:
Matthew Krishanu
The Wedding Dress, 2009
Oil on linen,
50 x 40cm

sunlit bedroom in Brighton. I knew I had about three hours before the light would fade and there would not be enough to continue the painting by daylight. During this period I had made a number of paintings in the evening, by Tungsten light. All of those works had a brownish tinge: it was hard to keep colours bright and clear — the yellow light made it hard to judge tones truly, and the result was often unexpectedly sludgy.

The speed with which I had to work was central to the vitality of the piece — the face is painted quickly and directly. All the colours were mixed on the palette, and applied thinly. Only the white of the wedding dress is thicker — it was painted last, in a flourish, to get the full buoyancy and brightness of the material. The dress shimmered in the afternoon rays.

The painting surface was a smooth, primed linen. The linen has a very fine grain, so was ideal for quite a delicate painting with a thin layer of paint. The white of the canvas primer shines through the semi-transparent ochre of the background, and provides highlights for the face and arms. In this respect, the oil paint is used like watercolour. The thicker (opaque) white of the wedding dress is the brightest part of the painting, and also catches light that shines on the canvas surface, as it is slightly raised. Often the white of a painting in 'old master' works is **impasto** — it catches the light shone directly on the painting, sometimes creating shadows on the surface.

Most of all with this piece, I wanted to portray the intimacy of watching someone thinking. Unlike a photo which captures only an instance — the briefest of expressions — watching the sitter pose over the course of the afternoon allowed me to approximate her expression, then make slight adjustments to it as she sat. Her face has an openness, as well as anxiety. I have enjoyed hearing the range of interpretations of her mood that viewers have suggested to me. I do not think I would have caught this particular face and mood, had I worked from a photograph.

PHOTOGRAPHS

In my recent work I have chosen not to work from photographs I have taken expressly for paintings, but have used old family albums of my childhood as source material for my work. Here I am using material that is personal to me, and relates directly to my memories, but is not constructed by me. As a painter, that means surrendering a certain degree of control in terms of composition and subject matter, and accepting the particular language of photography, and of family 'snaps' (for instance, the people in a photograph are often posing casually, in a manner quite apart from the formality of figures posed for life painting).

The majority of contemporary painters in the early twenty-first century use photographs as source material — whether as direct transcription (projected onto a canvas, drawn, then painted — for example Franz Gertsch), commentary (as with the work of Gerhard Richter, Luc Tuymans, and Wilhelm Sasnal, which sometimes uses blurring and white borders to show explicitly its photographic origins), or inspiration (as with artists like Karin Mamma Andersson, Peter Doig, Chantal Joffe, and Marlene Dumas, who use the photo as a starting point for painterly interpretation).

For Two Boys, the source photograph was of my brother and me as children playing in a ruined water tank in an old town in West Bengal, India. We used to have free rein to play amongst the ruined buildings and overgrowth. I have a strong nostalgia attached to these times — my past is like another country to me, and the painting operates as a window through which to look in on that world.

I worked on board, with a smooth, white surface. It is only 21 x 30 cm (A4), and relates directly to a standard size a photo might be enlarged to. For the first layer of paint I worked quickly, with diluted oils. At first I worked directly from the photograph, to sketch out the composition. In my painting the boys are larger than in the photograph — they dominate the space, and are placed centrally.

Once the initial layer of paint had dried, I returned to the painting, but this time did not look at the photo again. I was working from the memory of the photograph, which mingled with specific memories of the scene, and more general recollections of what my brother and I look like.

Working from memory for this period allowed the brush strokes to be freer: often when working directly from a photo I find myself playing 'spot the difference' between the images, and trying to replicate the original. With the photo out of sight, distortions and spontaneous decisions come into play, much as in the process

I have described above, of painting The Wedding Dress in one sitting.

Putting away the photograph allowed me to invent colours. The sky is far bluer and more vivid in my painting; the orange-brown of the water tank is brighter and complements the blue. I was able to let my hand lead, rather than following the instructions of my eye and head (which often happens when I am comparing a painting with a photo).

I played freely with the textures of the paint. Unlike The Wedding Dress, where the skin was painted in a transparent brown, here the boys' skin is mixed with white — with a strong tonal contrast between shadow and highlight. Other areas of contrast are between the opaque solidity of their hands and the partly transparent surface of the water tank. The background and foliage is roughly brushed in, with the brightest parts being the light of the sky behind them, and a thick impasto spike at the top of the church spire.

Having worked for a few sessions without the photo, I returned to using it again in order to finish the work. I found it useful for checking the details — the angle of the edge of the water tank, the position of the boys' hands — but overall most of the painting was resolved without the photo in view.

alone among ruined buildings in India, coming across a statue of a bull's head, and being terrified as I watched the statue turn to face me.

I worked initially with thin oils on a postcard-sized piece of card to sketch out the colours and composition. I then researched the look of bulls' heads (including old sculptures), to inform how I painted the statue. I found a photograph of myself as a child in a similar position to the pose in my sketch. However, when I used it as a reference for the painting, I found the figure was too stilted — it operated like a cipher of a person, rather than having a life of its own. I found that the best way to make the painting unified was to paint all parts from memory, and to invent the pose and expression of both boy and bull.

For the bull I used a palette knife and impasto paint to sculpt the forms and shadows of the bull's head, using black with a few streaks of white. I varied the brush strokes of the plinth, sky, and grass, using light opaque paint (colours mixed with titanium white) over a darker layer below, which shows through in parts. Finally, the face of the boy was blocked in with loose strokes, giving him an ambiguous expression as he faces the bull.

Boy and Bull has the brightest colours of the three paintings discussed. This is partly because the scene is dreamlike — it is meant to be an image recalled or imagined — and also, as I didn't use a photo or model, I was most free to choose the colours that suited my intentions.

In the past I have found that whenever I formulated a set way of working (for example painting directly from photographs), the paintings lost vitality. I need to alternate my methods in order to relinquish some control, and allow the paint to be unpredictable, and surprising.

I have found that working with other people's stories and personal material requires a close involvement with the sitter. Working from life is potentially the most intimate method of painting: an ideal way to spend extended periods of time with another person, and to access the emotional content of memory.

For autobiographical material I find working alone with photographs, drawings or just my imagination is the best way to create images that resonate for me. Photographs allow me to enter the past, although I find I often get lost in the detail of the image — the particular scene framed by the camera, rather than its emotional charge.

Perhaps the purest form of painting autobiography is without a visual aid of any kind — to paint a face or scene as it is remembered, with all the distortions and inaccuracies that memory contains.

MEMORY

All my work is concerned with memory, and how to explore and evoke memories through paint. Contemporary artists use memory and imagination to create fantasy worlds and scenes (for example, Neil Tait, Amy Cutler, and Marcel Dzama), but also to create portraits of imaginary people — as remembered from experience and observation (Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's paintings of people are all from memory, with no photographic reference). Sometimes I use a quick sketch from memory as a starting point for a painting.

The subject of Boy and Bull is a vivid dream I remember from my childhood, of being

Left image:
Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys, 2012
Oil on board
21 x 30cm

Right image:
Matthew Krishanu
Boy and Bull, 2012
Oil on board
21 x 30cm

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3+
Art and Design

7: PICASSO'S BELLE ÉPOQUE:

A SUBVERSIVE APPROACH TO STYLE AND SUBJECT

Lucy Gellman
MA History of Art
The Courtauld Institute of Art

There is something immediately unsettling about Picasso's *Dwarf-Dancer* or *La Nana*. One of over sixty works churned out for the artist's Galerie Vollard exhibition in the summer of 1901, this painting stands out as particularly strange and baffling. With the slightest turn of her head and a firm stance, the dancer glares directly at the viewer. Whatever shenanigans or raucous scene lies just beyond the frame, she is having none of it. There is something gloriously assertive about the way she marks what little territory she may have, her right arm placed defiantly on her hip as the left fist falls to her side in a parody of a *port de bras*.

Indeed, she seems out of place. While dressed in the traditional garb of a Parisian dancer, she does not look particularly happy or eager to entertain. Long gone are the angelic *piqué* turns and *pointe* work of Paris' young ballerinas; or, the painted smiles, cascading locks, and high flung legs of Jane Avril and her colleagues can-canning into morning, brought to us in the posters and paintings of Jules Cheret and Toulouse Lautrec. Instead, the viewer is met with a demeanor that falls somewhere between disdain, protestation, and defiant sass. Perhaps most indicative of this, she is frozen in a wide and slouching position that does not live up to the painting's title of dancing at all.

With her thick, black bun, the flamenco-esque flower in her hair and matching red ribbon around her neck, she serves as a reminder of foreign influence, specifically, the Spanish living among the French, as the young artist Picasso himself was struggling to do. This measure of difference arguably marks her as both enticing and alienating to Parisian viewers of the time. When the painting was first exhibited in 1901, audiences may have seen in her something intriguingly desirable. However, this sense of intrigue is cut short by her forlorn and confrontational nature. The pleasure in looking at her was, and continues to be, that of the spectacular **other**. The painting is thus at odds with pre-existing *demi-monde* imagery of the *Belle Époque*. Paris' carefree *flâneur*, – the French dandy who would indulgently and voyeuristically stroll, lounge and look around the modern city and its (female) inhabitants is denied any pleasure here.

The artistic choices that make her such a striking subject also provide a window into Picasso's buzzing Paris of the Belle Époque. It is one that differs sharply from far-flung romantic tales of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Paris, so often memorialised in films like *Moulin Rouge* and *Midnight in Paris*. Far removed are we from Degas scenes of delicate and young dancers, or Edouard Manet's images of the city's *bourgeoise*, socialising in cafes or at the newly built Opéra Garnier. Rather, the Paris conjured by the *Dwarf-Dancer* and the world in which she existed bears some semblance to the wretched and melancholy society that Charles Baudelaire warned of in his *Le Spleen de Paris* of 1869, a book of prose poetry documenting the dangers and evils of modernity. This atmosphere is captured in lines such as "I felt pulled down deathwards; which is why, when companions said, 'At last!' I could only cry, '*Already*!" words that could almost be spoken by the Dwarf Dancer from her place on the stage.

Now depicted as a luxurious and romantic destination, 'Picasso's Paris' had the underbelly of any cosmopolitan city: a sad, cold, dirty, poor, low-rent, and probably incessantly grey town, where he lived in cramped quarters with many fellow artists. Yet for the nineteen-year-old painter, it also represented an incredibly lively **bohemia** which he enthusiastically embraced. A large part of this affair was the artist's involvement in what would now be viewed as low-brow or base popular culture, of which there are still strong echoes throughout the city. This included popular theatre, street performances, prostitution, and a proliferation of **material culture** that would become a defining aspect of Picasso's *oeuvre*.

Keeping the *Dwarf-Dancer* in mind, let us retrace some of the artist's most formative influences in the city's bars and cabarets, where, mixing and mingling with new and old companions alike, he became immersed in Paris' bohemian social scene. At haunts like *Le Lapin Agile* (formerly the *Cabaret des Assassins*), the young artist experienced an intriguing mixture of music, poetry, dance, and performance. He found himself surrounded and thoroughly fascinated by the clamor of this half-wretched, half-magic existence that

Image:
Pablo Picasso
Dwarf-Dancer, 1901
Oil on board
105 x 60 cm
Museu Picasso, Barcelona (gasull Fotografia)

was the actual *vie bohème*. It was here, if not also in the lewd dance halls and circus performances, that he would have encountered his first taste of dancers like *La Nana*, as well as Harlequin performers.

So too was his experience at the aptly named *Le Zut* (literally "The Drat"), founded by Richard Lenoir in honor of the French *Zutistes*, a circle of nineteenth-century poets. A lively spot filled with anarchists, artists, and an array of cabaret performers, *Le Zut* became an odd sort of home base for the artist, who shared and decorated the space in its back room with several fellow Spanish artists, as well as French acquaintances like the poet and painter Max Jacob, who helped Picasso learn French.

With these locales also came the notorious underbelly of nineteenth and early twentieth century Paris, where bodies themselves could be displayed and enjoyed, if not also exchanged and devoured. At dance halls like the famous Moulin Rouge, opened only eleven years before his first visit to Paris in 1900, Picasso was also given an entryway into the heart of the French *demi-monde*. References to such entertainment peppered Belle Époque life, where cabaret and brothel culture created some of the city's most longstanding traditions and histories. Pamphlets like *Le Guide Rose* provided a comprehensive guide to and advertising for Paris' array of brothels, well documented by artists like Edgar Degas and Toulouse Lautrec by the end of the nineteenth century.

Their relatively consistent depiction of these venues makes Picasso's treatment of the *Dwarf-Dancer* and his other *demi-monde* subjects all the more interesting. While it remains unknown how much Impressionist art Picasso saw firsthand and before his execution of the 1901 works, there is a clear and even parodic connection between the *Dwarf-Dancer* and slightly earlier paintings by Edgar Degas, particularly his ballerinas. Compare *Dwarf-Dancer*, for instance, to Degas's *Two Dancers on a Stage*. Set against a positively impressionistic backdrop, perhaps a scrim or curtain on the Palais Garnier's grand stage, the two girls captivate the audience. In their tight silky dancer's bodices, decorated tutus and floral crowns they look remarkably young, their faces soft and sweet as the light falls onto them. Further, their bodies have a sense of three dimensionality, as if we could pick them up and spin them gently around like the figures that pop up from a music box. Passive, delicate and feminine, neither glances toward the viewer thus fulfilling the fantasy of the voyeur. They belong to our imagination just as the ballerinas at the time often belonged to rich patrons after the show.

While he is arguably taking artistic cues from Degas, Picasso has completely reworked the idealised dancer type, and scene. Still small – *smaller*, even, than the child-like ballerinas – Picasso's figure is not highly vulnerable but flustered, and ready to confront whoever may get in her way. Unlike Degas' painting, there is no expansive stage over which the viewer is poised, providing infinite angles from which to silently view her body. Rather, the *Dwarf-Dancer* confronts us from a frontal angle, bringing the image to a rather two-dimensional halt challenging the accepted visual codes and dancer imagery of the period.

One might see this kind of contrast again in an image like Toulouse Lautrec's *Jane Avril at the Entrance to the Moulin Rouge* (c.1892). While this version of Avril, the dancer, shows her tired and contemplative as she exits the Moulin Rouge after another long day as the star of the cabaret is infinitely closer to the sentiment of the *Dwarf-Dancer*, she still stands apart. Beneath the entryway, Avril straddles a modern Paris in which she is financially independent, indicated by the sac of coins dangling from her wrist, and an institution dependent on an insatiable economy of performance and desire; there is no such ambiguity with the *Dwarf-Dancer*.

Replete with references to the period and homages to the past, *Dwarf-Dancer* leaves us with several questions. Is this an image that idealises women, as Degas' and Lautrec's dancers did a few years earlier or something altogether more complicated? Does Picasso take pleasure in the strange and peculiar? And from where do his inspirations spring? In one figure, how is it possible to see echoes of Edgar Degas, Toulouse Lautrec, Edouard Manet, Diego Velázquez, and Francisco de Goya, as well as such a very bright gleam of originality? Is Picasso imitating or subverting the painterly style and subject matter of the Impressionist artists? Arguably, the answers to these ask for a return to what the artist found in popular culture, without which the Galerie Vollard, or at the very least *demi-monde*, suite of images would not have been complete. Between 1900 and 1901, the city of Paris became the ideal lens through which Picasso not only learnt about a new world of popular culture, bohemia, and its inherent poverty, but created work that responded to this and posed the above questions, most of which are still left unanswered today.

Left image:
Edgar Degas
Two Dancers on the Stage, c.1874
Oil on Canvas
61.5 x 46 cm

Middle image:
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
Jane Avril in the Entrance of the Moulin Rouge
c. 1892
Pastel and oil on millboard, laid on panel
102 x 55.1 cm

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS3+
Art and Design, History, Art History, and other Humanities

8: GLOSSARY

ALTARPIECE: A picture or relief, often made up of multiple panels, made for display behind the church altar in the Christian tradition.

ANALYTIC CUBISM: This term refers to an artistic style which emphasised the flat surface of the picture plane and rejected the traditional techniques of perspective and modelling. The work of Pablo Picasso and George Braque between 1907 and 1914 is characteristic of this movement.

ARCHETYPE: A typical example of a particular object, behaviour or character. An archetype is a universally understood symbol, 'type' or prototype upon which others are copied, patterned, or emulated. Archetypes are frequently used in storytelling and myths.

BELLE ÉPOQUE: French for "beautiful era," Belle Époque pertains to the culturally explosive period of modernisation in France running from the end of the Commune in 1871 to the beginning of the First World War in 1914.

BOHEMIAN: Originally the term Bohemian simply referred to a native of Bohemia, a region of central Europe. The meanings we associate with it today originate in the literature of France. In the nineteenth century, bohemian came to mean someone who cuts himself off from society, like a gypsy or traveller, and was often applied to artists, actors and writers. The creative bohemian was typically described as having a wild or irregular character and lived a life free from the standards and conventions of bourgeois society.

BOURGEOIS: An adjective applied to a person or group of people who exhibit characteristically 'middle-class' attitudes. As a class of people the bourgeois are often positioned against radical, progressive groups and are generally thought to operate according to materialistic values and from a conventional or conservative political position.

CAMERA LUCIDA: An optical device used as a drawing aid by artists. The camera lucida performs an optical superimposition of the subject being viewed onto the surface upon which the artist is drawing.

CIRQUE MEDRANO: This French circus was located on the edge of Montmarte, Paris, and was previously named Cirque Fernando.

COMICI: Trained actors who played archetypal roles and donned character-specific costumes and masks.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE: The first professional Italian theatre with performances dating back as early as 1551.

COMMEDIA ERUDITA: An early type of performance that takes place indoors with untrained actors.

COMPOSITION: The placement or arrangement of visual elements in a painting, photograph or artistic work.

CONNOISSERSHIP: The practice of identifying the author and authenticity of a painting using close visual observation and informed judgment. Professional connoisseurs would pay attention to size, condition, materials and technique, but would also use their knowledge of contemporary customs, fashion and literary sources to identify, date and authenticate a painting.

DEITY: A being with superhuman powers or qualities who may be thought of as holy, divine, or sacred.

DEMI-MONDE: This term is used to describe the prostitutes, dancers and entertainers, "with a fault in their past, a stain on their name," who performed at or frequented popular entertainment cafes, bars and venues in Paris. Literally means "half-world" in French, the demi-monde retained the outward appearance of the bourgeois and aristocratic classes through dress and glamour but were socially marginalised.

EULOGY: a tribute, often written or spoken, to a person on the occasion of their death.

FLÂNEUR: Coined by Charles Baudelaire in The Painter of Modern Life (Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne, 1863), the flâneur comes from the French verb "flâner" (to stroll) and describes is a man who strolls through the city at his leisure, passively observing modern life; looking at whatever and whomever he pleases.

THE FRENCH ACADEMY: The French Academy was founded in 1648 and ran its own school, the École des Beaux-Arts which is a famous French art school located in Paris. The school has a history spanning more than 350 years, training many of Europe's great artists. Beaux Arts style was modelled on classical "antiquities," preserving these idealised forms and passing the style on to future generations.

GROUND: the ground is a layer used to prepare a support for a painting or drawing; its colour and tone can affect the chromatic and tonal values of the paint or wash layers applied over it. Traditionally a ground would have been gesso for a panel piece or an undercoat of paint on a canvas.

HARLEQUIN: A clown figure traditionally dressed in a diamond patterned costume. This character originates from the performance Commedia dell'arte.

IMPASTO: A painting technique that involves a thick application of paint (usually oil) and makes no attempt to look smooth.

IMPRESSIONISM: A nineteenth-century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists that choose to break from the traditional style of painting taught at the French Academy. For these artists to give an impression of a scene, and not the scene itself, was the fundamental point of the painting.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: The transition to new manufacturing processes that occurred from about 1760. This transition involved a shift from hand production methods to new machine production methods.

LUMPENPROLETARIAT: A loosely-formed class of outcasts and degenerates that developed in urban and industrial centres with the rise of Capitalism.

MATERIAL CULTURE: This term is often used to refer to the artifacts or other concrete things left by past cultures.

MODERNITY: A term used to define the experience living in the modern world, or the conditions of life after the Industrial Revolution. Modernity is often associated with new possibilities for speedy travel, in particular the railway, and also a new availability of dazzling consumer goods.

OTHER: In History of Art, sociology, and humanities subjects the "Other" refers to a subject who differs from our self (culturally, socially, religiously, racially or politically). Paul Gauguin's fantastical images of women in Tahiti are an example of an artist depicting the "Other."

PATRON: A person who gives financial support to an artist, sometimes in exchange for artwork. This term is also used to describe a paying client at a bar, café, restaurant or the theatre.

PHOTOREALISM: A genre of painting that uses cameras and photographs to gather visual information to create a painting that appears to be photographic.

PIQUÉ: In French, the verb "piquer" means "to prick." The term was picked up by schools of classical ballet long before the nineteenth century, the piqué turn becoming the delicate and often en pointe movement of the dancer literally "pricking" the floor with her toe before lifting it again.

POINTE: To perform while on the tips of toe's toes rather than on the ball of one's foot, a practice that required years of rigorous training.

PORT DE BRAS: Translating to "carriage of the arms" in English, the port de bras describes the movement of a dancer's arms from one position (there are five basic positions of the feet) to another. Introduced during technical barre work in the first stages of a ballerina's training, the port de bras is one of the many techniques used to make a ballerina seem light and graceful on stage.

POSTMODERNISM: In architecture, art and literature, postmodernism has been characterised as a departure from the key ideas of modern art, such as the purity and specificity of one's media (paint, stone or words), or abstraction. The theoretical positions of modernism were abandoned in favour of art and ideas that mixed up materials and had multiple points of reference. Postmodern works of art and theory often explore ideas of mass consumption and consumerism.

READY-MADE: A term used to describe everyday objects that have been removed from their functional context and been elevated to the status of art object through the selection of an artist. A ready-made will often be an object that has been mass-produced and tend to be shown on its own, without any clear explanation.

ROMANTICISM: A movement in art and literature that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Emotions, imagination and freedom are important to Romanticism and Romantic literature will often focus on individualism, spontaneity, freedom and an idealisation of nature and of past civilisations.

SALTIMBANQUES: A group of travelling circus performers that performed in informal venues such as open fields and streets. Saltimbanques were often poor and considered to be of a low social status.

SUBJECT: A person or thing that is being discussed, described, or examined.

SUPPORT: The support of a drawing or painting is the object or material on which the work has been executed.

SYMBOL: Something that represents or stands for something else, either in pictorial or textual form.

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS: An approach to exploring works of art that uses conservation technology to examine the material and artistic execution of an artwork.

9: TEACHING RESOURCE CD

This CD is a compilation of key images related to the Becoming Picasso: Paris 1901 exhibition, held at The Courtauld Gallery from the 14th February to the 26th May 2013.

The images offer an insight into Pablo Picasso's work and that of his contemporaries, especially in relationship to popular culture and entertainment in belle époque Paris and to the Impressionist movement. The CD includes works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec and Degas along with other European artists working in France towards the end of the nineteenth-century and at the beginning of the twentieth-century.

The Power Point presentation included in the CD aims to contextualise the images and relate them to one another. All the images (and an accompanying image list) are also included individually in the 'images' folder.

FURTHER DETAILS:

• All images can then be copied or downloaded:

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CURRICULUM LINKS: KS2+
Art and Design, History, Art History, and other humanities.

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The Courtauld Institute of Art,
Somerset House,
Strand,
London WC2R 0RN.
images@courtauld.ac.uk,
Tel: +44 (0)20 7848 2879.

TEACHERS' RESOURCE
BECOMING PICASSO: PARIS 1901
THE COURTAULD GALLERY
First Edition

Sarah Green
Gallery Learning Programmer
Courtauld Institute of Art
Somerset House, Strand
LONDON, WC2R 0RN

0207 848 2705
sarah.green@courtauld.ac.uk

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