





**MASTERS OF ART**

# **PICASSO**

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Front Cover: Pablo Picasso, Portrait Marie-Thérèse, 1937

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# CONTENTS

6	Introduction
8	Life
38	Works
110	Further Reading



# INTRODUCTION

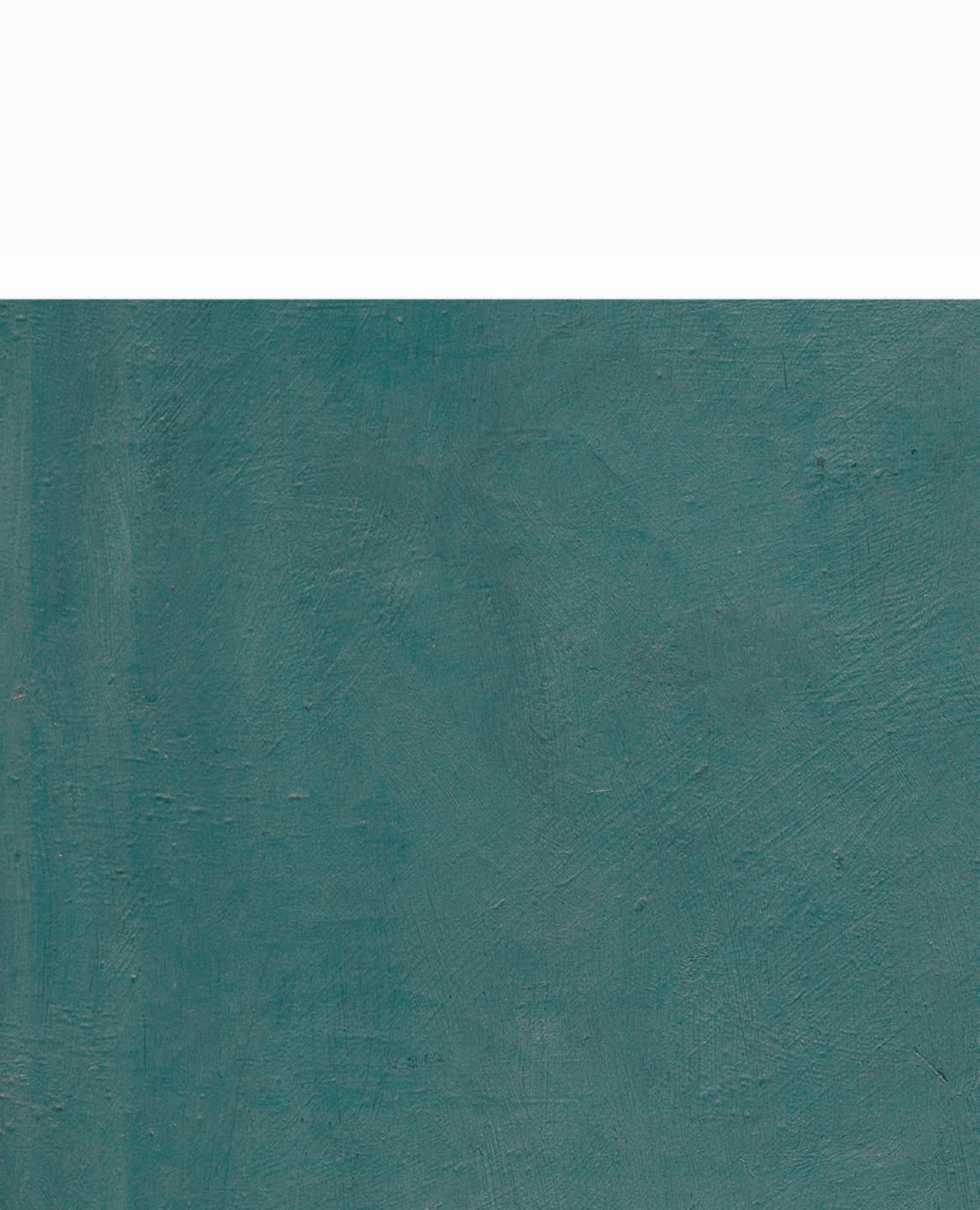
The family of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) were convinced he was going to be a great artist. His mother recalled that her son was drawing before he learned to speak. His parents amassed a childhood collection of art created by him. Extant works from the period c.1889–1890 are diverse, from landscapes and seascapes of Málaga, to paper cut-outs that he created to amuse himself, his sisters and cousins. He would utilise this talent creating *papiers collés* (cut-out pieces of paper applied to collages) in 1912 for his works of Synthetic Cubism. Picasso's first painting in oils, *Picador* (1889, Collection Claude Picasso, Paris) (page 10), was conceived when Picasso's father took him to see his first bullfight. He recorded what he saw and how he saw it. He was eight years old and kept the composition of a picador astride a horse in the bull ring all his life. The bull and the bullfighter were subjects that permeated his art throughout a long career. It is said that had Picasso not become a painter, he would have liked to have been a picador. His father, an artist of genre and animal art, most noted for paintings of birds, and an art teacher by profession, encouraged Picasso to embark on an academic training in art.

The pivotal moment in Picasso's career was the creation of the painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J.) in 1907 (pages 56/57). Influenced by the art of Paul Cézanne, who broke down nature into elements, Picasso deconstructed the female body and rebuilt it in geometric, modular planes. His interest in Iberian sculpture was transferred to the mask-like faces. A grotesque yet deeply engaging work, it was the precursor to Cubism. Collaborating with French artist Georges Braque, the two developed a new art form through their concepts of Analytical and Synthetic Cubism. Only Braque's call-up for military service in 1914 halted their progressive partnership. Picasso's friends were primarily artists, many from his chosen home Catalonia, who remained close to him. The success of Cubism gave Picasso fame and a following, in Europe and America, and a secure income. In 1910, he painted Cubist portraits of the three influential art dealers and collectors who had aided his success: Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Ambroise Vollard and Wilhelm Uhde. Avant-garde art needed the foresight and connections of knowledgeable brokers.

During his long life, Picasso had many relationships with different women and all are visible in many portraits. From 1904 to 1911, Fernande Olivier, his muse and mistress, was the subject of his Cubist art. Eva Gabriel followed, 1911–1915, and a brief liaison with Gaby Depeyra in 1915, then marriage in 1917 to the Russian ballet

dancer Olga Khokhlova, by whom he had a son, Paulo. Their relationship had faded long before their separation in 1943. During those married years, he had a relationship with Marie-Thérèse Walter, 1927–1936, by whom he had a daughter, Maya, and the opportunity to experiment with Surrealist compositions using her as the model. Dora Maar overlapped Marie-Thérèse, staying with Picasso until he left her in 1944 for François Gilot, by whom he had two children, Claude and Paloma. Their relationship ended in 1953, when François left him. A brief, platonic liaison with a young woman, the French-born Sylvette David (1934– ), produced a remarkable series of works featuring “the girl with the ponytail”, including *Portrait of Sylvette David* (1954) (page 34). His final love was Jacqueline Roque, whom he married in 1961, when she was twenty-seven and he was approaching seventy. They remained together until his death in 1973. He created over 400 portraits of her. For the last seventeen year of his life, she was the only woman he painted.

Picasso remained at the forefront of progressive art, following Cubism and Cubist sculpture with neo-classical representations and Surrealist works created during the inter-war years, 1918–1939. It was easy to follow his latest experiments and explorations as he dated all his works at the time of their creation. The diversity of his art was highlighted when the Basque town of Guernica was bombed in 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. It became the subject of the surreal mural *Guernica* (1937) (pages 86/87). Its exposure at the Paris World Fair that year highlighted the atrocities of war and brought Picasso further respect and fame. He continued to condemn the impact of war on ordinary people through allegory and symbolism, appropriating famous works by major artists of the past to convey his abhorrence of war. After 1945 and peace in Europe, he experimented in ceramics. Always the first to try new methods, he created extraordinary assemblages and became a noted sculptor as well as a painter. His final years, which he spent in the south of France, saw him return to familiar themes of Spanish life—he never forgot his Catalanian roots—and a renewed exploration of the human body, one of the first practical exercises in academic training that he never forgot.





# LIFE





Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), the greatest artist of the twentieth century, was born in the southern coastal city of Málaga in Andalusia, Spain, on 25 October 1881, into a middle-class family. The firstborn child of Don José Ruiz y Blasco (1838–1913) and Doña María Picasso y López (1855–1939), he was baptised on 10 November 1881 in the parish church of Santiago, Málaga, as Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno Crispín Crispiniano María Remedios de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz Picasso. As the firstborn son he was cherished. Siblings followed: possibly a brother, José (1883–1884/85), mentioned in the 1884–1885 census, who died in infancy—a possible cause of death, a cholera epidemic, had swept across Spain—and two sisters, Lola (1884–1958) and the youngest, Conchita (1887–1895), who died of diphtheria aged seven.

## From Málaga to La Coruña

In 1891, when Picasso was around ten years of age, the family had to move from Málaga when his father lost his job as curator of the municipal museum; the position came to an end when the museum closed through lack of funds in harsh economic times. They moved to La Coruña, a seaside town in Galicia in northwest Spain. Here the family tried to settle into the windier, rainier north, his father lamenting “no Málaga, no bulls, no friends, nothing”. José Ruiz worked as an art teacher at La Guarda School of Fine Arts. Picasso, following his father’s encouragement and



*Picador, 1889*

practical lessons, joined the school’s art classes in October 1892. He was taught the academic disciplines of figure drawing, copying from the plaster casts of antique statues, copying painted masterpieces, many appearing as illustrations in the journal *Blanco y Negro* (Black and White), painting from nature, and still-life drawing.

## A perfect draughtsman

In his spare time, Picasso tried many different types of art, from creating his own handmade newspapers (unpublished) full of sketches and caricatures in charcoal and pencil, to making portrait studies of the family, of himself, and of locals prepared to model; and landscape painting, such as the oil-on-canvas *House in the Country* (c.1893, Musée Picasso, Paris). He was known as Pablo Ruiz and signed his work "P. Ruiz". His draughtsmanship exhibited a near-perfect skill in capturing character and likeness. His portrait paintings of this period combined realism with the aura of the sitter, as in an 1895 portrait of the family friend Ramón Perez Costales, a doctor and politician responsible for fine arts in La Coruña, Picasso's first "collector", to whom he sold works for a few pesetas.

## Learning from Old Masters

Picasso's father encouraged him to study the works of such Spanish masters as Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), El Greco (1541–1614), Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664), Bartolomé Murillo (1617–1682) and Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652). Both father and son revered their technical abilities, powers of observation, and remarkable realism and expressionism, using palettes of blacks, greys and creams. Picasso's colour palette included deep ochre and umber, rich browns and dark reds. A work rich in colour in the Spanish

tradition, painted in early 1895 when Picasso was nearing fourteen years of age, is *Girl with Bare Feet* (page 12), a portrait of a local Galician girl. It reveals a fast-approaching maturity in technique, capturing the essence of the subject and creating an intense sense of presence of both sitter and artist. Seated centrally in the composition, wearing a deep-red dress with contrasting white shawl, the young girl has her hands folded in her lap, her facial expression serious and contemplative, her large brown eyes directed at the painter. Picasso captures a moment in time: her youth, her physique, her eyes focused on the viewer, and her bare feet. He said that servant girls of the house often had bare feet, and this girl's feet had frostbite. Picasso kept this painting and the remarkable *Man in a Beret* (1895, Museu Picasso, Barcelona) all his life.

## Family loss and his early successes

It was in La Coruña that Picasso's youngest sister Conchita, six years younger than he and with whom he shared a close bond, died on 10 January 1895, following an outbreak of diphtheria that had spread through the city. Her death, a deep shock for all the family, may link to Picasso works featuring sickness and death which followed, such as *Science and Charity* (1897) (pages 40/41). The painting received an honourable mention in the Exposición General de Bellas Artes in Madrid, followed by a gold medal in the Exposición Provincial de Málaga. It was a distinguished achievement