MÁLAGA, 1890 - LA CORUÑA, 1891-1895 Room 1

Pablo Ruiz Picasso's early years were spent in the artistic milieus of which his father, José Ruiz Blasco, was a member. He plied the trades of painter, teacher at the San Telmo School of Fine Arts and Trades and curator of the Malaga Municipal Museum all at the same time. The figure of his father was decisive in launching young Pablo's artistic career; from early childhood he had shown a marked predilection for drawing.

The Museum has conserved some of the few drawings that still exist from that first period. The line and composition are essentially childish, though in some of them we can glimpse some academic rules, no doubt the result of his attempts to emulate his father. Such is the case of the frequent descriptions of dovecotes, one of Don José’s favourite subjects.

The Ruiz Picasso family's move to La Coruña in September 1891 defined the young Picasso's career more exactly. His first drawings in La Coruña are an extension of his experiments in Malaga, not only from the point of view of subject matter, but also in relation to the childish style they still conserve to a degree.

From mid-1893, his maturity of line and gradual mastery of technical resources demonstrate the lessons he had learned at the School of Fine Arts. While he was doing those exercises, he also produced some freely inspired drawings and small oil wood panels, in which we can glimpse the young artist's efforts to give free rein to his own creativity and to initiate himself in new techniques by apprehending his immediate surroundings.

In 1894 Picasso cultivated a marked tendency towards caricature, no doubt a consequence of the abundance of illustrations in that style that appeared in the weeklies at that time.

From the second half of 1894 and into 1895, Picasso alternated landscape studies with the human figure. As part of the exhaustive exercise in portraiture he began at that time there are two outstanding oils, Portrait of an Old Man and Man in a Beret, representations of two Galician villagers, which show his interest in becoming established as a portraitist, an indispensable discipline in the training of any artist.

Barcelona, 1895 – 1897 (The Training Years) Room 2 (and Room 1 and 3)

In Barcelona, Picasso followed his studies at La Llotja School of Fine Arts. A set of drawings and oil paintings bear witness to his academic activity, dominated by life drawing and sculptural and pictorial models. At that time, a number of aspects of his immediate environment caught his eye: the sea, the beach in La Barceloneta, Ciutadella Park, the flat roofs and certain churches, which he used for painting outdoors and escaping from the inflexibility of La Llotja.

From 1896, he threw himself into the portrait painting he had already begun in La Coruña, striving to capture the essence of the human figure. Over the year he also cultivated the religious and historical genres, very much in keeping with the academic programme at his School of Fine Arts. He presented his first large oil, First Communion (room 2), at the III Exhibition of Fine Arts and Artistic Industries in Barcelona, competing with well-established artists.

The Ruiz-Picasso family spent their summers in Malaga. In 1896, they spent a few days resting at the Llanes estate, near the Malaga mountains, where Pablo made an exhaustive report on the surroundings, producing a group of oils which were striking for their great descriptive freshness. One of the products of that summer was Portrait of Aunt Pepa (room 2), perhaps the most important painting of his training period. Other portraits of the family, also from 1896, painted in Barcelona, are Portrait of the Artist’s Mother and Portrait of the Artist’s Father.

In 1897, he started work on a canvas that would strengthen his position in the Spanish art world: Science and Charity (room 3). Following the guidelines of the social realism that was so much in fashion and in an absolutely academic style, this work is the postscript to that first period of his youth. With it, Picasso won second prize at the General Fine Arts Exhibition in Madrid.
Madrid, 1897 – 1898. Horta de Sant Joan, June 1898 – January 1899 Room 3

Picasso spent the academic year 1897-1898 in Madrid. Encouraged by his family, he consolidated his apprenticeship as an artist at the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid.

Everything pointed to Pablo becoming an outstanding artist on the Spanish scene. But he soon tired of attending classes because he was convinced that he was learning nothing new and he rejected the reigning educational system. During that stay in Madrid, apart from the academic exercises, his artistic activity focused on scenes from everyday life and copying the masters at El Prado Museum.

In June 1898 he returned to Barcelona; he was recovering from scarlet fever. Shortly afterwards he went to Horta d’Ebre (today Horta de Sant Joan) at the invitation of his friend Manuel Pallarès. For a few months, from the end of June 1898 to January 1899, he breathed the atmosphere of the mountains.

The works from that period are a beautiful description of the countryside, its inhabitants and the local landscape. The drawings and paintings he worked on in Horta are a reference point in his artistic evolution for their directness, spontaneity and luminosity. The paintings show a new tonality and a great freedom of line, brushstroke and light.

His time in Horta was so important that he would never tire of repeating: “Everything I know I learned in Pallarès’ village.”

Barcelona, 1899 – 1900 (The Avant-Garde) Room 4

In January 1899, Picasso returned to Barcelona after his stay in Horta de Sant Joan. From then on he became a full member of the Catalan avantgarde. The meeting point and the heart of the Catalan artistic and literary world was the famous café Els Quatre Gats, which opened on 12 June 1897 in Montsió street. It was an initiative of Miquel Utrillo in association with Rusiñol and Casas and the manager was Pere Romeu. The young Picasso’s fellow habitués were Carles Casagemas, Jaume Sabartés, Ramon and Cinto Reventós, Mateu and Ángel Fernández de Soto, Joaquim Mir, Hermen Anglada Camarasa, Isidre Nonell and Ramon Pichot.

The influence of Catalan Modernism is evident in the artist’s work. Picasso’s output from 1899 to 1900 is dominated by the human figure, especially the portraits of his friends which were put on show in the exhibition room at Els Quatre Gats in February 1900, his first individual exhibition. Nevertheless, he continued to paint the street scenes and cityscapes which he liked so much and introduced a subject he would return to at other stages of his life: the landscape seen from the window.

His open spirit, always eager for new experiences, could not ignore the new graphic medium of expression that was all the rage at the end of the 19th century: poster painting. He submitted drawings for several poster illustration competitions. In the summer of 1900, he also began to produce press illustrations, an activity that reached its height the following winter in Madrid when, with Francesc d’Assís Soler, he founded the magazine Arte Joven, of which he was artistic director for the five numbers published.

Paris, 1900 – 1901 Room 5-7

In autumn 1900 Picasso made his first journey to Paris.

When he arrived in the city, Picasso made his first direct contact with the avant-garde currents which were spreading all over Europe. That period is dominated fundamentally by his discovery of the Impressionists, neo-Impressionists, Pointillists and Nabis, who had a profound effect. At the exhibition “Centennale” there were a large number of works by Manet and the Impressionists; at Vollard Gallery he saw the work of Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard and Van
Gogh. Observation of the reality around him, night-time Paris made manifest, its characters and its atmosphere, are the leitmotiv of the paintings of that first time in the city.

Those Paris drawings are closely connected with the bullfighting scenes and some pastels such The Divan done in Barcelona between 1899 and 1900. His work at that time was marked by the influence of Toulouse-Lautrec. However, unlike Lautrec’s work, there is very little drawing in his oils; the application of the brushstroke is harsh, the colours are warm and vehement; the paint is often applied in medium and light brushstrokes.

### Blue period, 1901 – 1904 Room 8

At the end of 1901, the description of Paris nightlife, the cityscapes of Montmartre, disappeared from Picasso’s paintings and the bright colours of the paintings of 1900 and 1901 were replaced by a monochrome with subtle tonalities. Blue became the dominant colour in his work, so much so that the paintings he did between 1901 and 1904 are defined by that colour.

That emergence of that change in subject matter and colour in Picasso’s work was neither sudden nor arbitrary; the influence of circumstantial, cultural, social and personal factors determined the step from a worldly painting to one of a strongly symbolic character.

One of the decisive elements in the creation of his Blue period was Picasso’s friendship with Max Jacob, who introduced him to Baudelaire, Rimbaud and most of all Verlaine. He discovered a type of literature in which sincerity is inseparable from pain; in which the art springs from sadness and suffering.

With the passage of time, blue came to monopolise the compositions, while an atmosphere of mystery, sadness and melancholy pervaded most of the paintings. Blue has literary associations with decadence and is considered a highly spiritual colour. When combined with green, it suggests the immense loneliness of the sea, and for that reason Picasso, often used blue when there was no naturalistic reason to do so. With that correlation between sadness and sincerity, the world of outcasts takes on great importance.

### Rose period, 1905 – 1906 Room 9

At the turn of the year from 1904 to 1905, there was a very gradual change in Picasso’s work. The mannerism that can still be seen in all the works from early 1905 disappeared, while colour was increasingly varied, with subtle, delicate combinations. In subject matter, the world of acrobats and the circus monopolised the output of this period.

It was at this time that he became more interested in the material. The figures are less angular and more solid and there is a visible tendency to look for volume. The colours are those of the flesh and the sensuality of the Dutch woman who appears as the central motif in a series of compositions from that time. We should mention Portrait of Mrs. Canals. Within a marked classicism and an ethereal atmosphere, the artist’s entire attention was focused on a detailed, balanced description of the face and the lace on the mantilla that frames it.

Despite being a transition period between the Rose period and Cubism, 1906 marked a major turn in Picasso’s work. In Gósol, he intensified his search for volume and there was a greater predominance of reddish ochre tonalities associated with the landscape of that little village in the Pyrenees. Moreover, the exhibition of Iberian sculptures from Osuna and Cerro de los Santos confirms the thesis of the influence of Iberian art on Picasso’s paintings from that period. All those factors helped to impregnate his oils with a great serenity, objectivity and balance, while there is also a clear tendency to more geometrical forms, the key to his imminent Cubism.
Barcelona, 1917 Room 10-11

Picasso’s association with Diaghilev's Russian Ballets was the key influence on a major part of his output in 1917. In February, Cocteau and Picasso set out for Rome to meet Diaghilev and Massine, who were working on the production of the ballet Parade. The contact with classical culture, with the art of Michelangelo, on the one hand, and the influence of Ingres, on the other, were decisive in the evolution of Picasso’s work, which returned to the classical sources and attained great harmony, balance and naturalism.

Picasso came to Barcelona with the Ballets, in pursuit of one of the Russian ballerinas, Olga Khokhlova, whom he married a year later. Whilst the other members of the company set off on a tour of South America, Pablo and Olga remained in Barcelona.

The Museum has conserved a series of canvases from that Barcelona period, which are proof of Picasso's interest in the search for new sources and artistic resources. In some of them the canons of Cubism are already in force and the intensity of their colours and the treatment of the geometry of the forms are linked to works from 1915.

The Passeig de Colom, seen from the hotel Ranzini, where Olga was staying, combines Cubism with a Divisionism that refers back to some extent to the kind he was using in 1901. Closely connected with the Divisionism of this work is the Pointillism used for the portrait Woman with Mantilla.

In Harlequin Picasso opted for a return to classicism, not only in the workmanship but also in the softness and subtlety of the tonalities, reminiscent of the harlequins of 1905. Presented by Picasso at the Art Exhibition in 1919 and later donated to the Museums of Art of Barcelona, is the first Picasso’s work to enter the museum collections of the city.

LAS MENINAS Room 12-15

Between August and December 1957, Picasso carried out an exhaustive analysis of Velázquez’s Las Meninas. The suite of fifty-eight works which Picasso donated to the Museum in 1968 consists of forty-four interpretations inspired by Velázquez's painting; nine, The Pigeons, present several descriptions of the dovecote he had installed in his studio at La Californie villa in Cannes; three landscapes and two free interpretations, The Piano and Portrait of Jacqueline.

Let us begin with the artist's own words, noted by Sabartés in his book L’atelier de Picasso, published in 1952, to set the bases for an analysis of the series: “If one were to set out to copy Las Meninas in all good faith, for example, on reaching a certain point and the person copying was me, I would wonder: How would it be to put this one a little more to the right or left? And I would try to do it my way, forgetting about Velázquez. That attempt would certainly lead me to modify the light or change it because I had moved one of the characters. And so, bit by bit, I would paint Meninas that would seem detestable to the professional copyist; they would not be the ones he would have thought he saw in Velázquez’s canvas, they would be my Meninas.”

His interpretation of this painting is an exhaustive study of rhythm, colour, movement and a constant play of imagination in metamorphosing the personalities of a number of the components of the work. However, his faithfulness and respect towards the atmosphere of Velázquez’s work are evident through all the compositions. The treatment of light, volume, space and perspective given by the old master is conserved through all his overall analyses, though to do so he has recourse to quite different procedures.

LAST YEARS Room 16

The last period of Picasso’s work is the one when he acted with total freedom, when the distortion and the brushstroke
were more daring and when the iconography revolved obsessively around certain particular subjects, which were extensively treated, but became an ever changing show in which the spectator has the dizzy feeling of being shaken, from the musketeers and pipe smokers, which refer us back to the Golden Age, to the daring, shameless love scenes. The aim of all this is to immerse us in a world where brazenness alternates with the most profound ingenuity and where what appears to be bad taste attains to the grandiosity and beauty of a new aesthetic beyond modernity.

The satirical-burlesque tone that pervades many of the works from this Avignon period, so-called because of the great exhibitions in 1970 and 1973 held at the Palais des Papes in Avignon, is most evident in Seated Man and Woman in Profile.

As a prologue to this moment, we should mention the oil painting Painter at Work, which connects the subject of painter and model. Painter at Work is one of the variants that monopolise the artist’s palette in the description of his own creative task, in the narration of the relations between painter, canvas and model.

**PRINTS ROOMS**

Prints rooms will remain closed from 7th January until May 2009 due to restoration works on the gothic panelled ceiling and also due to the undergoing preparation of the new exhibition about Picasso's erotic prints which will be opened the first fortnight of May.

**Picasso printmaker** - His extensive range, with over 2,000 prints of a myriad of different themes, most of which are among our museum’s collection, all created with mastery of his craft, diversity and technical experimentation, is what positions Pablo Picasso as the maestro par excellence of modern printmaking. He is the hand behind some of the most beautiful prints in the History of Print, not to mention the many innovations in his use of aquatint, lithograph and linocut. Starting with his famous etching, The frugal meal (1904), Picasso spent the rest of his life tirelessly producing intaglio prints. There were also periods of more intense production of lithographs (from 1919 to 1930 and from 1945 to 1962), as well as on linoleum (from 1954 to 1964).

Some of the most outstanding etchings include Minotauroamaquia (1935) or the hundred prints that make up the Vollard Suite (1930-1939). From Picasso’s time with the Mourlot workshops in Paris, there are some marvellous lithographs such as Dove (1949) or the portrait series of Françoise and of Jacqueline, all predominantly in black. Picasso saved the experience of colour for the linocuts, like the bold Still Life under the lamp or Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe (1962).

What’s more, between 1910 and 1972, Pablo Picasso illustrated around 154 books with his etchings, including: The Metamorphosis by Ovid, Natural History from Buffón, or Pepe Illo’s La tauromaquia o el arte de torear, Rojas’ La Celestina, among others. This creative fluency was completed towards the end of his life with two more series: 347 prints (from March 16 to October 5, 1968) and the 156 prints (between 1970 and 1972), in which Picasso returned to his own particular iconography to form his devotion to his own personal praise to love, the eroticism between painter and painting, between the artist and the printmaking.

The artwork on exhibition in the engraving rooms is renewed annually for conservation, as artwork on paper has a limited exhibition time period. It is also renewed for thematic variation, in order to show the different styles and techniques of the diverse Picasso prints collection in the Museum.
66 prints by Picasso that illustrate the book La Celestina

The Museu Picasso presents in the Prints' rooms one of the latest acquisitions: the 66 etchings and aquatints, from 1968, that Picasso himself selected out of his production to illustrate the French edition of 1971, La Célestine, at the suggestion of the printer Aldo Crommelynck.

The painter selected these sixty-six etchings from the series 347 (shown at the Galerie Louise Leiris in Paris in December 1968), which he made at Mougins between April 11 and August 18, 1968.

In representing Celestina, Picasso was faithful to the sparse descriptions of her in Rojas's text and to the iconographic tradition of the earliest editions and the prints that Goya had made of scenes from the same story. The money-grasping, drunken go-between whose name has become a popular synonym for her trade is depicted as a little old woman with a beard, dressed in a frayed cloak and a miserable hood. In these respects she coincides with Carlota Valdivia, a procuress the artist had known in Barcelona in 1902 and portrayed in some drawings and a magnificent painting from his Blue Period.

In most of the etchings Celestina is shown offering the services of her girls to a variety of male personages, some elegant, some pathetic, whose dress is closer in style to that of the seventeenth century than to that of the time when Rojas was writing, at the end of the fifteenth century.

Portrait of a man with ruff

The recent acquisition of a new print of the Man with ruff in the style of El Greco (1962) together with 7 proofs of its 4 states, as well as being a very significant addition to the collection of the Museu Picasso, is a wonderful testimony to the process that Picasso created for the production of his colour linoleums with one single block. These proofs permit us to observe, step by step, the cut and chromatic disposition created with a linoleum for a background and another for the image, carved with a “missing block or linoleum”. To do this, he engraved the shapes of the first colour —white— and then printed all the copies on a black background. Then, he took up the original block, carved the second colour —also white— and printed the copies on top of the first ones, in such a way that, in this state, the head had three colours, two white and the black of the background, and then he followed this system through to the very last colour, another black. In the end, the block only conserved the part corresponding to this black, and it was unrecoverable.

In the tonal austerity of this portrait, the blocks that take the black and the white stand out with the superimposed images of the same colour and both juxtaposed. The creamy white on a black background become a blueish grey. White on white, and white on black, take on a sort of pearl grey white. And while the first black is matt, the second, of black on black, is glossy.

Another originality is the composition divided in two: the picture and the frame. As in antique engraving, in which a separate frame was engraved from the main sheet to frame the effigy of different saints or noteworthy people, Picasso too used the same frame for all the group of portraits that alluded to paintings of the Grand Masters of the XVII century, Hat with flowers, Woman in hat with flowers, Portrait of Jacqueline with ruff and Family scene, that accompany this gentleman, directly inspired by El Greco.
Sabartés Rooms

New museum’s room dedicated to its founder: he was Picasso’s friend and personal secretary.

The warm friendship between Picasso and Jaume Sabartés (1881–1968) dates from the years of their youth when they both haunted the literary and artistic circles of Barcelona, a friendship that was to last throughout their lives. In 1935 Sabartés became his personal secretary. And so it is not surprising that Sabartés’ image should have been the object of the artist’s attention within his iconography from the start.

There are many pencil or oil portraits which reveal a deep knowledge of the person and a particular complicity which not only enables us to analyse the work stylistically but opens up new horizons which in turn lead us to a deeper knowledge of Picasso’s life.

The portrait he did of Sabartés in Royan in 1939 is a postscript to the Sabartés iconography in Picasso’s work. When he did the portrait their lives had come together again and on this occasion it was not friendship that united them; Sabartés had become his personal secretary and the most discreet and loyal witness to his life.

This last oil portrait is the materialisation of an old aspiration of Sabartés’. He himself has left a detailed description of the moment when it was conceived: ‘To amuse himself or just because, in other words, without rhyme or reason, when I think he’s tired of holding a soliloquy and to make him feel that I’m listening to him it occurs to me to say: ‘I’d like to have a portrait in a ruff, like the gentlemen of the 16th century, and a hat with a plume to cover my head.’ ‘I’ll do it,’ he answers carelessly. That happened in 1938, and Sabartés’ wish to see himself as a gentlemen from the age of Felipe II was fulfilled in the portrait done in Royan in 1939.

The drawings of the previous year were the seeds of the characterisation Sabartés wanted, and they took definitive shape in this splendid, fascinating portrait. It is a work that follows the artist’s rules at the time: the distortion of the features, the treatment of the nose, the apparent dislocation of the face that does not depart an inch from the signs of identity that make up the physiognomy and character of his old friend, to whom he makes constant allusions in his work, whether literary or graphic.