



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

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38-02 PICASSO 1932

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Pablo Picasso
*Woman in a Red
Armchair*
1931
FABA Brussels

In 1932, Pablo Picasso turned fifty, staged his own retrospective, and produced some of the most psychologically charged paintings of his career. This talk traces that single extraordinary year examining how a secret affair with this woman, Marie-Thérèse Walter, electrified his output, how wealth and domestic crisis coexisted in the same man, and how personal turbulence began darkening toward the collective catastrophe that would define the decade ahead.



From top left: Fernande Olivier, Olga Khoklova, Marie-Thérèse Walter,
From bottom left: Jacqueline Roque, Françoise Gilot and Dora Maar

Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973, aged 91) muses: Fernande Olivier (clockwise from top left), Olga Khoklova, Marie-Thérèse Walter (also left), Dora Maar, Françoise Gilot and Jacqueline Roque

His biographer **John Richardson** called 1932 his **annus mirabilis**, his wonderful year. By **1932**, Picasso was wealthy, famous, and living a life of barely contained crisis. He had recently met **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, seventeen years old when they first encountered each other in 1927, and she had become both obsession and muse. Three paintings of her, produced across just five days in March 1932, appear here together for the first time since their creation. The exhibition also reminds us how much larger than painting Picasso was. Born in **Málaga in 1881** with a full baptismal name running to nearly a dozen given names, he was a sculptor, ceramicist, playwright, and printmaker across a life that stretched to ninety-one years. His catalogue raisonné runs to **thirty-three volumes**, extraordinary for any artist. He co-founded **Cubism**, reinvented constructed sculpture, and drove modern art alongside his great rival **Henri Matisse**. In **1932** he also curated his own retrospective — almost unheard of for a living artist at the time — signalling his

absolute command of his own legacy.

Few artists have entangled biography and creative output as thoroughly as Picasso, and his relationships with women shaped his work decade by decade. **Fernande Olivier**, who met him in Paris in 1904, posed for over sixty portraits and her presence runs through his early **Cubist** experiments. When he left her for Eva Gouel in 1911, the shift registered immediately in his painting. **Olga Khokhlova**, the ballet dancer he married in 1918, brought a classical discipline to his circle; their separation in 1935 was bitter, and she refused divorce to prevent him dividing his assets. **Marie-Thérèse Walter** was just seventeen when Picasso began their secret affair, and she later bore him a daughter, Maya. **Dora Maar**, the Surrealist photographer, overlapped with Marie-Thérèse before becoming his primary companion through the late 1930s and wartime years. **Françoise Gilot**, a law student forty years his junior, left the relationship in 1953 — notably, she left him, not the reverse, and later wrote candidly about the affair. Finally, **Jacqueline Roque**, his second wife, inspired more than four hundred works and remained with him until his death in 1973.

Notes

Why 1932? It was an intensely creative period in the life of the 20th century's most influential artist. His biographer John Richardson called it his *annus mirabilis* ('wonderful year').

This is the first ever solo Pablo Picasso exhibition at Tate Modern and it includes more than 100 paintings, sculptures and drawings, mixed with family photographs and rare glimpses into his personal life. Three of his paintings featuring his lover Marie-Thérèse Walter are shown together for the first time since they were created over a period of just five days in March 1932.

Little Known Facts about Picasso (thanks to Tate and others)

His name was Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Mártir Patricio Clito Ruiz y

Picasso (1881-1973, aged 91). Picasso was his mother's name.

His father is an artist who is said to have given up painting when he saw a work Picasso produced when he was 13.

He became a celebrity in his own lifetime. By 1932 he was wealthy, established and part of the establishment.

He curated his first ever retrospective in 1932. In the 1930s a retrospective exhibition of a living artist was unusual and for an artist to curate their own was almost unheard of.

He was a fast-paced painter. It is thought *Nude Woman in a Red Armchair* was painted in a day.

He was more than just a painter. He was a committed sculptor all his life. He was also the author of two plays although he was never seen reading.

He was one of if not the most prolific artist who has ever lived. His catalogue raisonné is 33 volumes (for most artists it one or two).

He was a great animal lover. He loved animals all his life, particularly birds and dogs. His best known pet was Lump the dachshund.

He had sexual fantasies about Princess Margaret and her sister.

Bio:Picasso

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was a Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist, stage designer, poet and playwright who spent most of his adult life in France.

Regarded as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, he is known for co-founding the Cubist movement, the invention of constructed sculpture, the co-invention of collage, and for the wide variety of styles that he helped develop and explore.

Among his most famous works are the proto-Cubist *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907), and *Guernica* (1937), a dramatic portrayal of the bombing of Guernica by the German and Italian airforces.

Picasso demonstrated extraordinary artistic talent in his early years, painting in a naturalistic manner through his childhood and adolescence. During the first decade of the 20th century, his style changed as he experimented with different theories, techniques, and ideas.

After 1906, the Fauvist work of the slightly older artist Henri Matisse motivated Picasso to explore more radical styles, beginning a fruitful rivalry

between the two artists, who subsequently were often paired by critics as the leaders of modern art.

Exceptionally prolific throughout the course of his long life, Picasso achieved universal renown and immense fortune for his revolutionary artistic accomplishments, and became one of the best-known figures in 20th-century art.

Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (Málaga 25 Oct 1881 - April 1973). First trip to Paris in 1900. His friend Carlos Casagemas (1881-1901) shot himself after failing to kill Germaine, the girl he loved. Blue Period (1901–1904), Rose Period (1904–1906), African-influenced Period (1907–1909), Analytic Cubism (1909–1912), and Synthetic Cubism or Crystal Period (1912–1919). Picasso met Fernande Olivier, a bohemian artist who became his mistress, in Paris in 1904. Picasso left Olivier for the frail and enigmatic Eva Gouel, who called herself Marcelle Humbert when she arrived in Paris, and he was devastated when she died of tuberculosis or cancer in 1915 aged 30. After the loss of Eva Gouel, Picasso had an affair with Gaby Depeyre (later Lespinasse) and, in 1918, he married the respectable and elitist Ukrainian ballet dancer Olga Khokhlova and they had a child Paulo. In 1927 Picasso met 17-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter and began a long affair and fathered a daughter Maya. To avoid splitting his estate he never divorced and was married to Khokhlova until her death in 1955. In the 1930s and 40s the artist Dora Maar (born Theodora Marković) was a constant companion and lover and she documented *Guernica*. In 1944, aged 63, he began an affair with Françoise Gilot aged 23. Dora Maar famously said, 'After Picasso, only God' and when he left her in 1946 she became a Roman Catholic. Their split was painful and Picasso found ways to inflict pain but she outlived Picasso and continued to paint into the 1990s and was still exhibiting two years before she died aged 89. When Picasso grew tired of Dora Maar he and Gilot began to live together. They had two children: Claude, born in 1947 and Paloma, born in 1949. She described his abusive treatment and many affairs including Geneviève Laporte. He met Jacqueline Roque (1927-1986) in 1953 when he was 72 and she was 26. She became his second wife in 1961 until 1973 when she killed herself by gunshot aged 59 shortly after Picasso died. He created over 400 portraits of her, more than any of his other loves.

Notes

Love

Fernande Olivier (1881-1966) became Picasso's lover and muse from 1904 to 1911 after fleeing a difficult childhood and violent teenage marriage. Working as a model, she met the artist in Paris, going on to pose for more than 60 portraits and inspiring some of his Cubist period.

Olga Khokhlova (1891-1955, aged 63, m. 1918) was Picasso's first wife and mother of his eldest child Paulo. A ballet dancer, she stayed with him from 1917 to 1935 and is said to have bombarded him with hate mail after they parted, never divorcing after Picasso refused to divide his assets.

Marie-Thérèse Walter (1909-1977) stayed with Picasso from 1927 to 1936 and gave him a daughter Maya. Meeting when she was just 17, and the artist was still with Olga, she was eventually abandoned when Picasso moved on to his next mistress, hanging herself decades later four years after his death.

Dora Maar (1907-1997), the surrealist photographer who fought Marie-Therese for the artist's affection and stayed with him from 1936 to 1944.

Françoise Gilot (b. 1921, aged 96 in 2018), a 21-year-old law student to left her studies for an affair with Picasso, who was 40 years her senior. Mother of two of his children, Claude and Paloma.

Jacqueline Roque (1927-1986) was his second wife for 11 years, and inspiration behind more than 400 works. Jacqueline Picasso killed herself by gunshot in 1986 when she was 59 years old.

Notes

Picasso's women, wives, lovers and flirtations

<https://www.thoughtco.com/picassos-women-183426>

Laure Germaine Gargallo Pichot, 1901-3?

Madeleine, Summer 1904

Fernande Olivier (born Amelie Lang), Fall 1904 - Fall 1911

Eva Gouel (Marcelle Humbert), Fall 1911 - December 1915

Gabrielle (Gaby) Depreye Lespinesse, 1915 – 1916

Paquerette (Emilienne Geslot), Summer 1916

Irene Lagut, Spring 1916 - Beginning 1917

Olga Khoklova, 1917 - 1962, Picasso's First Wife

Sara Murphy, 1923

Marie-Therese Walter, 1927 – 1973

Dora Maar (Henriette Theodora Markovitch) 1936 – 1943

Francoise Gilot, 1943 – 1953, painter, critic and author, the pair had two children, Claude and Paloma

Jacqueline Roque, 1953 - 1973, Picasso's second and last wife

Sylvette David (Lydia Corbett David), 1954-55



Brassaï (1899-1984)
*Picasso in his rue La Boétie
 apartment*
 1932



"Chateau de Boisgeloup", Michele Bellot

Brassaï (1899-1984), Picasso in his rue La Boétie apartment, 1932

By 1932, **Picasso** had reached a peak of public recognition, and his material circumstances reflected it fully. He was chauffeured across **Paris**, socialised with the cultural and financial elite, and maintained properties that together reveal the divided life he was living. His apartment at **23 rue La Boétie**, in the wealthy eighth arrondissement, was kept immaculate under **Olga Khokhlova's** authority — a controlled, bourgeois domesticity that sat uneasily with Picasso's temperament. He responded by commandeering the floor above as a studio, a deliberate chaos directly overhead. Outside the city, the **Château de Boisgeloup**, acquired in 1930, served multiple purposes simultaneously: a family retreat, a venue for entertaining, and a private working space. Its converted stables became a dedicated sculpture studio, where Picasso produced large plaster heads that showed his sustained obsession with the human form. Boisgeloup also served a more clandestine function, as it was where he brought his young mistress **Marie-Thérèse Walter**. Her features dominate the sculpture of this period. The tension between respectability and transgression,

between the public figure and the private man, is not merely biographical detail — it is structural to understanding the work **Picasso** produced in these years.

Notes

Fame

Picasso turned fifty in the autumn of 1932. He was rich and famous but he was still active and creative. He was driven everywhere by his chauffeur and mixed in the highest social circles.

Picasso had an apartment/studio in No. 23 rue La Boétie, Paris, located in the wealthy 8th arrondissement and also had a château at Le Boisgeloup as early as 1930.

The apartment was controlled by Olga and was spotlessly clean. Upstairs Picasso had another apartment that was a total mess that he used as a studio. The chateau was used by the family, to entertain and by Picasso on his own as a studio. The stables were converted into a studio which he used for his sculpting. He also took his mistress Marie-Thérèse Walter there.



Marie-Thérèse Walter,
photo by Picasso, 1932



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Woman in a Red Armchair
1931

162 x 98 cm
FABA (Fundación Almine y Bernard
Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte), Brussels

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Woman in a Red Armchair*, 1931, 162 x 98 cm, FABA (Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte), Brussels

Marie-Thérèse Walter was seventeen when **Picasso** met her outside the Galleries Lafayette in **1927**. She was athletic, non-intellectual, and had never heard of him — he had to point to his name in a newspaper to prove his reputation, and she remained unmoved by his art. That indifference clearly fascinated him. Their relationship stayed secret for eight years, until the birth of their daughter **Maya** in **1935**. Maya was named after Picasso's sister María, who died aged seven in **1895** — a loss that haunted him throughout his life. This painting was made on **Christmas Day 1931**, when Marie-Thérèse was twenty-two and had been his mistress for four years. It shows a woman in a **red and black striped armchair**, her body parts revolving around her genitals in the fractured spatial logic Picasso had developed through **Cubism**. Most strikingly, her face is wiped away and replaced by a drawn heart — a gesture of erasure and tenderness simultaneously. The blond hair makes the identification unmistakable. Picasso rarely sentimentalised

his subjects, yet that heart sits at the centre of the composition, insisting on an emotional directness his other portraits of this period seldom allow.

Notes

This is thought to be a painting of his lover Marie-Thérèse Walter who he first met outside Galeries Lafayette department store in 1927. She was unlike his other friends as she was athletic, not an intellectual and had never heard of Picasso. He had to show her his name in the newspaper to prove he was well known but she was not interested in his art.

Their relationship was a secret for eight years until she gave birth to Maria de la Concepcion, known as Maya, in 1935. She was named after Picasso's sister who died aged seven in 1895 and her death haunted him for much of his life.

Painted on Christmas Day 1931 this shows a woman in a red and black striped armchair with various body parts revolving around her genitals. Unusually for Picasso, her face has been wiped away with a heart drawn over it. The blond hair leaves us in little doubt that this is Marie-Thérèse Walter, then aged 22. She had been his mistress for four years.

Pablo Picasso painted this work on **Christmas Day 1931**, and the date carries weight: his thirteen-year marriage to **Olga Khokhlova** was collapsing, and the biographical pressure is visible in every distortion. The figure sits in a red and black striped armchair, her body fragmenting into orbiting parts arranged around her genitals — a compositional strategy Picasso used repeatedly to assert erotic dominance over his subjects. What distinguishes this canvas is the face: wiped clean, replaced by a drawn heart. That erasure reads as neither tenderness nor abstraction for its own sake, but as a deliberate act of possession, reducing identity to desire. The blonde hair identifies the sitter without ambiguity as **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, who was twenty-two at the time of painting and had been Picasso's secret mistress for four years. **John Richardson**, in his biography of Picasso, traces how Walter unlocked a new visual vocabulary for the artist — rounder, more sensual forms replacing the angular severity of earlier work. **Woman with Dagger** sits within that transformation, but its violence of composition tells us this was never a straightforward relationship. The dagger of the title belongs to no one shown, which is precisely the point.

References

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/mar/11/picasso-1932-love-fame-tragedy-review-tate-modern>



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *The Crucifixion*, 1932, National Picasso Museum, Paris

That lyrical flute player and reclining nude give way, within a fortnight, to a drawing of the Crucifixion — and the emotional distance between those two images tells us everything about the latter months of **1932**. Picasso was navigating genuine personal crisis. **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, his young lover, contracted a serious illness after swimming in contaminated water and spent seven months hospitalised. That prolonged absence shadows the darker work of this period directly. Meanwhile, the broader world was fracturing: **Adolf Hitler** became Chancellor of Germany in **1933**, and within a year Picasso was among the modern artists officially condemned as degenerate. **Carl Jung** went further, declaring Picasso schizophrenic on the basis of his art alone — a diagnosis that reveals more about Jung's anxiety than Picasso's psychology. The **Great Depression** ground on with no end in sight. Picasso was not yet the overtly political painter he would become. That transformation arrived in **1937** with the bombing of **Guernica**. But his turn toward the Crucifixion, drawing on the raw, anguished altarpiece

of **Matthias Grünewald**, signals an artist absorbing suffering — personal and collective — and finding in a centuries-old religious image the formal language to express it.

Notes

In September Picasso drew this lyrical, classical image of a flute player and a reclining nude and just over two weeks later this drawing of the Crucifixion.

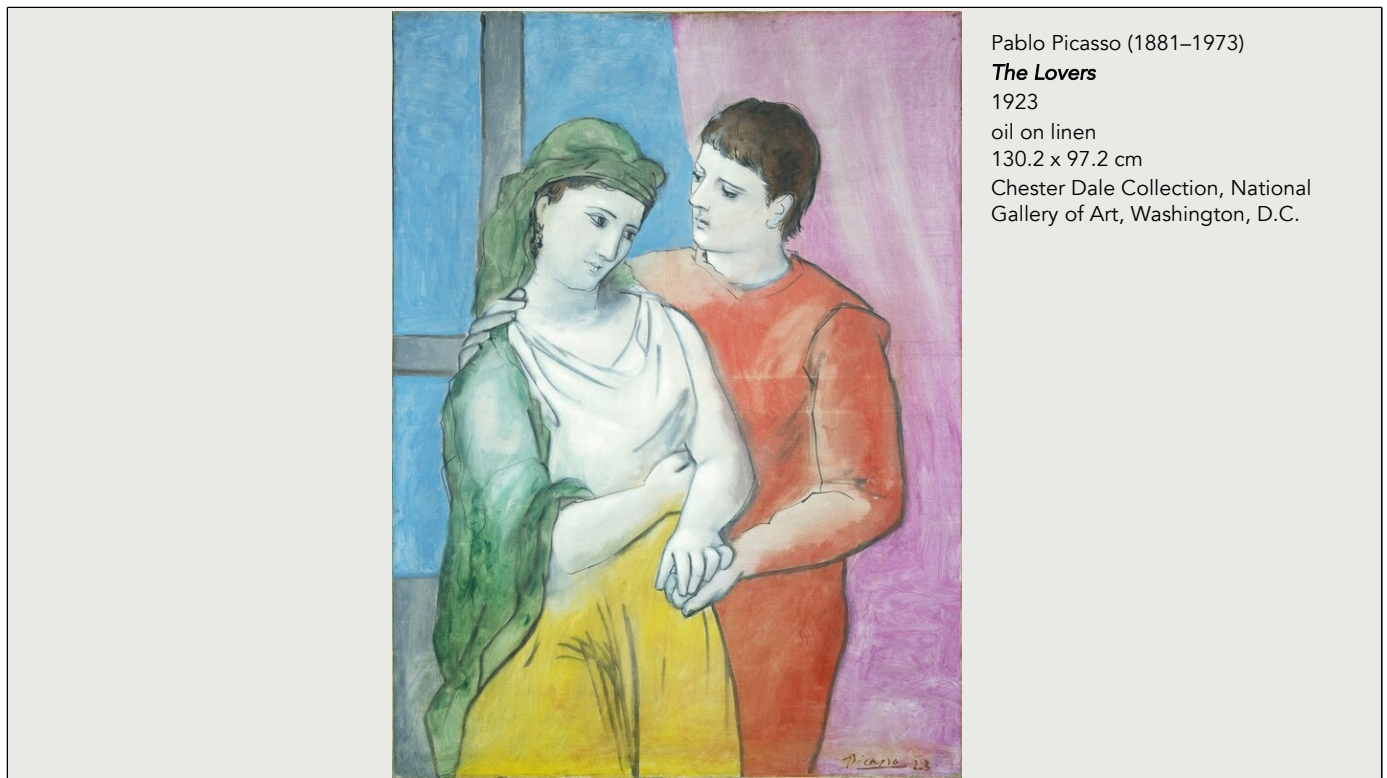
Tragedy

We know with hindsight that in 1932 Europe was at a turning point that led to the Second World War. In 1933 Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and in 1934 many modern artists including Picasso were declared degenerate. The psychiatrist Karl Jung declared Picasso a schizophrenic based on the extreme nature of his art.

It was still in the middle of the Great Depression which showed no sign of lifting.

Picasso was not overtly political in the early 1930s as we see from this exhibition although a few years later, in 1937, everything changed with the bombing of Guernica.

In the later part of 1932 Picasso changed from representations of the nude to new interpretations of the Crucifixion inspired by Matthias Grünewald. Marie-Thérèse Walter swam in a rat-infested river and contracted a disease that put her in hospital for seven months.



Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

The Lovers

1923

oil on linen

130.2 x 97.2 cm

Chester Dale Collection, National
Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), *The Lovers*, 1923, 130.2 x 97.2 cm, Chester Dale Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The **1932 retrospective** at the Galerie Georges Petit brought together 255 works spanning three decades and offers a revealing lens through which to trace Picasso's development. Two thousand Parisians attended the opening in evening gowns and tails, visibly shaken by what they saw. Picasso himself went to the cinema instead. Born in **1881**, he showed extraordinary precocity — by thirteen, his father, himself a painter, had declared his son the superior artist and set down his own brushes. Picasso trained at Spain's finest academies and ignored them, haunting the **Prado** instead. His **Blue Period**, beginning around 1901, used austere colour and sombre subject matter — beggars, prostitutes — shaped by Spanish poverty and the suicide of his friend **Carlos Casagemas**. By 1904 his palette warmed into the **Rose Period**, populated by circus performers and harlequins, as he settled into Montmartre and entered the orbit of **Gertrude Stein** and **Henri Matisse**. Then in 1907, **Les Femmes d'Alger** announced a rupture so radical that Matisse dismissed it as a hoax. Working closely

with **Georges Braque**, Picasso developed Cubism through its Analytic and Synthetic phases, introducing collage into fine art. The retrospective audience in 1932 confronted the full arc of that revolution.

Notes

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

First Communion, 1896

The Tragedy, 1903, National Gallery Washington

Mother and Child, Acrobats, 1904-05, gouache on canvas, 90 x 71 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907

Girl with Mandolin, 1910, 100.3 x 73.6 cm, MoMA

Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper, 1913, Tate

The Lovers, 1923, oil on linen, 130.2 x 97.2 cm, Chester Dale Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The Summer Retrospective

In June 1932 he held his first large-scale retrospective with works going back to 1901. 255 works were shown. This is a good way to talk about Picasso's life before we talk about 1932.

Two thousand Parisians attended the opening in evening gowns and tails; photographs show that they weren't inured to the shock. And it seems that Olga finally realised what was going on, although she did not leave Picasso until Marie-Thérèse became pregnant in 1935. Picasso was absent; he went to the movies instead.

Picasso's work is often categorized into periods. While the names of many of his later periods are debated, the most commonly accepted periods in his work are

His student years, his father was an artist but there is a famous anecdote that when he saw his 13-year son painting a pigeon he declared him a better artist and vowed to give up painting. By 1894, aged 13, his career as a serious artist can be said to have begun. Although he was sent to the best art school in Spain he stopped attending classes and visited the Prado instead.

the Blue Period (1901–1904), his Blue Period either began in Spain in 1901 or later that year in Paris. He used austere colours and frequently painted prostitutes and beggars influenced by his trips through Spain and the death of his friend Carlos Casagemas.

the Rose Period (1904–1906), in this period he used a lighter tone and orange and pinks and featured circus performers and harlequins. The harlequin became a personal symbol for Picasso. In 1904 he met Fernande Olivier a bohemian artist who became his lover and the same year became a favourite of American collectors Leo and Gertrude Stein. In 1905 he met Henri Matisse who was to become a lifelong friend and rival.

the African-influenced Period (1907–1909), this period began with *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*. When he displayed the painting to acquaintances in his studio later that year, the nearly universal reaction was shock and revulsion; Matisse angrily dismissed the work as a hoax.

Analytic Cubism (1909–1912), in this period he developed Cubism with Georges Braque. They analysed the form of objects and broke them down into their components represented from different viewpoints using neutral brown tones. In 1911, Picasso was arrested and questioned about the theft of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre but he was later cleared.

and Synthetic Cubism (1912–1919), also referred to as the Crystal period. Picasso cut paper fragments – often wallpaper or portions of newspaper pages – and pasted them into compositions, marking the first use of collage in fine art. After acquiring some fame and fortune, Picasso left Olivier for Marcelle Humbert, whom he called Eva Gouel. Picasso included declarations of his love for Eva in many Cubist works. Picasso was devastated by her premature death from illness at the age of 30 in 1915. In the summer of 1918, Picasso married Olga Khokhlova, a ballerina with Sergei Diaghilev's troupe, for whom Picasso was designing a ballet. The two had a son, Paulo Picasso, who would grow up to be a motorcycle racer and chauffeur to his father.

In 1927, Picasso met 17-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter and began a secret affair with her. The two remained legally married until Khokhlova's death in 1955. Picasso carried on a long-standing affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter and fathered a daughter with her, named Maya. Marie-Thérèse lived in the vain hope that Picasso would one day marry her, and hanged herself four years after Picasso's death.

Much of Picasso's work of the late 1910s and early 1920s is in a neoclassical style, and his work in the mid-1920s often has characteristics of Surrealism.

During the 1930s the minotaur replaced the harlequin as a motif in his work. He worked in a wide range of media, including sculpture, and styles, ranging from classical to works in which form was decomposed into its essential geometric shapes.

In 1937 he painted Guernica and his work became overtly political. His later work often combines elements of his earlier styles.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Self-portrait
1901
Musée Picasso, Paris

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Self-portrait, 1901, Musée Picasso, Paris

Pablo Picasso arrived in Paris in **1900**, aged nineteen, and the city offered him neither comfort nor stability. He had travelled there with his friend **Carlos Casagemas** and the painter Ramón Pichot, and the journey ended in tragedy. Casagemas became infatuated with Germaine Gargallo, a young woman in Picasso's circle, and when she rejected him, he attempted to shoot her in a restaurant before taking his own life. Germaine subsequently married Pichot, and the whole episode left Picasso shaken to his core. His response was painterly and immediate. In the **1901 self-portrait** that opens the **Blue Period**, Picasso depicts himself not as an energetic young artist but as gaunt, sallowness, and hollowed out — a figure who reads as decades older than his twenty years. A spectrum of deep **cobalt and navy** saturates both subject and background, while his face is rendered in an icy bluish-white that drains him of vitality. The composition carries a clear psychological charge: Picasso is casting himself as the alienated outsider, someone expelled from warmth and belonging. Biography and formal choice are inseparable here — the blue is not decorative, it

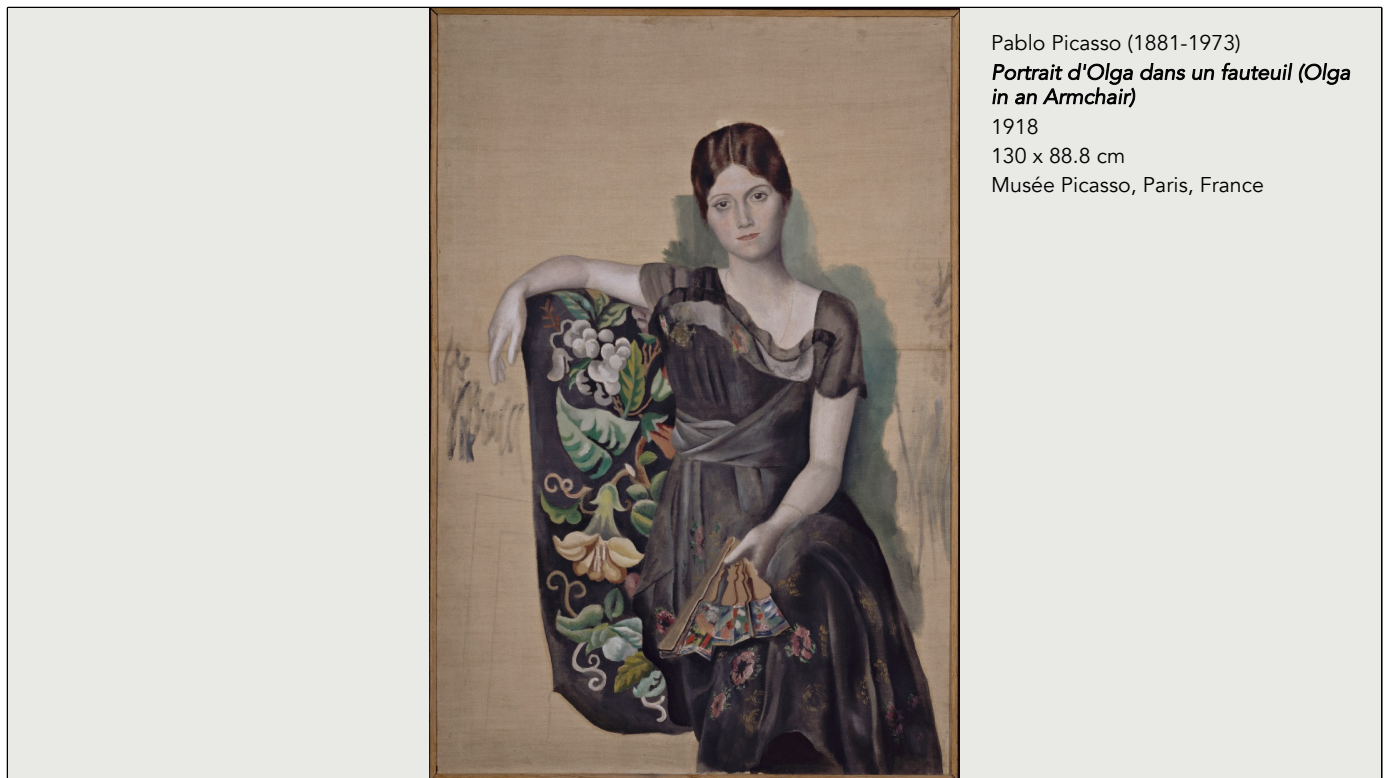
is an argument about grief.

Notes

1905 Self-Portrait from his Blue Period.

Picasso came to Paris in 1900 when he was 19 and his beginnings were not easy. This work was painted shortly after the suicide of his friend Carlos Casagemas. Picasso went with Ramón Pichot on his first long visit to Paris together with another young painter, Carlos Casagemas. In Paris, Casagemas fell in love with a young woman friend of Picasso named Germaine Gargallo. She rejected him and Casagemas committed suicide, after first taking a shot at Germaine in a restaurant, who soon after married Pichot.

"Picasso identified with this plight, as a 1901 self-portrait made clear. While he was only 20 years old when he painted the piece, he depicts himself as gaunt, sallow, and fragile—a man who looks 50, rather than an energetic young fellow at the outset of his career. A spectrum of dusty, dark blues saturate the subject and the backdrop he stands against, while his face is an icy bluish-white, his coat a deep cobalt, and his eyes wells of navy. The overall impression is one of dejection: a tormented artist cast out of society."
(www.artsy.net)



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Portrait d'Olga dans un fauteuil (Olga in an Armchair)*, 1918, 130 x 88.8 cm, Musée Picasso, Paris, France

Picasso's 1918 portrait of **Olga Khokhlova** rewards close looking precisely because it is unfinished — and deliberately so. He rendered her face and dress with the academic polish she admired, then left the background as bare canvas, a quiet declaration that realism was a choice, not an obligation. Olga was a dancer with **Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes**, the company for which Picasso had travelled to Rome to design **Erik Satie's Parade**. The couple married in the summer of 1918 and honeymooned near Biarritz at the villa of **Eugenia Errázuriz**, the Chilean patron who had already championed Picasso's work across fashionable Europe. Returning to Paris and needing reliable income, Picasso entered an exclusive arrangement with dealer **Paul Rosenberg**, who rented the couple an apartment in Paris adjacent to his own home at his own expense. What began as a commercial necessity became one of the most consequential partnerships in modern art dealing: a close, almost fraternal bond between two men of sharply different temperaments. Their collaboration shaped how Picasso's work reached

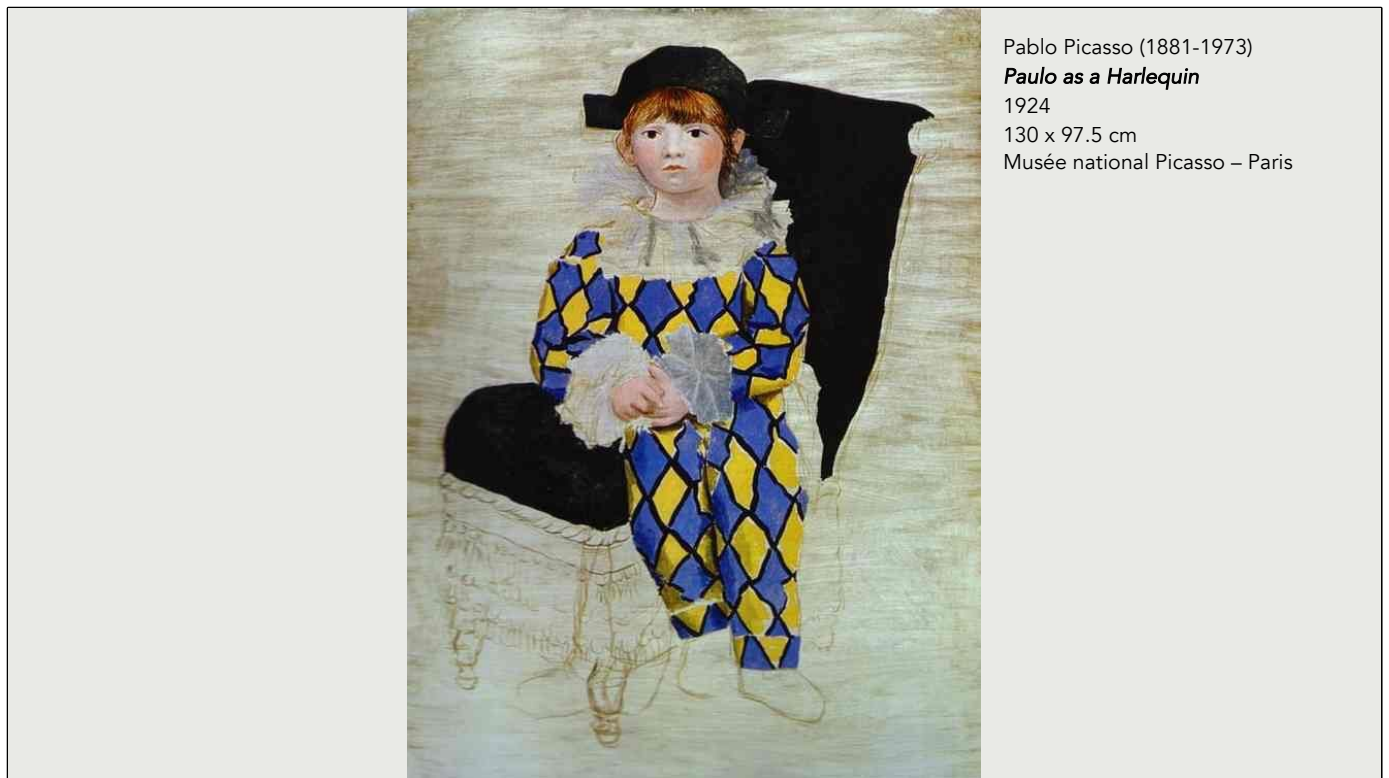
collectors and institutions across Europe and beyond, and it held firm until the outbreak of **World War II** forced both men into very different futures.

Notes

His portrait of Olga from 1918 shows his conventional technique which she loved but he has left the background unfinished to make a point.

Towards the end of World War I, Picasso became involved with Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. In the summer of 1918, Picasso married Olga Khokhlova, a ballerina with Sergei Diaghilev's troupe, for whom Picasso was designing a ballet, Erik Satie's Parade, in Rome; they spent their honeymoon near Biarritz in the villa of glamorous Chilean art patron Eugenia Errázuriz.

After returning from his honeymoon and in need of money, Picasso started his exclusive relationship with the French-Jewish art dealer Paul Rosenberg. As part of his first duties, Rosenberg agreed to rent the couple an apartment in Paris at his own expense, which was located next to his own house. This was the start of a deep brother-like friendship between two very different men, that would last until the outbreak of World War II.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Paulo as a Harlequin*, 1924, 130 x 97.5 cm, Musée national Picasso – Paris

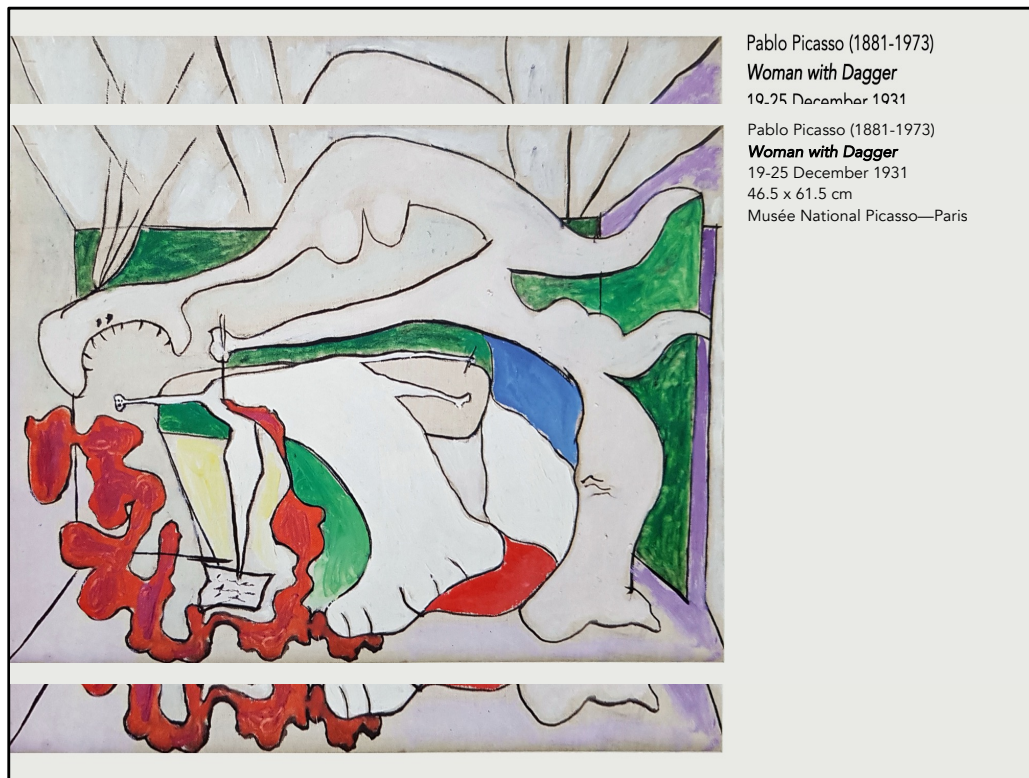
Olga Khokhlova drew Picasso into the formal world of high-society Paris — dinner parties, social obligations, and the rigid proprieties of wealth — and the friction between her expectations and his bohemian instincts ran through the entire marriage. Their son **Paulo** was born in **1921**, and would later become a motorcycle racer and his father's chauffeur. Yet the domestic turbulence of these years did not slow Picasso's output. Through his ongoing collaboration with **Diaghilev's Ballets Russes**, he came into close contact with **Igor Stravinsky**, and the two worked together on **Pulcinella** in **1920**. Picasso seized on those sessions to produce several portrait drawings of Stravinsky — precise, classically rendered images that sit at the opposite pole from his Cubist work of the same period. That alternation between **Cubism** and a revived classical idiom is one of the defining features of his early nineteen-twenties practice, and it resists any simple explanation. Rather than a retreat from modernism, it reads as a deliberate expansion of register — Picasso moving between modes the way a

writer shifts between registers of language, each informing and pressuring the other.

Notes

In the early 1920s we find Picasso alternating his Cubist style with a classical style.

Khokhlova introduced Picasso to high society, formal dinner parties, and other dimensions of the life of the rich in 1920s Paris. In 1921 the two had a son, Paulo Picasso, who would grow up to be a motorcycle racer and chauffeur to his father. Khokhlova's insistence on social propriety clashed with Picasso's bohemian tendencies and the two lived in a state of constant conflict. During the same period that Picasso collaborated with Diaghilev's troupe, he and Igor Stravinsky collaborated on *Pulcinella* in 1920. Picasso took the opportunity to make several drawings of the composer.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Woman with Dagger*, 19-25 December 1931, 46.5 x 61.5 cm, Musée National Picasso—Paris

By 1932, **Pablo Picasso** stood at a crossroads. Having risen from poverty in Barcelona to international celebrity in Paris, he now faced critics openly questioning whether his radical energy was spent. He responded with ferocious productivity, channelling personal contradiction into some of the most charged paintings of his career. The contradictions were real and acute. Picasso maintained a household of bourgeois respectability with his wife, the Russian ballerina **Olga Khokhlova**, while conducting a secret affair with **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, whom he had met in **1927** when she was seventeen. Their clandestine relationship electrified his output. **Woman in a Red Armchair**, completed on **Christmas Day 1931**, obliterates the sitter's face with a wash of yellow hair — a signature device Picasso used to signal Marie-Thérèse without naming her. That same day he finished **Woman with Dagger**, a surrealist scene of one woman killing another, its imagery loosely drawn from **Jacques-Louis David's** depiction of the murdered **Jean-Paul Marat**. Where David recorded political

assassination, Picasso transforms the act into domestic fury. As historian **John Richardson** argued, Picasso treated painting as a diary, and these two canvases — painted within hours of each other — map the poles of desire and violence that defined his **year of wonders**.

Notes

In 1927, Picasso met 17-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter and began a secret affair with her. Picasso's marriage to Khokhlova soon ended in separation rather than divorce, as French law required an even division of property in the case of divorce, and Picasso did not want Khokhlova to have half his wealth. The two remained legally married until Khokhlova's death in 1955. Picasso carried on a long-standing affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter and fathered a daughter with her, named Maya. Marie-Thérèse lived in the vain hope that Picasso would one day marry her, and hanged herself four years after Picasso's death.

Until his painting of Guernica in 1937 Picasso avoided mixing art and politics and his work mostly drew on personal experience.

Christmas 1931 Picasso shared with his wife the Russian ballerina Olga Khokhlova and their 10-year old son Paulo. Picasso painted Woman with Dagger. The picture loosely refers to Jacques-Louis David's 1793 depiction of the murdered Jean-Paul Marat by Charlotte Corday. In Picasso version she kills a rival woman.

The following is taken from the Tate exhibition booklet.

Pablo Picasso

In 1932, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was not yet half-way through his career. After years of poverty as a young artist in Barcelona, he had moved to Paris at the turn of the twentieth century and, by the early 1930s, was both celebrated and wealthy. He was aware, however, that he was losing contact with his artistic contemporaries, and that critics were questioning his ability to create radical new work.

Picasso was always restless, constantly trying his hand at new things. His Blue and Rose periods in the early 1900s were mainly of figurative paintings. On discovering archaic and non-western art, he moved further from naturalistic representation and radically reinterpreted it when he and Georges Braque

invented cubism. Between the two world wars he made works inspired by classical art, and others that engaged with the contemporary interest in surrealism.

As a foreigner living in France, Picasso refrained from political activities and kept a distance from official engagements, including those with his native Spain. Things changed dramatically when Nazi German and Fascist Italian warplanes bombed the Basque town of Guernica in 1937, in response to which Picasso created a monumental black-and-white painting which to this day is regarded by many as the greatest anti-war statement in art.

Throughout his life, Picasso sought to revive the tradition of western art, especially painting. He competed creatively with his contemporaries, particularly Matisse, but also earlier artists including Velázquez, Ingres and Manet. He returned repeatedly to subjects such as the female nude, classical mythology - particularly the character of the Minotaur — and the bullfight.

Picasso married twice and had several other long-term relationships. He had four children. By 1932, his marriage to Olga Khokhlova was under increasing strain. The escape offered by his relationship with the significantly younger Marie-Thérèse Walter became a key inspiration for much of his work from this period.

Marie-Therese Walter

It begins in 1931 with *Woman with Dagger*, 1931 (p. 43), a woman killing another name or woman, blood flows, there is a letter. Picasso who was very knowledgeable on art history mentions *The Death of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David, he was killed by Charlotte Corday. Does it signify an unhappy marriage, tensions, aggression? Can we read his life in his work he did say his work is like a diary of his life and many works were painted in a day. This work was finished on Christmas day 1931 and he painted *Woman in a Red Armchair* (p. 43) the same day! The face is obliterated by the yellow hair tells us it is Marie-Therese Walter (who he met in 1929(?) in *Galerie Lafayette*. She was 17 and he was 45. He introduced himself, saying "you have an interesting face . I sense we are going to do great things together." She was of Swedish origin and we can identify her in portraits by her thin blond hair. She knew nothing about art and had never heard of Picasso.

She never became interested in art but found him kind, protecting and passionate. He could not stop painting her .

The Reading face and body split, neurotic painting, phallic nose, V-line of book is suggestive.

Notes from Tate

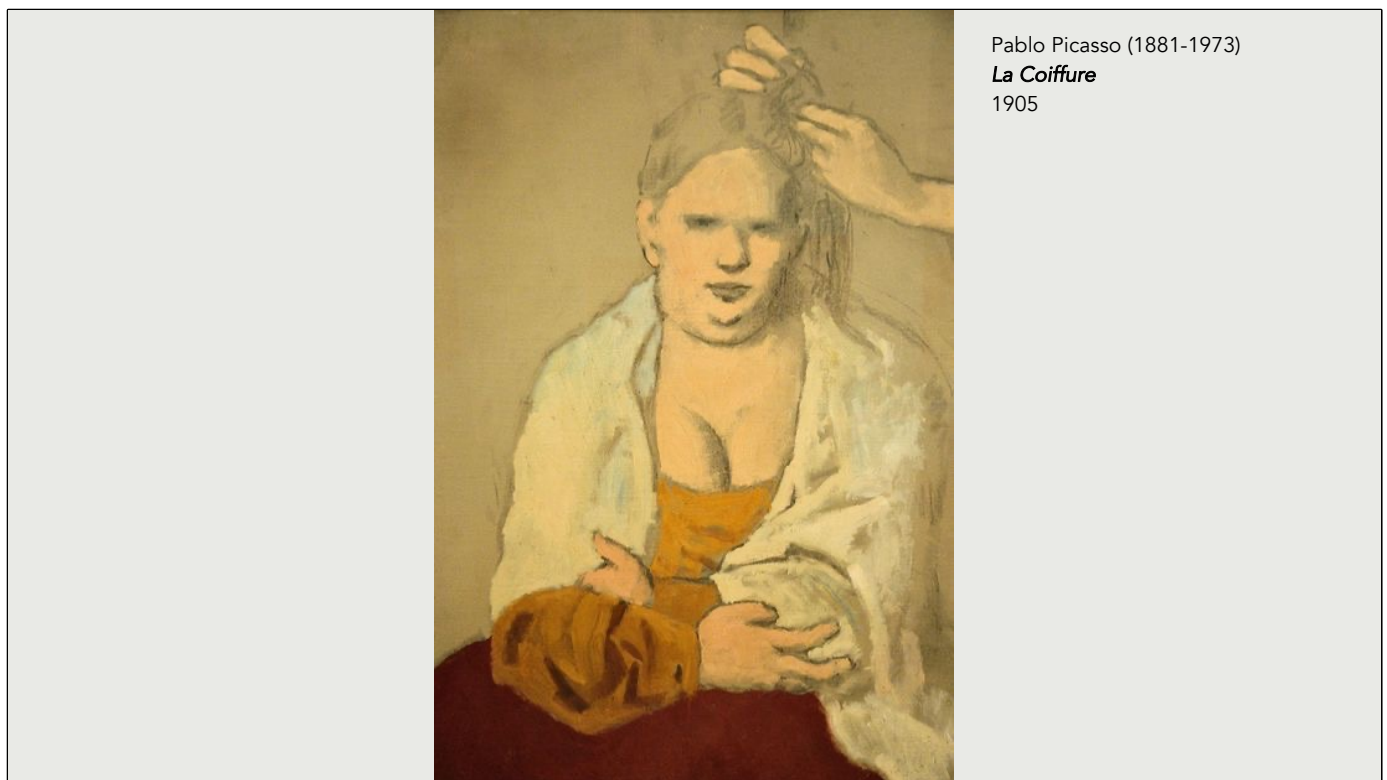
Room 1: Love, Fame, Tragedy

1932 was a make-or-break year for Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). In October 1931 he had turned fifty. He was inundated with invitations to exhibit his work. At the same time, critics openly discussed whether he was an artist of the past rather than the future, Picasso's grand apartment on the rue La Boétie, his tailored suits and chauffeur-driven car symbolised his rise from poor Spanish migrant to international superstar, as did his marriage to the Russian ballerina Olga Khokhlova, his principal model and inspiration for much of the late 1910s and early 1920s.

But Picasso felt increasingly restless and critically sidelined. He bought an eighteenth-century mansion in the Normandy countryside where he experimented with sculpture. He created a chaotic studio in a Parisian apartment identical to the one below in which he lived a life of bourgeois respectability with his wife and son. He was in a secretive relationship with a younger woman, Marie-Thérèse Walter. He flirted with surrealism while trying to beat Henri Matisse at his colourful game.

These contradictions were brought into focus by his first major retrospective in June 1932. In the preceding months Picasso channelled his energies into ambitious paintings intended to silence his detractors. As the year progressed, the mood darkened from sensuous exuberance to ominous anxiety. Rarely overtly political, Picasso's work nonetheless reflected the times: a world — including his native Spain - increasingly in the grip of economic depression, mass unemployment, populist nationalism and the rise of totalitarian regimes. If 1932 began for Picasso under the sign of love, it ended with a premonition of tragedies to come. Christmas Day 1931, 23 rue La Boétie: having spent the festivities with family and friends, Picasso completed a small painting he had worked on for a week. *Woman with Dagger* is a surrealist nightmare of a woman killing her sexual rival. The same day, he also painted a large canvas of a seated woman, her facial features replaced with a heart. While the former alluded to increasingly strained marital relations, the latter was a painterly dream about Picasso's secret lover, 22-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter.

Just as Olga Picasso and Marie-Thérèse Walter demarcated the poles of Picasso's personal life, so his work explored the tensions between painting and sculpture, surrealist distortion and sensual Colour harmonies. This complex force field gave rise to some of Picasso's most accomplished works. It was his urge to renew and reinvent himself which turned 1932 into Picasso's 'year of wonders'.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *La Coiffure*, 1905

Nineteen thirty-two presented the world with contradictions: record auction prices for art sat alongside economic collapse, political upheaval, and gathering darkness. The sale of **Picasso's** **La Coiffure** of 1905 fetched an astonishing 56,000 francs, reported internationally as a signal of recovery — yet the **Los Angeles Olympics** drew only half the nations that had attended Amsterdam four years earlier, a direct consequence of global recession. **Amelia Earhart** became the first woman to fly the Atlantic solo, **Adolf Hitler** was granted German citizenship and positioned himself for election, and the **Lindbergh kidnapping** transfixed the world. British cultural life shifted quietly but permanently: the **BBC** moved into Broadcasting House, experimental television began, and **George V** delivered the first Royal Christmas broadcast. Most significantly for our purposes, the **National Gallery of British Art** formally adopted the name **Tate**, honouring its founder Henry Tate. **Aldous Huxley** published **Brave New World**, a novel whose dystopian logic would soon feel less like fiction than prophecy. Nineteen thirty-two, seen with the knowledge of what followed, was

the last moment in which optimism and catastrophe occupied the same breath.

Notes

1932

Picasso's *La Coiffure*, 1905 sold for the astounding sum of 56,000 francs, internationally reported as a sign of economic recovery.

In 1932 the big story was the kidnap and murder of the 20-month old son of US aviation legend Charles Lindbergh. 35-year old Amelia Earhart became the first woman to cross the Atlantic on a solo flight.

1932, 25 February Adolf Hitler was granted German citizenship allowing him to stand for election.

The Los Angeles Olympics was only attended by half the nations that attended Amsterdam four years earlier because of global recession. The BBC moved into Broadcasting House and the first experimental TV started.

George V gave the first Royal Christmas Message on the radio. The National Gallery of British Art officially renamed itself Tate after Henry Tate, its founder. Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World*.

1932, with hindsight, was the calm before the storm.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Nude Woman in a Red Armchair
 1932

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Nude Woman in a Red Armchair*, 1932

Between January and February 1932, **Pablo Picasso** produced an extraordinary sequence of paintings in his Paris studio, all depicting a woman seated, sleeping, reading, or absorbed in music. The sitter is almost certainly **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, though Picasso worked from imagination rather than life. What is remarkable is the range. Saturated colour harmonies sit alongside Surrealist distortion; sensual abandon shifts toward caricature, then dissolves into abstract sculptural form. These paintings are not variations on a theme — they are restless reinventions. At fifty, Picasso was wealthy, critically celebrated, and socially respectable, with a tidy apartment near the **Champs-Élysées**. The question driving him was whether comfort had dulled his radical instinct. **The Dream**, painted on **24 January**, answers that question decisively. Quickly laid down but returned to repeatedly, it uses a palette knife to build a wallpaper that vibrates with life. The red, blue, and purple zones function as pure abstract colour. His handling of **Marie-Thérèse's** figure — the merged profiles, the five fingers and a thumb — is brave and frankly erotic. The scholar **T.J. Clark** argues

Picasso found in her a licence to risk everything. The painting sold in 2013 for **150 million dollars**, and no reproduction does it justice.

Notes

Figures by the Seas, 2 January

Reading, 2 January

The Yellow Belt, 6 January

Reading, 9 January

Young Woman with Mandolin, 10 January

Sleeping Woman by a Mirror, 14 January

Still Life at the Window, 15 January

Rest, 22 January 1932

Sleep, 23 January 1932

The Dream, 24 January 1932

Women in a Red Armchair, 27 January

Seated Woman in a Red Armchair, 30 January 1932

Nude Woman in a Red Armchair was it painted in a day? X-ray analysis shows the paint is very thin, 27 July, 1932 is written on the back. He started with a brush and a lot of the work is wet on wet. There are gaps left between the colours so it could be painted before it had dried. The eyes are just a dash of black and the eyebrows are formed by the end of the brush. The lips are four dashes of purple and then his finger drawn across with a final swirl in the middle. It speaks of his joy of painting.

The Dream is the central work. Sold for \$150m.

In 1932 he was 50 and had proved himself, he was loved by the critics, dealers and the public. He had become respectable, wealthy, good suits and a tidy apartment near the Champs Elysee. But was he past it, had he blunted his radical edge? Could he prove himself? This became his year of wonders but it had its dark secrets, its passions and a dark end.

The Dream must be seen in person as it is stunning and the texture and energy cannot be reproduced. You feel he is blending with Marie-Therese Walter . The eroticism is gentle. The side of her head has been described as a penis. He has found himself, he is brave, this woman and I are one. Mind

blowing. Quickly painted but he came back to it many times. He uses a palette knife, the wallpaper is thick and alive. The red, blue and purple are a pure abstract work of colour combinations. He is reinventing himself, he is at the top of his game and has the bravery to risk everything by experimenting and trying something new. Note she has five fingers and a thumb.

Notes from Tate

Room 2: January and February

On 26 February 1932, Picasso's *La Coiffure* (1905) sold in Paris for a record-breaking 56,000 Francs. Aside from raising hopes that the worst of the economic crisis might be over, this price was indicative of the high regard in which Picasso's early work was held. Moments such as this strengthened Picasso's resolve to prove his continued relevance.

Throughout January, with his impending retrospective in mind, Picasso produced in his Paris studio a series of ambitious portrait paintings. All of them depict a female figure seated in an armchair, reading, sleeping or apparently absorbed in music. The sitter is almost certainly Marie-Thérèse Walter. The model, though, is imagined rather than real as Picasso was not in the habit of painting from life.

Despite their shared subject matter, the paintings differ greatly in style and mood. Saturated colour harmonies alternate with surrealist distortion; at times the figure is shown in sensual abandon, at others it veers towards caricature or dissolves altogether into a sculptural arrangement of abstracted shapes. Seen together, these paintings testify as much to Picasso's restless inventiveness as to his complex relationship with the women in his life. The still life from early February marked a momentary break from the female figure as the dominant subject of Picasso's work in 1932.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Head of a Woman
1932
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Head of a Woman, 1932, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Turning now to **Picasso's** sculptures, we arrive at a body of work that remained largely hidden from public view for decades. **Bust of a Woman**, made in **1930**, is one of the earliest works from his newly acquired château at **Boisgeloup**, forty miles outside Paris. Picasso purchased the property in **1930**, converting a stable into a dedicated sculpture studio — a space that doubled as a secret retreat for his clandestine meetings with **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, even as his wife Olga and son Paulo visited openly. Trained as a classical painter with no formal sculptural education, Picasso taught himself the medium entirely, carving directly into **concrete**. The bust reflects that self-determined approach: a phallic nose, exaggerated breasts, and aggressively tactile surfaces transform Walter's strong features into bold, bulbous volumes. Whether Picasso was consciously responding to African sculptural traditions at this moment is worth noting — his close friend **Michel Leiris** was on ethnographic expedition in Africa at precisely this time. The Boisgeloup sculptures first entered public

consciousness through photographs taken by **Brassaï** in **1932**, published that same year. The château remains in the family today, owned by Picasso's grandson **Bernard**.

Notes

The Sculptures

Bust of a Woman, 1930. An earlier work made in concrete. He bought a house in 1929 and converted the outhouse into a studio. He was trained as a classical painter but not trained in sculpture so he trained himself. The work has a phallic nose, exaggerated breasts, it is a tactile sculpture which he carved into the concrete. Was he mindful of African art at the time. His friend Michel Leiris was on an expedition in Africa. His country house was called Boisgeloup ('secret wood') and it was his secret retreat. He took Olga and his son Paulo and had clandestine meeting with Marie-Thérèse Walter. The house is still owned by his grandson Bernard.

"Picasso was a committed sculptor throughout his career, though for a long time this side of his art was not widely known. In 1930, he acquired a house in Boisgeloup, forty miles outside of Paris. Away from the distractions of city life, it became the ideal place for him to pursue his sculpture work with a new energy. The disused stable became a dedicated sculpture studio where he also experimented with printmaking." (Tate)

Notes from Tate

Room 3: Boisgeloup

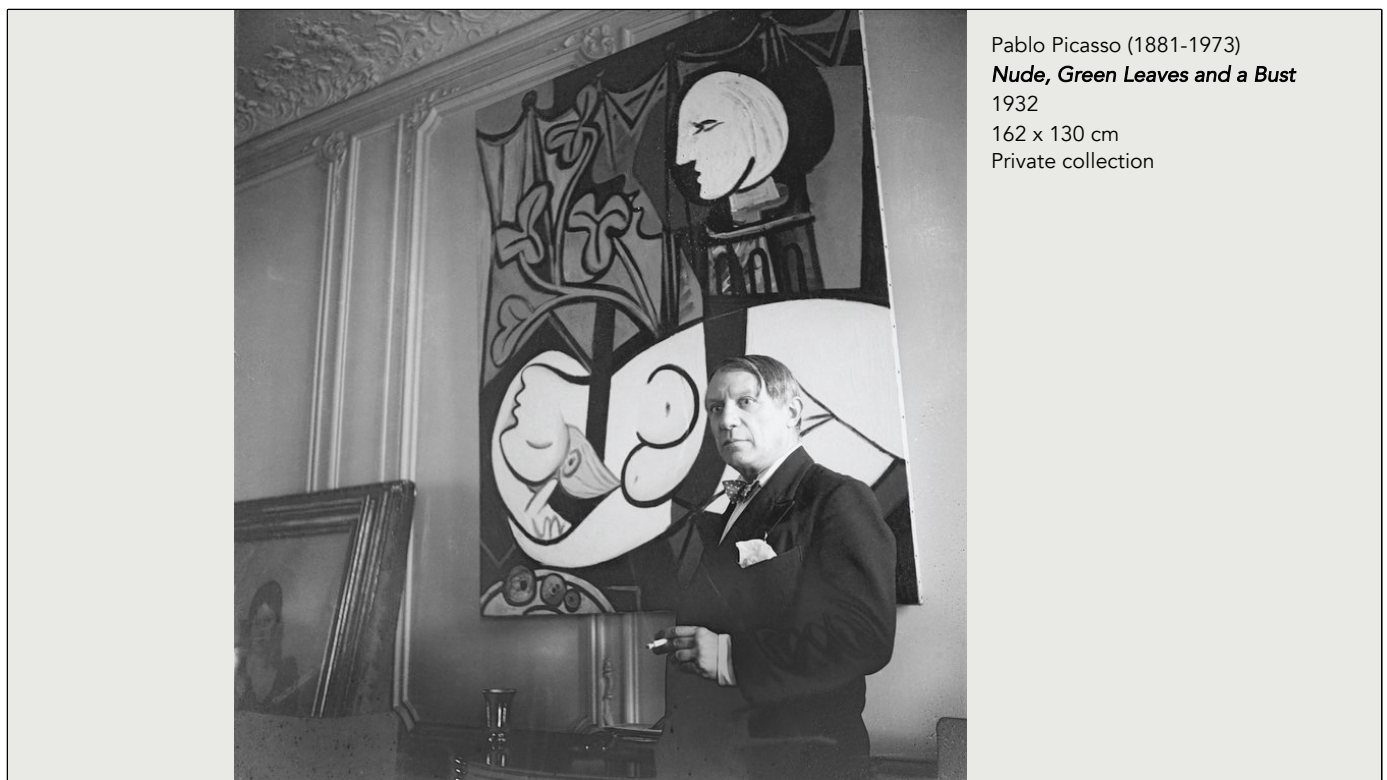
In June 1930, Picasso had purchased an eighteenth-century château in Normandy. Boisgeloup provided a welcome retreat from city and public life, and was an easy drive from Paris in the chauffeur-driven Hispano-Suiza limousine the artist now owned. Despite its basic plumbing and heating, in the spring and summer months the mansion became a gathering place for family and friends. When neither was present, it served as a secret meeting place for Picasso and Marie-Thérèse Walter.

A room on the second floor of the corner tower, offering sweeping views across the village of Gisors, became Picasso's painting studio. He turned one of the stables into a sculpture studio. Throughout 1931 he developed a new sculptural language, transforming Walter's strong features into solid volumes and bulbous shapes.

The Boisgeloup sculptures were published for the first time in a series of photographs by French-Hungarian photographer, Brassai, taken at the end of 1932. They were also a key reference for Picasso's painting in the first half of the year.

References

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81148>



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Nude, Green Leaves and a Bust
 1932
 162 x 130 cm
 Private collection

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Nude, Green Leaves and a Bust*, 1932, 162 x 130 cm, Private collection

These works, reunited here for the first time since **1932**, represent twelve days of extraordinary creative intensity in early March of that year. **Picasso** produced a group of large canvases exceptional in colour and compositional ambition, centring on three interlocking subjects: the reclining nude, the sculpted bust, and the still life. His lover **Marie-Thérèse Walter** is present as nude, as lilac profile, and as the Boisgeloup-derived bust that gazes across the picture plane. In ***Nude, Green Leaves and a Bust***, all three converge in a single charged image where the nude lies with a reckless, sleeping abandon. Picasso was no formal revolutionary for its own sake. He rooted his innovation in the Western tradition of portraits, still lifes, and reclining nudes stretching back through the Renaissance. ***Girl Before a Mirror*** echoes **Édouard Manet**, whose major Paris retrospective in 1932 ran alongside Picasso's own. Like his rival **Henri Matisse**, Picasso believed figurative painting could be modern, and Walter became the vehicle for injecting it with new sensuality. **Paul Rosenberg**, Picasso's exclusive dealer, bought

Nude, Green Leaves and a Bust. With war approaching, he dispersed his collection internationally, sending this work to **New York** in 1939, where it began a journey that ended at auction in 2010 for over one hundred million dollars.

Notes

The March Nudes

The first time they have been put together since 1932.

Nude, Green Leaves and a Bust. Marie-Thérèse Walter is lilac, she is also the bust and the profile next to the curtain. It is also a still life. He worked hard over it, it is like a piece of theatre. The nude lies with reckless abandon.

At this time Picasso was under an exclusive contract with the art dealer Paul Rosenberg who bought this painting. With war imminent, in the late 1930s, Rosenberg started to distribute his 2,000 works around the world. He used the 1939 New York Fair to send this painting to New York where he opened a new branch in 1940. From there it was bought by the Brody's in 1951 and was publicly exhibited only once in 1961 to commemorate Picasso's 80th birthday. The painting was in the personal collection of Los Angeles art collectors Sidney and Frances Brody for nearly six decades. It sold at auction in 2010 for US\$106.5 million, the third highest price for a piece of artwork sold at auction at the time.

Tate Notes

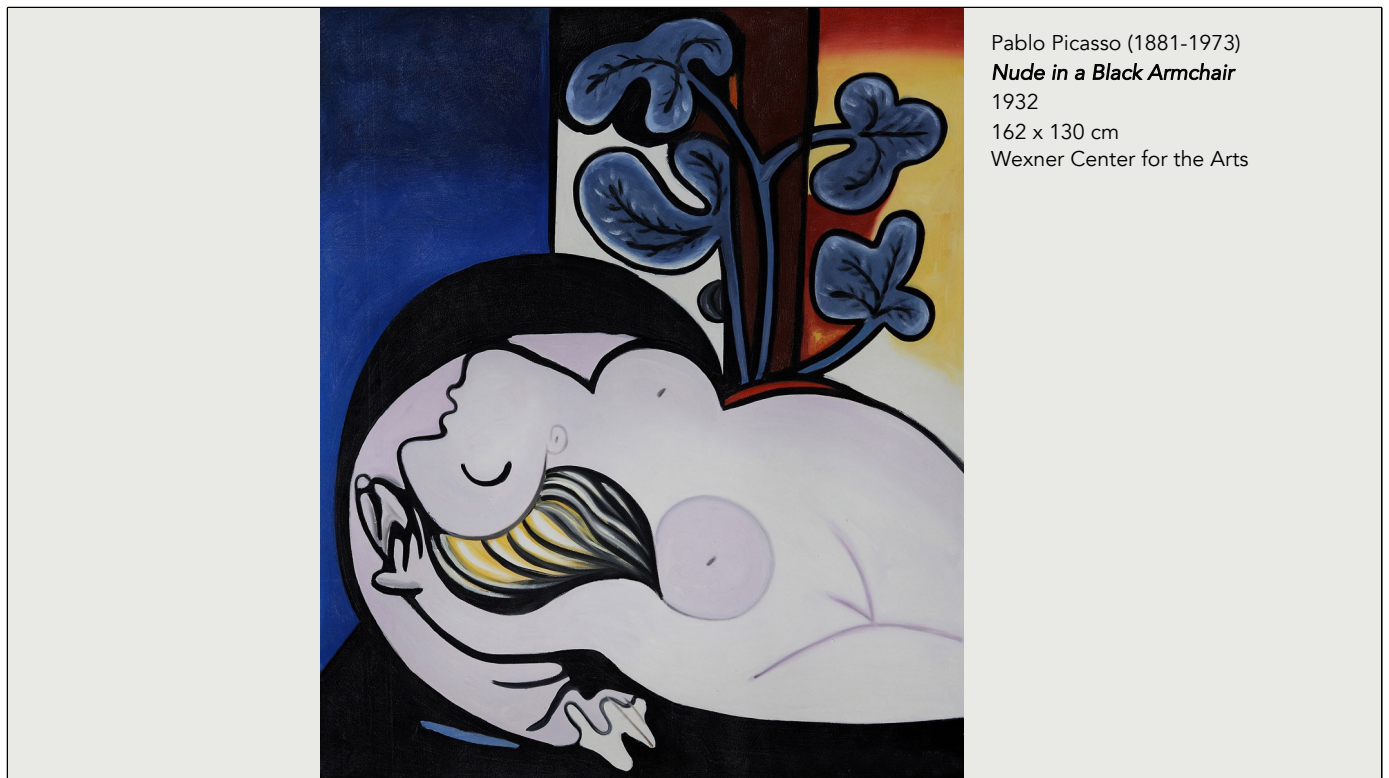
Room 4: Early March

Early March marked a moment of extraordinary creativity, even by Picasso's standards. Over the course of twelve days, he painted a group of large canvases which are exceptionally rich in colour and composition.

In one of the earliest, a bust in profile, suggesting both the Boisgeloup sculptures and Marie-Thérèse Walter, looks out beyond a still life. In the painting dated 8 March, the sculpture gazes at a philodendron plant and a reclining nude. In subsequent works, the nude takes centre stage, sleeping with her head in her arms.

While being a great formal innovator, Picasso privileged traditional subjects rooted in the history of Western painting such as portraits, still lifes and reclining nudes, a popular subject from the Renaissance onwards. Girl Before

a Mirror echoes a similar painting by the French nineteenth-century artist, Edouard Manet, who was the subject of a major exhibition in Paris in 1932 which coincided with Picasso's own. Like his friend and rival, Henri Matisse, Picasso sought continually to prove that figurative painting could be modern by injecting it with a new sensuality inspired by Walter.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Nude in a Black Armchair
 1932
 162 x 130 cm
 Wexner Center for the Arts

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Nude in a Black Armchair*, 1932, 162 x 130 cm, Wexner Center for the Arts

Nude with a Black Fern, painted on the 9th of March, draws its botanical centrepiece directly from a companion work, embedding the two paintings in deliberate dialogue. Art critic **Richard Lacayo** reads this canvas as evidence of the creative rivalry between **Picasso** and **Henri Matisse**, arguing that Picasso borrowed Matisse's voluptuous curves as a sign for pleasure and his use of black to intensify pink. Former **Museum of Modern Art** curator **William Rubin** described the figure bluntly as a squishy sexual toy, and several other critics have identified a shared theme of fecundity running between the female form and the lush plant beside her — each amplifying the other's sense of abundance and generation. The painting's market history underlines how forcefully that reading has resonated: in **1999**, retail magnate **Les Wexner**, founder of **Limited Brands**, acquired the work for **45.1 million dollars**, a figure that placed it firmly among the most sought-after works of its era. Together, the erotic charge, the borrowed botanical motif, and the steep valuation tell a coherent story about how Picasso

absorbed and redirected the influences around him into something distinctly, unmistakably his own.

Notes

Painted on 9th March. The plant is from the other painting.

The art critic Richard Lacayo cites the painting as an example of the creative give-and-take between Picasso and Henri Matisse, in which Picasso "borrowed Matisse's voluptuous curves as a sign for pleasure and his use of black to intensify pink". Former Museum of Modern Art curator William Rubin deemed it a "squishy sexual toy," and other critics have described a theme of fecundity being mutually displayed by both the female figure and the plant. In 1999 it was bought by Les Wexner, founder of Limited Brands, for \$45.1 million.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)
The Mirror
1932
130.2 x 96.8 cm
Private collection



Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), *The Mirror*, 1932, 130.2 x 96.8 cm, Private collection

In March 1932, at the height of his obsessive engagement with Marie-Thérèse Walter, Picasso painted *The Mirror* in a single concentrated burst.

Picasso told his dealer and lifelong friend Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler: "I want to paint like a blind man, who does a buttock by feel." *The Mirror* is the perfect illustration of that ambition. Marie-Thérèse's form is not observed but possessed — those great swelling curves, simultaneously frontal and profile, are the record of a hand moving across a body in memory and desire, not a eye tracking a model across a studio.

The mirror motif, recurrent throughout his 1932 output, functions as a threshold between conscious self and hidden interior identity. What it returns is not confirmation but revelation. The warm palette — ochres, pinks, deep greens — carries an almost Mediterranean sensuousness, simultaneously absorbing and contesting Matisse's decorative boldness.

Painted at the Château de Boisgeloup, *The Mirror* marks the absolute

peak of Picasso's Marie-Thérèse period: urgent, tactile, and among the most purely joyful paintings he ever made.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Girl before a Mirror
 1932
 162.3 x 130.2 cm
 Museum of Modern Art, New York

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Girl before a Mirror*, 1932, 162.3 x 130.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Having just completed *The Mirror*, **Picasso** turned the very next day to 'Girl Before a Mirror'. The two works together constitute one of the most psychologically intense sequences in twentieth-century painting. Painted in **March 1932** and now held at **MoMA**, which dedicated an entire publication to the work. The painting presents his lover **Marie-Thérèse Walter** as a divided self. On one side, her face is bright, made up, and outward-facing — the performed, daylit self. On the other, a darker, rougher passage strips that performance away, exposing something more vulnerable beneath. The reflection in the mirror darkens further still, ageing her features, distorting her silhouette, pulling the figure toward mortality. This is the **vanitas** tradition recast in Cubist terms: not a skull or an hourglass, but a woman confronting the face she fears she will become. The palette of yellows and reds carries the heat of both **Matisse** and Spain, and positions Picasso at the forefront of European figurative painting in the early **1930s**. The form Robert Motherwell later described — fidelity to what occurs between

oneself and the canvas, decisions grounded in truth rather than taste — speaks precisely to what this painting achieves. Picasso commits to psychological discomfort rather than beauty, making anxiety, not adornment, the subject.

Notes

Two days after he painted *The Mirror* he painted *Girl Before a Mirror*. One of the most complex works he created and is considered one of his masterpieces. MoMA published a book about this painting.

A vanitas painting, a reflection on the transience of beauty. There is a split face with the right side heightened in colour and veiled and darker. In the mirror it is still darker. Is it a vanitas painting, does it speak about mortality? Does she have a pregnant stomach? The reflection represents the other interpretation of how she views herself. The colours used here are dark and make her look very old. Instead of happiness the meaning here is more of hate and unhappiness, fear and as if aging is getting on to her indicative of her fear of losing her youth.

Yellow and red are the colours of Spain and of Matisse. It shows him at the forefront of figurative painting.

"One side shows the day time where she seems more like a woman, dolled up with her make up done. The other side with the rough charcoal texture portrays her at night. When she takes off the mask of makeup, and is more vulnerable as a young lady. One way of interpreting the painting is when the woman looks at herself in the mirror; she is seeing herself as an old woman. From the green discoloration on her forehead, darkening of her facial features to the lines that show that her young body has been distorted, and gravity has taken its rightful place. Another way of viewing the painting is that she is self-conscious, and she sees all the flaws in herself that the world doesn't see." (www.pablopicasso.org)

The artist Robert Motherwell wrote, "The of painting then is conceived of as an adventure, without preconceived ideas on the part of persons of intelligence, sensibility, and passion. Fidelity to what occurs between oneself and the canvas, no matter how unexpected, becomes central.... The major decisions in the process of painting are on the grounds of truth, not taste....

No artist ends up with the style he expected to have when he began... . It is only by giving oneself up completely to the painting medium that one finds oneself and own style."



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Woman on the Beach (Nu sur la plage)
 1932
 Penrose Collection

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Woman on the Beach (Nu sur la plage)*, 1932, Penrose Collection

Nu sur la Plage, painted during Picasso's Easter stay at **Boisgeloup** in 1932, presents **Marie-Thérèse Walter** in a radically distorted reclining pose — blonde hair, splayed limbs, and bodily orifices rendered with unflinching directness. **Paul Rosenberg**, Picasso's dealer since 1918, refused to exhibit the work, declaring he would not have an arsehole in his gallery. The remark was wry, but the refusal was absolute. The painting reached the British Surrealist **Roland Penrose** through a magazine reproduction, and he pursued it with enough determination to travel to Picasso himself. That encounter became a lasting friendship. Penrose visited Picasso's homes, and Picasso played at bullfighting with Penrose's young son **Anthony**, always leaping aside so the boy ran into the wall. Eventually Anthony bit him — and Picasso bit him straight back. Anthony later commemorated the episode in his book **The Boy Who Bit Picasso**, which conveys something important: that alongside the psychological intensity of the 1932 nudes, Picasso's daily life retained genuine warmth and physical playfulness. The body,

in both his art and his behaviour, was never an abstraction to be kept at a respectable distance.

Notes

In the next room we find another but very different nude - Nu Sur La Plage. Again it is Marie-Thérèse Walter with blond hair, black shapes, splayed legs and what looks like a belly button is actually an anus. His dealer Paul Rosenberg would not show it in his gallery, 'I will not have an arsehole in my gallery'. Roland Penrose saw the work in a magazine article and fell in love with it. He contacted Rosenberg to see the work but had to travel to see Picasso and formed a lasting friendship. They visited each others homes and later Picasso played bull fighting with his son Anthony Penrose but Picasso would always jump out of the way and Anthony would hit the wall so in the end he bit him and Picasso turned round and bit him back. Anthony later wrote a book "The Boy Who Bit Picasso" to show he fun-loving Picasso was.

Tate Notes

Room 5: Late March to May

If Picasso's paintings in early March were major public statements, those later that month explored the darker realms of the unconscious. Painted across the Easter period, during a prolonged visit to Boisgeloup, they show abstracted female bodies, their orifices accentuated by the sun or the moon above. Paul Rosenberg, Picasso's dealer since 1918, declined to show the paintings, commenting wryly: 'No, I refuse to have any arse-holes in my gallery.'

The large horizontal nudes from April reveal Picasso's renewed engagement with surrealism. Depending upon the viewer's point-of-view, the figures can turn from nude to octopus holding a skull, and back again. One source of inspiration may have been an early documentary by the French filmmaker Jean Painlevé, revered by cinema enthusiasts like Picasso; another was Japanese erotica, known as 'shunga', by, among others, the nineteenth-century painter and printmaker, Hokusai. As Picasso's retrospective approached, his focus on painting increasingly gave way to the practicalities of organising this ambitious show. Woman in a Yellow Armchair is one of the last large figure paintings made in anticipation of the exhibition at the Galeries Georges Petit in June.

References

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/visual-art-review-picasso-1932-love-fame-tragedy-at-tate-modern-se1-zp2th8gq8>



Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)
*Retrospective Exhibition at the
 Galeries Georges Petit*
 1932
 Galeries Georges Petit, Paris

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Retrospective Exhibition at the Galeries Georges Petit, 1932, Galeries Georges Petit, Paris

In 1932, Picasso staged a retrospective at the **Galeries Georges Petit** in Paris — the same venue where **Henri Matisse** had shown the previous year. Picasso had declined invitations from the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Venice Biennale to mount it here instead, and he took complete personal control. When asked how he would curate the show, he replied simply: badly. He hung works from across his career in a dense, deliberately non-chronological arrangement, omitting dates from every piece to suggest that all his output was equally alive and present. Paintings from **1932** were scattered throughout as proof of that claim. The frequent appearance of **Marie-Thérèse Walter's** features in recent canvases gave the public its first hint that a new woman had entered his life. Pride of place, however, went to portraits of his wife and son, presided over by a **Blue Period** self-portrait from the early nineteen hundreds. When fashionable Paris gathered for the opening, Picasso himself went to the cinema. The show travelled to the **Kunsthaus Zürich**, where **Carl Gustav Jung** published a withering

review suggesting Picasso showed signs of schizophrenia. Commercially, the retrospective failed entirely: no sales in Paris, one in Zürich.

Notes

"Retrospective exhibitions of living artists were unusual in the early 1930s; it was almost unheard of for an artist to curate their own. In 1932, Picasso staged the first solo show looking back over his career at the Galeries Georges Petit in Paris. Matisse had exhibited there the year before, and Picasso was keen to do better than his hero and rival. Picasso personally arranged the art in the gallery, even contributing his own pot plant to the display. He selected works from throughout his career, not displaying any dates and not hanging them in a chronological order, as if to say that all his works were of equal importance and value. The frequent appearance of Marie-Thérèse Walter's features in his more recent paintings provided the first public clue that a new woman had entered the artist's life. Yet pride of place was given to a group of paintings that celebrated Picasso's family, including portraits of his wife and son. In September, the retrospective travelled to the Kunsthaus Zürich, where it was seen by the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung. He published a scathing review of the exhibition, implying that Picasso was schizophrenic because his 'pictures immediately reveal their alienation from feeling'. The exhibition was much more popular with the public, but was nonetheless a commercial failure, with no sales in Paris and only one in Zürich." (Tate)

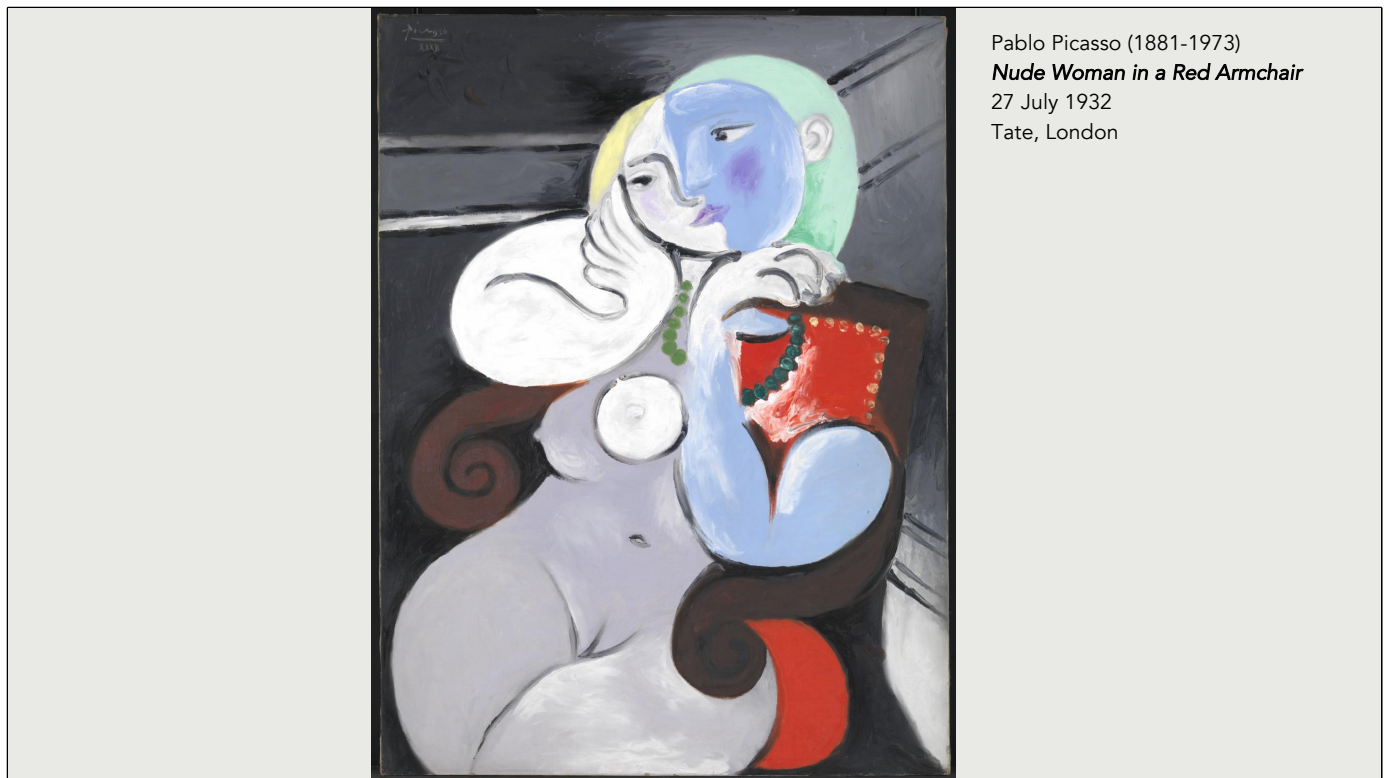
Tate Notes

Room 6: Fame

Retrospectives of living artists were unusual in the early 1930s. Henri Matisse's exhibition at the Galeries Georges Petit, Paris, in 1931 had been a rare exception. To facilitate his own retrospective there in June 1932, Picasso had declined offers from The Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Venice Biennale. Unlike Matisse - and to avoid the latter's mistake of giving too much power to his dealers — Picasso took full control of his show. When asked how he would curate his retrospective, Picasso replied provocatively: 'badly'. Resisting attempts to provide a chronology of his artistic development, Picasso chose instead to mix up works from different periods in a dense hang, and did not provide dates of individual works. Those of 1932 were

interspersed throughout as if to indicate that all his output was equally contemporary. The frequent appearance of Marie-Thérèse Walter's features in his recent work provided the first public clue that a new woman had entered the artist's life. Yet pride of place in the retrospective was given to a group of paintings that celebrated Picasso's family, with portraits of his wife and son presided over by a self-portrait from his Blue period in the early 1900s.

While fashionable Paris gathered at the opening, the only (the person missing was Picasso himself: he went to the cinema instead. If dealers had hoped Picasso's exhibition would stimulate an art market hard-hit by the Great Depression, they were disappointed. Many of the collectors who attended the glamorous opening soon lost their fortunes to the economic and political turmoil engulfing the world. Picasso's retrospective turned out to be the last major exhibition held at the Galeries Georges Petit, which closed in 1933.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Nude Woman in a Red Armchair
27 July 1932
Tate, London

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Nude Woman in a Red Armchair*, 27 July 1932, Tate, London

Nude Woman in a Red Armchair, painted in the summer of 1932, belongs to a concentrated series Picasso made of his mistress **Marie-Thérèse Walter** at his country property at **Boisgeloup**. He had retreated there immediately after his retrospective opened, bulk-buying canvases and working with a speed and fluidity that the pressure of critical attention had previously constrained. This is one of the few large-scale works from those months, and it is unusual within the series for showing Marie-Thérèse entirely naked rather than clothed or draped. Picasso worked without preparatory drawings, and an X-ray of the canvas confirms that the paint was almost certainly applied in a single fast-paced session — a claim reinforced by the exact date Picasso inscribed on the back himself. The brushwork throughout is loose, sensuous, and transformative: limbs curve and blur in ways that recall the reclining nudes of the preceding weeks, where Picasso had dissolved women's bodies into forms resembling sea creatures, their extremities becoming pointed fins. Picasso described his drive not as

the pursuit of finish but of perpetual forward movement — telling an interviewer in **1943** that perfection meant, in his own words, "from one canvas to the next, always go further and further."

Notes

"Nude Woman in a Red Armchair is one of the few large-scale paintings that Picasso painted in the summer of 1932. It is one of a series of portraits that he made of his mistress Marie-Thérèse Walter at his country property at Boisgeloup. He made no preparatory drawing, and his paint and line flow more sensually than ever. An x-ray of the painting reveals that it was almost certainly executed in a single fast-paced session. On the back of the canvas, Picasso has inscribed the exact date - which makes us suspect that he wanted us to think it had been painted in one day. Whether this was the case, we cannot know for sure." (Tate)

In 1943 Picasso said, "I can rarely keep myself from redoing a thing – sometimes it gets to be a real obsession. After all, why work otherwise, if not to better express the same thing? You must always seek perfection." By perfection Picasso did not mean the level of finish, he said, "For me it means: from one canvas to the next, always go further and further."

Tate Notes

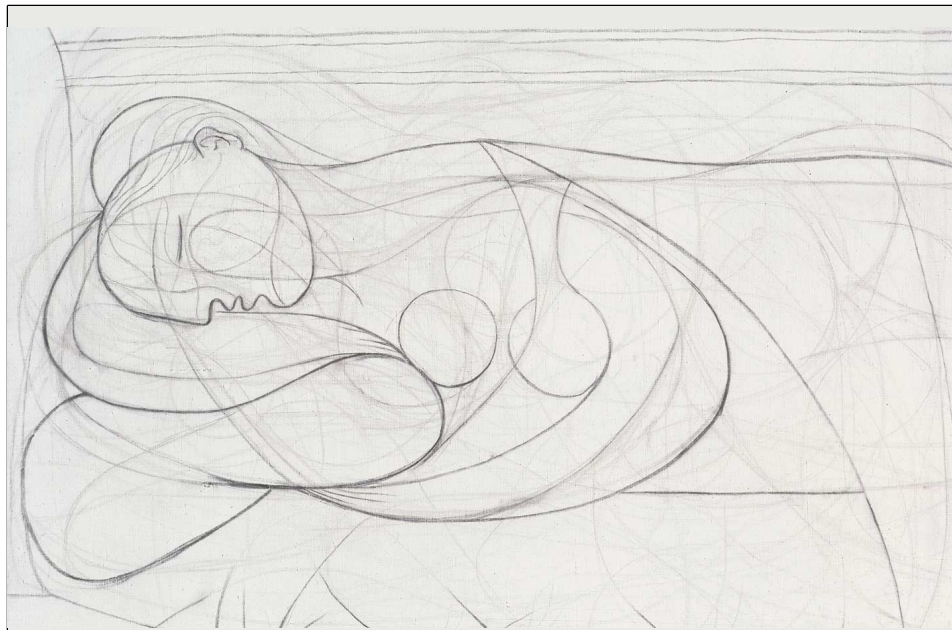
Room 7: July and August

As soon as his retrospective opened, Picasso bulk-bought canvases and retreated to Boisgeloup for the summer. Freed from the weight of critical expectation, his painting style became faster and more fluid, with smaller works exploring new themes.

Picasso's Reclining Nudes of late June and July picked up where he had left off before the retrospective. Transformation, with one thing turning into another, remained central to his imagination. With their extremities turned into pointy flippers, the small nudes suggest the similarities between women and sea creatures, perhaps inspired by Marie-Thérèse Walter's prowess as a swimmer. (Though he had grown up by the sea, and though he planned to install a swimming pool at Boisgeloup, Picasso could not swim.)

Nude Woman in a Red Armchair is one of the few large-scale paintings of the summer. Here Picasso returned to his preferred subject matter of early 1932, without preparatory drawing and with his paint and line flowing more

sensually than ever, and the woman, unusually for this subject, being naked. An X-ray of the painting reveals that it was almost certainly executed in a single fast-paced session.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Sleeping Woman

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Sleeping Woman*

In 1932, **Picasso** worked intensively in charcoal on canvas, producing drawings that Christian Zervos largely excluded from his catalogue raisonné, yet these are finished works, not preliminary studies. Their visible rubbings, erasures, and over-drawing lay bare the mechanics of image-making itself — form and line take precedence over colour, and the constructive process becomes part of the meaning. Drawing sat at the very centre of Picasso's imagination. His sketchbooks reveal an artist who used drawing as a conceptual instrument rather than a rehearsal for painting. Returning repeatedly to themes such as the artist in his studio, he would produce rapid sequences of drawings that rarely resolved into painted works. The sketchbooks also expose his deliberate disregard for chronology: **Sketchbook 40**, dated Paris, **25 January 1932**, was abandoned almost immediately and not resumed until late that year. **Sketchbook 17**, picked up again in **April 1932**, had originally been opened in January 1930. This non-linear practice mirrors the retrospective exhibition Picasso was simultaneously organising, in which he similarly refused to arrange work in neat

chronological sequence. For Picasso, time in the studio was fluid, and the drawn line — brave, immediate, and decisive — was where thinking happened.

Notes

He knows when to stop. Brave, an expressive line.

Tate Notes

Room 8: Black and White

Throughout 1932, Picasso produced a number of charcoal drawings on canvas. Though most would not appear in the catalogue raisonné being compiled by Zervos, they are not studies, but finished works in their own right. They often relate to paintings on similar themes albeit with a focus on line and form rather than colour. Rubbings, erasures and over-drawing make visible the process of image construction.

Drawing was central to Picasso's imagination. As much is demonstrated by his complex line drawings as well as his sketchbooks. Here he often elaborated on a particular theme, such as the artist in his studio, by making a series of drawings in quick succession. These drawings were conceptual exercises rather than preparatory studies and rarely translated into paintings.

Picasso's sketchbooks show the same disdain for chronology as did his retrospective exhibition. On 25 January 1932, for example, he dated the first page of sketchbook number 40 as Paris, 25 January 1932, but then abandoned it until the last weeks of the year. Similarly in April 1932 he picked up another sketchbook, number 17, which he had begun in January 1930.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
The Crucifixion,
 19 September 1932

Matthias Grünewald (c. 1470-1528), Isenheim Altarpiece, Crucifixion, c. 1510-15, Unterlinden Museum, Colmar, Alsace, France

By autumn of **1932**, Picasso's mood darkened visibly, and his work followed. Returning from Zurich, where he had attended his first major museum retrospective, he embarked on an intense series of **Crucifixion drawings** — not as a religious statement, but as an emotional and formal investigation. Picasso was not a believer, and these works were never conceived for the Church. What drove them was his close engagement with **Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece**, a work he knew deeply through reproduction and study. The rawness of Grünewald's tortured Christ offered Picasso a vehicle for expressing something his beach scenes and arcadian nudes could not contain. His personal life at the time was growing more entangled — **Marie-Thérèse Walter** remained a hidden presence, kept apart from his public world — and the Crucifixion series registers that psychological pressure without illustrating it directly. Whether these drawings prefigure the moral weight of **Guernica** is a question worth holding. Picasso was not yet a politically committed artist, but he was already

fluent in the visual language of suffering. Alongside the dark drawings, classical scenes of reclining figures and flute players persisted — Picasso rarely worked in a single register, even at his most troubled.

Notes

Crucifixion

In the autumn the mood gets darker.

Crucifixion (top p. 199). Michelangelo started his Crucifixion series in the last year of his life but Picasso was not religious.

Dark mood, black, mirror his increasingly complex personal life.

Does it prefigure Guernica?

He was not a political person at this time but this changed.

It was not painted for the Church.

Picasso was very well read and he mentions he was looking at Matthias Grunewald, p. 180.

Tate Notes

Room 9: September and October

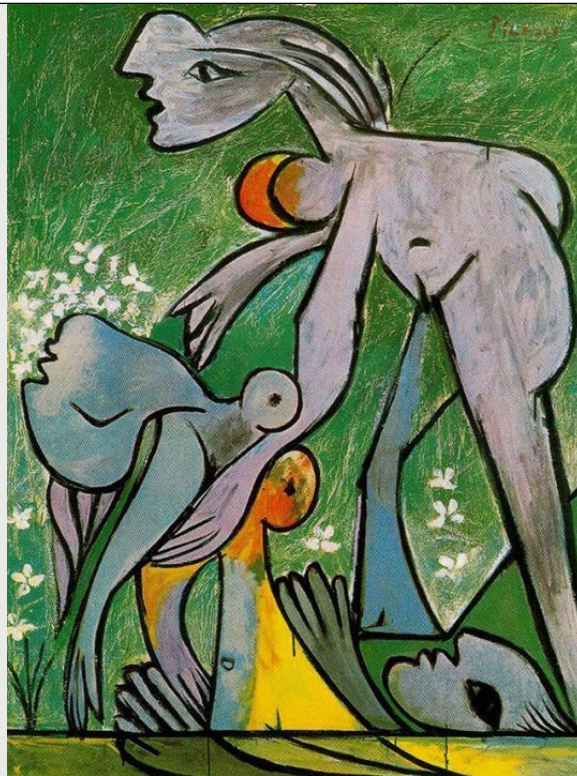
As summer drew to a close, Picasso's work filled with beach scenes. Yet the artist himself, apart from a brief family excursion to the seaside in Normandy, spent most of the summer with family and friends in Boisgeloup. Marie-Thérèse Walter holidayed separately in the south of France.

In early September Picasso left for Zurich to visit what was his first major museum exhibition. On his return he began work on an extraordinary series of drawings on the subject of the Crucifixion. In particular, he was inspired by Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece. Despite suggestions that he had gone to see the painting on his way back from Zurich, it is unlikely that he actually did so. Arcadian scenes of reclining nudes and flute players interspersed his darker representations of Christ's suffering.

Picasso continued to engage with classical themes, both secular and religious. And, if Matisse had been his sparring partner in the first part of the year, he now competed with surrealism. He was sceptical of group membership of any kind and disliked the theoretical framing of art, preferring instead to trust intuition and process. Yet he was happy for his work to be reproduced and discussed at length by the surrealist poet and provocateur

André Breton, in the first issue of the magazine *Minotaure*.

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
The Rescue
20 November 1932



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *The Rescue*, 20 November 1932

The dark mood from the previous room deepens here as Picasso turns to drowning — and the fragile possibility of rescue. **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, Picasso's lover and the luminous subject of his most celebrated 1932 paintings, contracted a serious viral infection after swimming in the sewage-contaminated river **Marne**. The illness cost her the iconic blonde hair Picasso adored and kept her hospitalised for months. Biographer John Richardson connects Picasso's anguish over women's suffering to the childhood death of his younger sister from diphtheria — a wound that never closed. The works in this room respond with the intensity of a lamentation. Colour detaches from line or drains to **grey**. The desperate, writhing figures in **The Rescue**, painted in early **1933**, carry the same contorted faces that would reappear four years later in **Guernica**, transformed into universal symbols of civilian agony. The personal and political collapse were simultaneous. **Hitler** became German Chancellor in **January 1933**. Spain was moving towards civil war. The extraordinary equilibrium Picasso had achieved through **1932** — what critics call his year of wonders — was fracturing. These final

works mark not just the end of a relationship's golden moment, but the beginning of a world in crisis.

Notes

Drowning

The Rescue.

In the final room the dark mood continues. We see what could be Marie-Therese Walter almost drowning and being saved by two women, possibly her sisters.

Marie-Therese Walter who was very keen on water sports almost drowned. She contracted a life threatening disease by swimming in a rat-infested river. The story is that she lost all her iconic blond hair that Picasso so loved and she spent seven months in hospital away from Picasso. He was distraught and produced countless images of drowning. Like a lamentation and like a pieta. The figures haunted Picasso and we find the same faces in Guernica where they have become a symbol of peace. It was a sombre end and the world around him was at the beginning of collapse. Hitler came to power in 1933.

Tate Notes

Room 10: November and December

Towards the end of the year, Picasso turned to a new and darker subject matter: the threat of drowning, and the possibility of rescue. The impetus may have been Marie-Thérèse Walter who, while swimming in the sewage-contaminated river Marne, contracted a serious viral infection. Some biographers have argued that, since the childhood death of his younger sister from diphtheria, Picasso felt doomed to cause women to suffer. This is suggested by some of the works on paper in which fatal accident is transformed into sexual violence.

In the final paintings of the year, colour detaches from line or is reduced to shades of grey. The proliferation of works on paper, especially prints in multiple stages to which he turned in the latter months of the year, indicates Picasso's pleasure in experiment. The different subjects and rapidly changing styles suggest a growing restlessness. The carefully constructed balance which had made 1932 Picasso's 'year of wonders' was coming to an end.

'Essentially, there is only love. Whatever it may be.' Pablo Picasso In 1935,

Marie-Thérèse Walter became pregnant by Picasso. The birth of their daughter Maya marked the end of his marriage to Olga Picasso. Though they never divorced, she moved immediately to the south of France, taking their son with her. Picasso described this as the worst period of his life.

The political and economic situation in Europe also deteriorated. Hitler was appointed German Chancellor in January 1933, Mussolini had consolidated a fascist dictatorship in Italy, and Spain became engulfed in civil war which ended with the defeat in 1939 of the Republican cause with which Picasso sympathised. Six months later, the world was once again at war.

The Rescue, painted in the first days of 1933, foreshadows the agony of the mother and child in Picasso's emblematic anti-war painting, Guernica (1937). By then, Picasso's world as it had been in 1932 was lost forever.



Unknown, *The Rescue*, 11 January, 1933, 73 x 92 cm, Foundation Jean et Suzanne Planque, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence

Here is the last work in the exhibition, and it comes from a year that proved far more significant in the studio than in the gallery. **1932** stands as one of the most creatively charged years of **Picasso's** career, even as his retrospective at the **Galerie Georges Petit** in Paris drew largely hostile reviews from critics who found the sheer range of his output bewildering rather than impressive. Picasso responded to that public indifference not by retreating but by accelerating. His obsessive focus on **Marie-Thérèse Walter**, his young lover and a recurring presence in the work of this period, drove a series of paintings of extraordinary psychological intensity. The rounded, sculpted forms that dominate these canvases are inseparable from his relationship with her — biography and brushstroke are impossible to untangle. **John Richardson**, in his monumental life of Picasso, identifies this year as the moment when erotic energy and formal invention locked together most completely. The critical failure of the retrospective, then, reads in hindsight as a reminder of how poorly contemporary reception

predicts lasting significance. What the reviewers dismissed, the work quietly outlasted.

Notes

This is the last work in the exhibition.

Creatively 1932 was a major year for Picasso although his retrospective exhibition had limited success and mostly negative reviews.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Guernica*, 1937, 349.3 x 776.6 cm, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Guernica*, 1937, 349.3 x 776.6 cm, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain

Guernica, painted in **1937**, marks the sharpest political turn in Picasso's career. When **General Franco** commissioned German and Italian air forces to bomb the Basque town of **Guernica** on a busy market day, Picasso — already contracted to produce a work for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris International Exposition — responded with fury and precision. He wrote: "Painting is not made to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of offensive and defensive war against the enemy." The painting's imagery is deliberately open. A screaming horse at the centre represents Spain in agony, stabbed by a spear. A bull on the left, also a symbol of Spain, turns away from the carnage. A bare electric bulb shaped like an eye floods the scene with harsh, unsparing light. A broken sword beneath the horse's hooves holds a single flower at its hilt — justice destroyed, but not entirely extinguished. Picasso himself insisted the symbols were not fixed, telling viewers their own interpretations were as valid as his. **Dora Maar**, his partner and a poet and photographer in her own right,

documented the entire creation of the work. The painting now hangs in the **Reina Sofía Museum** in Madrid, where it has done exactly what Picasso demanded of it — refused to let the world forget.

Notes

Picasso was exceptionally prolific throughout his long lifetime. The total number of artworks he produced has been estimated at 50,000, comprising 1,885 paintings; 1,228 sculptures; 2,880 ceramics, roughly 12,000 drawings, many thousands of prints, and numerous tapestries and rugs. His catalogue raisonné compiled by Zervos runs to 33 volumes and the complete work sells for \$20,000. The catalogue raisonné of most artists is one or two volumes.

Picasso had reinvented himself and art at fifty. The exhibition ends with the previous painting but I would like to show one final painting, one of his most famous works, as it shows another major change in Picasso's work just five years later.

Guernica. In 1936 the Spanish Civil War began and in 1937 Picasso heard the news that General Franco had asked the German and Italian air forces to bomb the quiet Basque town of Guernica in northern Spain on market day. There were about 10,000 people in the town which was destroyed by the bombing. Later women and children were machine gunned as they tried to run away. If you look closely at her pupils, they are an odd shape and some think they show a reflection of the German bombers.

Can art change the world? Before the bombing Picasso rarely painted in response to political events but once he heard the news he responded by painting Guernica, now in the Reina Sofía Museum, Madrid. He wrote, 'Painting is not made to decorate apartments. It is an instrument for offensive and defensive war against the enemy.'

Regarding Guernica, Picasso said, "It isn't up to the painter to define the symbols. Otherwise it would be better if he wrote them out in so many words! The public who look at the picture must interpret the symbols as they understand them."

Elements of the Painting

On the left a bull faces away from the scene with a screaming woman holding a dead baby beneath it. A bull symbolises Spain, "fecundity, protector qualities, sacrifice, chastity and patience." (see https://www.slideshare.net/Blue_Shift/guernica-512738)

To the right of the bull is a bird flying upwards, symbolising the human soul escaping.

In the centre is a horse again representing Spain. It has been stabbed with a spear and is screaming with pain. Beneath the horse is a hidden image of a bull. Its head is made from the foreleg of the horse, the kneecap is its nose and the curve behind its fetlock is the bull's eye. The bull may be goring the horse.

Under the horse is a dead soldier looking up with a dismembered arm holding a broken sword. A sword conventionally symbolises justice but it is broken and a flower grows from the hilt.

Above the horse is a light shaped like an eye. A light symbolises truth, goodness, purity and wisdom but this is a harsh light from a bare electric bulb.

The woman to the right of the horse is coming through a window and is holding a torch or lantern. She may represent the outside world horrified at what she sees.

Another woman below her is looking at the light.

The man on the right is being burned alive with flames above and below him.

The open door on the far right may symbolise hope for the future but it is small compared with the whole painting.

When pushed to explain the painting Picasso said, "...this bull is a bull and this horse is a horse... If you give a meaning to certain things in my paintings it may be very true, but it is not my idea to give this meaning. What ideas and conclusions you have got I obtained too, but instinctively, unconsciously. I make the painting for the painting. I paint the objects for what they are."

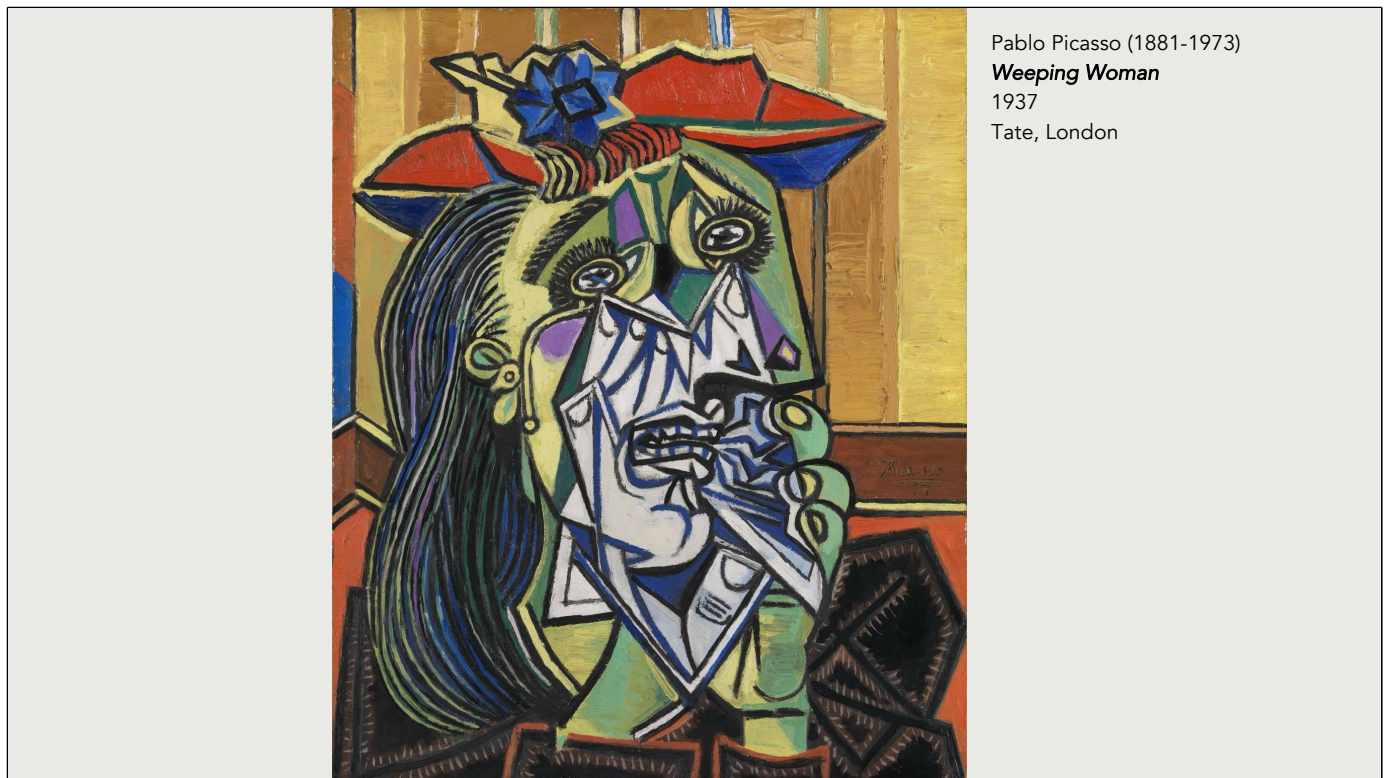
Notes

In 1937, Picasso was working on an assignment to produce a work for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris International Exposition (June 1937). On April 26 1937 during the Spanish Civil War General Franco asked the Italian and

German air forces to bomb the peaceful Basque town of Guernica. Guernica was revered as Basque's Holy City and guardian of liberty and democracy. It was Monday which was market day and there were an estimated 10,000 people in the small town. Official Basque figures say 1,654 people were killed although German air force figures put the number at 300. Reports of the damage vary but this photograph from the German Federal Archives shows the total destruction that took place. The number of deaths is now estimated to be between 170 and 300 people. There were five waves of 21 German and 3 Italian bombers from 16:30 to 18:30 followed by 29 planes that bombed from 18:00 to 18:45 and strafed civilians in the fields fleeing the town.

Dora Maar was his tragic muse. She couldn't have children, and they had many rows. She was often depressed and had to have electro-convulsive treatment. She was however a photographer, poet and artist who assisted Picasso with Guernica and she was the official photographer who recorded its production.

There are 9 paintings, 21 drawings and 6 small drawings on matchboxes of single female heads expressing anguish produced by Picasso between May and the end of October 1937 but the Tate's version is the last and the most famous.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
Weeping Woman
 1937
 Tate, London

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Weeping Woman*, 1937, Tate, London

Picasso's **Weeping Woman**, painted in **1937**, asks something of every viewer before it asks anything intellectual: how does it make you feel? The jagged black lines seem to expose bone beneath skin, the handkerchief forced into her mouth reads like a shard of glass, and those acidic, slightly repellent colours sit deliberately on the edge of the unbearable. Her eyes have left their sockets entirely, floating as though in small boats, registering what they have witnessed. What they witnessed was the bombing of **Guernica**, the Basque market town destroyed on **26 April 1937** when **General Franco** requested German and Italian air forces to attack it on a busy Monday. Picasso, already working on a commission for the **Spanish Pavilion** in Paris, responded immediately. After completing the large mural now in the **Reina Sofia in Madrid**, he produced thirty-six images of weeping women, of which the Tate's is the last and most powerful. The model was **Dora Maar**, photographer, poet, and artist who helped paint sections of *Guernica* itself. The weeping Virgin is a deep tradition in Spanish religious art, and Picasso drew on that weight deliberately. Dealer **Roland Penrose**

bought the canvas so urgently in November 1937 that he ran down the street with it while the paint was still wet.

Notes

Description. There are four paintings in this room connected with the Spanish Civil War. This is Pablo Picasso's Weeping Woman, one of the most famous paintings in the Tate. I would like to start by asking you how it makes you feel? Despair? Sadness? Misery? Many people still find it upsetting. Picasso's distortion of her face accentuates the pain and anguish. The jagged black lines seem to be revealing the bones underneath the skin and the handkerchief she stuffs in her mouth could be a shard of glass. Picasso uses slightly repellent, acidic colours that make us feel uncomfortable and, to me, her clothing looks like the black mouths of hell we find in medieval religious paintings. Her eyes have even left their sockets in horror at what she has seen and float in little boats.

Guernica. But what has she seen and why is she weeping? The clue is the year it was painted, 1937. It was the year after the Spanish Civil War started.

Picasso had just heard that General Franco had asked the German and Italian air forces to bomb the quiet Basque town of Guernica in northern Spain on market day. There were about 10,000 people in the town which was destroyed by the bombing. Later women and children were machine gunned as they tried to run away. If you look closely at her pupils, they are an odd shape and some think they show a reflection of the German bombers.

Can art change the world? Before the bombing Picasso rarely painted in response to political events but once he heard the news he responded by painting Guernica, now in the Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid. He wrote, 'Painting is not made to decorate apartments. It is an instrument for offensive and defensive war against the enemy.'

Weeping women. After finishing Guernica, Picasso became obsessed with images of weeping women as a symbol of suffering Spain, of which this is the last and the most famous. The weeping Virgin has always been a traditional image in Spanish art. The model for the painting was his lover Dora Maar who was a gifted photographer, poet and artist who helped Picasso paint parts of Guernica. Picasso said 'Dora, for me, was always a weeping woman...And it's important, because women are suffering machines'. I am reminded of a line from a Victorian poem [by the poet, Charles Kingsley], 'For men must work, and women must weep'. Both sentiments express a particular Victorian

attitude—that women are emotional creatures whose role is in the home—and this reflects another way ‘art can change the world’, by reinforcing stereotypes.

Is there hope? One puzzle presented by this weeping woman is whether Picasso intended there to be any sign of hope. The ear, for example, is represented by a tiny bird, possibly a symbol of hope and the flower on her hat could be another indication of a hopeful future. However, I think it is more likely that she is wearing a hat because it is market day and she wants to look her best, making the image even more poignant and hopeless.

Tate’s Acquisition. When the dealer Roland Penrose (on 9-10 November 1937) first saw it he was so keen to acquire it that he agreed the price immediately and rushed down the street with it while it was still wet in case Picasso changed his mind. Penrose kept it all his life and gave it to his son who donated it to the Tate.

Background Notes Pablo Picasso, Weeping Woman, 1937

In 1937, Picasso was working on an assignment to produce a work for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris International Exposition (June 1937). On April 26 1937 during the Spanish Civil War General Franco asked the Italian and German air forces to bomb the peaceful Basque town of Guernica. Guernica was revered as Basque’s Holy City and guardian of liberty and democracy. It was Monday which was market day and there were an estimated 10,000 people in the small town. Official Basque figures say 1,654 people were killed although German air force figures put the number at 300. Reports of the damage vary but this photograph from the German Federal Archives shows the total destruction that took place. The number of deaths is now estimated to be between 170 and 300 people. There were five waves of 21 German and 3 Italian bombers from 16:30 to 18:30 followed by 29 planes that bombed from 18:00 to 18:45 and strafed civilians in the fields fleeing the town.

Dora Maar was his tragic muse. She couldn't have children, and they had many rows. She was often depressed and had to have electro-convulsive treatment. She was however a photographer, poet and artist who assisted Picasso with Guernica and she was the official photographer who recorded its production.

There are 9 paintings, 21 drawings and 6 small drawings on matchboxes of single female heads expressing anguish produced by Picasso between May and the end of October 1937 but the Tate's version is the last and the most famous.

Picasso's mother wrote to him from Barcelona telling him of the burning of a local convent which had produced acrid, eye-watering smoke. The weeping Virgin (Mater Dolorosa), a traditional image in Spanish art, is often represented in sculptures with glass tears, like the one that flows towards this woman's right ear. 'The Weeping Woman' (La Llorona) is a legendary ghost in the folklore of Hispanic America. According to this tradition, she is the ghost of a woman who lost her children and cries while looking for them by the river, often causing misfortune to those who hear her.



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Pablo Picasso
Weeping Woman
1937

Nineteen thirty-two was the year Picasso proved that personal crisis and creative ambition are not opposites but engines. We have traced his double life across Parisian apartments and a country château, followed Marie-Thérèse Walter's presence through painting, sculpture, and retrospective, and watched a year of erotic exuberance darken into lamentation as Europe itself began to fracture. The road from those luminous nudes of March to the weeping women of 1937 starts precisely here.



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