

Picasso and Braque

PIONEERING CUBISM

September 24, 1989–January 16, 1990

The pioneering of Cubism by Picasso and Braque is the most passionate adventure in our century's art.

--William Rubin*

This fall The Museum of Modern Art presents PICASSO AND BRAQUE: PIONEERING CUBISM, the first exhibition to explore the creative exchange between Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) during the years of their invention and elaboration of Cubism. This is the first attempt to examine the most generative art movement of our century through an in-depth concentration on its core--the art that Picasso and Braque produced in dialogue with each other between 1907 and 1914. "During the Cubist years," writes William Rubin, director emeritus, Department of Painting and Sculpture, and organizer of the exhibition, "both artists were at their best when they were closest to one another. Cubism as we know it was a vision that neither artist could have realized alone."

Sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc., the exhibition is on view from September 24, 1989, to January 16, 1990.

The exhibition includes 390 works in all mediums employed by the two artists: paintings, drawings, prints, construction sculptures, collage, and papiers collés (pasted papers). The recent cultural exchange agreement with the Soviet Union has made it possible to add important loans from Moscow and Leningrad to those from museums and private collections in such cities as Paris, London, Stockholm, Prague, and Basel, as well as from The Museum of Modern Art's own collection.

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Organized chronologically, the exhibition details every phase in Picasso's and Braque's development of Cubism, from 1907, when the artists first met, to 1914, when Braque departed for the war. The full range and rich diversity of the artists' work is represented, including bold, early Cubist paintings; the complex, highly faceted compositions of Analytic Cubism in 1911 and 1912; pioneering construction sculptures; austere papiers collés; and the extremely colorful and decorative art of Synthetic Cubism during the final years of the collaboration.

Implicit in the presentation is an exploration of the ways in which Picasso's and Braque's differences, in temperament, mind, and pictorial gift, complemented each other and contributed to the realization of a common vision. "We were like mountain-climbers roped together," Braque recalled. "Almost every evening," said Picasso, "either I went to Braque's studio or Braque came to mine. Each of us had to see what the other had done during the day." The two artists' friendship was in many senses an attraction of opposites, yet the visual language they shared served equally well their contrasting needs. During the years of their association, Picasso suppressed his natural virtuosity and lifelong impulse toward narrative imagery in favor of a rigorous commitment to pictorial invention. For Braque, whose abilities did not include Picasso's near demonic facility, Cubism was a vehicle that enabled him to exploit his own particular talents.

Among Braque's many gifts was an exceptional inventiveness in regard to materials and textures, and a superb sensitivity to light and space; his technical innovations were often the basis of Cubism's most important breakthroughs. But, if Braque more often opened up new ways of working, it was Picasso who was more likely to exploit most thoroughly their possibilities. For example, research on the exhibition has made clear that as early as 1911

Braque--rather than Picasso, as has long been thought--created the first Cubist construction sculptures. These Braque reliefs in painted cardboard, and later wood, were without mass or solidity and were cut out and assembled rather than (as in traditional sculpture) carved or modeled. Braque came, however, to attach less importance to these sculptures than Picasso, and none of them appear to have survived his absence in the trenches. The earliest extant construction sculpture is Picasso's cardboard version of Guitar, from the autumn of 1912. Picasso would later go on to revolutionize further the art of sculpture on the basis of these fragile objects.

In 1912 the intensity of the dialogue between the artists resulted in two other key discoveries that, like construction sculpture, profoundly affected the form of subsequent art. In May Picasso made the first "collage," his now-famous Still Life with Chair Caning; and, in September, Braque, acting on ideas generated by his paper constructions, assembled the first "papier collé" or pasted paper, Fruit Dish and Glass. The distinction between these two mediums offers a clue to the differences between Picasso's and Braque's art and to the nature of the give and take between them. In Braque's papier collé, a classical harmony is the governing principle, expressed by the unity of both materials and style. In Picasso's collage, subversion is the goal; a totally contradictory element--oil cloth imprinted with a pattern of chair caning--is seemingly arbitrarily imposed on a loosely brushed, abstract still life.

The collaboration between Picasso and Braque is unique in the history of art for its intensity, duration, and generative impact. No other modern style was the simultaneous invention of two artists in dialogue with each other. In the years of their association, Picasso and Braque not only produced a number of exceptionally great works, they created a visual language that could and would be used by artists with widely divergent aesthetic, literary, and

political concerns. Futurism, Neoplasticism, Russian Constructivism, Dadaism, and Orphism, as well as much Surrealism and post-World War II art, are unimaginable without it.

Additional support for the PICASSO AND BRAQUE exhibition has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. An indemnity for the exhibition has been received from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Philip Morris Companies Inc. began its support of the arts in 1958. Since then, the company has developed one of the most comprehensive corporate cultural programs. Through its broad spectrum of sponsorship, Philip Morris promotes contemporary and minority visual and performing arts, as well as major international exhibitions and tours. PICASSO AND BRAQUE: PIONEERING CUBISM is the third exhibition sponsored by Philip Morris at The Museum of Modern Art. The first was MIRRORS AND WINDOWS: AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY SINCE 1960 in 1978; the second, "PRIMITIVISM" IN 20TH CENTURY ART: AFFINITY OF THE TRIBAL AND THE MODERN in 1984. In addition, Philip Morris supported BERLINART 1961-1987 in 1987.

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*PUBLICATION Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism contains an essay by William Rubin with a chronology/documentation by Judith Cousins in collaboration with Pierre Daix. 460 pages. 321 color and 230 black-and-white illustrations; all works containing color are reproduced in color. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Hardcover (\$70.00) and paperbound (\$35.00) editions are available in The MoMA Bookstore. The hardcover is also distributed by Bulfinch Press/Little, Brown and Company.

No. 72

September 1989

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