The background of the slide is a reproduction of Pablo Picasso's painting 'Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)'. The painting depicts a group of figures in a domestic interior, rendered in a cubist style with fragmented forms and a rich color palette of reds, pinks, blues, and greys. The figures are arranged in a way that suggests a social gathering or a scene of daily life. The overall composition is dynamic and complex, reflecting the revolutionary nature of the work.

# Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon and the birth of Cubism

Paul Cezanne to George Braque & Pablo Picasso

# Introduction

The first decade of the 20th century was a time of extraordinary revolutionary fervour in the development of Western European art, with various forms of Expressionism holding sway not only in Paris (Fauvism), but Dresden (Die Brücke) and Munich (Der Blaue Reiter). In Austria, Gustav Klimt, the leading member of the Vienna Secession gave the figurative and portrait traditions, an intensely sensual and decorative appeal, whilst his protégé Egon Schiele provocatively explored the frankly erotic. In Paris, Cezanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh were idols for the young avant-garde, Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck and many others. It was within this maelstrom of ideas that Picasso and Braque, made a complete break with representational art. The aim of this essay is to explain how these competing concepts influenced the genesis of *Les Femmes d'Alger* and Cubism.

- Commencing with the early life of Pablo Picasso: **The Blue and Rose & Saltimbanque Periods**
- The patronage of Gertrude and Leo Stein
- Contemporary rivalry and the influence of the Old Masters
- *Les Femmes d'Alger* and the influence of Manet and Cezanne
- Paul Cezanne, Georges Braque, Picasso and the birth of Cubism





## *Self-Portrait with Palette*

1906. Oil on canvas, Philadelphia

The name which most readily comes to mind when discussing the origins of 20<sup>th</sup> century modern art is Pablo Picasso. It was the Spanish born master, more than any other artist, who dominated the first decades of the century in which the Academic formulas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with its emphasis on the perfection of idealised forms of beauty, were cast aside.

Born in Malaga in 1881, the young Picasso demonstrated a precocious talent, which by the age of 19 saw him visit Paris for the first time, where he was exposed to the Parisian verve of Toulouse-Lautrec, the exoticism of Gauguin, the structured beauty of Cezanne and the powerful expressionism of Van Gogh. His innate talent and hunger to assimilate all the voices of the past, especially the work of the great Spanish masters, El Greco, Velasquez and Goya, prepared him for a long life of discovery and experimentation, unequalled in 20<sup>th</sup> century art.

Whilst on his first visit it was the gay bourgeoisie life of cabarets, parks and race-courses that provided inspiration, his return visit in May 1901 saw a mood change influenced no doubt by his reduced circumstances. The struggle of everyday life was very much reflected in his choice of subjects, vagabonds, beggars and prostitutes, a period of his artistic output from 1901-4, now regarded as the 'Blue Period.'

In 1904, Picasso finally settled in Paris, where he took a studio in the Bateau Lavoir, a building inhabited by painters and poets, high up on the slopes of Montmartre. The company of the beautiful Fernande Olivier led him away from melancholy subjects, which had obsessed him during the 'Blue Period.' With frequent visits from Max Jacob and Apollinaire, his studio became known as the 'Rendezvous des Poetes' and it was here that the famous banquet of the Douanier Rousseau took place in 1908. The 'Blue Period' paintings were beginning to sell to collectors such as Gertrude and Leo Stein and Wilhelm Uhde. Life was looking up and the actors and strolling players of the boulevards and circuses became his friends and found their way into his paintings, heralding the so-called 'Saltimbanque and Rose Period.'

## *The Tragedy.*

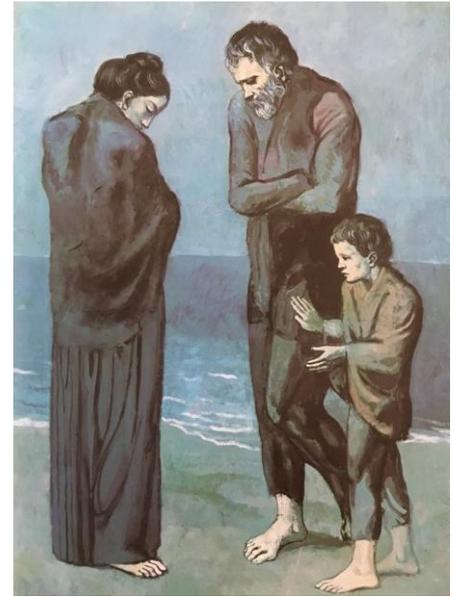
1903. Picasso, Oil on canvas, N.G.A. Washington.

## *The Poor Fisherman.*

1881. Puvis de Chavannes, Oil on canvas, N.G.A. Australia.

In a painting typical of Picasso's Blue Period, three forlorn figures stand on the seashore, a bent-shouldered old man and a younger woman with a young child; the nature of the tragedy is unexplained. It may just refer to the human condition as experienced during Picasso's period of struggle as an artist, the idea of the artist as an outcast from society. However, it may also refer to his still depressed state, following the suicide of his friend Carlos Casagemas, who was allegedly driven to despair because of his impotence; his lover was a woman called Germaine, with whom Picasso was also amorously involved.

The narrative and composition may also have been influenced by the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, a contemporary French Symbolist painter, highly respected by the young avant-garde Parisian painters. ***The Poor Fisherman***, is imbued with a secular mystical feeling similar to ***The Tragedy***. A dejected fisherman is waiting for a catch, whilst his young daughter is left to care for her sibling sister, whose mother may have died in childbirth. The subdued colour scheme, with large areas of flat colour was borrowed from Italian fresco and is typical of Chavanne's work, influencing both Paul Gauguin and the Nabis.



## *The Family of Saltimbanques.*

1905. Oil on canvas, N.G.A. Washington.

This enigmatic composition, at 7x7.5 ft, the largest yet painted by Picasso during the 'Rose Period', brings together the cast of circus characters that he had previously depicted. Saltimbanques were the lowest class of acrobats, who wandered from town to town giving impromptu performances at fairgrounds. Harlequin, a character from the Commedia dell'Arte and jesters have a long history associated with the Medieval and Renaissance courts. Here Picasso provides the viewer with a composition of all three types.

These wandering Saltimbanques stood for the melancholy of the neglected underclass of circus performers, a kind of extended family, with whom Picasso identified. Like them, he was a peripatetic artist, seeking his fortune in Paris.

It has been proposed that the group represents 'La bande a Picasso', with the artist as the harlequin in a lozenge patterned suit, his bohemian allies being the poets Max Jacob as the youthful acrobat and Guillaume Apollinaire, a rotund jester and the artist's mistress, Fernande Olivier with a distracted gaze, looking out at the viewer.



## *Nude against a Red Background.*

1906. Oil on canvas, Private collection.

Constant searching for fresh sources of inspiration led Picasso to the Classical art of the past, specifically sculpture. A classical vocabulary of forms was engrained from his earliest academic training and would remain an undercurrent throughout his artistic life.

Here, Picasso has moved away radically from the willowy El Greco-like figures of the Blue and Rose periods to something more substantial, with much more emphasis on delineating anatomical volume. There is another equally obvious transformation in the depiction of the facial features to a somewhat mask-like appearance.

For many years, it has been customary to dedicate this change to Picasso's encounter with African Negro culture, not unreasonably so, as it was said to have captured the imagination of other young painters such as Vlaminck, Derain and Matisse. However, in 1939, Picasso dispelled this notion, declaring at the time of commencement of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, he had not yet come into contact with it. However, he did confirm his particular interest in Iberian Culture, stimulated by the excavations at Osuna in 1903, with exhibition of objects in the Louvre in 1906.



### ***Woman Combing Her Hair.***

1905. Crayon and charcoal on paper, whereabouts unknown.

### ***Woman Plating Her Hair.***

1905. Oil on canvas, MoMA

***Woman Plating Her Hair***, is likely to have been painted in Autumn 1905 and is predated by ***Woman Combing Her Hair***, a crayon and charcoal drawing with a similar theme. Undoubtedly both these works and many others were being produced around the same time as Picasso was engaged in the protracted process of painting the renowned portrait of ***Gertrude Stein***. The young artist and his muse Fernande Olivier having previously been invited to the Stein's legendary Saturday evening salons, where the Parisian avant-garde rubbed shoulders.

Gertrude and her brother had travelled to Paris via London in 1903 and took up residence at 27 Rue de Fleurs in the heart of the bohemian sixth arrondissement. The apartment consisted of two stories and an adjacent atelier, in which they steadily built up their collection of works at first by Matisse, Gauguin, Cezanne and Renoir and then later an extensive collection of Picasso, unrivalled at the time.



## *Portrait of Gertrude Stein.*

1906-7. Oil on canvas, MoMA.

Gertrude Stein, admitted in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, her long-term partner, that during the winter of 1906 she sat at least 80 times for this portrait. Notwithstanding, Picasso scraped out her face before leaving for Gosol, a remote village in the Pyrenees. On his return, he repainted the face before Gertrude arrived back to Paris from her summer vacation in Italy.

In the interim, several recently excavated Iberian bas-relief and other artifacts had been on display in the Louvre and Picasso's encounter with them appears to have been a revelation. His borrowings were principally the shape of the head and the mask-like appearance of the face and the much enlarged eyes with eyelids like the rim of a cup. As the photograph of 1913 confirms, there is despite these exaggerations, a striking resemblance, drawing upon his great skill as a caricaturist.

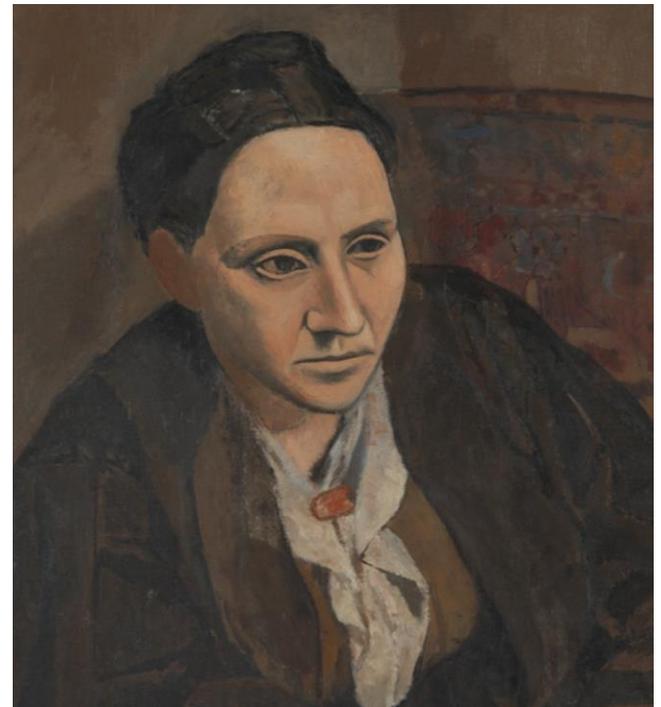


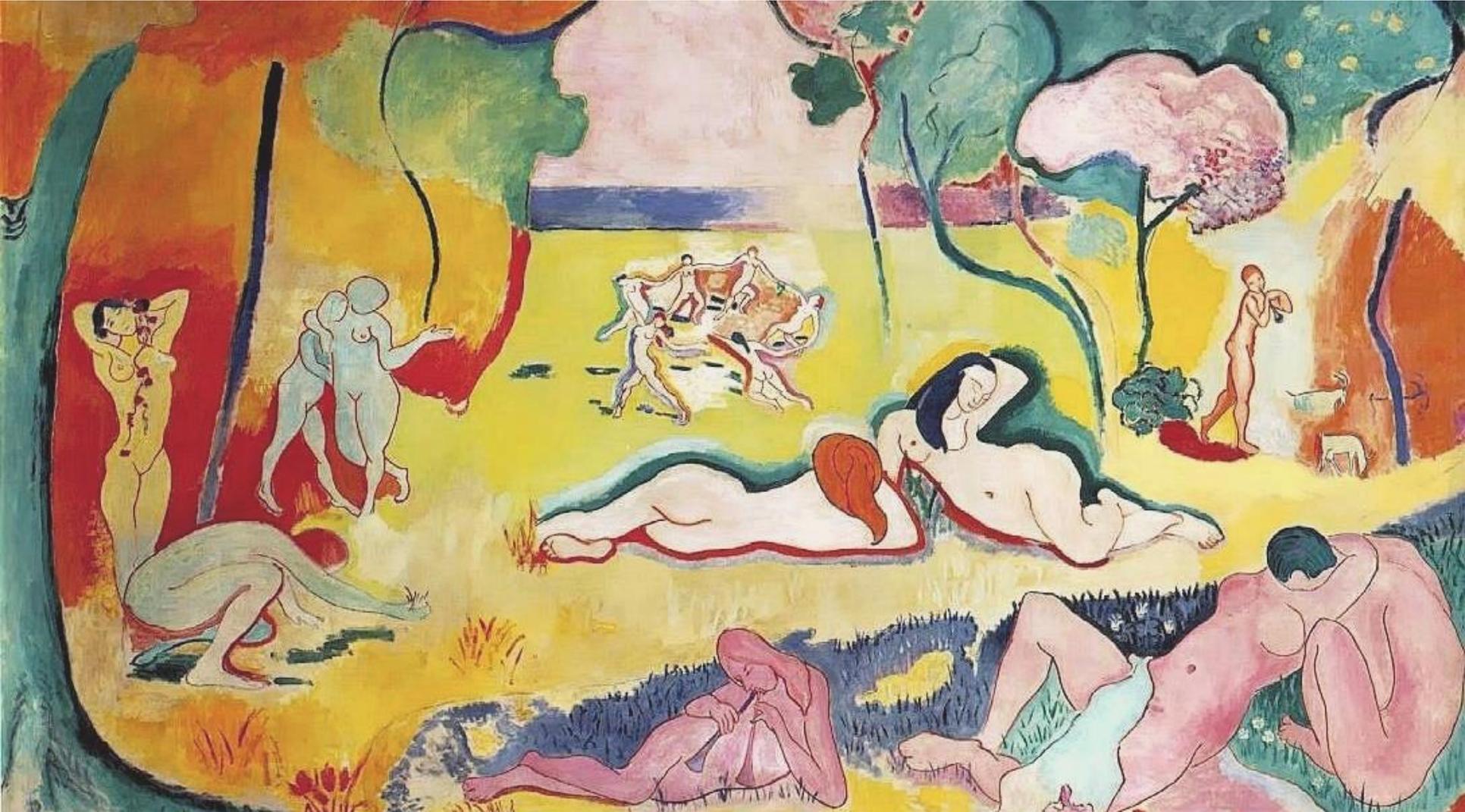
## Negro attacked by a Lion. Iberian Stone Bas-Relief from Osuna

In repainting Gertrude Stein's face, Picasso has given it a formal, mask-like appearance in marked contrast with the rest of the picture, which he did not alter. And if we compare the features of this mask, with its eyeballs larger than life, with eyelids like the rim of a cup, the line of the mouth, the shape of its head and the formalized treatment of its hairline and nose, with the same features as in the Iberian Bas-Relief, ***Negro attacked by a Lion***, we at once see a resemblance, which appears to confirm Picasso's assertion that in the years 1906-7, his interests were focussed on Iberian sculpture.

As the solid presence of the painting suggests, Gertrude Stein was a formidable presence in Paris in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By reworking the portrait in a primitive style, Picasso has extracted the essence of the sitter, represented as the artist visualised her and not merely as a likeness. In her book on Picasso, she wrote: 'I was and I am still satisfied with my portrait, for me, it is I and it is the only reproduction of me which is always I, for me.' The portrait remained in her possession until her death in 1946.

It was following the 1905 Autumn Salon that the first Picasso, *Young Girl with a Basket of Flowers*, entered the Stein collection, not without some friction between Leo, who loved it and Gertrude, who was initially not at all persuaded of its merits. It was the beginning of a friendship and patronage, which supported Picasso through from 1906-10.





***Le Bonheur de Vivre.*** 1905-6, Matisse, oil on canvas, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia.

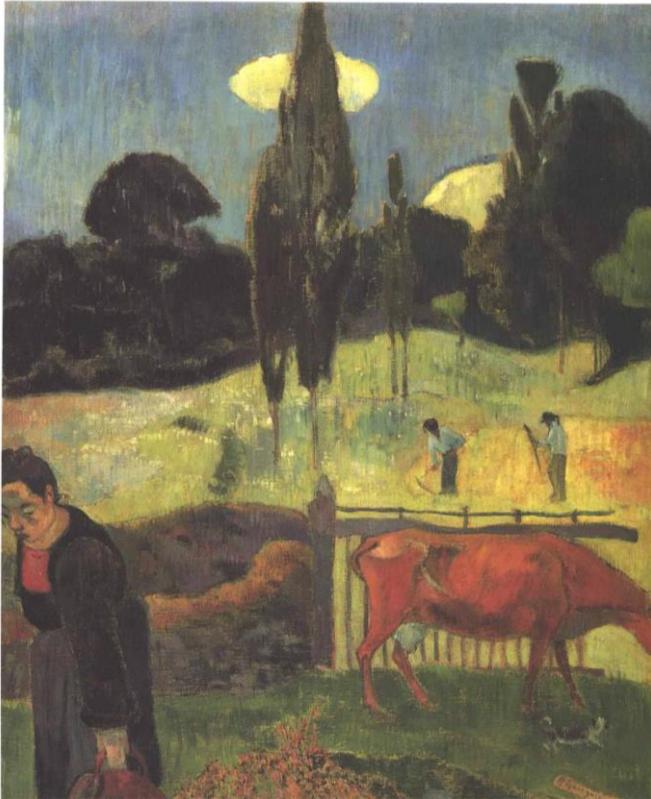
***Les Moissonneurs.*** 1907. Picasso, Oil on canvas, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza.

***Le Bonheur de Vivre*, (*The Joy of Life*, previous image)**, was painted at a time, that marks the beginning of the rivalry between Matisse and Picasso. When exhibited at the 1906 Salon des Independants it created shock and outrage. Depicted in a pastoral scene reminiscent of the paintings of Giorgione, Titian and Watteau, are sixteen figures. It is a hybrid painting, an amalgam of artistic references, stylistic incongruities, disparities in scale and technique, which in the round contest accepted 19<sup>th</sup> century Academic practice. It's effectiveness derives from the rhythmic power stemming from the use of the arabesque line. Here Matisse has also distanced himself from the Neo-Impressionist influence seen in his *Lux Calme et Volupte* of 1904. ***Le Bonheur de Vivre*** was purchased at the exhibition by Gertrude Stein and placed on the wall of their atelier, where Picasso would have seen it, although he would have already come face to face with it at the exhibition.

Earlier at the 1905 Autumn Salon, Matisse exhibited *Woman in a Hat*, another of his more renowned paintings, immediately purchased by Gertrude Stein. Of the verdicts of the critics on the work of Matisse and his fellow Fauves, Derain, Braque and Vlaminck, it was Louis Vauxelles, the art critic of *Gil Blas*, who reflecting on the lurid combination of colours in all their paintings, used the phrase, 'Un Donatello parmi Les Fauves,' Donatello amongst the wild beasts; the wild beast epithet referring to the combination of garish colours employed in Fauve paintings.

***Les Moissonneurs*, (*The Harvesters*, next image)** was painted at the Bateau-Lavoir studio, whilst Picasso was working on ***Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon***, possibly during the second phase in the summer of 1907. It represents Picasso's only true venture into Fauvism. Also influential may have been Breton works by Gauguin, specifically, ***Moisson en Bretagne*** and ***The Red Cow***, both painted in 1889. At the time that ***Les Moissonneurs*** and ***Les Desmoiselles*** were being painted, the Parisian avant-garde artists shared the opinion that new formulas needed to be explored for such works, that is complex compositions with several figures. In fact, a series of works ranging from ***The Joy of Life*** to Derain's *The Golden Age* pointed in that direction and revealed just how compelling this opinion was within the artistic circle that Picasso had joined in 1906.





*The Red Cow.* Gauguin. (Above)  
1889. Oil on canvas, Los Angeles.

*Moisson en Bretagne.* Gauguin.  
1889. Oil on canvas, Courtauld.



These two pictures of 1889, are typical of Gauguin's work in Brittany. Paintings such as these may well have influenced Picasso when he was exploring the potential of the Fauvist style, specifically with reference to *Les Moissonneurs*.

*The Hungry Lion throws itself on an Antelope.* Rousseau, 1905. Oil on canvas, Riehen, Switzerland.

This was only the second jungle painting completed by the Douanier Rousseau, so called because he was a lowly custom's officer, the first seven years earlier being *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*, for which he received negative reviews. These paintings were based upon the diorama of stuffed animals in the Paris National History Museum. Now regarded as the first and premier 'Naive' painter, Rousseau had built up a considerable following by the time Picasso met him in 1900.

The painting was displayed alongside paintings by the Fauves and Renaissance sculptures at the 1905 Autumn Salon and much impressed Picasso, who at the time had an open mind to most contemporary influences. Since their first meeting, Rousseau had become the perfect material for a genuine spokesman of the aesthetic movement. In 1908, the exciting and comical aura surrounding the elderly good-natured Rousseau, led Picasso to the mischievously amusing idea of a ceremonial banquet in honour of Henri Rousseau's genius, at his studio.



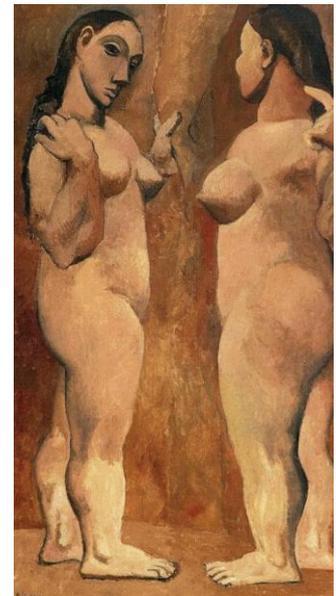
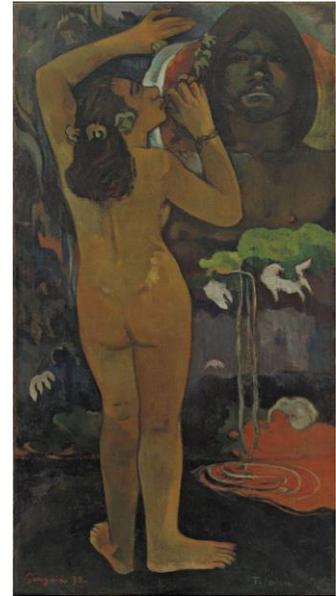
***Hina Tefatou.*** 1893. Gauguin, Oil on canvas, MoMA.

***Two Nudes.*** 1905. Picasso, Oil on canvas, MoMA.

Picasso's acceptance of both classical and contemporary influences in all probability opened the door for a gradual transition to a more archaic idiom, much influenced by the Iberian sculpture he saw at the Louvre. These tendencies are well illustrated by *Two Nudes*, where there has been a constantly increasing sculptural solidity of form in figure style since 1905.

It's known that both Gauguin's posthumous retrospective at the Autumn Salon of 1903 and an even larger exhibition in 1906, were a huge influence on the young Picasso, who kept an open mind on all possibilities; Gauguin's primitive Tahitian sensibility would have been especially influential. ***Hina Tefatou***, *The Moon and the Earth*, upper right image, would certainly have been a point of reference for ***Two Nudes***.

These two women are nearly mirror images, but the face of the figure on the left bears a strong resemblance to that of the figure on the far left in ***Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)***. Like the woman in ***Les Femmes d'Alger***, with whom she shares a chiseled nose, hollow eyes, the nude seen here holds open a curtain and gazes outwards, as if inviting in the viewer, a potential punter.



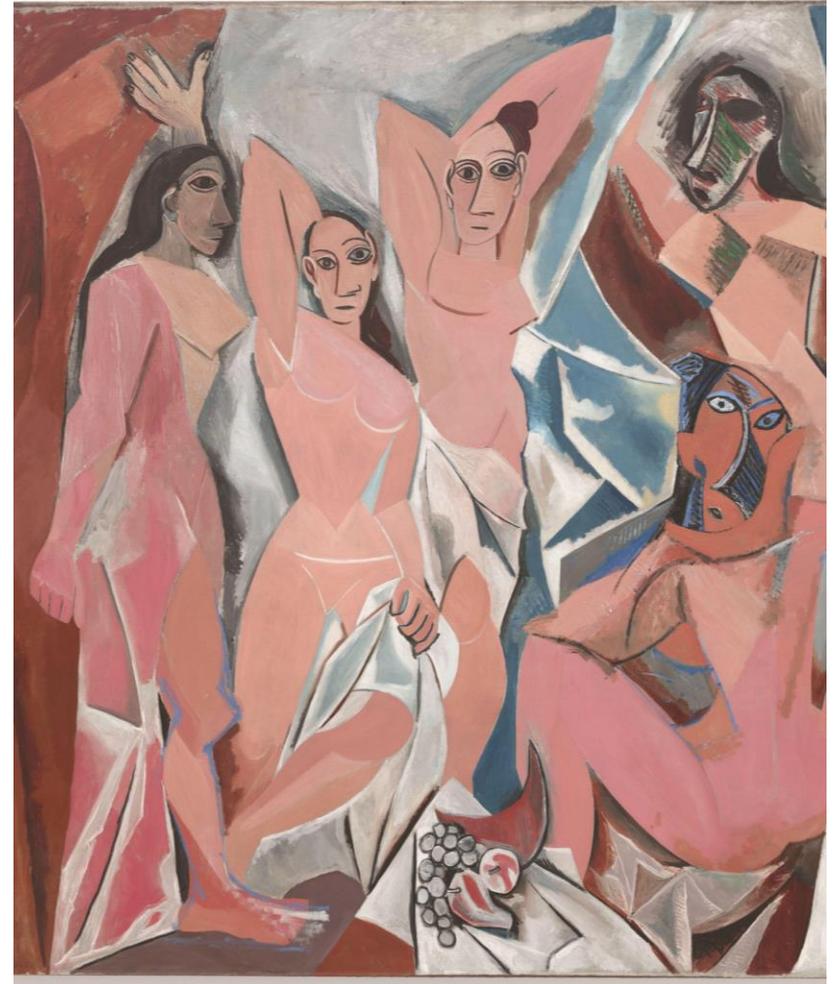
## *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)*

1906-7. Oil on canvas, MoMA.

***Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)*** is the painting above all others that heralded a profound change in the way artists viewed the world. Like many paintings of the period 1905-7, it broke all of the hitherto accepted artistic conventions, but none so dramatically as this painting. In an essay on Picasso in 1920, the scholar Andre Salmon spoke of the painting as 'the ever-growing crater from which the fire of contemporary art erupted.' Like Manet in 1863 with *Olympia*, Picasso has used the female nude prostitute to confront and shock the genteel viewer, but this time with five figures, just to magnify the combative and iconoclastic stance of modern art.

The painting had a long gestation period of almost two years and even after completion, it was not publicly exhibited until 1916, but was shown to fellow artists and poets, who greeted it initially with shock and incomprehension.

The work portrays five female nudes in a brothel on Carrer d'Avinyo, a street in Barcelona. The idea of depicting a woman as a subject of male sexual fantasy has a long history, going back to the first secular nude, *The Sleeping Venus*, painted in c.1510 by the Venetian master Giorgione, which then became the prototype for all subsequent female nudes, from Titian's *Venus of Urbino* to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Academic Nudes of Cabanel and Bouguereau etc.



# *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe.*

Manet

1863. Oil on canvas,  
Musee d'Orsay.

Picasso would certainly have seen this painting in Paris, as it was accepted as a donation to the Louvre from the d'Etienne Moreau-Nelaton collection in 1906; moved to the newly opened Musee d'Orsay in 1986. In view of the subject of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, it would indeed have been bizarre if Picasso had not taken a keen interest in the painting. Just like the unclothed Victorine Meurent in Manet's provocative masterpiece, the prostitutes in Picasso's painting are confronting the viewer without any embarrassment.

With *Olympia*, exhibited a year later, Victorine Meurent's demeanour is even more confrontational and provocative and it is very much this feeling that Picasso captures in *les Femmes d'Alger*.

It is also telling, that Picasso has included a small still-life in his painting, surely a homage to Manet's masterful still-life of a basket of overturned fruit displayed on top of Victorine's dress.



## *The Vision of St John.* El Greco.

1608-14. Oil on canvas, MoMA.

El Greco was one of Picasso's favoured old masters and as his drawing of 1905 reveals, *The Vision of St John*, otherwise known as *The Opening of the Fifth Seal*, was certainly an inspiration for this drawing, at a time when he was working on *Les Femmes d'Alger*.



## *Nudes.* Picasso

1905. Graphite on paper, Private.



## *The Large Bathers.*

1906. Cezanne, Oil on canvas,  
Philadelphia.

This is the largest of the three paintings on the subject of groups of nudes bathing and is also the most formally composed. It is known that Cezanne grouped his figures based on his study of Veronese's *Supper at Emmaus*; in both, the figures are in two groups of three dimensional pyramids, here separated by a band of blue river.

Picasso saw *The Large Bathers* at the Cezanne retrospective exhibition in Paris in September 1907 and was much taken with the painting, using it as part of his inspiration and planning for *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

According to the scholar, Douglas Cooper, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, is the logical picture to take as the starting point for Cubism, because it marks the birth of a new pictorial idiom and in it Picasso violently overturned established conventions and because all that followed grew out of it.

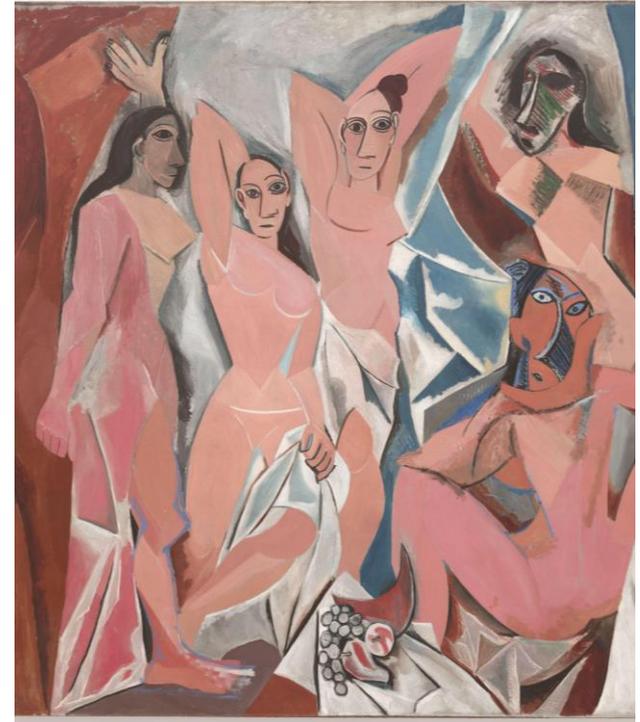


## *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. No. 1492)*

Here we are looking at a painting that is a radical break with the long-held traditions of Western European painting. Gone is linear perspective, chiaroscuro and the modelling of flesh, all of which had produced the representational, illusionary quality of 19<sup>th</sup> century Academic paintings. Although Manet was accused of eulogizing the body of a mere everyday naked woman, his mistress, Picasso has turned the nude prostitutes into the 'stuff' of nightmares.

The fragmented image, where the bodies are made up of sharp, jagged-edged parts, all contained within a very restricted space, mystified even his closest friends and admirers at first. The image is best analyzed in three parts; the figure on the extreme left has the facial features of Iberian sculpture from Osuna, seen by Picasso in the Louvre in 1906, whilst the facial features of the two central figures gazing straight out at the viewer are of a more contemporary appearance. Finally, the two figures on the far right have African mask-like faces. It's believed that Picasso later repainted these faces after he had seen African masks in 1907.

The painting confirms the intense interest for primitive and exotic culture amongst avant-garde French artists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. France had extensive colonies in North and West Africa in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the culture of primitive peoples and their art became more accessible.

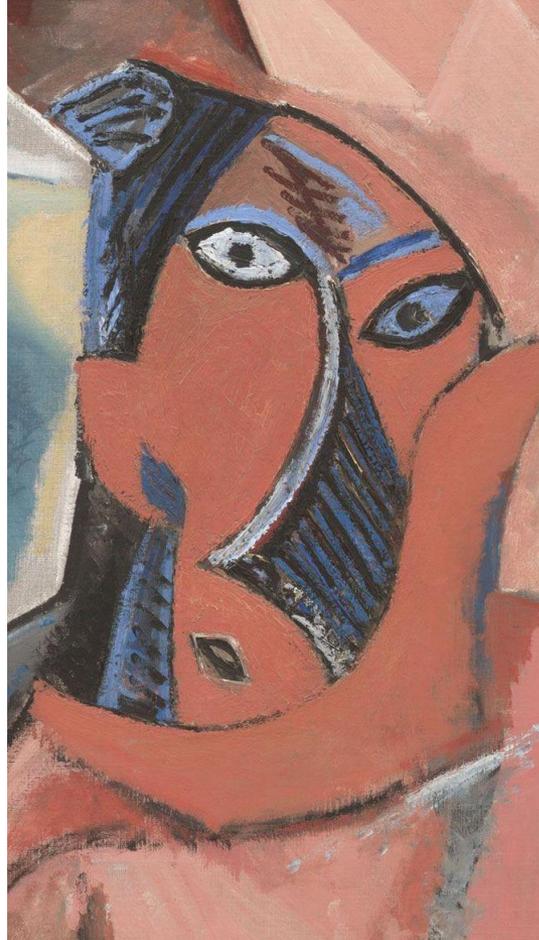


***Blue Nude, Souvenir de Biskra.*** 1907. Matisse

The ***Blue Nude***, part of the Cone Collection, at the Baltimore Museum of Art was painted at the height of the rivalry between Picasso and Matisse, when both were competing for the patronage of Gertrude and Leo Stein. Based on a long line of 'reclining nudes', dating back to the first secular nude by Giorgione, it is also a tribute to Paul Cezanne. It was a deliberate response to the academic nudes so frequently seen in the Paris Salon and as such angered a lot of people. So much so that an effigy was burned when the Armory Show moved to Chicago in 1913. It was the last Matisse purchased by Leo and Gertrude Stein



*Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J. no. 146): detail of head of prostitute from right hand side of painting, to be compared with mask from the Dan Region of Africa shown to Picasso by Matisse.



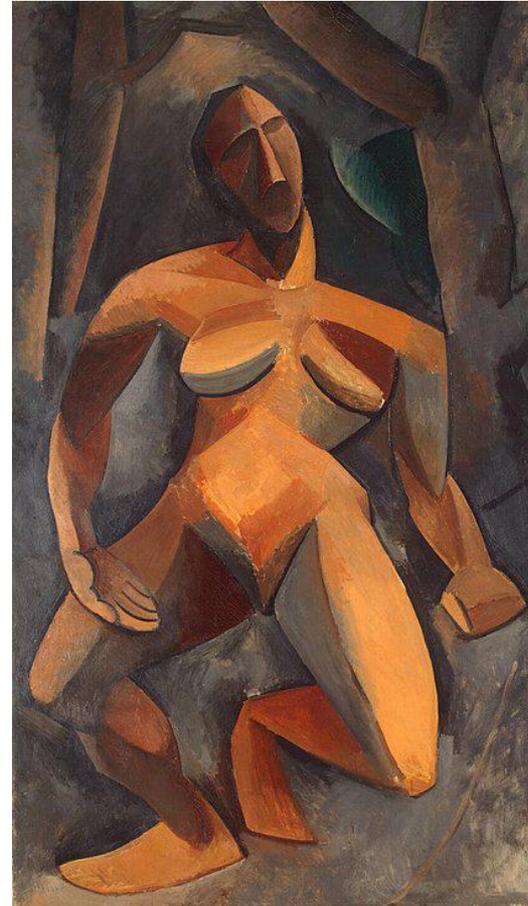
As already alluded to, during the early 1900s, the aesthetics of traditional African culture became a powerful influence on French avant-garde artists. Picasso, unlike Gauguin had no direct experience of 'primitive' cultures, but the primitive art being imported from Africa as France expanded its colonization of that continent, still regarded as barbaric in view of tales of cannibalism, immediately took hold of Picasso's imagination.

From 1906-9 was deemed to be his African period and both during and after the completion of his ground-breaking masterpiece, he remained fascinated with the artistic possibilities: *Nude with a Serviette* and *The Dryad* to follow are examples.

***Nude with a Serviette.*** Picasso.  
1907. Oil on canvas, Private



***The Dryad.*** Picasso.  
1908. Oil on canvas, Hermitage



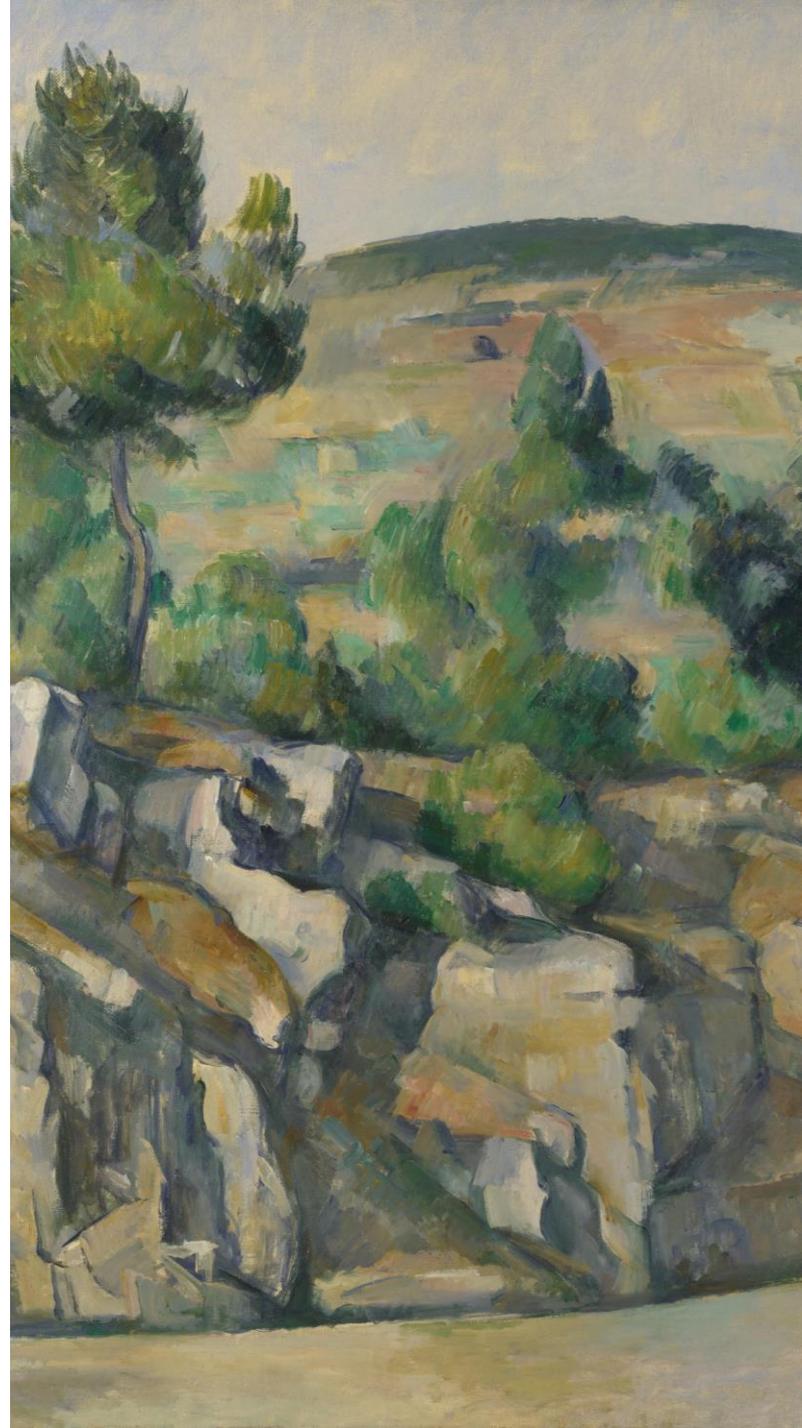
## ***Mountains in Provence.*** Paul Cezanne.

1906. Oil on canvas, N.G. London.

Concurrent with the many other cultural and artistic influences, the painting of Paul Cezanne had as already highlighted, become familiar to Picasso, in part through exhibitions, but also by way of the influential anti-establishment dealer Amboise Vollard, who in 1895 bought 150 Cezanne paintings. In that same year he held an exhibition, which cemented Cezanne's status as the leader of the Post-Impressionist painters, a position, which with subsequent exhibitions, gained momentum over the succeeding decade until and after Cezanne's death in 1906.

Cezanne's search for a valid interpretation of form and the geometric basis of his composition, 'the painting of something more permanent like Nicholas Poussin', as he put it, had impressed the young Picasso, who similarly desired to create a tangible, three dimensional quality in his painting.

Cezanne's ***Mountains in Provence***, is just such a painting, where in a highly organised composition, most probably painted in the studio, the almost geometric shapes of rock-faces are modelled not tonally, that is in black through to white, but by using complementary colours. The orange-red rocks become deep grey-blue-violet in shadow, with only very sparing use of black. The fields on the sloping hillside, made up of patches of green and yellow, placed next to highlights of red and deep blue, provide the optical excitement, which addresses the problem of representing sunlight with paint.



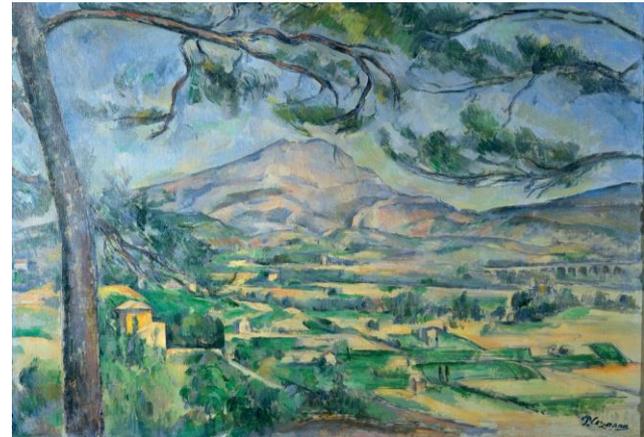
***The Bridge at Maincy.*** Paul Cezanne.

1879. Oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay.

***Mont Sante-Victoire with Large Pine.*** Cezanne.

1887. Oil on canvas, Courtauld.

Emile Zola, the renowned 19<sup>th</sup> century novelist and childhood friend of Cezanne said of him, 'Paul may have the genius of a great painter, but he will never possess the genius actually to become one. He despairs at even the smallest obstacle.' Harsh criticism indeed, but not far from the truth. Cezanne had an unshakeable belief in what he was trying to achieve, even when periods of self-doubt and despondency forced him to withdraw into himself. His refusal to engage in any form of artistic compromise, or concession to society, often made him appear a strange and eccentric figure. He lived only for his painting, was largely self-taught, but nevertheless became one of the most influential painters of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is now regarded by many as the father of modern art. His love of the outdoors began as a child in his native Aix-en-Provence, when with Emile Zola and Jean-Batistin Baile, who would later become a famous engineer, "Les trois Inseperables" would engage in long excursions along the River Arc and surrounding countryside. ***Montagne Sainte-Victoire***, is one of the most successful depictions, where the branch of the pine follows the undulating surface of the mountain and surrounding hills. A patchwork of wonderfully modulated complementary colours capture the landscape with the viaduct over the River Arc providing horizontal interest. ***The Bridge at Maincy***, a painting completed almost ten years earlier, is the finest early example in landscape of Cezanne's 'constructive brushwork', the juxtaposition of parallel, or hatched strokes of paint at angles to each other, making up an interlocking patchwork, uniting the image.



*The Bibemus Quarry. Cezanne*

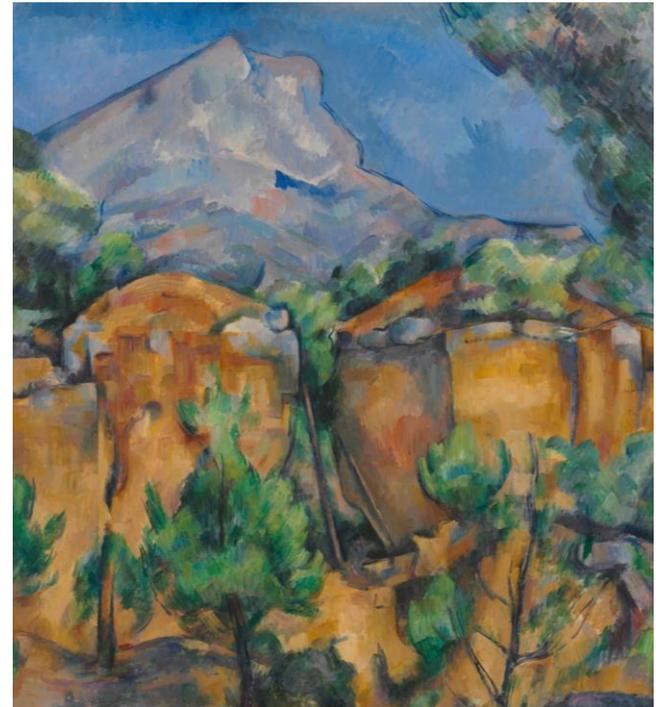
1895. Oil on canvas, Museum Folkwang.

*Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from the Bibemus Quarry. Cezanne*

1897. Oil on canvas, Baltimore Museum of Art.

Cezanne painted numerous oil and water colour representations of Montaigne Sainte-Victoire and the valley of the River Arc. His view of his native Provence, was that to represent it properly in paint, one first had to understand the geology. A further younger member of his childhood companions has recently been identified, Antoine-Fortune Marion, who became a renowned geologist and paleontologist. The friendship with Marion into adulthood may have given Cezanne greater insight into the geology of the Bibemus Quarry region in the foot-hills of Montaigne Sainte-Victoire. The quarry has a history back to Roman times, when sandstone blocks were cut out to construct civic monuments for Aix-en-Provence, which showcase the region's geological heritage.

In 1905, towards the end of his life he wrote to Emile Bernard: 'The Louvre is the book in which we learn to read. We must not, however, be satisfied with retaining the beautiful formulas of our illustrious predecessors. Let's go forth to study beautiful Nature, let us try to free our minds from them, let us strive to express ourselves according to our beautiful temperaments. Time and reflection, moreover modify our vision little by little and at last the comprehension comes to us.' One of those past masters was the 17<sup>th</sup> century classical landscape painter, Nicholas Poussin, whom Cezanne revered. Referring to his desire to move beyond the fleeting visions of Impressionism, he stated that he wished to emulate Poussin by producing an art that was more permanent. He further wrote, 'Everything in Nature is to be treated through the cylinder, sphere and cone, these shapes being suggested by the play of light and tone.' (continued next slide).



## *Landscape with Calm.*

1651. Nicholas Poussin, Oil on canvas, Getty Centre.

## *Grounds of the Chateau Noir.*

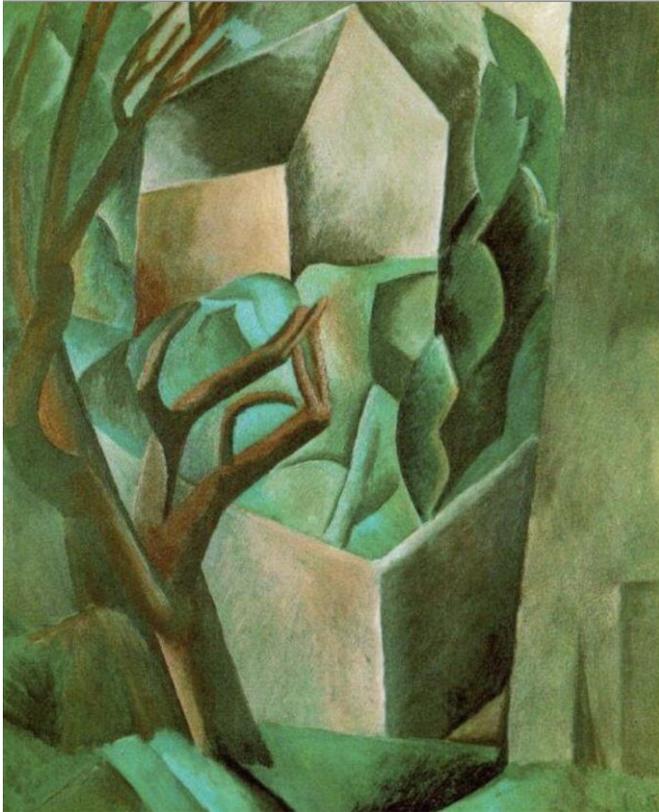
1904. Cezanne, Oil on canvas, N.G.A. Washington.

‘Drawing and color are not separate, as one paints one is drawing, the more harmonious the color, the more apparent the drawing becomes and when color is at its richest, form is at its fullest’: thus were the Cubists inspired.

The slide top left is one of Nicholas Poussin’s most harmonious and beautiful compositions. This was not arrived at by accident, as to give landscape an air of order and permanence, requires the harmonious balance of the horizontal and vertical elements in the design. Poussin like Cezanne later, recognised that the spacing of these horizontals and verticals in their rhythmic relation to one another could have an effect exactly like the harmonic devices of architecture and in fact they both disposed them according to the so-called ‘Golden Section.’ However, because Nature is essentially horizontal in its disposition, Poussin in his more schematic landscapes, would introduce architecture to provide the verticals. The precursor to this line of thinking was the Venetian Renaissance master, Giovanni Bellini, whose *Resurrection* is worth examining in this regard.

*Chateau Noir*, near the Bibemus Quarries, is a worthy successor to Poussin’s picture, where Cezanne has also created, ‘A feast for the eye.’



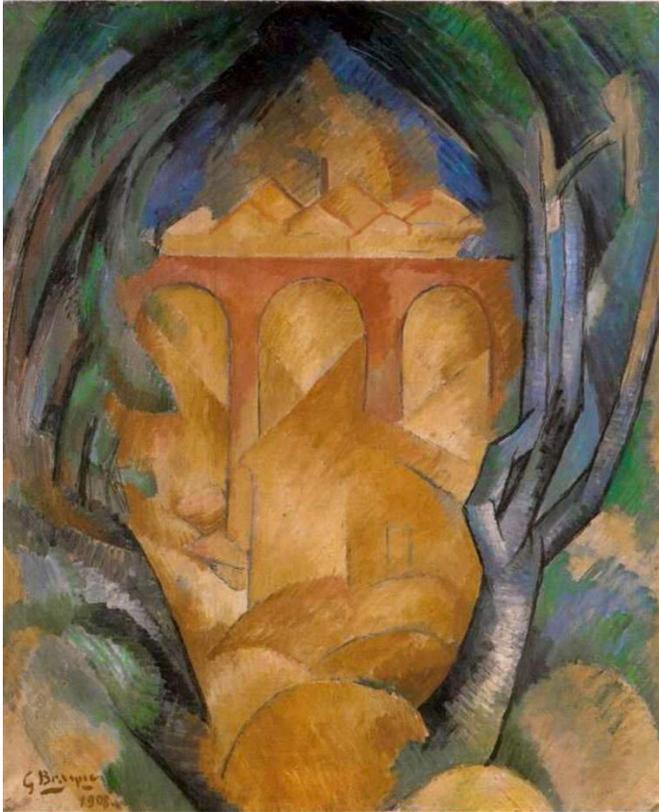


*Small House in the Garden*  
1908. Oil on canvas, Picasso



*Landscape with two Figures*  
1908. Oil on canvas, Picasso

In the Spring of 1907, Georges Braque visited the studio of Pablo Picasso for the first time. In the years that followed, the two artists, apparently so different in personality and background, formed a professional bond essential to each other's pretension to succeed as avant-garde painters. They compared ideas, critically analyzed their paintings and went off to paint in different places armed with the way forward sign-posted by Paul Cezanne in his Bibemus Quarry works, which both would have seen at the Autumn 1907 Cezanne Retrospective in Paris. Both the above works were painted by Picasso in Northern France and clearly demonstrate Cezanne's concept of geometric simplification, but taken to a new level.



*The Viaduct at L'Estaque.*  
1908. Oil on Canvas, Braque.



*Normandy Harbour.*  
1909. Oil on canvas, Braque.

Georges Braque, born in 1882, in Argenteuil on the outskirts of Paris, trained first as a house decorator and later studied art in Rouen and later Paris at the Academie Humbert. A quiet man, he must have complemented the extrovert and brash Picasso. They worked together until Braque enlisted in the French army on the outbreak of war in 1914. In 1915 at Carency, he sustained a severe head wound, which caused temporary blindness. After a prolonged period of convalescence and rehabilitation, he was able to return to painting towards the end of the war. The above works were painted in L'Estaque in 1908-9.

## *Still Life with Glass, Fruit & Knife*

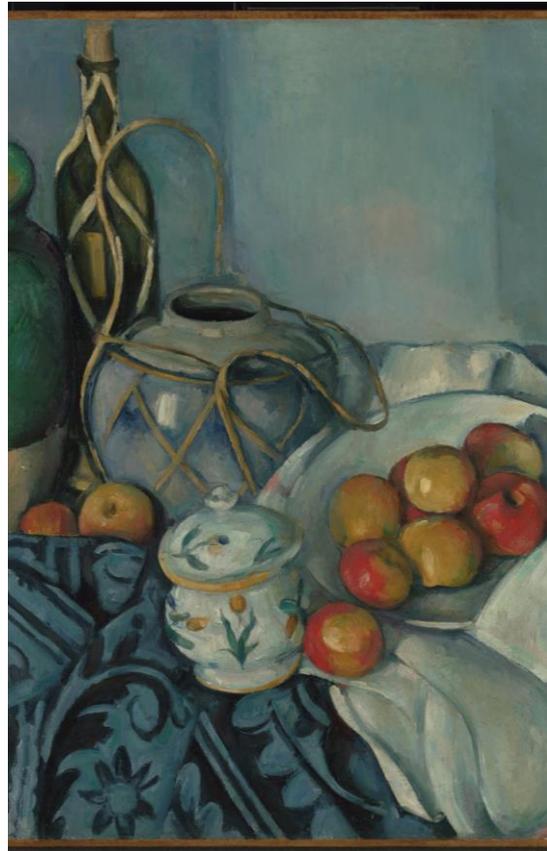
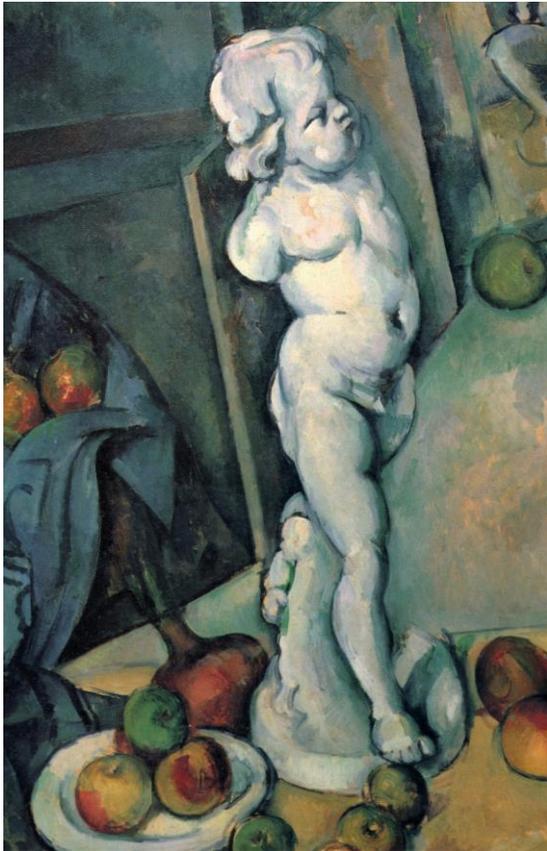
1879, oil on canvas, Private collection

Paul Cezanne's earliest still life's date back to the late 1860s, during his early days in Paris. However, *Still Life with Glass, Fruit & Knife* a much more advanced work artistically, is a justly famous work, so much so that Gauguin included it in his *Portrait of Marie Henry*, 1890 and even more importantly Maurice Denis, made it the focal point in his *Homage to Cezanne* of 1900, now in the Musee d'Orsay. Cezanne's unease with naked models meant that still-life's became his laboratory for experimentation. Here he could arrange objects at his leisure and ponder for hours on the optimal composition. One of his most famous remarks eulogises the humble apple: 'I will with an apple astonish Paris.' And indeed he would by the end of his life fulfill this prophecy, confirmed by the popularity for both collectors and Art lovers of his astonishingly beautiful still life paintings, many prominently featuring the apple. This group of objects has been organised in Cezanne's exploration of the relationship between objects. The elevated, rather than the more formal frontal format, afforded more visual interest, allowing him to look into the fruit bowl and the glass. However, there are ambiguities; the glass and bowl do not sit centrally on their bases and the ellipses are not true. And at the lower edge of the composition, the viewer is uncertain what is happening at the front of the table. The knife precariously placed, its handle overlying the edge, is an artistic device used to provide a degree of tension within the composition; note again, Cezanne's use of his renowned 'constructive brushwork.'



*Still Life with Apples.* Detail  
1894. Oil on canvas, private

*Still Life with Plaster Cupid.* Detail  
1894. Oil on canvas, Courtauld.



Two of Cézanne's finest still life's, both of these demonstrate the degree to which by this time, Cézanne was refining subjective vision, which is constantly ordering the space according to one's position in relation to groups of objects. In the complex *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, he is attempting to render human vision, which is subjective, continuous and informed by memory.

By placing the plaster Cupid at the centre of the work, Cézanne is referring to the great humanist triumph of the Greeks and Romans, which in turn informed Renaissance and Naturalistic representation. In its pose, the Cupid even displays *contaposto*, one of the most pivotal developments of Renaissance sculpture, giving it an almost dynamic effect. The Cupid cast also appears larger than life, although only 46 cms high and the apple on the floor top left appears as large as those on the table. There are also ambiguities in relationships between objects; the drapery at the bottom left merges with the painted still life canvas above it and the foliage of the onion appears to fuse with the table leg in the same canvas. These and other inconsistencies of space are compounded by the paradoxes about the nature of the reality depicted, for example between 'real' and painted fruit and drapery. There are similar inconsistencies in *Still Life with Apples*. Whereas the large blue water container appears to be viewed straight on, the dish of apples and the compote jar are seen from above.



*Still Life with Apples and Peaches.*  
1905. Oil on canvas. N.G.A. Washington.

*Still Life with Apples and Peaches* is one of Cézanne's final still life's. Of it the writer Peter Handke wrote in, *The Teacher of Sainte-Victoire*, 'The pears, peaches, apples and onions, the vases, bowls and bottles, partly because of the slight displacements and crooked surfaces, like fairy tale objects are just about to come to life.'

Cézanne's innovation was that he put into his paintings his own doubts about objects related to himself, recognising that viewpoints are in flux, that we routinely see things from multiple, sometimes contradictory viewpoints. It is binocular vision, two eyes, two viewpoints and therefore doubt, in contrast to the tyrannical monocular vision (the lens and mirror), view of Caravaggio, Velasquez and Vermeer etc .

Generations of painters have revered Paul Cézanne and with good reason. Of him, Picasso declared that he was *The mother who protects her children* and Matisse most tellingly declared Cézanne to be, *The father of us all*.

## Picasso. *Vase Bowl & Lemon.*

1907. Oil on canvas. Private

The influence of Paul Cezanne is immediately evident in *Vase Bowl & Lemon*, one of Picasso's first still-life works with a Cubist look, although the term as such was not coined until 1911. Following Cezanne's doctrine that, 'everything in Nature takes its form from the sphere, cone, or cylinder', simple geometric shapes have been used. Braque's *The Fruit Dish*, is a much more advanced work, where the simplification and fragmentation of objects has progressed to a much greater extent.



## Braque. *The Fruit Dish.*

1909. oil on canvas, Stockholm.

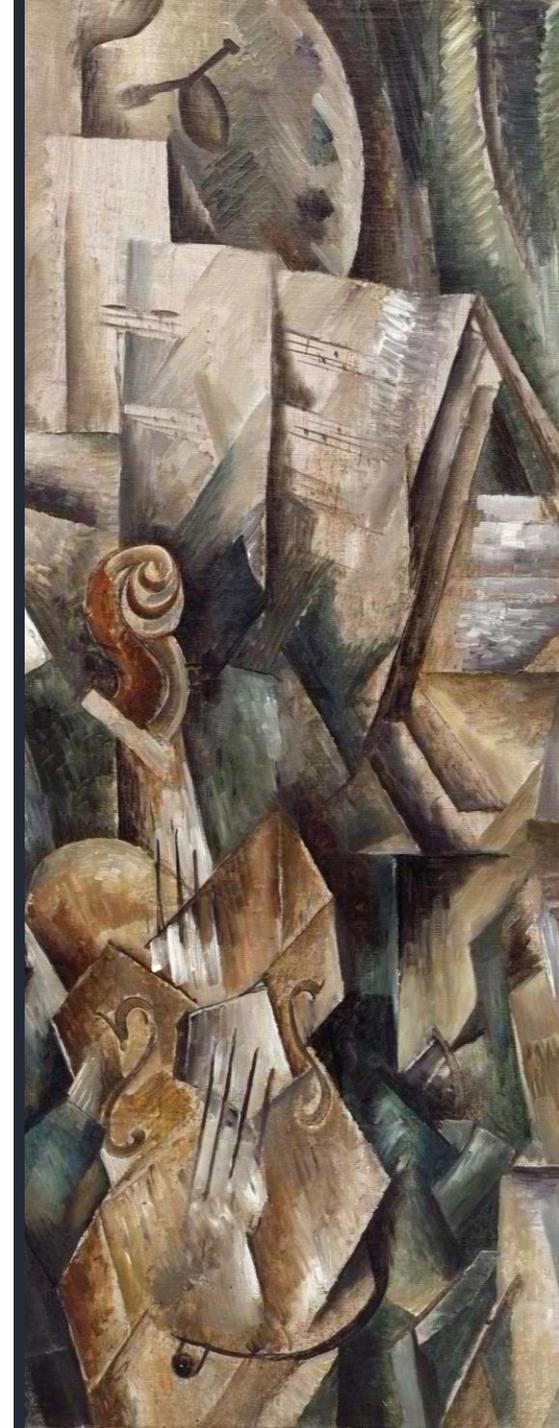


***Girl with a Mandoline.*** Picasso.  
1910. Oil on canvas, MoMA.  
(below)

***Violin & Palette.*** Braque.  
1909. Oil on canvas, Guggenheim.  
(opposite)



'I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them.' This remark by Picasso explains the essential artistic divergence between Picasso and Cezanne. These two paintings by the authors of Cubism confirm just how far Picasso and Braque had advanced since their meeting in 1907. To clarify and systematize a new conception of this vision, they first had to make a complete break with the figurative and naturalistic traditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; perspective and depth now gave away to how one could understand form and interpret it on a flat surface. To do so they felt it necessary to fragment, separate the elements, penetrate beneath the surface and reveal those parts, which under normal circumstances cannot be seen. The appearance of an object taken from just one point of view, was manifestly insufficient; it should be conceived from all angles. Initially, they also felt that restricting their palettes to sepia and grey with occasional olive-green, concentrated the viewer's mind on form, rather than colour. And traditional academic modelling gave way to flat crystalline facets, which built up together to give the appearance of solid form.



## *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler.* Picasso.

1910. Oil on canvas, Art Institute Chicago.

Whilst Gertrude and Leo Stein were the patrons, who supported Picasso throughout the somewhat lean years of 1906-10, it was the dealer Daniel Kahnweiler, who realizing Picasso and Braque's dramatic breakthrough, encouraged them in 1910 to give him sole rights to sell their paintings and strongly encouraged them not to exhibit in public salons. This business practice, first originated with the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in the 1860s with Delacroix, Corot and Millet, and then later in the 1870s with Edouard Manet and the Impressionists. Later still, in the 1890s, Amboise Vollard did the same in respect of Cézanne.

This portrait is widely considered the masterpiece of what subsequently became known as High Analytical Cubism, where crystalline planes of the figure are permeated by the surrounding space. Nevertheless, with a little effort the outline of the figure becomes visible and Picasso's ability as a caricaturist gives substance to the sitter's identity. Color is subdued so as not to distract from the complexity of the geometric, almost abstract form of the sitter.



## *Three Musicians.* Picasso

1921. Oil on canvas, Philadelphia.

This painting and a similar version, painted in Fontainebleau exemplify the Synthetic Cubist Style and are thought to be a nostalgic tribute to the heady days of pre-war Cubism and 'lost' friendship. In many ways it's a culmination of all that Picasso had learnt along the way. Although appearing to be a collage, made from cut out pieces of coloured paper, the canvas has in fact been painted with sharp angles and flat planes of colour to give this illusion. The represented musicians wearing the masks of the Commedia dell' Art are in addition to Picasso, with violin, his good friends, Guillaume Apollinaire, deceased and Max Jacob, who underwent a religious conversion and entered a Monastery

The renowned art historian, Ernst Gombrich described Cubism as, **'the most radical attempt to stamp out ambiguity and to enforce one reading of a picture, that of a man-made construction, a coloured canvas.'** Which brings to mind the words of Maurice Denis in the opening lines of his famous essay of 1890: **'Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a female nude or some form of anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order.'**

In their lifetimes, Paul Cezanne and others, notably Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh, had determined new ways of visualising the world around them in paint on canvas, turning their backs on Academic dogma and reinforcing the two-dimensionality of pictures, but it was Pablo Picasso, who made the quantum leap forward, that led to what we now recognise as 'Modern Art'

