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Picasso - His graphic Work Volume 1 1899-1955 - Thames and Hudson 1966

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Picasso - His graphic Work Volume 1 1899-1955 - Introduction by Bernhard Geiser



Pablo Picasso

When Picasso talks about his life - which is not often - it is mostly to recall a forgotten episode or a unique experience. It is not usual for him to dwell upon the past because he prefers to be engaged in the present: all his thoughts and aspirations spring from immediate experience. It is on his works - and not least his graphic work - therefore, that we should concentrate in order to learn most about him. A study of his etchings, lithographs, and woodcuts reveals him in the most personal and intimate aspect. I cannot have a print of his in my hand without feeling the artist's presence, as if he himself were with me in the room, talking, laughing, revealing his joys and sufferings. Daniel Henry Kahnweiler once said: "With Picasso, art is never mere rhetoric, his work is inseparable from his life.... It is a confession to mankind." (Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, Pablo Picasso, Radierungen und Lithographien, 1905-1951, Munich 1952.)

It is on this note that I am led to discuss his graphic work within the limits imposed by a short introduction. It is not my intention to go into each work separately or to dwell on technical detail: my object is to preserve above all things the human element and the inspiration with which his work is imbued.

Four Spanish towns are closely associated with Picasso's early memories: Malaga, La Coruna, Barcelona, and Madrid. Malaga, where he was born on October 25, 1881, lies in the extreme south of the Iberian Peninsula and on the shores of the Mediterranean; La Coruna, where the family went to live later, lies on the Galician coast, lashed by Atlantic gales, gray and misty by comparison. It was in this latter place that his father Jose Ruiz Blasco spent four miserable years waiting for his appointment as drawing master at the long established Academy of Fine Arts, of Barcelona. Pablo enrolled for the advanced course in life-drawing and painting at Barcelona, where the entrance test was child's play for him, as it was again two years later at the famous Royal Academy of San Fernando, in Madrid.

This waiting period, and his subsequent appointment as well, were a sacrifice on the father's part for the welfare of the family - for his son Pablo, and for the boy's younger sisters Lola and Concepcion, affectionately nicknamed Conchita. The father was melancholy thinking of the friends he left in Malaga, whose artistic successes he envied and he longed for the excitement of the bullfights and the enthusiastic shouts of his son. He had given up his own painting, but he nourished secret hopes for the boy. He found it hard to adapt himself to the new life in the north, so different from what he was accustomed to in the south; though a Basque by descent his heart remained forever in Andalusia. He was tall and fair, while his wife, whose family, the Picassos, were goldsmiths in Majorca, was short, dark, and plump.

In contrast to the father, Pablo could be happy anywhere. In Malaga he had listened to the fantastic tales told by the maternal grandmother, and had entertained his friends with equally fantastic birds and animals drawn on the sand in a single unbroken line. At La Coruna he retained his link with his friends and relatives in Malaga by means of a homemade journal in which he reported, with profuse illustrations, everyday happenings: "It has begun to rain and it will surely go on until summer." A simple statement redeemed by an original and remarkable drawing (Jaime Sabartes, *Souvenirs et Portraits*, Paris 1946).

In these childish pastimes he was early revealing his ability to express himself in drawing and to formulate his experiences. This tendency is even more clearly expressed in the drawings he contributed to the advanced journals of the Art nouveau movement in Barcelona and Madrid. Already we see a breaking away from academic influences, and the discovery of a more personal and significant form of communication.

At the end of the century young Picasso belonged to the advanced Bohemian set of Barcelona, which used to meet at the cafe Els Quatre Gats. These young enthusiasts sat into the early hours of the morning arguing and discussing the art of Scandinavia as well

as of Paris, equally attracted to both. Picasso, as was his nature, was intimate with all, but to them he was always the Andalusian, the gypsy, the toreador. He seemed too lively, too resourceful, too intense for them to accept him as one of themselves. But they were proud of his talent and he felt happy in their circle, which gave him the understanding and sympathy he needed. Some of them are still his friends.

One of these friends from the Quatre Gats, Riccardo Canals, suggested to Pablo that he should make his first etching on a copperplate. There is now only one impression of this in existence, the only print of his Spanish period. It resembles a small painting, for Picasso tinted it with water color and then varnished it. It bears the signature "P. Ruiz Picasso", and is inscribed at the top El Zurdo (The Left-Handed Man) [Fig. 1]. Picasso, as a beginner in the technique of etching, had forgotten to allow for the fact that, when printed, the picture is reversed, and the picador holds his lance in the left instead of the right hand. Considering his enthusiasm for bullfights, it is strange indeed that this theme is so rare among the Picassos of this period. It is interesting to notice that the picador in this etching is shown in a room, and not in the arena as one would expect. The comfortable chair and the pictures on the wall suggest the interior of the Quatre' Gats and it is thought that he may have meant to portray himself in the guise of a bullfighter to signify his joy, after a long illness and convalescence at Horta de Ebro, at finding himself once more among his friends, active and vital. A striking feature of the composition is the owl. This print shows the clear, unerring line and the rhythmic flow of the drawings of his period. It is difficult to understand why Picasso did not continue with this experiment after so promising a start. It was not until he left Spain for Paris in 1904 that Picasso again took up this particular medium.

He was not unfamiliar with Paris, for he had already been there three times, but had not succeeded in getting a foothold. In 1900, on his first visit, he was helped by his parents and friends. After his mother and father had paid for his ticket, they were left with so little money that they wondered how they would live for the rest of the month, but Picasso was unaware of their plight. On this third attempt to capture Paris he tried desperately - so we are told by Andre Level - to sell a rolled-up group of paintings for two hundred francs, but no one was interested in them. No dealer would take them even on a commission basis. To ward off the bitter cold in his studio he fed the fire with his drawings and sketches. Today these works would be priceless.

In the late spring of 1904 Picasso decided to settle in the heart of Montmartre. He took a studio at 13, Rue Ravignan, an old studio building which was nicknamed Bateau-lavoir because it resembled the bathing and laundry boats anchored in the Seine. He was not alone for long, for "La belle Fernande" came to share his joys and sorrows, and among his friends were poets, artists, sculptors, and now and again, a collector or a dealer. The particular Bet that thronged his studio (among them Guillaume Apollinaire and Max Jacob) came to be known as "La bande Picasso" - the Picasso gang - and was notorious on the Butte Montmartre for its turbulence and high spirits. It was made up of all nationalities, but particularly of Frenchmen and Spaniards. Among the latter was

Riccardo Canals (already mentioned as the inspirer of the first etching at the Quatre Gats), and it was thanks to his guidance that Picasso became accomplished enough in the techniques of etching to be able to get the effects -he wanted. As an outcome of these early efforts we have *The Frugal Repast* (*Le repas frugal*) [Fig. 2], one of the most sought-after prints of his whole oeuvre. A friend of Picasso, a former Communist named Delatre, printed a small edition which the dealer Clovis Sagot tried to sell, but neither he nor Picasso made any profit from this. When, in 1913, Ambroise Vollard, the famous art dealer, bought the plate along with some others, he reaped the reward denied to the artist. He steel-faced the plates and from them he printed a large edition under the name of *Circus People* (*Les saltimbanques*) [Fig. 3-9]. But not all the prints in this series were of circus people, nor were all his models from Montmartre. Scenes such as, for instance, *The Frugal Repast* were memories of his native country; the poor, the blind, the beggars, the emaciated figures - he had met them all on Spanish soil. The world of the circus, on the other hand, sprang from his immediate surroundings in Paris, with the possible exception of the two young acrobats [G 6] of which the one on the right is said to be a youthful self-portrait (cf. *Cirici Pellicer, Picasso antes de Picasso, Barcelona 1945*) while the other is presumably inspired by Pisanello.

This is quite usual for Picasso, as the study of his aesthetic derivations reveals. He makes a mental note of an object and uses it when required, perhaps years later when it has matured in his mind, incorporating it freely into a composition in all its original clarity. No impression is ever lost; it merely bides its time. Whatever he has drawn or given shape to is ready to be used again at the slightest call.

The bird which, as a child he drew in the sand, reappears in the woodcuts intended for *Le bestiaire* of his friend Guillaume Apollinaire, and the monkey that accompanied the juggler family in 1905 [G 13] turns up again with greater force in the lithograph *The Dance of the Banderillas*, of 1954 [Fig. 164]. Again, the theme of the saltimbanques recurs in one of the rare monotypes of that period, printed from glass plates and occasionally heightened with more than one color. There was no limit to his materials: mostly he employed copper and zinc plates, but he used even cloth. In the early Paris years he had tried his hand at woodcuts, but in this medium his work was only fitful. One woodblock, dated 1908, merely sketched in pencil and water color, was never finished. Once, at the beginning of World War I, he came across an old printing plate of Kahnweiler's and was immediately tempted to turn it over and incise the wooden backing [G 220]. After 1919, however, he gave up woodcutting in favor of lithography.

Although his woodcuts are not numerous, we must not underrate their importance, for not only do they show the characteristics of his Negro period, but there is in them more than a hint of *The Girls of Avignon* (*Les demoiselles d'Avignon*), which is rightly considered one of the turning points in modern art. This large canvas discloses for the first time his tendencies toward the breaking up of natural forms and relationships, and the "deformation" which leads to Cubism. These are also visible in his graphic work: his etchings, his work with dry point and burin - almost always done on copper. We can see

their beginnings in the two prints published by Kahnweiler in 1909 where, in the small etchings *Two Nude Figures (Deux figures nues)* [G 21; here Fig. 12] and *Still Life with Fruitbowl (Nature morte, compotier)* [G 22; here Fig. 15] the objects that inspired the compositions are still discernible, but an element of distortion is already apparent.

The recognizability of the object gradually declines; abstract signs now become more frequent: a T-shaped line, for example, is enough to express eyes and nose. A memory image is reduced to a few elementary shapes. Yet the reverse of this process also occurs. It is possible to trace in some of his drawings the development from an indefinite spot to an extensive elaboration, culminating in a return to a semblance of nature. Among the earliest and loveliest examples of this Cubist style are the etchings for the books of his friend Max Jacob, *Le siege de Jerusalem* [Fig. 14] and *Saint Matorel* [Fig. 15].

It was at this time that Picasso gave his famous banquet in honor of the Douanier Rousseau. But we should not be deceived by the glamour of that event, for these were the years of bitter struggle and deep distress. Nor were the difficulties mainly financial: the inner anguish was the greater. For with an artist's sensibility he saw the approaching chaos that threatened to engulf European civilization. He turned his back on conventional forms; the growing interest in Negro art and folk art is only one symptom of the desire to escape the danger. Yet escape, however alluring, could satisfy neither him nor his friends. These young artists, held together by bonds of common joys and sufferings, strove to replace the old and the outworn, to create a new order - thus, Cubism. In these decisive years Braque was Picasso's inseparable companion. Later they were joined by Juan Gris, Fernand Leger, and others. The responsibility rested on the shoulders of the whole group and success depended on their strength. Victory came to them at the moment when the outbreak of World War I scattered their happy circle. No longer could they enjoy painting together at Cadaques, Ceret, or Sorgues. The greatest loss to their circle was the death, from wounds, of the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, one of the first champions of Cubism.

When war broke out, Picasso was at Avignon, but he immediately returned to Paris where he found outlet for his creative genius in a new sphere, that of music and the theater. In 1917 he went to Rome with the young Cocteau to meet Diaghilev, who was building up his own inspired version of the traditional Russian Ballet. Picasso was commissioned to design the curtain, scenery, and costumes for *Parade*, which had its first performance in Paris in May of that year. Picasso had never before found such satisfaction as he found in his work for the theater. Cocteau wrote to Misia Sert (who had introduced him to Picasso) ... Picasso amazes me more and more every day. To live beside him sets one an example of hard work and nobility. (*Misia and the Muses. The Memoirs of Misia Sert*, John Day, New York 1953.) When Picasso married one of the dancers in the Russian Ballet in 1918, Misia Sert acted as witness at the ceremony. The couple settled at 23, Rue de la Boetie, where their son Paul was born; Misia was godmother. Picasso's dealer, Paul Rosenberg, lived nearby and followed his work with

the closest interest. In the autumn of 1919 came his great success with an exhibition of drawings and water colors which established Picasso as a master. For this exhibition he executed his first lithographs: *The Window at Saint-Raphael* (*La fenetre a St.-Raphael*) [G22; here Fig. 20], as an invitation card, and a special portrait of his young wife [Fig. 21] for the cover of the catalogue for which Andre Salmon wrote the introduction.

Picasso was now a family man. His young wife's background and inclinations imposed on him all sorts of social obligations. He was asked to design stage sets and costumes, which were much appreciated by progressive writers and producers; publishers competed for his work. Now that he was famous he no longer spent his holidays with Bohemian friends in small country villages, but with his family at the smart hotels of fashionable seaside resorts: Saint-Raphael, Juan les Pins, Dinard, Cap d'Antibes, and Cannes. Finally he bought Bois-geloup, a magnificent estate midway between Paris and Dieppe, about an hour's journey from the capital. Soon, the stables and outbuildings of this estate and some of the rooms, too, were converted into luxuriously furnished workshops. He could often be seen going there in his chauffeur-driven Hispano.

These changes in his life can be followed in his prints. For Diaghilev, who did not care for Cubism, but believed in Picasso's unerring taste, insisted that his collaborator should make himself intelligible to the public, which always took a great interest in his work for the stage even when they did not like it. Picasso did not object. He could always adapt himself to new environments, and amiably enough portrayed his new friends in such a manner that they were easily recognizable. *Harlequin*, 1917, is the last of the Cubist prints of that period [G 54; here Fig. 18]. It is the only work of that year executed on copper with a burin. The straight line predominates and there is some shading. The hat, the mask, the diamond pattern on the costume, and the wooden sword help to make the subject clear. The print *Pierrot* [Fig. 19], dated the following year, 1918, is quite different; *Pierrot* is shown half-length, striking a pose as if he expected to be painted. It is a print animated with music; there seems to be a humming round the figure, a nervous vibration achieved by the magic touch of the needle. From now on portraits and portrait-like subjects predominate: *L'italienne*, a portrait of Madame Picasso, three versions of a portrait of Paul Valery [Fig. 23], portraits of Max Jacob, Pierre Reverdy [Fig. 22], and Andre Breton. The portrait of his old friend Max Jacob [G 62] is particularly striking because this sensitive dry point has all the fluency of a painting and expresses the deep and lasting friendship between the artist and the poet. Most of these portraits were intended as frontispieces to books published by the sitters. Simultaneously, Picasso found time to convey his tenderness and care for his family in a number of prints showing the joys of parenthood.

Another group of etchings and lithographs is inspired by his holiday experiences and shows most clearly the influence of the new environment [Figs. 24-29]. In these, woman is his theme: mature - almost plump - sleek, charming, and graceful women who move deliberately and bear no traces of physical labor. Picasso had watched them bathing and disporting themselves on the promenades and beaches. The treatment stresses mass

and space rather than pictorial aspects, and reaches a degree of classic poise and measured formality for which Picasso is unique. There is a great contrast between these sophisticated ladies of fashion whose major concern is their appearance and who cannot even do their own hair, and the woman of the *Saltimbanque* series who hands her baby to her husband while she uses her comb. Whereas the later series is more urbane, more sophisticated, the earlier works were perhaps more natural, more intimate, and more touching. We next see the artist preoccupied with the grouping of three women. It appears first in *The Source* (*La Source*), 1921 [G 61; here Fig. 30], a horizontal plate worked in dry point and with a burin. Three women with jugs arc grouped around a spring, massive figures with classical drapery modeled by shading. Picasso uses the subject again - this time in a purely linear treatment - for one of the three etchings illustrating Reverdy's *Craoates de chanore* [G 14]. Elsewhere he puts three women into a sketchily drawn room [G 102 I], one of them being a nude seen at an angle from behind. He goes on, making small alterations and variations through a number of states, finally completing the dry point plate with its faintly sketched outlines as a full-bodied etching [G 102 VI]. On another occasion all three are nudes, now closer together, and again the treatment is linear. To give a heightened effect of space, Picasso next proceeds to show the body of the right-hand figure in a combination of aspects - the buttocks from behind, the breasts in profile. By representing a figure in a number of aspects which could not be perceived by the beholder at one and the same time, Picasso introduces time as a fourth dimension into his pictures.

During the years 1922 and 1923 he completed a series of about thirty zinc plates which aimed at uniting in one representation the profile and full-face view of a head. He allowed each line to take its own course, just as he had in the drawings of his childhood on the sands of Malaga. There is no doubt a heightened sculptural effect can be achieved through the simultaneous presentation of various aspects of the subject. He transformed the theme of the three figures still further. In no print is the inclusion of the fourth dimension more striking than in the *Three Women Bathing II* (*Les trois baigneuses II*) [G 107], where the left figure is seen from the front, the back, and the side. This principle was further developed in a series of illustrations which revealed him as one of the greatest modern illustrators. The thirty prints illustrating Ovid's *Metamorphoses* [Figs. 46-51] were commissioned by Albert Skira. Vollard, who somewhat earlier had asked Picasso to illustrate Balzac's *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* with thirteen original etchings [Figs. 42-45], was Skira's great rival. Each wanted to precede the other in the publication of Picasso's work. Skira was the younger and more persistent and was on the point of succeeding in his object when Vollard boldly substituted for two missing plates others intended for the *Tauromaquia* of Pepe Hillo, a project of a Spanish publisher which had so far not been carried out. Both works appeared at the same time in 1931. In spite of the economic depression of the day, the publications were successful and as a result the Limited Editions Club of New York commissioned Picasso to illustrate the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes. Six plates went to America and the book appeared in 1934 [Figs. 56-57].

Vollard now set his heart on acquiring another hundred of Picasso's plates. He first bought a few existing ones and was not kept waiting long for the rest, as Picasso was now deeply interested in black-and-white illustrations. He experimented with new processes: he painted heads and figures over the as yet unused plates of Vollard and printed them as monotypes. Picasso needed this terrific productivity as an antidote to an increasing inner restlessness. He felt homesick. In 1933 he and his wife had visited Spain and returned with many photographs which Madame Picasso showed me. One of them was of a broken-down hovel. "Can you imagine what Picasso said to me when he saw this hovel?" his wife asked me, uncomprehendingly. "He said. That is where I would like to live.!" The following year, after fifteen years of married life, they separated. Picasso went to Spain, but did not find there the peace he had hoped for.

Not until many years later did he find the place he sought - a house in the Rue des Grands Augustins, in Paris, of which Misia Sert says: "I know few houses as beautiful and noble in their simplicity." But even here there was no peace for Picasso. He found himself avoiding people by going into hiding, often for long periods, and changing his hiding places according to circumstances. When World War II broke out he was at Royan near Bordeaux, but after the total occupation of France in August 1940, he returned to the capital, which he was not to leave for the duration of the war, and sought his inspiration from the city around him. The last ten years had changed him; for in spite of his successes as an artist, he had experienced great suffering through the breakdown of his family life and a very serious illness. He had taken sides with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and his indignation and distress at their defeat through Franco and his Fascist helpers had been deep-felt and lasting. During that period his work in black-and-white increased rapidly. He became one of the most sought-after illustrators, and was forever experimenting with new techniques. In May 1936 the printer Roger Lacouriere showed him the sugar process, or "lift ground" method of aquatint, a process known to printers but rarely used by artists. Etching in all its forms was at that time his favorite medium. That excellent craftsman Lacouriere taught him how to use the press himself. Picasso refused to be confined in his treatment of any subject. He regarded himself as free, though in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* he kept perhaps a little closer to the text than in some of the other illustrated books. His artistic means included the simultaneous representation of a body in various aspects (what we earlier called the fourth dimension) and the deliberate fragmentation of the human body whose proportions, however, he never ignored. The unity of composition so achieved is apparent in his etching *Vertumnus Pursues Pomona with his Love* (*Vertumnus pour suit Pomone de son amour*) [G 170]. In the other illustrated books which appeared in the thirties, the *Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, the *Tauromaquia*, and the *Lysistrata*, Picasso is more restrained.

He received yet another stimulus from Classical mythology when Skira commissioned him to design the cover for the first number of the magazine *Minotaure*. This myth inspired him to some of his most beautiful creations [Figs. 80-83, 86-87], culminating in the so-called *Minotauremachie* [Fig. 89], one of the most important prints of his whole oeuvre. The Classical story is disregarded completely; the huge bull-man is dazzled by the light of a candle held high in the hand of a young girl - almost a child - in modern

dress, while with the other she offers him a bunch of flowers. Between these main figures Picasso places a wounded horse carrying on its back a half-dressed young woman in the costume of a bullfighter. For Picasso there are no differences of time and place. Past and present merge into one all-embracing, unifying whole, which finds its exact expression in his graphic images.

The prints of these years are full of surprises. There are, for example, the Rembrandt portraits, a curious homage so that unsurpassed master in the art of etching whom he greatly admired [Figs. 77-79]. He strove hard to achieve that velvety black which we associate with Rembrandt's work. On some of the plates [Fig. 76] he contrasted parts painstakingly worked in the manner of the Dutch master with lightly thrown-off sketches or purely decorative patterns. The last plates of the series are portraits of Vollard himself. There are many versions, of which two are clearly masterpieces. One is a vivid representation of his massive, domed skull and rather coarse, restless features in a listening attitude, the other is more linear and full of symbolic significance. This publisher was insatiable and was forever suggesting new projects to the artist. When he asked him to illustrate Buffon's Natural History, Picasso, who is a great animal lover, accepted with alacrity; and he produced in an incredibly short time, working completely from memory, the desired thirty-one plates, to which the texts were carefully fitted afterwards [Figs. 110-111]. The outbreak of war held up the publication of the book, which did not appear until after the death of the famous art dealer.

At the same time he gave expression to his political indignation in his *Dream and Lie of Franco* (*Sueno y mentira di Franco*), a defiant attack which was translated into many languages and made famous by its eighteen illustrations. He also produced many single prints during this period, such as *Combat* (*Le combat*) [Fig. 102], *Dancer with Tambourine* (*La femme au tambourin*) [Fig. 103], and many female heads (again with simultaneous representation of various aspects) [Figs. 104-105].

Though the restrictions and hardships of the war years lay heavy on Picasso - he could not leave Paris - they did not seem to affect his work. He illustrated many more books - notably the works of Andre Breton, Georges Hugnet, and Paul Eluard - some of them with original color prints. After the war, with renewed energy, he illustrated *Gongora* with forty-one etchings which caused a sensation. This was followed by a hundred and twenty-four lithographed designs to illustrate the poems of Pierre Reverdy. There was no end to this prodigious energy and inspiration.

In July 1945, shortly after the end of the war in Europe, I visited Picasso in Paris. The war was not mentioned; for once, he seemed to dwell on early memories. Picasso, bare-chested, was basking in the sunshine which spilled through a narrow window. He complained of being sun-starved and a few days later he went to the Cote d'Azur in quest of sunshine. We met again in October; he had just returned from the south and was obviously fatigued by the long car journey. He wore his hair short and insisted on showing me various folders with drawings and prints, most of them representing bucolic

scenes [Figs. 106-109]. He was full of enthusiasm about this work in the south and intended taking it up again the following year. The winter of that year was bitterly cold, and there was no fuel. Picasso had to find a warm corner where he could work in the lithographic workshops of the brothers Mourlot. He went there every day, and in the company of these excellent lithographers and printers he experimented with new methods and amazed these professionals with his startling results. Back in his studio he continued with lithography. One stone after another went back to the workshop, marked "bon a tirer" (ready for printing). Fernand Mourlot collected his lithographs and published them in an oeuvre catalogue of two volumes. Picasso continued with his lithography after he had returned to the south. It had become a passion with him, as pottery was to become soon after.

Francoise Gilot, a young painter, now became his companion; they had two children with whom Picasso played and romped on the sand. All his artistic powers centered around the young mother and the children; portrait after portrait was completed [Figs. 124-125]. They seem effortless - almost haphazard - but a close study soon reveals that they are all directed toward one end: to embody the essence, the personality of the sitter in a form of ultimate significance and beauty.

At the same time, Picasso became interested in the monsters and creatures of Classical mythology, and in his national sport, the bullfight [Figs. 120-121]. Here again he reveals his growing love for the abstract, and his studies of the bull show an increasing tendency to simplification which ultimately leads to a mere sign or symbol [Figs. 122-123]. Picasso goes so far as to take the abstract elements of the Francoise series out of their context and to re-employ them as arabesques in the hundred and twenty-four illustrations in *The Song of the Dead (Le chant des morts)* by Pierre Reverdy. Picasso loves animals, and particularly birds; he often has pigeons in his house. This love combined with childhood memories of the still-life-with-pigeons his father used to paint, to add a deep significance to his own representation of these birds. They now turned into a highly charged symbol. The dove on his posters for the Peace Congresses became known all over the world [Figs. 144, 152-153].

Picasso is often led to new creations through some incidental stimulus. His inspiration does not arise from within; he finds it in the life around him or in some work by another artist. Whatever it is, he changes it, develops it, and transmutes it into his own idiom. Thus Lucas Cranach's *David and Bathsheba* serves as a theme for a series of lithographic variations [Figs. 145-148]. In another series, the dreadful machines of modern warfare become knights in heavy armor, to whom - by a flight of poetic fancy - pages, monks, and courtly ladies attach themselves [Fig. 158]. Again, the tumults of the corrida are an ever-recurring theme inspiring wonderful aquatints, almost Impressionist in manner [Figs. 156-157].

In his latest work the attempt to defy time has gone still further: modern and Classic periods meet as one, and as if there had been no changes in manners and customs. In

The Bull Game (Le jeu du taureau) [Fig. 165] and Dance of the Banderillas (La danse des banderilles) [Fig. 164] Classical antiquity merges with bullfighters and vagrants, tourists and dancers into a pictorial unity. Realistic representation as such is thrown aside; he employs again the basic principle of Cubism - a solid bodily form is achieved through the simultaneous presentation of its different aspects. Picasso is obviously seeking a universal language, transcending local or national traditions, and aiming beyond aesthetic pleasure at illuminating the problems and aspirations of our time.

Picasso is a law unto himself. The only obligation he accepts is the inner one that impels him to express himself and to seek the symbol that will satisfy his soul.

“La vie de ce grand artiste ne sera pas assez longue pour parcourir tout le chemin que son oeuvre eclaire. L’art present et l’art futur dependent de sa bienfaisante tyrannie.” (“The life of this great artist could not be long enough to allow him to traverse the entire length of the road illuminated by his work. The art of the present is nourished by his ‘benevolent despotism,’ and so will be the art of the future.”) Thus Andre Salmon in the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition at Rosenberg’s gallery in 1919.

There seems to be no end to this “benevolent despotism.” Only when his work is complete and can be seen in its entirety, will the world be able truly to assess and understand the significance of his tremendous creative accomplishment.

Bern, January 1955

Bernhard Geiser

- The notations [G 1], [M 1], [J 1], [K 1], etc. in the text and in the List of Illustrations refer to the catalogues by Bernhard Geiser, Fernand Mourlot, and Una E. Johnson (Bibliography, Items 1, 2, and 31) and to D.H. Kahnweiler. Les sculptures de Picasso, Paris: Editions du Chene, 1948.

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