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Pablo Picasso's 1906-1907 Transformation: from the "Primitive" to the "Rational"

Enrique Mallen

World Languages & Cultures, Sam Houston State University 1905 University Ave, Huntsville, USA
Email: mallen@shsu.edu

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Abstract

1906-1907 was a transitional period for Picasso, dividing youth from maturity, promise from fulfillment. In two years of intense work, a painter of late-nineteenth-century sensibility would be reborn as a prophet of modernity. Taking crucial steps on the path to an artistic revolution, he had no clear destination in mind except the intention to push his art in a new direction to challenge Matisse and his Fauve colleagues. In seeking an alternative to the Frenchman's chromatic profligacy, he steeped himself in the art of his country's Iberian past. His search led him back to the art of Gauguin, but also forward to new discoveries like the work of Paul Cézanne and African sculpture.

Keywords

Picasso, Iberian, Gauguin, Matisse, Cézanne, African, Cubism

1. Picasso's Definitive Trip to Paris

By 1904. Barcelona had become simply too small for Pablo Picasso. Comfort and protection were provided by the city, but the audience was unable to comprehend his recent goals. Even worse, it didn't give him the inspiration he needed to develop as an artist. Despite his capacity for creativity, he did not flourish in isolation. Rivals who were as driven to succeed as he was, determined individuals working in diverse fields, who could push him with concepts from new sources and provide him with different viewpoints, were necessary (Unger, 2018, 148). On April 12, 1904, he and Sebastià Junyer-Vidal left for Paris after learning that a Montmartre studio would become available since their friend Paco Durrio was preparing to leave the *Bateau-Lavoir* for a larger place in the Maquis (with room for a pottery kiln) (Palau, 1980, 370). They reached their final destination the following day. Picasso had hoped that Montmartre could serve as his permanent base

(Richardson, 1991, 293).

Unfortunately, the two friends would not get to Paris in time to see the *Salon des Indépendants* that ran from February 21 to March 24 and included works by Camoin, Kees van Dongen, Dufy, Friesz, Girieud, Manguin, Marquet, Matisse, Jean Metzinger, Puy, Vallotton, Louis Valtat, and Vlaminck, plus a special exhibition of Cézanne. Matisse had become *secrétaire adjoint* at that Salon and was exhibiting six paintings that would be praised by critics like Roger Marx and Maurice Nanteuil (Cousins & Elderfield, 1992, 87). But it was Vlaminck who made the biggest impression as a newcomer with four of his compositions. The artist worked instinctively, brutally, and was indifferent to the business of promoting his work in galleries (Franck, 2001, 68). Nevertheless, Matisse had taken the initiative and introduced him to Vollard, who had already spotted him as he wandered around rue Laffitte, "a tall, powerful fellow whose red scarf, knotted round his neck, might have suggested some militant anarchist, if, from the way in which he was carrying a canvas, I had not immediately recognized him for an artist" (Roe, 2015, 85). Of one of the pictures that he saw, a sunset, he noted that it seemed to have been "squeezed out of tubes of paint in a fit of rage"—a description not inconsistent with Vlaminck's own explanation of his rough technique.

The clash between the cultural establishment and the avant-garde had finally settled into a predictable pattern in modernist circles. One sensitive observer lamented that they were still living through "a period of transition in which nothing definitive was being created" after the disappearance of several major innovators. Van Gogh had committed suicide in 1890, Seurat had passed away a year later; Toulouse-Lautrec had died in 1901, at the age of thirty-six; and Gauguin in May 1903 after many years of self-imposed exile in the South Seas. Of the great quintet lumped under the unhelpful label of post-Impressionism, only Cézanne remained, but the pictorial experiments he was currently engaged in were taking place in far-off Aix-en-Provence. He was only slowly beginning to get the attention of critics and collectors (Unger, 2018, 150-151).

When not busy with work, Picasso would visit the many gallery shows all around him. One of them particularly got his attention. It was Matisse's first solo exhibition running June 1 - 18 at *Galerie Vollard*. It featured forty-five paintings and one drawing dating from between 1897 to 1903. In the introduction to the catalogue, the critic Roger Marx praised the artist for his spurned fashion success and recommended his harmonious synthesis of the lessons of Manet and Cézanne. Matisse had included a few early experimental pieces painted in Corsica but, otherwise, it mainly showcased works painted in shades of gray that Vollard believed his clients preferred. In any event, neither style seemed to appeal to the general public, since there were no purchases. Surprisingly, after the close of the show, the gallerist offered to buy Matisse's newer work for the sum of 200 francs, promptly reselling it to a German collector (Roe, 2015, 86). While Picasso most probably dropped in at the gallery, he had not had an opportunity to meet the French painter yet (Bouvier, 2019, 135).

Around mid-June, Picasso and Junyer-Vidal moved into Durrio's top-floor dilapidated studio at 13, rue Ravignan (now Place Emile Goudeau) (McCully, 1994, 213). To the locals, the ramshackle building made mostly of wood, zinc, and dirty glass, with stove-pipes sticking up at haphazard was known as the *Maison du Trappeur*, apparently because its decrepit appearance conformed to their notion of a log cabin in back-woods Alaska. As summer advanced, Picasso's palette and subject began to adjust. Now that the blue light, which had permeated his paintings for the last two years, had begun to lose its chill, even the scrawny and sulky *Femme au casque de cheveux* (1904), with her indigo chignon and ice-blue skin, could afford to flaunt touches of pink on her lips. Flesh tones became rosier, often accompanied by even reddish backgrounds. The model for the portrait might have been Margot, perhaps with the intention of selling it to Frédé. Around this time she also appeared in two very similar gouaches *Femme à la corneille* (1904) and *Femme à la corneille* (1904) where autumnal tones define her weightless body against a background of hard blue (Léal, Piot & Bernadac, 2000, 72). The dynamic contour; the contrasting colors (black, red, blue); the large and small, open and closed forms; the emphasis on the central area combined with lateral displacement; light juxtaposed with dark with the white paper gleaming through; the deep black of the crow's plumage against the girl's pale face chiseled out like in a Flemish primitive painting—all of these features are intentionally evocative. The long, slender fingers underscore the intimacy of her gesture (Warncke & Walther, 1991, 111).

Penrose described Montmartre as "being a village within a city," almost self-contained (Penrose, 1981, 110). Within a small distance a great variety of amusements and theaters were at hand. Picasso gathered with his friends in the more run-down cafés or sat beneath the plane trees in the place Ravignan, where they all could look down across the roofs and spires of the city below as they discussed the affairs of the day like the recently opened exhibition of newly acquired archaic Iberian sculptures (six to fifth century BC) at the Musée du Louvre. Those pieces had been recently excavated by Pierre Paris and Arthur Engel at sites in different areas of Spain, notably at Cerro de los Santos (Albacete) and Osuna (near Seville), the latter in Picasso's home region of Andalucía (Daemgen, 2005, 18). He was still most comfortable speaking in Spanish or Catalan, although his French had improved since his first arrival. The *bande* of compatriots would draw up their chairs outside the front door of the *Bateau-Lavoir* and chat loudly in their native languages. At midday and in the evenings, they would go to Azon's *Aux enfants de la Butte* near rue Ravignan, or Vernin's on rue Cavalotti, where they could eat cheaply and often on credit. Dinner could cost as little as ninety cents. Then there was Au Lapin Agile, where Frédé and his Burgundian wife (a famous cook) offered an excellent supper with unlimited wine for two francs (O'Brian, 1994, 130). Picasso continued to frequent the ivy-covered establishment with its shaded terrace when he was not getting high at one of the various *fumeries*. With its rough wooden tables and stone floor, the moldering room dimly lit by two kerosene lamps which smoked under their pleated red paper

shades was still gritty enough to appeal to the gang, though Frédé, hoping to attract a better class of customer, had pompously inscribed the words *Cabaret Artistique* on an exterior wall (Unger, 2018, 185).

2. The 1905 *Salon d'Automne*

From October 15 to November 15, the *Salon d'Automne* running at *Grand Palais des Champs-Élisées*, Paris included, among its two thousand forty-four items, rooms dedicated to Renoir (thirty-five works), Toulouse-Lautrec (twenty-eight), Puvis (forty-four) and Cézanne (thirty-one). For the latter, Matisse had lent *Trois baigneuses* in his collection. He was represented by fourteen paintings, as well as two of his plaster sculptures, the first time his work in this medium was shown to the public. He had returned to Paris this month—he would remain there until mid-May, 1905—bringing with him another new painting, *Luxe, calme et volupté*, a sunny idealized scene painted predominantly in warm pink tones depicting a group of nude women relaxing on the beach and a single figure, her arms raised to her wet hair, emerging from the sea (Cousins & Elderfield, 1992, 87). He had already caught art critics' attention. Louis Vauxcelles singled him out as the strongest of the group of former Moreau students. The Salon also showed quite a few paintings by Redon and Rouault.

Louis Vauxcelles wrote of Matisse in *Gil Blas*: "This young painter—yet another dissident from the Moreau studio who has risen freely towards the summits of Cézanne—is assuming, willingly or not, the position of leader of a school" (Baldassari et al. 2002, 363). Matisse was on the hanging committee of the *Salon des Indépendants* which ran from March 24 to April 30. It featured several artists soon to be associated with Fauvism. Henri himself exhibited eight works, including *Luxe, calme et volupté*, which touched upon deep-seated fantasies of delight, calm and sensuality, attracting considerable attention and confirming his leadership position among his contemporaries. His latest work incorporated the characteristic dots of pure color of Neo-Impressionism, perhaps influenced by Seurat, who was also featured in a retrospective. However, he defied convention by making them larger and more distinct, such that they were no longer visually combined. Rather, the high-keyed pigment blobs developed a personality of their own, bringing the landscape to life while ever losing their function as markers on a flat surface. His liberation of line from its simply descriptive purpose was also radical. His brush created elegant arabesques on the canvas that only vaguely resembled the forms they depicted, rather than mindlessly adhering to the contours of the figures (Unger, 2018, 222). Elderfield has remarked that although Matisse valued, and was determined to maintain, the traditional, physical substantiality of figure representation, eventually it was the very bright substance of the pigment itself that came to fulfill the functions that form and structure had fulfilled earlier. Yet, he maintained that he was a painter not merely of visual sensations but of the feelings such sensations evoked in him: feelings of plenitude and intense sensuality (Elderfield, 1992, 15-16).

By the end of the year, Picasso painted two floral still lifes in the manner of Redon, *Fleurs dans un vase bleu* (1904) and *Vase de fleurs* (1904). Picasso rarely painted bouquets unless he needed to raise money. One of these gouaches may be the flower piece that Fernande remembers the art dealer Eugène Soulié commissioned from the artist (Frank, 2021, 310). In these works, we may also see an early reaction to the work of Matisse. By this time, the Frenchman had taken the color theories of the neo-Impressionists (above all his friends Signac and Cross) and transformed them into an explosively colorful style. For all that he had succeeded in dazzling the art world, Picasso did not let achievement impede his progress. He went on to accomplish what he called a more lasting interpretation of reality, drawing on Cézanne, van Gogh and Gauguin, the same sources that Matisse had drawn on, although coming up with a totally different synthesis (Richardson, 1991, 411).

3. Gertrude and Leo Stein

It was probably around mid-March of 1905 when, according to his own recollection, Leo Stein discovered Picasso's work at an exhibition recommended to him by Sagot. Leo lived with his sister at 27, rue de Fleurus. Gertrude had arrived in Paris in 1903, and had moved in with her brother. He had traveled to the city in the winter of 1902, and had been the one to find the apartment. Soon after his arrival, Leo had started collecting, using his inherited funds to cover the purchases. He began with relatively new artists since he simply could not afford the old masters. It must have been the one at *Galeries Serrurier*, the only occurring at the beginning of the year. His sister Gertrude described the venue as "a little furniture store where there were some paintings being shown by Picasso." Although the gallery's premises could hardly be considered a "little store," it is true that it was devoted to "furnishings and artistic decoration." Having made an offer for a painting hanging there, which remained unanswered, Leo would turn instead to Sagot and acquire *Famille d'acrobates avec singe* (1905) before the summer. This gouache was probably one of those shown at *Galeries Serrurier*, since in his poetic account of the exhibition. Apollinaire (1905) referred to "acrobats among the familiar monkeys, white horses and dogs resembling bears" (Roe, 2015, 131).

Leo Stein recalled his visit to Sagot's. "There was a Spaniard whose works he lauded, and as he had done me some favors, I bought a little Spanish watercolor; but when he recommended another Spaniard. I balked. 'But this is the real thing,' he said. So I went to the exhibition, and in fact this was the real thing. Besides the pictures, there were some drawings for which I left an offer, since there was no one in charge of the show, but from this I heard nothing further. When, a few days later, I dropped in at Sagot's to talk about Picasso, he had a picture by him which I bought. It was the picture of a mountebank with wife and child and an ape. The ape looked at the child so lovingly that Sagot was sure this scene was derived from life; but I knew more about apes than Sagot did and was sure that no such baboon-like creature belonged in such a scene. Picasso told me later that the ape was his

invention, and it was a proof that he was more talented as a painter than as a naturalist (Stein, 1947, 169).

On Tuesdays Picasso walked with his friend André Salmon halfway across Paris to the rowdy soirées that he and his fellow editors of *Vers et Prose* organized at the *Closerie des Lilas* at the top of boulevard Saint Michel, on the borderline between the old Latin Quarter and the up-and-coming artist's section of Montparnasse. Paul Fort's new magazine had appeared in March and featured contributions by Apollinaire, Gide, Maeterlinck, and others (Read, 1997, 212). Matisse was one of the first subscribers. So well attended were these gatherings that they would soon supersede the Symbolist *Soirées de La Plume*. Fort was part of a circle of intellectuals surrounding the unbearable Jean Moréas, whom Apollinaire held in high regard. The *Closure des Lilas* evenings would enable Picasso to have contact with artists and writers from all over the world, among them Italians like Soffici, Marinetti and Severini (who married Fort's daughter), and Americans like Stuart Merrill, Germans, Dutch and Scandinavians, and the young Greek student Christian Zervos.

Leo Stein had been another regular at the *Closerie des Lilas* going back to his days as a student at the Académie Julian. The discussions, ranging widely, from politics to banter, greatly interested him. At these evenings Leo frequently ran into the journalist and art critic Henri-Pierre Roché. The latter had been supplementing his income as an agent buying modern art for rich Americans. Leo had met Roché in the studio of a sculptor named Kathleen Bruce, who had been working on a bust of his nephew Allan. Henri-Pierre told him he could arrange a meeting with Picasso in late May (Richardson, 1991, 360), at which time he wrote Leo again: "I shall bring the American of whom I spoke to see you at your house tomorrow, Wednesday morning, at 10.00 a.m." (Riedel, 2011, 102). By end of the month, Leo had already made his acquaintance. He would later say of their first encounter: "One could not see Picasso without getting an indelible impression. His short, solid but somehow graceful figure, his firm head with the hair falling forward, careless but not slovenly, emphasized his extraordinary seeing eyes" (Franck, 2001, 87). Leo's interest in both Picasso and Matisse would only intensify the competitive nature of both artists. Matisse had been working closely with André Derain, who pulled him away from the constraints of Signac's divisionism. If Derain's inconstancy and pride had not ruled out a long-term commitment to another living artist, he and Matisse might have enjoyed a partnership as constructive as Picasso and Braque's eventually would. Released from the army since September of the previous year, Derain joined Matisse in Collioure for the summer. Together they made a brief visit to Spain. Through Etienne Terrus, a painter from nearby Elne, they met Aristide Maillol, who would introduce both to the painter Georges-Daniel de Monfreid, a custodian of Gauguin's archives and late Oceania pictures. Working alongside Derain, Matisse made spontaneous land-scapes using curls and strips of contrasting colors set against a white ground.

Picasso's work began to show the influence of his study of primitive and classical Mediterranean sculpture at the Louvre. Soffici recalled that whenever Picasso visited the museum, he always returned to the ground-floor "where he would pace around and around like a hound in search of game between the rooms of Egyptian and Phoenician antiquities—among the sphinxes, basalt idols and papyri, and the sarcophagi painted in vivid colors" (Soffici, 1942, 365-366). One of his abilities was to bring the past into the present. It came easily to him to see Ingres in terms of Egyptian art, and vice versa, and in absorbing and blending elements from both he enrolled himself within the newly defined primitivist classicism. Also in sculpture, he turned not only to older artistic traditions, but also to the example set by Gauguin, as mentioned earlier. The Frenchman's idea of the "primitive" provided a compelling contemporary analogy to the "purity'" of archaic art, which the exponents of the new classicism held up as a model (McCully, 1992, 52). He later gave this Gauguinesque portrait of the Dutch woman to his friend Paco Durrio to hang alongside his extensive collection of works by the French artist (a measure of his pride in it).

4. Derain, Vlaminck and Matisse

Over the course of the summer, André Derain continued his experiments in Collioure, bowled over by the effect of the light and its potential to transform his work. On July 28, he had written his friend Maurice Vlaminck. He had noticed that when sunlight was very strong, shadows were not darker but, on the contrary, very pale. He also realized that brightness naturally "deforms" what one sees, so light must be seen as a medium that itself determines the dimensions of contrasting surfaces and the rhythm of their proportions. It was not a question of brightening the content of a picture but of making light emanate from it (Roe, 2015, 110-111). At the same time, Maurice had made a discovery of his own that would have a profound and lasting influence on virtually all the painters in Montmartre. One hot, sunny afternoon in August, after he had been painting the barges on the Seine at Argenteuil, he went to a bistro nearby frequented by coal heavers. He noticed, three African statuettes on the shelf behind the bar, two from Dahomey, streaked with red, yellow and white, and a third from the Ivory Coast, all in black. The owner agreed to part with them in exchange for a round of drinks (Franck, 2001, 96-97). He most probably revealed his new finding to André. Soon after he bought more examples from one of his father's friends who, when the painter had shown him the statues, had said he had some himself; and his wife was always nagging him to get rid of them. As a result, Maurice left with a large white mask and two figures from the Ivory Coast. He took them out for Derain to see when his friend traveled back to Paris. André was immediately fired up by these exotic pieces and offered to buy one of them. He hung it on the wall in his studio. When Matisse saw it there after his return to the city in early September he was dumbfounded. It might have influenced the dramatic portraits of his wife *Femme au chapeau* and *La raie verte*. As Elderfield declared, it was not merely a

new mode of making a picture, it was a new way of conceiving the world (Elderfield, 1992, 52).

Derain, Vlaminck and Matisse were featured in the exhibition "Ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, dessin, gravure, architecture et art décoratif" running from October 18 to November 25 at the third *Salon d'Automne* at *Grand Palais des Champs-Élisées*. Their work was hung in the celebrated room VII along with other paintings by Marquet, Camoin and Manguin, and others, the artists who became known as *Les Fauves*. The Salon also presented works by van Dongen and Renoir, sculptures by Maillol (notably *La Mediterranée*), as well as retrospectives of Manet (thirty-one paintings) and Ingres (sixty-eight paintings, including *Bain Turc*; a gallery of ten paintings by Cézanne; and a group of three paintings by Rousseau. The critic Louis Vauxcelles, who admired Le Douanier, claimed that his case demonstrated "that the most ignorant and untaught man can be a gifted artist. It was said of him that he was a kind of deaf-mute of painting, alone and intuitive, going merrily along his way, a way that no one could share and whose rules he himself didn't know—if there were any rules" (Franck, 2001, 105). Also in room VII was a quattrocento-like bust, which is what had caused Vauxcelles in his preview of the Salon in Gil Blas to comment, "La candeur de ce buste surprend au milieu de l'orgie des tons purs: Donatello parmi les Fauves," and christen the "Fauve movement" (Hülsewig-Johnen, 2011, 39). The paintings had put the president of the *Salon d'Automne*, Monsieur Jourdain, on guard. Though he had wished to appear tolerant, he nevertheless could not be seen to be too openly breaking with academic tradition. He had begged the jury not to accept Matisse's landscape, insisting that their refusal could only be in the interest of the artist himself. He was, however, overruled. The scandal of the exhibition was such that the President of the Republic refused to attend the inauguration.

From October 21 to November 21, Matisse once again joined Camoin, Derain, Dufy, Manguin, Marquet, and Vlaminck in a showing at *Galerie Berthe Weill*. The gallerist wrote in her memoirs: "The Fauves are beginning to tame the art lovers. Apollinaire, a regular visitor to my gallery, and an equally revolutionary poet, is particularly interested in the work of these revolutionary artists. How boisterous these young artists are! Matisse, the eldest, however, remains very reserved; Picasso and Apollinaire, who have become very friendly, arouse his suspicion ... Why? Quickly reassured, he becomes one of the clan".

5. The Steins' Meeting with Picasso

Although he did not authorize any exhibitions in Paris after the *Galeries Serrurier*, there were a few unauthorized ones of Picasso's works like the one at an unnamed dealer's possibly in November, according to Leo Stein, that Sagot packed him off to see. Ten of his works would also be seen while the *Salon d'Automne* was going on in a group show—"Exposition Picasso, Girieud, Launay et Dufrénoy—held simultaneously by both Vollard and Sagot at their galleries on 6, rue Laffitte and 46, rue Laffitte, respectively. Both dealers must have included recent purchases in

their shared exhibition. However, in general, Picasso's reluctance to exhibit regularly or even publish his work made it difficult for people without an entrée to his studio to follow his development. Anyone who wanted to keep up with his increasingly meteoric progress was obliged to seek out the artist or pay regular visits to Weill, Soulié, or Sagot for an odd piece of his they might have in their premises.

In early November, Leo Stein discovered *Fillette à la corbeille fleurie* (*Linda la Bouquetière*) (1905) at Sagot's. The dealer had placed an advertisement for it under the title La fleur du pavé on the cover of *Le Courrier Français* (November 2) (Daix, 1992, 39). Gertrude did not approve of the painting. She later wrote that she found something rather appalling in the drawing of the legs and feet, something that repelled and shocked her. At their request, a short time later, the dealer arranged for them to meet Picasso in his establishment. Despite their clear differences, they got along, and decided to meet again. It was already the end of the month when Roché brought the Steins to the *Bateau-Lavoir*. Picasso knew the journalist from the *Vers et Prose* gatherings at the *Closerie des Lilas*. Amidst the usual disorder of tubes of paint, dogs, pet mouse, bowls of unemptied liquid of varying description and piles of Fernande's clothes, they found the artist already waiting for his visitors. He took out a few drawings to show them, and Leo noticed how closely he scrutinized his own work; he was "surprised that there was anything left on the paper, so absorbing was his gaze" (Richardson, 1991, 398).

After completing *La famille de saltimbanques* (*Les bateleurs*) (1905), Picasso had planned another ambitious, multifigure picture on the theme of a group of adolescents watering their horses in an arid, mountainous landscape. Those new visions were clearly in the spirit of both Paul Gauguin and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (whose work had been featured at the recent *Indépendants*). The result was a combination of classical and primitive, which he was searching for. What had attracted him to Puvis was his would-be-modern way of classicizing things by simplifying drawing, eliminating anecdotal detail and establishing an idyllic mood in a minor key. His interest in Gauguin would continue to grow as the year progressed.

6. Picasso's Encounter with Matisse

The *Salon des Indépendants* that Picasso gave as the place of his first encounter with Henri Matisse. It ran from March 20 to April 30 at Grandes Serres de la Ville de Paris, Cours-la-Reine. Among the elected members of the hanging committee were Matisse, Signac and Metzinger. Following the *Salon d'Automne* of 1905 which had brought about the beginning of Fauvism, this Salon marked the first time that all the Fauves showed together: Derain, Marquet and Camoin, and their friends, Dufy and Friesz. Braque took part with seven submissions, all of which he would later destroy. He probably met Derain and Matisse at this time. The centerpiece of the exhibition was the latter's monumental *Le bonheur de vivre*, which Leo Stein would later buy, while the smaller oil sketch, simultaneously exhibited at *Galerie Druet*, would be purchased by his brother Michael (Fluegel, 1980, 59).

Critics were horrified by the flatness, bright colors, eclectic style and mixed technique of the painting. It was while the Salon was still running that the Stein siblings took Matisse to the *Bateau-Lavoir*.

At first, Picasso and Matisse met regularly and subjected each other's work to intense scrutiny. He later said: "You've got to be able to picture side by side everything Matisse and I were doing at that time. No one has ever looked at Matisse's painting more carefully than I; and no one has looked at mine more carefully than he" (Daix, 1993, 64). He realized that the older painter was developing into one of the most inventive innovators in history, one who knew how to evoke not just light but space, form and atmosphere through color, and how to establish a whole new "abstract" range of harmonies. His sense of color was far more instinctive than Picasso's ever would be.

The competitive Picasso went into his work, so to speak, full steam now that he had the opportunity to evaluate his opponent in person; he could no longer permit the senior artist's dominance to remain uncontested. In the face of his rival's ubiquity, he preferred to remain aloof, biding his time until he felt he had the upper hand. It was Mont-martre versus the Latin Quarter, the *bande à Picasso* versus the Fauves, as Unger notes (Unger, 2018, 229). And yet, there is a certain complicity between Picasso's *Chevaux au bain* (1906) and the Arcadian *Bonheur de Vivre* that Matisse had exhibited at the *Salon des Indépendants*.

Picasso had also probably seen Gauguin's *Cavaliers sur la plage* at Vollard's in 1903. Twin boys stand almost dead center, next to twin horses that look as if they should be harnessed to a chariot on a Greek mirror back; one horse is black, the other white. On one side a boy rides toward us, and on the other, one moves away. But he relied on other sources as well. The gouache reflects the early Renaissance practice of showing figures repeated in the same composition albeit reversed. It was a conspicuous feature in Mantegna, on whom Leo Stein was planning to write a book, and he might have pointed it out to him. Picasso had also taken mental notes from Degas jockey scenes like *Avant la course*. Finally, the fresco-like palette of grayed pinks, ocher, and pale blue of Picasso's gouache bears the imprint of Puvis, whose work had been celebrated in Paris in 1904.

By the time Picasso was ready to paint a definitive version of his painting on the Arcadian theme, he had already seen *Le bonheur de vivre* at the Salon. Leo Stein bought the Matisse around mid-April, regarding it as "the most important work of our time" (Baldassari et al., 2002, 363). This bothered Picasso. For all the radicalism of its means as reflected in that canvas, he found Fauvism's goals fairly conventional. After all, Matisse and his colleagues sought to "delight the eyes" and "satisfy the mind's quest for harmony" (Unger, 2018, 262). Even the prudent Vollard had put money down for the purchase of twenty paintings and studies by the Frenchman for which he paid 2,200 francs towards the end of the month. Picasso needed an absolute win. He must have realized that the Puvis-inspired riders would hardly have qualified him for victory in the avant-garde stakes, so the project was abandoned (Mallen, 2025). What he did was develop several offshoots

from that composition showing one single youth accompanied by a horse. One of the preparatory watercolors, *Le meneur de cheval nu: jeune homme nu conduisant un cheval* (*Étude*) (1906), shows the male nude slightly turned towards the horse, the arm that touches the animal's neck and one of its legs placed almost parallel to each other. This serves to emphasize the harmony between human and beast. The artist would progressively accentuate the sculptured aspect of both figures, investing them with an authority characteristic of classical statuary. This transformation was analogous to a progressive formal abstraction in the execution of his characters, an indication of Picasso's contemporary search for greater sobriety and classicism, as Rivero and Llorens have pointed out (Rivero & Llorens, 1992, 282-284).

7. Iberan Sculptures and Trip to Spain

Around mid-winter, he visited the Louvre exhibition of Iberian sculptures dating largely to the fourth century BC that had been excavated a few years earlier at Osuna and Cerro de los Santos, revealing to him a primitive art indigenous to his own country that he had been unaware of. To the non-archeological eye these objects might have seemed of little aesthetic value, they tended to be small and crude in execution, but to him they were a major revelation. In addition to their atavistic aura, their roughness and primitiveness commended them to someone who was looking for ways to demolish traditional canons. There was a sense among all ground-breaking painters that Western traditions were spent, and each in his own way should revitalize artistic practice by tapping into something more primeval, more authentic. The Iberian statues he saw at the Louvre reflected the native art of his homeland before the arrival of Greek and Roman influences. Far from being put off by their slipshod execution, he cherished their raw power. This was exactly what he had been searching for in his own art—a candid approach to form free from any refinement. Gauguin had expressed in his creations a desire to recapture that power of origins lurking in the mythic imagination and ritual enactment of primitive cultures. In his view, the avant-garde should look for that replenishing metamorphosis that primitive artistic practices generated. Years later, the psychologist Erich Neuman would speak of a "breakdown of consciousness" that had carried artists back to "archaic qualities of participation mystique" leading to "constructive, creative elements of a new world vision" (Tucker, 1992, 1-26).

By May, Picasso started making specific plans for a trip home. He would take Fernande and go first to Barcelona to introduce her to his parents. Then he would look for a quieter place to work. He had heard of Gósol, an isolated village in Upper Catalonia five thousand feet up in the Pyrenees, near the little country of Andorra, through Enric Casanovas, who divided his time between Barcelona and Paris and sometimes spent the summer in that remote region. He might have also heard about the place from his old friend Jacint Reventós, who used to send his patients there to convalesce: "good air, good water, good milk and good meat." In

any case, all the arrangements for the trip were made by Casanovas (Palau & Fabre, 1992, 76). Such an isolated setting could bring about the changes he desired in his work. Surrounded by the bare landscapes and the rustic population, he could refine his style, finding what Gauguin had discovered in Tahiti or Pont-Aven: a form of purity, an unpolluted primitivism, and something else, as well: novelty.

At Gósol Picasso embraced the need to stage his own particular revolution toward modernity, and he did so in an almost monochrome ocher, the color of primeval nudity, a pigment ideally suited to a new creation that would permanently distance him from fin de siècle nostalgia (Jaques Pi, 2019, 228-229). The Gósol summer prompted many kinds of regression to ancient roots. In the background was still the impression those fifth- and sixth-century B.C. primitive Iberian sculptures had made on him. Picasso would work enthusiastically, as the huge number of works demonstrates. During the first part of his stay, his subjects were deeply influenced by what he had seen at the Louvre's exhibition. But, as Richardson wrote, "for the time being Picasso did not see how to harness their primitivism to his work. The months he was to spend in Spain in the summer would show him how to do so" (Richardson, 1991, 428). In its landscape and architecture Gósol itself was in perfect harmony with the search for centuries-old Iberian foundations. Spurred by his discovery of early Iberian art, Picasso now set out searching for simplified ways of sketching the locals using the same "primitive" seductiveness of those ancient sculptures. The generally reddish, clay colored palette of the Gósol paintings reflected a preoccupation with modeling and a turning back to his archaic, Mediterranean artistic roots. This would lead to a certain similarity or even uniformity among the models. We see this even in his own *Autoportrait* (1906) where he depicted himself with almond-shaped eyes, thin, arched eyebrows, and full sensual lips as if he were one of his ancestors. This is part of a graphic tendency towards depersonalization. Modeling of the features is suppressed in favor of sharp, isolated strokes that evoke direct carving. Playing on his own stocky proportions, he increased the ratio of skull to torso conveying a sense of compressed power. As Varnedoe has pointed out, "the unusually heavy line where the chin seems to rest on the clavicles simultaneously insists on the four-square chunkiness of the body and the masklike quality of the face" (Varnedoe 1996, 111-175). By diminishing the chin and proportionally enlarging the ear, nose, and eyes, Picasso transformed his physiognomy to suggest a more exotic identity, one marked by appropriate attributes of a "primitive' spirit."

At the beginning of his stay, he carried on with this classical manner, painting still, gently molding forms, and using pink and ocher as he had once used blue, so that some of the canvases were almost monochromatic. Later on there would come a certain hardening, the figures assuming a still more sculptural form as their faces gained an impassive, masklike quality, as though the severe, archaic Iberians in the Louvre were finally showing through. Particularly in his canvases, the proportions of the bodies were in the process of changing: they were becoming

thick-set, the heads shorter and more square, the eyes sightless or in shadows. As Cowling mentions, the figures sometimes recall great Mesopotamian statues. But, although their bulk, weight and extreme simplification suggest a dense, heavy material such as stone and the texture of the support remind us of huge slabs of stone, the texture and tonality of their flesh are more evocative of pottery surfaces. By this time, he had left both Symbolism and Naturalism behind in his desire to become un *primitif classique* (Cowling, 2002, 131-152).

Close inspection of *Buste de femme* (*Bois de Gósol*) (1906) reveals that the artist whittled a found piece of boxwood with a simple knife, rather than the conventional tools, and then applied color. Another stimulus for this might have been the Romanesque Gósol Madonna (Mahler, 2015, 52-53). Medieval sculpture was already appreciated in the Catalan artistic environment from the works of Santiago Rusiñol. Though thinly and sketchily executed, his paintings already hovered on the brink of sculpture. Picasso was evidently tempted to think, if not actually work, in three dimensions, like his friends Manolo and Casanovas, who had been urging him in this direction. Once again Gauguin played a part, this time in his woodcarvings. Noa Noa described how he and a young Tahitian went on an expedition to the mountains in search of rosewood—traditionally used for carvings of idols. As the Frenchman hacked away ecstatically, he rid himself of "mon vieux stock de civilisé" and became a new man, a "Maori." Each time he took his chisel to the piece of wood, he felt "a sweet quietude ... a victory ... a rejuvenation" (Richardson, 1991, 442). Picasso felt the same for the remote village he had temporarily chosen.

The unstable representation Picasso pursued after his return to Paris is exemplified in *Nu sur fond rouge* (1906) where the nude female with long copper-brown hair stands out against a uniform red background. Her head is tilted slightly forward, and she is holding a strand of her hair. This graceful pose is offset by the geometric simplification of the body and the presence of some distortions, such as the exaggerated fold of the woman's right elbow or the disparate length of her rounded shoulder on that same side. This is a painting turned sculpture then back again. The original image might have been Fernande's, but as he proceeded, he flattened the oval of her face and replaced her lively, almond-shaped eyes with heavy lids devoid of any expression that recall the Iberian model. The sullen mouth, prominent cheekbones, protuberant ear, and even the complicated twisting gesture that pushes her chin into her chest all refer to those ancient sculptures.

The increasingly primitivist language can be seen in *Nu se coiffant* (1906). Thematically, the figure is based on the mythological Venus Anadyomene, the goddess of love and beauty emerging from the sea and wringing her hair dry, as depicted by Titian. But if this testifies to his continued engagement with images from the classical canon, he nevertheless subjected those sources to a critical deconstruction, as he searched for a new, anti-classical ideal, apparent in the masklike face and the distorted body of the model, clearly under the influence of the pre-Roman Iberian reliefs (Tinterow & Stein, 2010, 106). He returned to Gauguin

through primitivism. His statue *Oviri* is unmistakably identified by the spread position and archaizing features. Picasso lifted the figure to a standing position after initially sketching her in a crouching pose that is still visible in x-radiographs.

Picasso and Fernande were not the only ones back in the capital. Braque had returned in September too. Also back were Matisse (from Collioure) and Derain (from L'Estaque via Chatou), both having acquired their first African mask. The whole question of who "discovered the blacks" first and who told who is hopelessly confused. Vlaminck later claimed to have been captivated by Negro masks as early as 1904 and to have interested Derain in them. He later claimed: [these masks] were to be found everywhere and aroused vague curiosity among people with a taste for the exotic, representing a new stimulus amidst outworn subjects. They could be picked up for very little at Saint-Ouen or in rue Mouffetard ... Such objects could be found in plenty of dusty junkshops, but a man named Heymann had made a specialty of them in his shop on rue de Rennes (Vallentin, 1963, 78). He had two Dahomey figures and four from the Ivory Coast in 1905, one of which, a white mask, he sold to his friend André, in whose studio Picasso and Matisse beheld it with amazement. The latter also bought a Negro head at an antique shop on rue de Rennes because of its affinity with Egyptian art.

8. Meeting with Derain

Towards the end of September, Picasso met Derain through Apollinaire at either the *Bateau-Lavoir* or Azon's restaurant. Guillaume and André were neighbors. The poet's mother had rented a villa at Le Vésinet next to Chatou, where the painter had lived with his family. In October, however, Derain would take a studio in Montmartre at rue Tourlaque (the one which Bonnard had occupied, towards the bottom of rue Lepic), thus choosing Picasso's territory over Matisse's Quartier Latin. He and Picasso would become very close. "Poor, patient Matisse," wrote the American journalist Gelett Burgess, "breaking his way through this jungle of art, sees his followers go whooping off in vagrom paths to right and left" (Unger, 2018, 297). His defection from Matisse was the more opportune for coming at a time when the Spaniard was mustering all his resources to win out over his rival. The two artists were ostensibly on friendly terms, but their visits to each other's studios were dictated less by camaraderie than by curiosity and competitiveness. Each had to see what the other was up to. Both of them would profit hugely from the dynamics of this rivalry, honing each other's very different strengths.

The Fourth *Salon d'Automne*, running from October 6 to November 15, featured a large Gauguin retrospective around the theme of the Tahitiennes which made a deep impression on Picasso. Some of his woodcarvings and ceramics were among the two hundred and forty works exhibited, which included not only paintings and monotypes, but also sculptures. As we have seen, he had already shown considerable interest in the artist, and the woodcarvings he executed following the exhibition would have much in common with Oviri, which was one of the sculptures on view. His friend Paco Durrio, Fayet, and Vollard

were some of the most generous lenders to the exhibition. It also featured ten paintings by Cézanne and five works by Matisse; Biette, Camoin, Derain, van Dongen, Dufy, Friesz, Manguin, Marquet, Puy, Rouault, Vlaminck, and Brâncuși were also represented.

The retrospective only served to reinforce the influence of Gauguin that had led Picasso to Gósol. The works he saw at the Salon left Picasso more than ever in this artist's thrall. The Frenchman had demonstrated that the most disparate types of art—not to speak of elements from metaphysics, ethnology, symbolism, the Bible, classical myths and much else besides—could be combined into a synthesis that was of its time yet timeless. An artist could confound conventional notions of beauty, he demonstrated, by harnessing his demons to the dark gods (not necessarily Tahitian ones), thus tapping a vital new source of energy. The woodcuts *Buste de femme à la main levée* (1906) and *Buste de jeune femme de trois-quarts* (1906) from October are the most Gauguinesque portraits of Fernande. Picasso hacked away at a plank to produce a rough-and-ready print as primitive and expressive as anything in *Noa Noa*. The coquettish Parisienne in her belle époque hat and veil who caused such a sensation in Barcelona and Gósol had by now been stripped of her fashionable trappings. The result is a paradoxical image that is of its time yet timeless, primitive yet classical. Composed of fiery terracotta tones overlaid with softer shades of rose pink and gray, it encapsulates this stylistic transformation, embodying a Mediterranean-inspired primitivism.

After his return, Picasso had gone to visit Durrio's studio in the Maquis. The sculptor had been pressing him to try his hand at stoneware sculpture, which permitted color to play an organic role, as Gauguin had triumphantly demonstrated. He and Paco had discussed working together earlier in the year. Their connection went back to 1893. His experiments in stoneware under his friend's instruction were clearly inspired by ceramics by the French artist they had seen (probably together) at the Salon retrospective. One piece he worked on in Durrio's studio was the life-size *Tête de femme* (*Fernande*) (1906) where his lover displayed once again the characteristics of antique Iberian sculpture: prominence of the ears and especially of the blank eye, which is capped by equally protuberant eyelids and brow. Using his fingers, as well as a sculptor's knife and other scraping tools, he worked quickly on the clay to model Fernande's features in a style that is reminiscent of contemporaneous Rodin sculptures. He subsequently fired it in his friend's kiln. Mahler has suggested that it might have been Durrio who advised Picasso to first press fine tulle into the surface of the moist clay to evoke the porous texture of skin. Picasso was not simply opening new avenues in an accepted tradition; he was rethinking in a deep and serious way the very foundations of art (Mahler, 2015, 41-42). He had to make things ever more challenging for himself. At Gósol he had put sentimentality and virtuoso effects behind him. After flirting with classicism, he had finally seen how Gauguin's synthetic brand of primitivism could enable him to fuse the conflicts inherent in his style and vision. He knew

that technical virtuosity had a built-in disadvantage: facility. This had to be fought at all costs.

9. Death of Paul Cézanne

On October 22, Paul Cézanne (b. 1839) died in Aix-en-Provence. Ten of his works were still being displayed at the running *Salon d'Automne*. Of him Kahnweiler had said: "Cézanne [is] the point of departure for all painting today" (Kahnweiler, 1949, 3). No doubt his death was the topic of conversation, and he must have become aware of the profound convergence of vision represented in the Salon between Cézanne and Gauguin, on the one hand, and the new generation of artists, on the other. The impact of the old master in Picasso would soon become evident in woks like *Deux nus* (*Étude*) (1906) and *Femme nue assise, les jambes croisées* (1906). In the latter, the face seems to be clumsily hewn out of the original stone. The orbits of the eyes are high beneath an accentuated curve of the eyebrows, the noses V-shaped, the cheeks steep, the chins pointed. Although the rose tone tinged with purplish blue he had brought from his experiments in Gósol still persisted here and there, the bodies now appeared in monochrome, as if carved out of the rock. The choice of certain expressive, stylized elements, divorced from any realism or ideal representation, allowed him to stress the tenacity of a gaze, the solidity of the body (Seckel, 1996, 23).

In *Deux nus* (1906), we encounter two gigantic matrons with terracotta flesh against a red-brown background, a mixture of Cézanne's bathers and Gauguin's nudes. Their powerful thighs and breasts, wrestlers' forearms and pectoral muscles and bulls' necks are the antithesis of conventional female beauty. Facing each other, the two forms seem to be seen in a combination front and three-quarters view. Golding argued that what we are actually seeing one single figure, part Iberian, part Negroid, depicted twice, and rotated as though on a sculptor's wheel through 180 degrees (Golding, 1994, 18). By restructuring the enormous flank of the woman on the right and centering her left breast on her torso, the painter managed to show us partial back and front views as well as a side view. For all that, the pictorial space is as shallow as a bas-relief; we can experience these exotic females in the round more fully than ever before. Unger writes: "These massive women expand in every possible direction, bulking large in time as well as space. The process of stretching time causes deformations in the three spatial dimensions as well, forms apparently receding and projecting at the same instant, locking figure and ground into a single, perceptually undulating field" (Unger, 2018, 289). These figures would progressively metamorphose into a strange pair of women—a seated one, posed with one left high across the knee of the other, and a twin sister, who, with her back to us and her legs spread wide, possesses a similar stocky Iberian-African look.

By mid-autumn, Picasso, Apollinaire, Jacob, and Salmon were in the habit of meeting Matisse for dinner. Jacob would later report that it was at the latter's place that Picasso saw *art nègre*, or at least was struck by it, for the first time: "We were

dining one Thursday evening at Matisse's on the quai Saint-Michel—Salmon, Apollinaire, Picasso, and myself. Matisse took a black, wooden statuette from a table and showed it to Picasso. It was the first piece of Negro wooden art. Picasso held onto it all evening. The next morning, when I arrived at the studio, the floor was strewn with sheets of paper, and on each sheet was drawn the head of a woman; all of them were more or less the same: one eye, an oversized nose attached to the mouth, and a lock of hair on the shoulders. Cubism was thus born" (Warnod, 1972, 128).

Blier has explained that the diminutive size of the Vili sculpture Picasso first saw and its relative lightness made the very act of handling it more intimate. He would have noticed how different this figure was from academic sculpture: there was no musculature defining the legs, arms, or stomach; the face also showed little resemblance to any living human, although it had all the physiognomic markers. Yet, perhaps because of these very traits, the sculpture had a unique power over him. The internal geometries and the wonderful harmonies of their composition intrigued him. The active, tactile experience—volume that can be felt as much as seen—as well as the emotional power it imparted, reinforced the unique iconic impact of this small African figure for Picasso. Power objects of this sort are said to address reciprocating universes in a presumed interchange between the visible world of the living and the invisible realm of the dead (Blier, 2019, 85-88).

At this turning point, Picasso realized clearly that in order to achieve purity of plastic vision his art would have to acquire complete independence from emotional content, anecdote and even subject-matter altogether. One day, a friend, Henri Mahaut, heard him dismiss his previous work with the contemptuous remark: "All that is sentiment" (Vallentin, 1963, 76). Toward the end of the year, he stopped working on large paintings, choosing to fill sketchbooks for a multifigure composition on the theme of the bordello. As his friend Salmon noted: "He turned his canvases to the wall and laid down his brushes ... During long days and as many nights, he drew, living concrete expression to abstract ideas and reducing the results to their fundamentals. Never was a labor more arduous, and it was without his former youthful enthusiasm that Picasso began on a great canvas that was to be the first result of his researches" (Golding, 1968, 48). As Fernande revealed that "as the intervals between bouts of wild socializing grew longer, our existence became more reclusive. Work was the only thing that really mattered, and it dominated everything" (Olivier, 2001, 199-200). These preparations seem to have been begun as a response to the challenge of Matisse's recent work and to his discovery of African art. The theme the brothel—the only place where, in Picasso's words, "there are truly naked women nowadays"—would allow him to approach a painting of nudes in the tradition of Ingres's *Le Bain turc* or Cézanne's *Les Baigneuses*, from the new angle he was developing.

The shattering of assumptions about how representation should work had become a new, sovereign imperative in Picasso's picture-making. Much of the drama

would reside in the tension he brought onto the canvas and declined to resolve, between the sanctioned modes and motifs of the pictorial tradition and extraneous interventions of the most daunting strangeness. He understood that the assault on tradition was most provocative when the lineaments of tradition—Ingres, Degas, Matisse, etc.—were still to be seen in it. For the same reasons as Gauguin or Cézanne before him, he wanted to tackle the main problem, which was to pull painting out of its routine and obsolete rules in order to hand it back transformed by a new language, releasing a new harmony between expression of forms and the organization of space. He had discovered that he had to free himself from any imitative or illusionary art if he wanted his canvases to show a world which is entirely thought out and recreated by himself, giving the artist his natural role of inventor, of creator on new domains (Diehl, 1977, 27-28). He slowly evolved an environment of strange, confrontational figures like totems, where some kind of raw and primal exchange was under way.

He painted a number of horribly warped female nudes in the winter, including the small painting *Trois nus* (*Étude*) (1906), where, unlike the Fauves, there was no colorful charm to subdue the expressionism. His decisive ugliness was extremely violent; it not only violated conventional definitions of beauty but also intentionally abused the human body. Having flirted with classical conventions earlier on, he now understood that primitivism—Gauguin's synthetic brand as well as the real thing—could enable him to fuse the conflicts inherent in his style and vision. As Lavin has pointed out, he was not simply opening new avenues in an accepted tradition; he was rethinking in a deep and serious way the very foundations of art (Lavin, 2007, 55-69). For Picasso art was, at its deepest level, a shamanistic practice concerned with managing the hidden forces that rule man's fate. The key to discovering an artistic language capable of reflecting the jarring, jagged realities of contemporary life would have to come through channeling modes that issued from the remotest past, before civilization interposed the multiple layers that alienated men from their true selves. The breakthrough came when he discovered the tools to tap into the magic at the heart of all artistic creation that was embodied most fully in the art of so-called "primitives" (Unger, 2018, 263).

10. *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*

Knowing of his friend's interest in primitive art, André Derain urged Picasso to visit the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*. As already mentioned, he along with Vlaminck and Matisse had seen the potential of tribal art as a catalyst. However, André was too full of doubt to do much about it for another year. By urging him to visit the museum, he was relinquishing to Picasso the risk involved in pursuing that route. The experience turned out to be exhilarating. For him these intensely formalized works helped crystallize his kinship with archaic expression. For centuries Spain, geographically severed from the rest of Europe had preserved many of the effects of its African and Middle Eastern contacts, and was closer to

the concepts and rhythms of archaic expression. He was aware that for a primitive sculptor, who carved ritual objects, there was no schism between form and content. The object was not imitative, but embodied its message in forms that created rather than reflected, became rather than described their subject. He would later say: "They speak of naturalism in opposition to modern painting, I would like to know if anyone has ever seen a natural work of art. Nature and art, being two different things, cannot be the same thing. Through art we express our conception of what nature is not" (Schwartz, 1971, 21-24).

The gouache *Nu à la draperie: buste de femme* (*Étude*) (1907) is presumed to have been executed soon after his visit to the Trocadéro, given that it is part of Carnet 10. Richardson has revealed that the contents of this sketchbook were executed in the spring (Richardson, 1996, 24-27). This gouache and the others that accompanied it are "genesis" studies. He created them as he started to develop a profoundly radical and primitive stylization of the figure. A prescient work, it carries within it a basic conception of the revolutionary and liberating stylistic ideas that would soon lead him to Cubism. Cowling has pointed to an Oudombo reliquary figure from Gabon as a possible source for it (Cowling, 2002, 183). However, it was not drawn directly from tribal objects in the museum, but depicted his recollection of them, elaborated to suit his own expressive ends.

The shocking canvases presented by Derain and Matisse at the *Salon des Indépendants* running from March 20 to April 30, also drawn from Negro art, pressed the young and ambitious Picasso further to alter the plans for his painting, from a group of bathing, predominantly European women (evidenced in his earlier compositional studies), to individuals referencing not only Iberian, but also African women. The idea of replacing a brothel scene with a primitivist setting seems to be all the more likely in so far as Vauxcelles had "murdered" Matisse's canvas in terms that could only stir in Picasso a desire to rival his elder in the art of doing things "wrong." In his article "Le Salon des Indépendants" in Gil Blas, the critic had written: "The drawing here seems sketchy to me and the coloring harsh; the right arm of the mannish nymph is flat and heavy." The artist, he had said, "allows the eye to move around his nude, to see it from front and back, thanks to a twist of the torso whose blue shadows on breasts and buttocks also outdoes the boldness of Ingres." Further, "he devises visual rhymes in the orchestration of the nude and the palm trees." Nor was Vauxcelles kinder to Derain's "barbaric simplifications" (Daix, 2007, 16).

By early spring had Picasso acquired the large fine-grained cotton canvas on which he hoped to realize "the first fruit of his experiments." The Steins provided him with money for a second studio in *Bateau-Lavoir* that could accommodate the large frame. This was a dark room on the floor below his main studio: a sanctuary where he could lock himself away from any disruptions, including Fernande's. He immediately delved into preliminary works such as *Femme au corsage jaune* (1907) and other related studies of figures standing stiffly, frontally,

with hands joined at the groin, a pose that seems to have had a special, independent significance for him. Despite their seeming informality, these remarkable works were among the most crucial to his final canvas planning since they clearly document a thought process in figuring out human body proportions. By late March, he started preparing the canvas itself, as witnessed by Leo before his departure for Italy: "I had some pictures relined, and [Picasso] decided that he would have one of his pictures too treated like a classic, though in reverse order—he would have the canvas lined first and paint on it afterwards" (Stein, 1947, 175).

11. African Influence

In mid-May, Picasso executed several figure studies like *Buste de femme* (1907) stressing angular shapes. As Baldassari points out, Gauguinesque, Iberian, and Catalonian Romanesque now came together with his own reinterpretation of African art (Baldassari et al., 2007, 7). Lines had become the dominating structural device. Facial features were marked by broad, fast strokes of the brush, which also delineate the other sections in the picture. Nearly all areas were filled with color with very little shaping. In several places the canvas was in fact left unpainted. Responding to Raymond Cogniat's characterization of his work as "monstrous" and "inhuman," Picasso protested to his interviewer, André Warnod: "I'm astonished, because, on the contrary, I always try to observe nature … My goal is resemblance, but a resemblance more profound, more real than the real" (Golding, 1973, 77). If this "super-realism" did not correspond to his viewers' expected image of realistic painting, it was because painting was inherently incapable of being realistic: "Nature is one thing, painting another." Likewise, he told Warnod that "A painter's study should be a laboratory. He should invent, not just copy nature like an ape … Painting and sculpture are forms of writing. Their products are signs, emblems, and not a mirror, more or less distorted, of the external world" (Karmel, 2003, 99-101).

In June, he decided to do away with the last surviving male figure, and so the sailor vanished, leaving the female personnages to themselves, frozen within the dense folds of the drapery that had become one with their bodies. Their full exposed flesh and intense eyes, ostensibly turned toward the spectator-voyeur, no longer left any doubt as to their identity. The flat shapes of the deformed bodies are merely suggested by the spaces between the lines, while their faces, reduced to masks, are dominated by noses shown in profile, schematically drawn ears, and bulging eyes. The painting showed increasingly exacerbated violence and dramatization, going far beyond the rebelliousness displayed by Matisse or Derain. To illustrate the process that took place as he sketched from the initial vision to the definitive form, Picasso would touch his forehead. "Everything that happens is here," he would say. "Before it reaches the end of the pen or the brush, the most important thing is to have it at one's finger-tips, all of it, without losing anything" (Vallentin, 1963, 10-11). The Negro sculptor tends to depict what he knows about his subject rather than what he sees. This leads inevitably to great simplification

or stylization, and, at the same time, to a clarification and accentuation of what are felt to be the significant features or details of the object depicted. Ultimately, the finished product has the quality of a symbol—a re-creation, rather than a re-interpretation. In short, African art was not so much a record of the sensory appearance of the subject, as an expression in pictorial terms of the idea or knowledge of it. The influence of *art nègre* is strongly discernable in the features and the body in *Nu à la draperie: la grande danseuse* (*Étude*) (1907), but was here complemented by a far deeper understanding of the possibilities of planar painting techniques, translating the three-dimensionality of African sculptures into the planes and components of two-dimensional compositions. As Daix has remarked, "the fact is that from now on Picasso looked to the rhythms of African masks for his inspiration, and he had both to assimilate them and discover suitable means of translating them into his pictures" (Daix & Rosselet, 1979, 204).

The watercolor *Les demoiselles d'Avignon: nu jaune* (*Étude*) (1907) he painted then might be the first study for the figure along the right side of the final picture. It demonstrates Picasso's primary reliance on draftsmanship as a means of creative expression. He used drawing throughout his career to cope with different artistic problems: how to show volume, mass and weight; how to convey movement through gesture and other means; and how to establish monumentality and scale. This seems to apply also to this summer. He paid particular attention to the figure's face, focusing on the angularity and dimension of the nose, which was rendered with a network of cross-hatching. The inspiration clearly comes from the geometric modeling of tribal masks and the liberties that African sculptors took with the representation of facial features. He worked on another canvas, *Demoiselle d'Avigon* (1907) through July. In it, the face and the bust were still shaped with gentle curves which became regular and stylized, but the hair, brow and nose were done with angular hatchings, which acquired their maximum intensity in the color contrasts, the beginnings of an emblematic visual aggressiveness that would define the large canvas. The wedge-shaped nose almost by itself subsumed the violence of the study; without any recourse to traditional modeling, it conveyed an impression of relief that demonstrated his desire to sacrifice realism for the sake of pictorial solutions. "I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them," he explained. More than any of his contemporaries, he had an intuition of the uncanny dimensions of art and how they could restore the lost sense of connection with the occult forces that govern the world. They were cast spells, cryptic incantations obeying inscrutable laws. In Unger's words, he wanted to "reclaim art's totemic status" (Unger, 2018, 334-339).

What intrigued him was the piercing insight that art was, fundamentally, not an aesthetic practice at all but a system for manipulating the hidden forces of the universe. Primitive arts at this time acquired the special prestige of the timeless and the instinctive, on the level of spontaneous animal activity, self-contained, unreflective, private, without dates and signatures, without origins or conse-

quences except in the emotions. Thus, for Picasso, African sculpture looked "rational" because it incarnated rather than simply represented its subject. He grasped that African art was the vehicle for the mimicry not of things or creatures, but of a collective intuition (Kozloff, 1973, 18-26). Daix imagined the fantastic spectacle of the stocky short artist in front of the huge picture, a canvas he would wrestle with for months while those disjointed women were carrying on. The original memento mori had at first been intended to make fun of the title of Matisse's Le bonheur de vivre. But as he continued with his sketches, the idea had transformed into the exact opposite of that Arcadian pastoral. Pictorially it was even more of a contrast. For one, the rather theatrical enclosed setting of the bordello clearly contrasted with Matisse's open scenery. Moreover, the exaggerated and increasingly violent primitivism was a veritable assault on the rhythmic, limpid *cloisonnisme* of the older artist (Daix & Rosselet, 1979, 18). Progressively, under the influence of what he had seen in the Trocadéro, the figures turned into geometrical constructs, a confusion of shapes going every which way, reminiscent of nothing known. The bodies with their broad flesh-pink planes were not shaded by either light or chiaroscuro, but violently chiseled with unrestrained fury. And yet, his shock at the museum had not been caused by the sight of something new but by the recognition of what he knew already existed. The value of seeing it so clearly lay in recognizing the twin poles of mimesis: a possible interaction between the ideal co-incidence of object and representation, on the one hand, and the complete absence of any representational content, on the other.

As Flam and Deutch report, Vlaminck recognized that it was Picasso who first "understood the lessons one could learn from the sculptural conceptions of African art and progressively incorporated these into his painting" (Flam & Deutch, 2003, 28). He stretched the forms, lengthened, flattened and recomposed them on his canvas; painted them with unmodulated colors, just as the Negroes did for their idols and fetishes. In doing do, we may say he initiated Cubism, or at least Proto-Cubism. Its poetic reshaping of perception was very much part of the primitivistic thrust of twentieth-century art, of its longing to recapture something of the so-called primitive experience of participation mystique. Turner argues that modern art is distinguished above all by the challenging quality of its own thought and ideas about the world. Such ideas would be "embodied in" rather than "illustrated by" the materials and forms of art, developing through the artist's complete involvement in the manipulation the medium. It is this approach that gives modern art its potential to be "a truly transformative activity" (Tucker, 1992, 49-75).

The perspectival space perfected in the Renaissance was giving way to a renewed emphasis on the integrity of the picture plane. The tools invented five centuries earlier for creating a convincing illusion were not discarded but deployed in a deliberately disruptive way. Planes overlapped and interpenetrated, tilting this way and that in vertiginous cascades. Unger saw the obvious sexual ramifications of the new approach: "Shading is not only inconsistent but paradoxical, so that

forms seemed to protrude and recede simultaneously. The curtain, which shifted position and even color as it slithered across the surface of the canvas, highlighted this game of penetration and projection. Void was as palpable as solid; figure and ground became part of a single, accordion-like membrane. The women themselves may be singularly unsexy, given their angularity, but the rhythmic push and pull to which space is subjected diffuses the erotic charge across the entire surface of the canvas" (Unger, 2018, 325-327).

He felt that he needed to see the reaction of some of his most devoted admirers. Uhde later wrote: "I received a desperate note from Picasso asking me to come see him at once. He was troubled about the new work; Vollard and [Félix] Fénéon had paid him a visit but had left without understanding a thing" (Uhde 1938, 142). "It's the work of a madman," Vollard had said. Intrigued by this, Uhde went to the *Bateau-Lavoir* and there saw the large canvas. The information available from other accounts, especially concerning dates, is often less precise. Olivier mentions the less than favorable reactions of Braque and Matisse to his work (Olivier, 1964, 88, 98), but without explicitly relating them to the canvas. Picasso, without mentioning a date, told Édouard Pignon that Matisse and Fénéon had made jokes when they eventually saw the painting, and he told Parmelin that the critic, who may or may not have been accompanied on that occasion, advised him to take up caricature (Parmelin, 1966, 37). According to Penrose, who very likely got his information from Picasso, Fénéon was with Apollinaire when he saw it (Penrose 1981, 131); and Matisse was with Leo Stein, and the latter two, in a fit of laughter, supposedly invoked the fourth dimension (O'Brian, 1994, 152). Vallentin, too, mentions the episode, but her version Leo appears to be alone (Vallentin, 1957, 150). We do not know when Gertrude herself saw the painting for the first time. It is known, however, that before mid-October she went to the *Bateau-Lavoir* with Alice B. Toklas (Stein, 1961, 22).

Progressively, the pink or ocher bodies of the women in *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), almost devoid of modeling, were arranged in a low left to right diagonal anchored by a squatting figure on the lower right that resembled one of Cézanne's *Baigneuses*. For sure, his goal with such a magisterial work had been to measure himself against the giants. The combination of the lowest brothel scene and the loftiest style was as explosive as anyone could have wished for. There was still an underlying reference to Ingres. However, the studies reveal that he was thinking much more of Iberian art as far as the figures were concerned. The three women on the left still had the mask-like faces of Gósol; one head in profile features a full-face eye and two full-face heads show the nose in profile, as sharp as a wedge of cheese; Cézanne's influence is visible in the execution of the bodies, made up largely of straight lines and angular planes, and they stood against a shallow background of varying blue, the only hint of depth being a brown curtain thrust by an upheld hand. On the right, the violence of distortion reaches a new pitch: the face of the squatting female, turned right round over her back, had its features savagely jumbled, and the woman above has a long ridge for a nose, strongly hatched to give it height, very

much like Congo masks: neither of these heads was of the same nature as the other three, and in this half of the picture, all the angular planes—drapery, breasts, interstices—were sharper, much more definite.

Once these changes were implemented, the figures appeared to obey mutually contradictory principles, although they were simultaneously united by a general geometrical structure that superimposes its own laws on the natural proportions, making them merge almost completely with the background. The essential difference between Iberian statuary and African art lies in the fact that the former uses disproportion, flattening, unilateral distortions, basing its expressivity on disequilibrium and anomaly, whereas African stylization is based on regularity, symmetry and equilibrium. While the former seizes on "barbaric" realistic peculiarities and exaggerates them, the Negro-African masks take their essence from pure plastic forms, make use of proportion in their symbolism and invent new signs. It is the combination of the two approaches in Picasso that produced the desired result.

What seemed like "abrupt changes of style" was simply the juxtaposition of two different approaches in the course of work on the large canvas. In the final version, the rounded contours of the figures had metamorphosed into a series of hard-edged shapes (principally mandorlas and triangles) that lie flat within the picture plane. It had been early July when Picasso decided to subject the picture to further "Africanization." The artist remembered: "I had done half the painting. It felt it wasn't right. Then I did the other half. I wondered whether I should redo the whole thing. But, no, I said to myself, people will understand what I wanted to do ... Yes, I knew exactly what I was letting myself in for" (Seckel, Rubin & Cousins 1994, 224).

This masterpiece teaches us about the limitations and unpredictability of traditional visual representation.. As Roe argues, the sense of being locked in the moment only added to the bewildering impact of the work. Overall, it looked like a moving picture that had been momentarily frozen. "For me, the role of painting, Picasso once said, is not to depict movement, to show reality in movement. Its role, for me, is rather to halt movement. You must go further than movement in order to halt an image" (Roe, 2015, 220-221). The hard thing for the viewer was to get a consistent interpretation of the picture. If one lets the eye move across the frame from left to right, as in a conventional painting, we go from naked, staring faces to masked ones. Viewed from left to right, there seemed to be no connection between the masked and the unmasked figures. The sought impact was in the juxtaposition, and in the realization that there was no logic to the correlation of images, just the shock of confrontation. Unger saw the obvious sexual ramifications of the new approach: "Shading is not only inconsistent but paradoxical, so that forms seemed to protrude and recede simultaneously. The curtain, which shifted position and even color as it slithered across the surface of the canvas, highlighted this game of penetration and projection. Void was as palpable as solid; figure and ground became part of a single, accordion-like membrane. The women themselves may be singularly unsexy, given their angularity, but the rhythmic push and

pull to which space is subjected diffuses the erotic charge across the entire surface of the canvas" (Unger, 2018, 325-327).

On July 11, Kahnweiler opened his gallery at No. 28, rue Vignon. At first he showed the Fauves Derain and Vlaminck, van Dongen and Braque. Soon Picasso went to reconnoiter. He would return the next day accompanied by Vollard. The German would recall: "One day a young man came into my shop on rue Vignon. His looks surprised me, but then, at the time, very few people ventured into my gallery. He was rather small, stocky, poorly dressed, with dirty, down-at-the-heel shoes, but he had eyes that struck me as superb. He went around the gallery, not very big then, about four meters by four, and left. The next day, he came back in a carriage with an older man, very heavy and with a beard; they also toured the shop and left without a word" (Cabanne, 1979, 120).

The dealer had heard about *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* from Uhde. He remembered having seen the painting "in its present state in early summer:" He would report: "[Uhde] was the first to speak to me about a strange painting done by a Spanish painter whose name I had seen on some drawings at Sagot's, Picasso. A picture that he said looked Assyrian. Being curious, I went up to the *Bateau-Lavoir* in Montmartre, and knocked at the door of the painter Uhde had talked to me about ... He opened the door in his shirt sleeves—it was early in the morning and I recognized my visitor of the other day; the man with him had been Vollard" (Cabanne, 1979, 122). He was bowled over by the almost finished painting. He later also wrote: "No one can ever imagine the poverty, the deplorable misery of those studios in rue Ravignan ... The wallpaper hung in tatters from the unplastered walls. There was dust on the drawings and rolled-up canvases on the caved-in couch. Beside the stove was a kind of mountain of piled-up lava, which was ashes. It was unspeakable. It was there that he lived with a very beautiful woman, Fernande, and a huge dog named Fricka" (Kahnweiler, 1971, 38). Some of Picasso's friends who now saw the work for the first time were also shocked. In his big canvas he had begun to see the fundamental processes and principles of art differently. It was a question of identifying himself with the formal concepts of the primitive mentality and applying them to the problems of the modern painter.

By the end of summer, the artist had set the large painting aside for good. In its final version, the figures had replaced a self-sufficient narrative with one in which the viewers, are required to complete its meaning. The five women display themselves for us, both alluring and horrifying at the same time; fixing us in their accusatory stare, creating, in Steinberg's memorable phrase, "the startled consciousness of a viewer who sees himself seen" (Unger, 2018, 320). Subsequent works, with priority given to abstract form and "pure" plastic rhythms, would produce a new type of image, no longer based on the relationship with external reality, but on the power of expression. Picasso would not hesitate to distort the human figure, chopping it up into fragments and scattering them throughout the composition.

12. Conclusion

As Daix proclaims, the age of science had arrived, the moment when, in order to represent physical phenomena correctly, scientists and artists had to disregard physical appearances and common sense (Daix, 1965, 66-68). Schwartz describes "the furious motion in the painting [that] prefaces the stillness of the Cubist ideal just as the explosion of a celestial body precedes a new formation of bodies in coordinated movement" (Schwartz, 1971, 26-30). The new approach followed a double path: one leading from primitive art, the other from Cézanne; one analysis, the other invention. In time, African art would lead to the development of a cognitive, semiological model (Rubin, 1992, 214). The geometry of a painting would no longer be based on the way we perceive in real life, but would make room for an autonomous structure which could only be understood in terms of the picture itself.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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