

## The Wait (Margot)

Signed *Picasso* in the lower left-hand corner

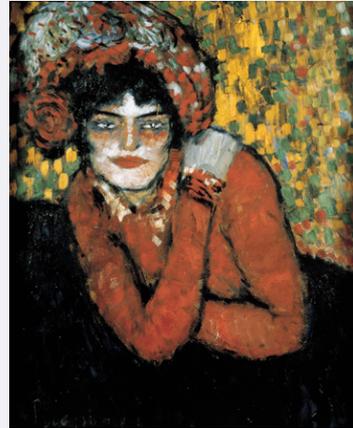
Paris, 1901

Oil on board

69.5 x 57 cm

Plandiura Acquisition, 1932

MPB 4.271



### The work

A work set in the Parisian nightlife Picasso discovered at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a portrait of a morphine addict or prostitute painted in quick flowing highly colourful strokes with a partly divisionist pictorial treatment. Likewise, the energetic thick brushstrokes – an influence from Van Gogh – and the black outline of the figure – also a feature of some Van Gogh works and the French *Les Nabis* artistic movement – are worth commenting on.

The noted chromatism lets us see how Picasso here felt captivated by the play of lights and how much he enjoyed using colour. The extensive red was used to colour both the dress and the hat as well as the face – lips, make-up – and also to fleck the back wall.

### Context and reception of the work

In 1901 Pere Mañach – a Catalan living in Paris and Picasso's first dealer – in collaboration with the art critic Gustave Coquiote organised an exhibition for the artist at the Gallery of Ambroise Vollard, the most important art dealer in Paris in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With prodigious intuition and exceptional aesthetic taste, he discovered or launched the post-impressionist painters Van Gogh and Cézanne – Les Nabis – and finally Matisse and Picasso – Les Fauves.

The young Picasso exhibited 64 paintings and some drawings, alongside the Basque painter Francisco Iturrino. *Margot* formed part of the exhibition (it was known as the *Morphine Addict* in the catalogue under number 9) and is also known as *Pierreuse* [prostitute] *with her hand behind her shoulder*. This theme is also seen in other artists from the period such as Santiago Rusiñol (*Morphine*, 1894), Anglada Camarasa and Van Dongen.

The exhibition enjoyed a certain success ('nearly all the papers saw it favourably' wrote Picasso himself) and caught the attention of Max Jacob who, the day after the opening, was invited by Mañach to meet Picasso and see more of his works.

In his book, Coquiote describes Picasso as a 'frenzied lover of modern life' who observes 'all street scenes, all human adventures' (landscapes, prostitutes, street scenes or interiors). He also admires the furious brushstrokes ('the man can not stop looking [...] filling his canvas furiously with urgency, impatient with not being able to make his hand go

quicker') executed with 'long brushstrokes filled with colour'. (Gustave Coquiot, *La vie artistique. Pablo Ruiz Picasso*, June 1901.)

In July 1901, the critic Félicien Fargus stated in the *Revue Blanche* that Picasso 'adores colour for itself' and Pierre Daix classified this work as pre-fauvist.

It was purchased from Catalan collector Lluís Plandiura by the Museums Board in 1932 alongside other Picasso works which, when the Museu Picasso in Barcelona opened in 1963, became part of the permanent collection.

### Pointillism, divisionism

If in an 1897 letter to his friend Bas, Picasso classed *pointillism* as *blind obstinacy*, he would be influenced, amongst others, by the style during his stay in Paris – still in vogue amongst avant-garde painters – as can be seen with *Margot*.

*Pointillism* was the popular term for the technique known as divisionism, comprising of the juxtaposition of short pure colour strokes so as to achieve a much more intense and bright optical blend (in viewers' eyes, a contemplation from a certain distance) than that achieved with traditional physical mixtures of colour on the palette.

The painters Georges Seurat and Paul Signac – divisionism leaders and theoreticians – rejected the term pointillism for being inexact and superfluous, having to further bear a new classification detractors contemptuously coined – *confetti style*. Picasso, on the other hand, invented constantly: he made a personal adaptation of the technique, not applying it with a neo-Impressionist brushstroke feature (Picasso's is freer) nor systematically (limiting its use especially to the backdrop and, even, the table, whilst he seems to have taken inspiration from painters such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec or Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen for the figure).

Divisionism can also be seen in other works housed at the MPB: *La Nana (The Dwarf)*, MPB 4.274), dating from the same year, but also the later *Woman with Mantilla* (MPB 110.004) painted in Barcelona in 1917 and left unfinished, perhaps due to dissatisfaction with the result of a divisionism applied more systematically and *canonical* this time, in comparison with the two earlier works.

### References

*Margot* was the work chosen as the communication image for the Musée d'Orsay exhibition 'De Cézanne à Picasso, chefs-d'oeuvre de la galerie Vollard', held from June to September 2007 that brought together over a hundred works in Paris from around the world which were once owned by Ambroise Vollard.



### Location

Room 7