

# 10 Cubism

**T**he various modes of Cubism that Pablo Picasso developed jointly with Georges Braque in France between 1908 and 1914 offered a radically new way of looking at the world. Their shared vision had an inestimable impact on the avant-garde art that followed it. Although Cubism was never itself an abstract style, the many varieties of nonobjective art it helped usher in throughout Europe would have been unthinkable without it. From Italian Futurism to Dutch Neo-Plasticism to Russian Constructivism, the repercussions of the Cubist experiment were thoroughly international in scope. But the legacy of Cubism was not exhausted in the first quarter of the twentieth century, when these movements took place. Its lingering influence can be felt in much art after World War II, in works as diverse as the paintings of Willem de Kooning (see fig. 19.4), the sculpture of David Smith (see fig. 19.39), the multimedia constructions of Robert Rauschenberg (see fig. 21.11), the photographs of David Hockney (see fig. 21.7), and the architecture of Frank Gehry (see fig. 25.32).

Cubism altered forever the Renaissance conception of painting as a window into a world where three-dimensional space is projected onto the flat picture plane by way of illusionistic drawing and one-point perspective. The Cubists concluded that reality has many definitions, and that therefore objects in space—and indeed, space itself—have no fixed or absolute form. Together, Picasso and Braque translated those multiple readings of the external world into new pictorial vocabularies which had remarkable range and invention.

The English critic Roger Fry, one of their early supporters, said of the Cubists, "They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form, not to imitate life but to find an equivalent for life." By 1911 the Cubist search for new forms was gaining momentum well beyond the studios of Picasso and Braque, and eventually spawned a large school of Cubist painters in Paris. The work of these later practitioners of Cubism is discussed in the second half of this chapter.

The invention of Cubism was truly a collaborative affair, and the close, mutually beneficial relationship between Picasso and Braque was arguably the most significant of its kind in the history of art. According to Braque, it was "a union based on the independence of each." We have seen how much of the modern movement was the result of collective efforts between like-minded artists, as in Die Brücke or Der Blaue Reiter in Germany (see chapter 8) or the Fauves in France (see chapter 7). But there was no real precedent for the intense level of professional exchange that took place between Picasso and Braque, especially from 1908 to 1912, when they were in close, often daily contact. "We were like two mountain climbers roped together," Braque said. Picasso called him "pard," in humorous reference to the Western novels they loved to read (especially those about Buffalo Bill), or "Wilbur," likening their enterprise to that of the American aviation pioneers, Wilbur and Orville Wright. Braque was a Frenchman, Picasso a Spaniard, and their temperaments, both personal and artistic, were strikingly dissimilar. Whereas Picasso was impulsive, prolific, and anarchic, Braque was slow, methodical, and meditative. He had little of Picasso's personal magnetism or colossal egotism, and the tendency toward lyrical painterliness in his work stood in strong contrast to Picasso's expressionist sensibility. Their close working relationship was brought to an end by World War I. In August 1914 Braque was called up for active military duty; as a Spanish expatriate, Picasso was not called and remained behind, staying mostly in Paris and southern France during the war.

## Taking Possession: Picasso's Early Career

**Pablo Ruiz Picasso** (1881–1973) achieved legendary status even within his lifetime. The critic John Berger went so far as to say that by the forties, if Picasso wanted to possess anything, all he had to do was draw it. His career dominated three-quarters of the century, during which he

produced a staggering output of art in virtually every conceivable medium, from small-scale prints, drawings, and ceramics to mural-size paintings and monumental public sculpture. The catalogue raisonné of his paintings and drawings alone runs to thirty-three volumes. With a combination of virtuoso technical facility and a virtually unparalleled ability to invent new forms, Picasso could easily compose in several styles simultaneously. As a result, the single-minded focus of his Cubist years, when he collaborated with a fellow artist more closely than at any other time in his career, presents something of an anomaly.

Nearly as well known as Picasso's art are the stormy details of his personal life, which was littered with emotionally destructive relationships, whether with lovers, children, or friends. More than is so for his contemporaries (including Braque), knowledge of Picasso's life is essential to a thorough understanding of his art; as a quintessential modernist, autobiography infiltrates his imagery in overt and covert ways. As William Rubin, one of the leading Picasso specialists, has written, the biographical references in Picasso's art "often constitute a distinct and consistent substratum of meaning distinguishable from, but interwoven with, the manifest subject matter." No other twentieth-century artist discussed in this book has been studied in as much depth as Picasso. To justly serve the complex nature of his long and multifaceted career, his oeuvre, of which Cubism proper really only encompasses six years, is addressed in the course of several chapters.

### Training and Move to Paris

Picasso was born in the small, provincial town of Málaga, on the southern coast of Spain. Though an Andalusian by

birth (and a resident of France for most of his life), he always identified himself as a Catalan, from the more industrialized, sophisticated city of Barcelona, where the family moved when he was thirteen. Picasso's father was a painter and art teacher who, so the fable goes, was so impressed by his adolescent son's talents that he handed over his brushes to him and renounced painting forever. Many such self-aggrandizing legends originated with Picasso himself or his friends and were perpetuated by his biographers. Nevertheless, the artist is recorded as saying, "In art one must kill one's father," and he eventually did revolt against all that his father tried to teach him.

Though Picasso was no child prodigy, by the age of fourteen he was making highly accomplished portraits of his family. In the fall of 1895, when his father took a post at Barcelona's School of Fine Arts, the young Picasso was allowed to enroll directly in the advanced courses. The following year, he produced his first major figure composition, *The First Communion*, which was included in an important exhibition in Barcelona. At the urging of his father, Picasso spent eight or nine months in Madrid in 1897, where he enrolled at but rarely attended the Royal Academy of San Fernando, the most prestigious school in the country. In Madrid, Picasso studied Spain's old masters at the great Prado Museum, admiring especially Diego Velázquez, whose work he copied. Several decades later, Picasso made his own highly personal interpretations of the old masters he saw in the museums (see fig. 20.4).

Picasso suffered serious poverty in Madrid and chafed under the strictures of academic education, already setting his sights on Paris. First, however, he returned for a time to Barcelona, a city that provided a particularly stimulating



10.1 Pablo Picasso, *Le Moulin de la Galette*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 35½ × 46" (90.2 × 116.8 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

environment for a young artist coming of age at the turn of the century. As the capital of Catalonia, a region fiercely proud of its own language and cultural traditions, Barcelona was undergoing a modern renaissance. Its citizens were vying to establish their city as the most prosperous, culturally enlightened urban center in Spain. At the same time, poverty, unemployment, and separatist sentiments gave rise to political unrest and strong anarchist tendencies among the Catalans. As in Madrid, the latest artistic trend in Barcelona was *modernista*, a provincial variation on Art Nouveau and Symbolism (see fig. 5.9) that was practiced by young progressive artists and that left its mark on Picasso's early work.

Upon his return to Barcelona, Picasso declined to resume his studies at the Academy or to submit to his father's tutelage. Essential to his development was Els Quatre Gats (The Four Cats), a tavern that provided a fertile meeting ground for Catalan artists and writers. Picasso illustrated menus for Els Quatre Gats in the curving, stylized forms of *modernista* and made portraits of the habitués that were exhibited on the tavern walls. These incisive character studies amply illustrate that he had arrived at a personal mode well beyond his previous academic exercises. A watercolor from 1898–99, *The End of the Road*, contains aspects of the *modernista* style in the undulating forms of paths along which stooped figures shuffle toward a gateway presided over by an enormous angel of death, while, to their left, the wealthy travel by carriage to the same destination. "At the end of the road death waits for everybody," the artist said, "even though the rich go in carriages and the poor on foot." Picasso's biographer John Richardson has observed that this image stems from the death in 1895 of his younger sister, Conchita. This early trauma was compounded by the family's inability to afford a suitable funeral. In more general terms, Picasso may have been responding to the poverty around him, including the ranks of mutilated veterans who had returned from Spain's colonial wars and were reduced to begging in the streets. But *The End of the Road* was also in step with the pessimistic mood that permeated international Symbolist art toward the end of the century. We have seen this melancholic soul sickness in the works of artists such as Aubrey Beardsley and Edvard Munch (see figs. 5.3, 5.18). Picasso's preoccupation with poverty and mortality was to surface more thoroughly in the work of his so-called Blue Period (see fig. 10.2).

In 1900 one of Picasso's paintings was selected to hang in the Spanish Pavilion of the Universal Exposition in Paris. At age nineteen he traveled to the French capital for the first time with his friend and fellow painter Carles Casagemas. Picasso, who spoke little French, took up with a community of Spanish (mostly Catalan) artists in Paris and soon found benefactors in two dealers, a fellow Catalan, Pedro Mañach, and a Frenchwoman, Berthe Weill, also an early collector of works by Matisse. She sold the first major painting Picasso made in Paris, *Le Moulin de la Galette*

(fig. 10.1), a vivid study of closely packed figures in the famous dance hall in Montmartre. Although he no doubt knew Renoir's Impressionist rendition of the same subject (see fig. 2.31), Picasso rejected the sun-dappled congeniality of the Frenchman for a nocturnal and considerably more sinister view. This study of figures in artificial light relates to the dark, tenebrist scenes typical of much Spanish art at the time, but the seamy ambience recalls the work of Degas or Toulouse-Lautrec, both shrewd chroniclers of Parisian café life.

### Blue and Rose Periods

Picasso's companion during this sojourn in Paris, Carles Casagemas, became completely despondent over a failed love affair after the artists arrived back in Spain. He eventually returned to Paris without Picasso and, in front of his friends, shot himself in a restaurant. Picasso experienced pangs of guilt for having abandoned Casagemas (though he soon had an affair with the very woman who had precipitated the suicide), and he later claimed that it was the death of his friend that prompted the gloomy paintings of his Blue Period. Between 1901 and 1904, in both Barcelona and Paris, Picasso used a predominantly blue palette in many works for the portrayal of figures and themes expressing human misery—frequently hunger and cold, the hardships he himself experienced as he was trying to establish himself. The thin, attenuated figures of Spain's sixteenth-century Mannerist painter, El Greco, found echoes in these works by Picasso, as did the whole history of Spanish religious painting, with its emphasis on mourning and physical torment.

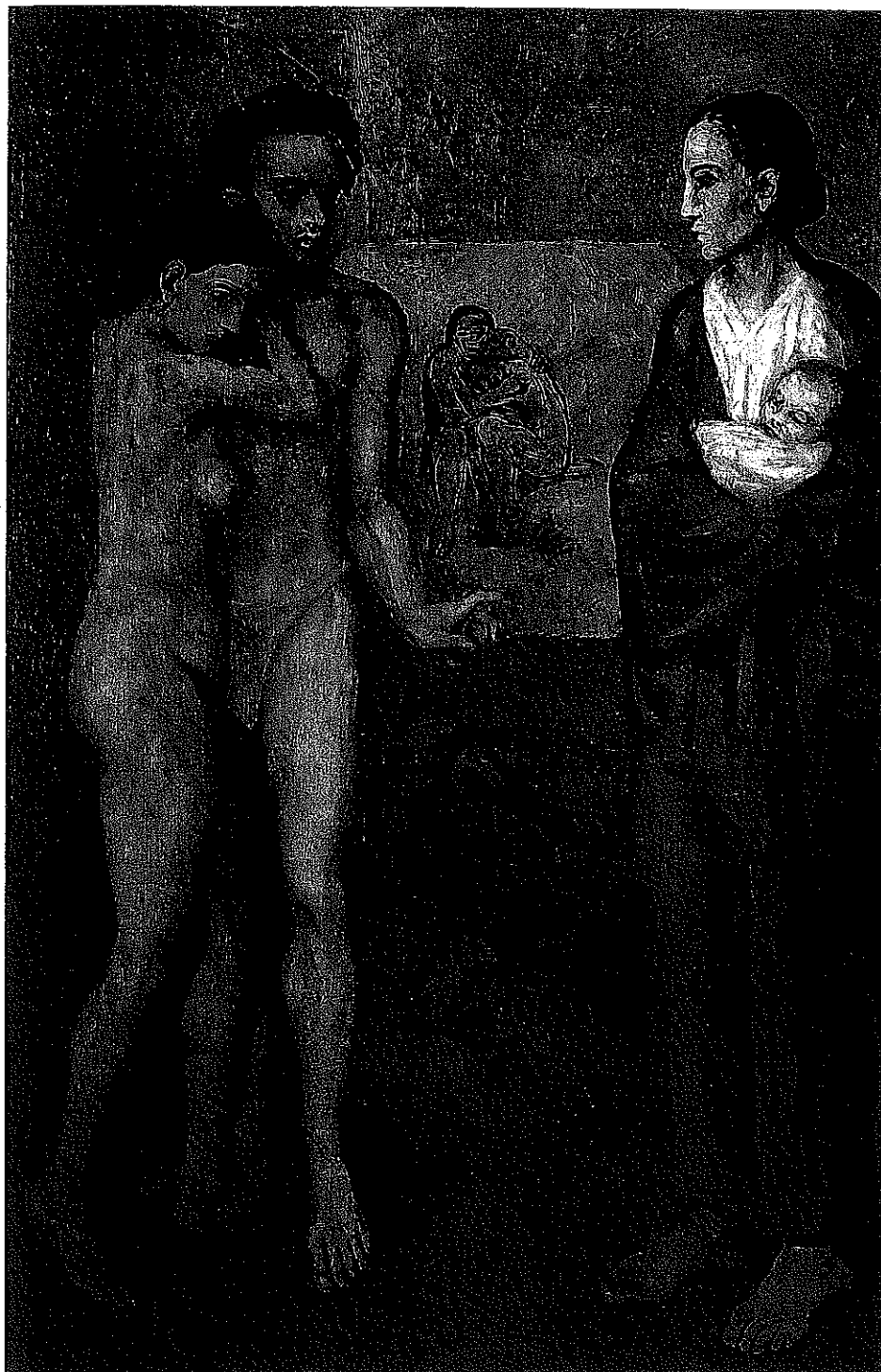
One of the masterpieces of this period is the large allegorical composition Picasso made in Barcelona, *La Vie (Life)* (fig. 10.2), for which he prepared several sketches. For the gaunt couple at the left Picasso depicted Casagemas and his lover, though X-rays reveal that the male figure was originally a self-portrait. They receive a stern gaze from the woman holding a baby at the right, who emerged from studies of inmates Picasso had made in a Parisian women's prison (where he could avail himself of free models), many of them prostitutes suffering from venereal disease. By heavily draping the woman, he gives her the timeless appearance of a madonna, thus embodying in a single figure his famously ambivalent and polarized view of women as either madonnas or whores. In their resemblance to a shamed Adam and Eve, the lovers (like their equivalent in the painting on the wall behind them) also yield a religious reading. From events in his own life Picasso built a powerful modern interpretation of the universal themes of love, life, and death. The pervasive blue hue of *La Vie* turns flesh into a cold, stony substance while compounding the melancholy atmosphere generated by the figures. Many Symbolist painters, and Romantics before them, understood the richly expressive potential of the color blue, including Gauguin in his great canvas from 1897, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*

(see fig. 3.19), a painting that also confronts life's largest questions. Gauguin, whose work made a significant impression on the young Spaniard, died in the distant Marquesas Islands while Picasso was at work on *La Vie*.

In the spring of 1904 Picasso settled again in Paris; he was never to live in Barcelona again. He moved into a tenement on the Montmartre hill dubbed by his friends the Bateau Lavoir ("laundry boat," after the laundry barges docked in the Seine) that was ultimately made famous by his presence there. Until 1909 Picasso lived at the Bateau Lavoir in the midst of an ever-growing circle of friends:

painters, poets, actors, and critics, including the devoted Max Jacob, who was to die in a concentration camp during World War II, and the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, who was to become the literary apostle of Cubism. In 1921 Picasso paid tribute to both men in his two versions of *The Three Musicians*, discussed in chapter 14 (see fig. 14.25).

Among the first works Picasso made upon arriving in Paris in 1904 is a macabre pastel in which a woman with grotesquely elongated fingers and hunched shoulders kisses a raven. The subject evokes Edgar Allan Poe, a favorite writer among *fin-de-siècle* Parisian artists,



**10.2** Pablo Picasso, *La Vie*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 6'5 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  $\times$  4'2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2  $\times$  1.29 m). The Cleveland Museum of Art.

particularly Odilon Redon, whose own brilliant pastels may have been a source for Picasso's (see fig. 3.14). The model for *Woman with a Crow* was an acquaintance of Picasso who had trained her pet bird to scavenge crumbs from the floors of the Lapin Agile, a working-class cabaret in Montmartre frequented by the artist and his entourage. Her skeletal form is silhouetted against an intense blue, but the chilly hues and downcast mood of the Blue Period were giving way to the new themes and the warmer tonalities that characterize the next phase of Picasso's work, the Rose Period.

Between 1905 and 1906 Picasso was preoccupied with the subject of acrobatic performers who traveled from town to town, performing on makeshift stages. Called *saltimbanques*, these itinerant entertainers often dressed as Harlequin and Pierrot, the clownish characters from the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte* who compete for the amorous attentions of Columbine. These subjects were popular in France as well as Spain in nineteenth-century literature and painting, and Picasso certainly knew pictorial variations on the themes by artists such as Daumier and Cézanne. His own interest in circus subjects was stimulated by frequent visits to Paris's Cirque Médrano, located near his Montmartre studio.

Like his predecessor Daumier, Picasso chose not to depict the saltimbanque in the midst of boisterous acrobatics but during moments of rest or quiet contemplation. His masterpiece of this genre is *Family of Saltimbanques* (fig. 10.3); at seven and one-half feet tall (2.3 m), it was

the largest painting he had yet undertaken and stands as a measure of his enormous ambition and talent in the early years of his career. He made several preparatory studies for the work, and X-rays reveal that at least four variations on the final composition exist beneath the top paint layer. The painting began as a family scene, with women engaging in domestic chores and Harlequin (the figure seen here at the far left) watching a young female acrobat balance on a ball. But in the end Picasso settled upon an image virtually devoid of activity, in which the characters, despite their physical proximity, hardly take note of one another. Stripped of anecdotal details, the painting gains in poetry and mystery. The acrobats gather in a strangely barren landscape painted in warm brown tones that the artist loosely brushed over a layer of blue paint. An enigmatic stillness has replaced the heavy pathos of the Blue Period pictures, just as the predominant blues of the earlier work have shifted to a delicately muted palette of earth tones, rose, and orange. The identities of the individual saltimbanques have been ascribed to members of Picasso's circle, but the only identification experts agree upon is that of Picasso, who portrayed himself, as he often did, in the guise of Harlequin, easily identifiable by the diamond patterns of his motley costume. These homeless entertainers, who eked out a living through their creative talents, existing on the margins of society, have long been understood as modernist surrogates for the artist. Their marginal status, including their role as satirists of mainstream society, and the vulnerability that accompanies it, provide a very different image of that



**10.3** Pablo Picasso, *Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 6'11 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  7'6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (2.1  $\times$  2.3 m). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



**10.4** Pablo Picasso, *Gertrude Stein*, 1905–6. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 32' (99.7 × 81.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

artist than the isolated figure of the Romantic genius or the socially engaged Realist (see fig. 1.1).

Before completing this large canvas, Picasso exhibited over thirty works at a Paris gallery, including several saltimbanque subjects. Little is known about the sales, if any, that resulted from the show, but subsequently Picasso tended to refrain from exhibiting his work in Paris, except in small shows in private galleries (his favorite venue was his own studio). Although he was still seriously impoverished, his circumstances improved somewhat during these years as his circle of admirers—critics, dealers, and collectors—continued to grow.

One remarkable member of that circle was the American writer Gertrude Stein, who, with her brothers Leo and Michael, had lived in Paris since 1903 and was building one of the foremost collections of contemporary art in the city. She met Picasso in 1905 and introduced him the following year to Matisse, whose work the Steins were collecting. In their apartment Picasso had access to one of the great early Matisse collections, including the seminal *Bonheur de vivre* (see fig. 7.6). He was keenly aware of Matisse as a potential artistic rival, particularly following the uproar over the 1905 Salon d'Automne, in which the Fauves made their public debut. Gertrude Stein said she sat for Picasso ninety times while he painted her portrait (fig. 10.4). Her ample frame, characteristically draped in a heavy, loose-fitting dress, assumes an unconventional pose for a female sitter, one that clearly conveys the self-assured

nature of a woman who freely proclaimed her own artistic genius. She fills her corner of space like some powerful, massive work of sculpture. Picasso abandoned the portrait over the summer while he vacationed in Spain and repainted Stein's face from memory upon his return. Its masklike character, with eyes askew, anticipates the distortions of coming years.

By the end of 1905 Picasso's figures had taken on an aura of beauty and serenity that suggests a specific influence from ancient Greek white-ground vase paintings. This brief classical phase was prompted by several factors, including his contented (at least temporarily) relationship with a young woman named Fernande Olivier, his studies of antiquities in the Louvre, and the 1905 retrospective of the work of Ingres, the French Neoclassical painter who died in 1867 (see fig. 1.13). Picasso's subjects during this period were primarily nudes, either young, idealized women or adolescent boys, all portrayed in a restrained terracotta palette evoking the ancient Mediterranean. By the end of 1906, following a trip with Olivier to the remote Spanish village of Gósol, this classical ideal had evolved into the solid, thick-limbed anatomies of *Two Nudes* (fig. 10.5), a mysterious composition in which we confront a woman and what is nearly but not quite her mirror reflection. The



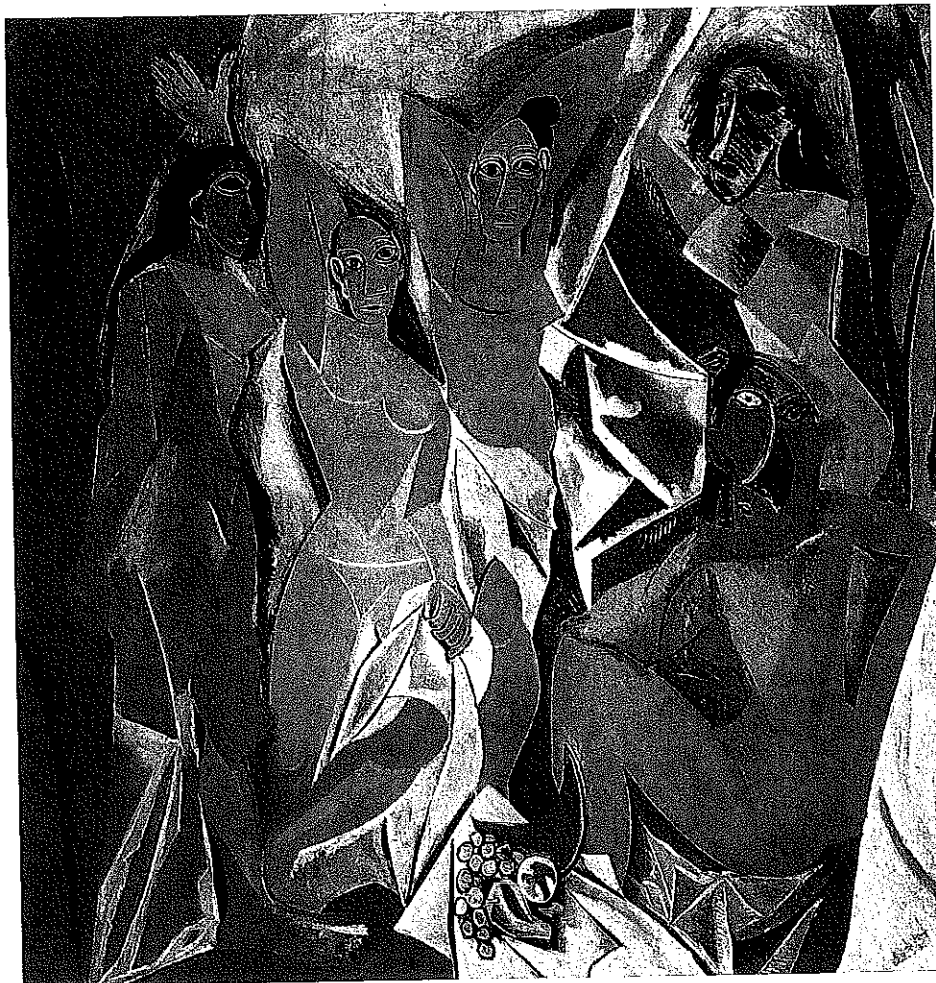
**10.5** Pablo Picasso, *Two Nudes*, Paris, late 1906. Oil on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (151.5 × 93 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

image is drained of the sentimentalism that inhabited the artist's Blue and Rose Period pictures. Significantly, Picasso was making sculpture around this time and earlier in 1906 had seen a show at the Louvre of Iberian sculpture from the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. These works, produced by a people that inhabited the eastern and southeastern coastal region of Spain during the first millennium B.C.E., were of particular interest to him since they had been excavated fifty miles (80 km) from his hometown. In 1907 he actually purchased two ancient Iberian stone heads, which he returned in 1911, after discovering they had been stolen from the Louvre. In addition, the 1906 Salon d'Automne had featured a large retrospective of Gauguin's work, including the first important public presentation of his sculpture (see fig. 6.3). As an artist who plundered the art of non-Western and ancient cultures for his own work, Gauguin provided Picasso with a crucial model. Picasso's own preoccupation with sculptural form at this time, his encounter with the blocky contours of the ancient Iberian carvings, and the revelatory encounter with Gauguin's "primitivizing" examples left an indelible mark on paintings such as *Two Nudes*. It has even been proposed that the corpulence of Gertrude Stein influenced the hefty proportions of the models in this work. Certainly the nudes' simplified facial features, with their wide, almond-shaped eyes, recall the Stein portrait.

### Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

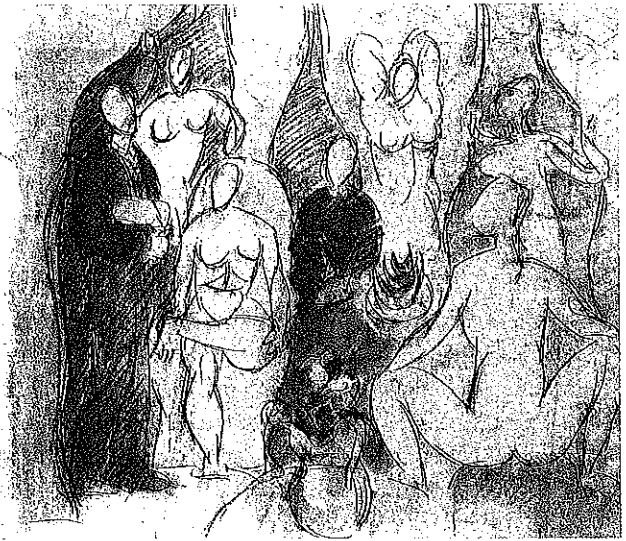
Picasso's large canvas, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (fig. 10.6), has been called the single most important painting of the twentieth century. It is an astonishing image that, in the iconoclastic spirit of modernism, virtually shattered every pictorial and iconographical convention that preceded it. Robert Rosenblum, one of the leading historians of Cubism, called this momentous work a "detonator of the modern movement, the cornerstone of twentieth-century art." Scholars have generated hundreds of pages scrutinizing its history and pondering its meaning, and the painting still has the power to assault the viewer with its aggressively confrontational imagery. Long regarded as the first Cubist painting, the *Demoiselles*, owing largely to the pioneering studies of Leo Steinberg, is now generally seen as a powerful example of expressionist art—an "exorcism painting," Picasso said, in which he did not necessarily initiate Cubism, but rather obliterated the lessons of the past. In fact, this type of multigure composition did not persist in high Cubism, which was the domain of the single figure, the still life, and to a lesser degree, the landscape. Nor did this violent, expressive treatment of the subject find a place in a style famous for emotional and intellectual control.

The five *demoiselles*, or young ladies, represent prostitutes from Avignon Street, in Barcelona's notorious red-light district, which Picasso knew well. The title, however,



**10.6** Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*, June–July 1907. Oil on canvas, 8' × 7'8" (2.4 × 2.3 m). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

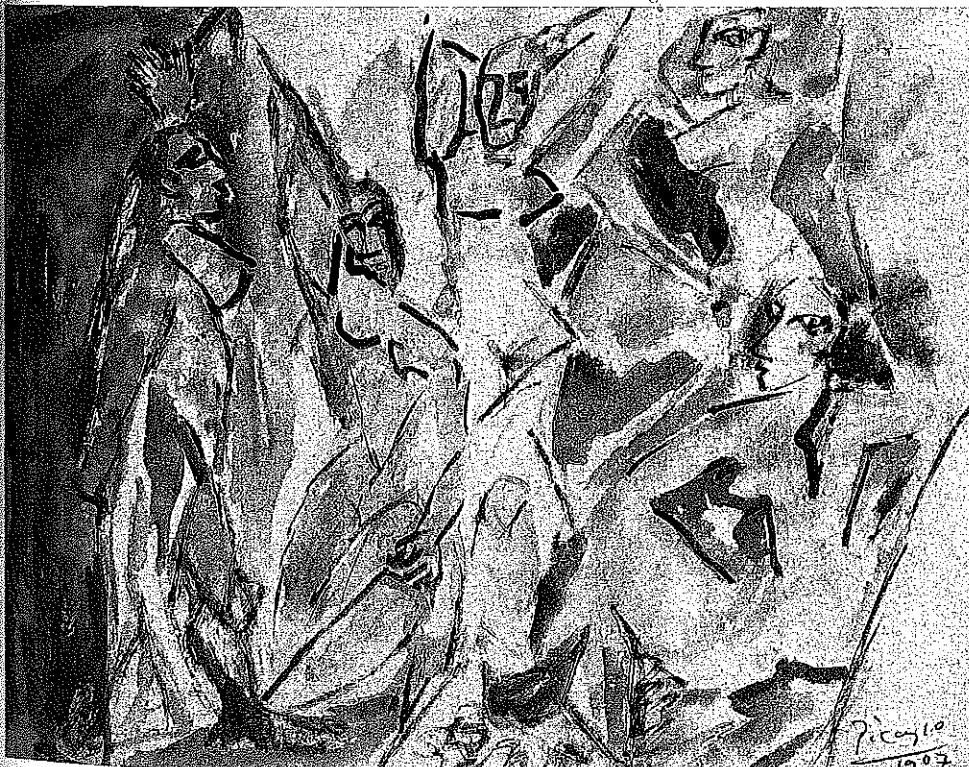
is not his; Picasso rarely named his works. That task he left to dealers and friends. The subject of prostitution, as we saw with Manet's scandalous *Olympia* (see fig. 2.20), had earned a prominent place in avant-garde art of the nineteenth century. Cézanne responded to Manet's painting with his own idiosyncratic versions of the subject. Other French artists, especially Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec, had portrayed the interior life of brothels, but never with the vehemence or enormous scale seen here, where the theme of sexuality is raised to an explosive pitch. When confronted with the *Demoiselles*, it is difficult to recall that the gentle *Saltimbanques* painting (see fig. 10.3) was only two years old. When compared to *Two Nudes* (see fig. 10.5), the anatomies of the *Demoiselles* seem crudely flattened and simplified, reduced to a series of interlocking, angular shapes. Even the draperies—the white cloth that spills off the table in the foreground and the bluish curtains that meander around the figures—have hardened into threatening shards. The composition is riddled with deliberately disorienting and contradictory points of view. The viewer looks down upon the table at the bottom of the canvas, but encounters the nudes head-on. Eyes are presented full face, while noses are in complete profile. The seated figure at the lower right faces her cohorts but manages to turn her head 180 degrees to address the viewer. The two central figures offer themselves up for visual consumption by assuming classic Venus poses, while their companion to the left strides into the composition like a fierce Egyptian statue. All of the prostitutes stare grimly ahead, with emotions seemingly as hardened as the knife-edge forms themselves. The three women at the left wear the simplified "Iberian" features familiar from *Two Nudes*.



**10.7** Pablo Picasso, *Medical Student, Sailor, and Five Nudes in a Bordello* (study for *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*), March–April 1907. Graphite and pastel on paper, 18¾ × 25" (47.7 × 63.5 cm). Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Kunstmuseum, Basel.

Most shocking of all, however, are the harshly painted masks that substitute for faces on the two figures at the right. Here, Steinberg has written, sexuality is "divested of all accretions of culture—without appeal to privacy, tenderness, gallantry, or that appreciation of beauty which presupposes detachment and distance."

The *Demoiselles* evolved over several months in 1907, during which Picasso prepared his work in the manner of a traditional Salon artist, executing dozens of drawings (figs. 10.7, 10.8). Through these preparatory works we are able to observe Picasso's progress as he honed his composition



**10.8** Pablo Picasso, *Compositional study with five figures for *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon**, June 1907. Watercolor, 6¾ × 8¾" (17.2 × 22.2 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.



from a complex narrative to the startlingly iconic image we encounter today. The first of the drawings shown here, executed in the spring of 1907, reveals Picasso's early idea for the painting. At the far left is a figure the artist identified as a medical student. He holds a book in his right arm (in earlier studies it was a skull) and draws back a curtain with his left. In this curiously draped, stagelike setting, which Rosenblum called a "tumultuous theater of sexuality," the student encounters a provocative quintet of naked women, one of whom theatrically opens more curtains at the right. They surround a lone sailor, who is seated before a table holding a plate of spiky melons and a phallic *porron*, a Spanish wine flask. A second still life on a round table projects precipitously into the room at the bottom of the sheet. Even on this small scale the women appear as aggressive, sexually potent beings, compared to their rather docile male clients. For Picasso, a frequenter of brothels in his youth, the threat of venereal disease was of dire concern in an era in which such afflictions could be fatal. The inclusion of a skull-toting medical student (who resembled Picasso in related sketches) probably reflects the artist's morbid conflation of sex and death and his characteristically misogynistic view of women as the carriers of life-threatening disease.

In a tiny watercolor made about two months after the drawing (see fig. 10.8), Picasso transformed the medical student into a woman in a similar pose and eliminated the sailor altogether. The prostitutes, for the most part, have shifted their attention from their clients to the viewer. It is this conception, deprived of the earlier narrative clues, that makes up the large painting. As Rubin has observed, Picasso did not need to spell out his allegory to get his meaning across; he could let these predatory seductresses stand alone as symbols of sex and death. In this watercolor, executed in delicate washes of pink with jagged, electric-blue contour lines, Picasso also made drastic changes in his formal conception of the subject. The space is compressed, the figures are highly schematized, and rounded contours have given way to sharp, angular forms. Even the table is now a triangle, jutting into the room.

Equipped with a prodigious visual memory and keen awareness of past art, Picasso could have had several paintings in mind as he set to work on his large canvas in June. In 1905 he had seen Ingres's round painting *Turkish Bath* of 1863, a titillating Salon piece that displays intertwined female nudes in myriad erotic poses. While staying in Gósol in 1906 Picasso produced his own version of a harem subject. But in that painting, unlike the *Demoiselles*, the sitters (all likenesses of Olivier) are represented in conventional bather poses, washing themselves or brushing their hair. Matisse's spectacular painting *Bonheur de vivre* (see fig. 7.6) had surely made a great impact on Picasso in the 1906 Salon des Indépendants, the juryless Salon that had been an important showcase for avant-garde art since 1884. The following year he had probably also seen Matisse's *Blue Nude* (see fig. 7.7). It is possible that Picasso

undertook the *Demoiselles* partly as a response to these radical compositions by his chief rival. Most important of all for the artist (and for the subsequent development of Cubism) was the powerful example of Cézanne, who died in 1906 and whose work was shown in a retrospective at the 1907 Salon d'Automne. It is important to recall that many of the French master's early depictions of bathers (see fig. 3.5) were fraught with an anxiety and violence that no doubt attracted Picasso, but a major instigating force for the *Demoiselles* were Cézanne's later bather paintings (see fig. 3.11). Indeed, certain figures in Picasso's composition have been traced to precedents in Cézanne's works. Picasso, however, chose not to cast his models as inhabitants of a timeless pastoral, but as sex workers in a contemporary brothel.

The work of many other painters has been linked to Picasso's seminal painting, from El Greco to Gauguin, but more significant than these stimuli was the artist's visit in June 1907 to Paris's ethnographic museum, where he saw numerous examples of African and Oceanic sculpture and masks. According to Apollinaire (who no doubt embellished the artist's words), Picasso once said that African sculptures were "the most powerful and the most beautiful of all the products of the human imagination." He had already seen such works, during studio visits to artists who were collecting African art, including Matisse, Derain, and Vlaminck (see chapter 7). But his encounter at the museum, which took place while he was at work on the *Demoiselles*, provoked a "shock," he said, and he went back to the studio and reworked his painting (though not specifically to resemble anything he had seen at the museum). It was at this time that he altered the faces of the two figures at the right from the "Iberian" countenances to violently distorted, depersonalized masks. Picasso not only introduced dramatically new, incongruous imagery into his painting, but he rendered it in a manner unlike anything else in the picture. When he added the women's masklike visages at the right he used dark hues and rough hatch marks that have been likened to scarification marks on African masks. By deploying such willfully divergent modes throughout his painting Picasso heightened its disquieting power. Rubin has even argued that the stylistic dissimilarity is central to an understanding of the work's sexual theme. As our eye scans from left to right in the painting, we may see what Rubin has called Picasso's "progressively darkening insights" into his own concept of woman's nature. African art provided him with a model for distorting the female form in order to express his own innermost anxieties.

## Beyond Fauvism: Braque's Early Career

When the French artist Georges Braque (1882–1963) first saw *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in Picasso's studio in 1907, he compared the experience to swallowing kerosene

and spitting fire. Most of Picasso's supporters, including Apollinaire, were horrified, or at least stymied, by the new painting. Derain ventured that one day Picasso would be found hanged behind his big picture. According to the dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, the *Demoiselles* "seemed to everyone something mad or monstrous." As more and more visitors saw it in the studio (it was not exhibited publicly until 1916), the painting sent shock waves throughout the Parisian artistic community. For Braque, the painting had direct consequences for his art, prompting him to apply his current stylistic experiments to the human figure.

Just one year younger than Picasso, Braque was the son and grandson of amateur painters. He grew up in Argenteuil, on the Seine River, and the port city of Le Havre in Normandy, both famous Impressionist sites. In Le Havre he eventually befriended the artists Raoul Dufy and Othon Friesz, who, like Braque, became associates of the Fauve painters. As an adolescent Braque took flute lessons and attended art classes in the evening at Le Havre's École des Beaux-Arts. Following his father's and grandfather's trade, he was apprenticed as a house painter and decorator in 1899 and at the end of 1900 he went to Paris to continue his apprenticeship. Some of the decorative and *trompe l'oeil* effects that later entered his paintings and collages were the result of this initial training. After a year of military service and brief academic training, Braque settled in Paris, but he returned frequently to Le Havre to paint landscapes, especially views of the harbor. Like his

artist contemporaries in Paris, he studied the old masters in the Louvre and was drawn to Egyptian and archaic sculpture. He was attracted by Poussin among the old masters, and his early devotion to Corot continued. During the same period he was discovering the Post-Impressionists, including Van Gogh, Gauguin, and the Neo-Impressionist Signac, but it was ultimately the art of Cézanne that affected him most deeply and set him on the path to Cubism.

In the fall of 1905 Braque was impressed by the works of Matisse, Derain, and Vlaminck at the notorious Salon d'Automne where Fauvism made its public debut, and the following year he turned to a bright, Fauve-inspired palette. Unlike Picasso, Braque submitted work regularly to the Salons in the early years of his career. His paintings were included in the 1906 Salon des Indépendants, but he later destroyed all the submitted works. In the company of Friesz and Derain, he spent the fall and winter of 1906 near Marseilles at L'Estaque, where Cézanne had painted (see fig. 3.6). He then entered a group of his new Fauve paintings in the same Salon des Indépendants of March 1907 that included Matisse's *Blue Nude*. One of his works was purchased by Kahnweiler, who was to become the most important dealer of Cubist pictures. Though the record is not certain, Braque and Picasso probably met around this time. It was inevitable that their paths should cross, for they had several friends in common, including Derain, Matisse, and Apollinaire.



**10.9** Georges Braque, *Viaduct at L'Estaque*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 31 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (65.1 × 80.6 cm). The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

During his brief exploration of Fauvism, Braque developed his own distinctive palette, beautifully exemplified in the clear, opalescent hues of *Viaduct at L'Estaque* (fig. 10.9). Despite the bright coloration of this landscape, made on the site in the fall of 1907, its palette is tame compared with the radical color experiments of Matisse's Fauve work (see fig. 7.5). Owing largely to lessons absorbed from Cézanne, Braque was not willing to forgo explicit pictorial structure in his landscapes. The composition of *Viaduct at L'Estaque* is rigorously constructed: the hills and houses, though abbreviated in form, retain a palpable sense of volume, created through Cézannist patches of color and blue outlines, rather than through traditional chiaroscuro. Braque built these forms up toward a high horizon line and framed them within arching trees, a favorite device of Cézanne. These tendencies in Braque's work are often referred to as "Cézannism."

At the end of 1907 Braque visited Picasso's studio with Apollinaire, possibly for the first time. By the end of the next year he and Picasso were regular visitors to one another's studios. On this visit Braque saw the completed *Demoiselles* and the beginnings of Picasso's most recent work, *Three Women* (see fig. 10.12). Until this point Braque had rarely painted the human form, but early in 1908 he made a multifigure painting, since lost, which was clearly inspired by Picasso's *Three Women*. That spring he



**10.10** Georges Braque, *Large Nude*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 55½ × 39" (140 × 99.1 cm). Collection Alex Maguy, Paris.

produced *Large Nude* (fig. 10.10), a painting that signals his imminent departure from Fauvism. Like Picasso, Braque had seen Matisse's *Blue Nude* the previous fall (see fig. 7.7), and his massively muscular figure, set down with bold brushwork and emphatic black outlines, bears the memory of that work. But Braque repudiated the rich pinks and blues of *Viaduct at L'Estaque* for a subdued palette of ochers, browns, and gray-blue. While the model's simplified facial features and the angular drapery that surrounds her recall the *Demoiselles*, Braque was not motivated by the sexualized themes of Picasso's painting. With *Large Nude*, he said he wanted to create a "new sort of beauty ... in terms of volume, of line, of mass, of weight."

A comparison between *Viaduct at L'Estaque*, and Braque's painting from August 1908, *Houses at L'Estaque* (fig. 10.11), makes clear the transformations that took place in his style after the fall of 1907. With the suppression of particularizing details, the houses and trees become simplified, geometric volumes that are experienced at close range and sealed off from surrounding sky or land. Braque explained that in such pictures he wished to establish a background plane while "advancing the picture toward myself bit by bit." Rather than receding into depth, the forms seem to come forward, approximating an appearance of low-relief sculpture, or bas-relief.

Braque's illusion of limited depth is not dependent upon traditional, single-point linear perspective. Cézanne, he later said, was the first to break with that kind of "erudite, mechanized perspective." Instead, he achieves illusion by the apparent volume of the buildings and trees—their overlapping, tilted, and shifting shapes create the effect of a scene observed from various positions. Despite many inconsistencies (of the sort that abound in Cézanne's work), including conflicting orthogonals and vantage points, or roof edges that fail to line up or that disappear altogether, Braque managed a wholly convincing, albeit highly conceptualized, space—one that exemplifies modernist concerns in being true to sense perceptions rather than to pictorial conventions. Color is limited to the fairly uniform ocher of the buildings, and the greens and blue-green of the trees. Whereas Cézanne built his entire organization of surface and depth from his color, Braque, in this work and increasingly in the paintings of the next few years, subordinates color in order to focus on pictorial structure.

With *Houses at L'Estaque* Braque established the essential syntax of early Cubism. He is generally credited with arriving at this point single-handedly, preliminary to the steady exchanges with Picasso that characterize the subsequent development of high Cubism. These works at L'Estaque confirmed Braque's thorough abandonment of Fauvism. "You can't remain forever in a state of paroxysm," he said. In fact, Fauvism was a short-lived experiment for most of its artists, partly because painters such as Derain, Dufy, and Vlaminck fell increasingly under the



10.11 Georges Braque, *Houses at L'Estaque*, August 1908. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 23¾" (73 × 60 cm). Kunstmuseum, Bern.

spell of Cézanne's work. In the world of the Parisian avant-garde during this remarkably fertile period, there was a growing sense of polarization between the followers of Matisse and the Cézannist and Cubist faction. Gertrude Stein described the competing camps as "Picassoites" and "Matisseites."

In the fall of 1908 Braque took his new works from L'Estaque back to Paris, where he showed them to Picasso and submitted them to the progressive Salon d'Automne. The jury, which included Matisse, Rouault, and the Fauve painter Albert Marquet, rejected all his entries. According to Apollinaire, who told the story many ways over the years, it was upon this occasion that Matisse referred to Braque's "little cubes." By 1912 this had become the standard account for the birth of the term "Cubism." Following his rejection, Braque exhibited twenty-seven paintings in November 1908 at the Kahnweiler Gallery, with a catalogue by Apollinaire. Louis Vauxcelles, the critic who had coined the term "Fauve," reviewed the exhibition and, employing Matisse's term, observed that Braque "reduces everything, places and figures and houses, to geometrical schemes, to cubes."

### "Two Mountain Climbers Roped Together": Braque, Picasso, and the Development of Cubism

The remarkable artistic dialogue between Braque and Picasso began in earnest toward the end of 1908, when they started visiting one another's studios regularly to see what had materialized during the day. "We discussed and tested each other's ideas as they came to us," Braque said, "and we compared our respective works." At this time Picasso completely revised *Three Women* (fig. 10.12), a painting he had begun the year before in response to Braque's Cubist paintings from L'Estaque. Those new experiments led Picasso toward a more thorough absorption of "Cézannism," as he developed his own variation on the bas-relief effects he saw in Braque's work. The three women here seem to be a reprise of the two central figures of the *Demoiselles*, although these mammoth beings seem even less like flesh and blood and appear as though chiseled from red sandstone. In earlier states of the painting, known from vintage photographs, the faces were boldly inscribed with features inspired by African masks, but Picasso altered



**10.12** Pablo Picasso, *Three Women*, 1907–8. Oil on canvas, 6'6½" × 7'6½" (2 × 2.3 m). The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

those features in the final state. The women no longer stare boldly ahead, as in the *Demaiselles*, but seem to hover on the edge of deep slumber, suggesting, as Steinberg has surmised, the sexual awakening of some primitive life form. Picasso here employs Cézanne's *passage*, a technique whereby the edges of color planes slip away and merge with adjacent areas. For example, on the proper left leg of the central figure (meaning her left, not ours) is a gray triangle that dually functions as a facet of her thigh and part of her neighbor's breast. This *passage* mitigates any sense of clear demarcation between the figures and their environment, making, in Steinberg's words, "body mass and surround consubstantial." Such ambiguity of figure and ground, facilitated by an opening up of contours, is a fundamental characteristic of Cubism.

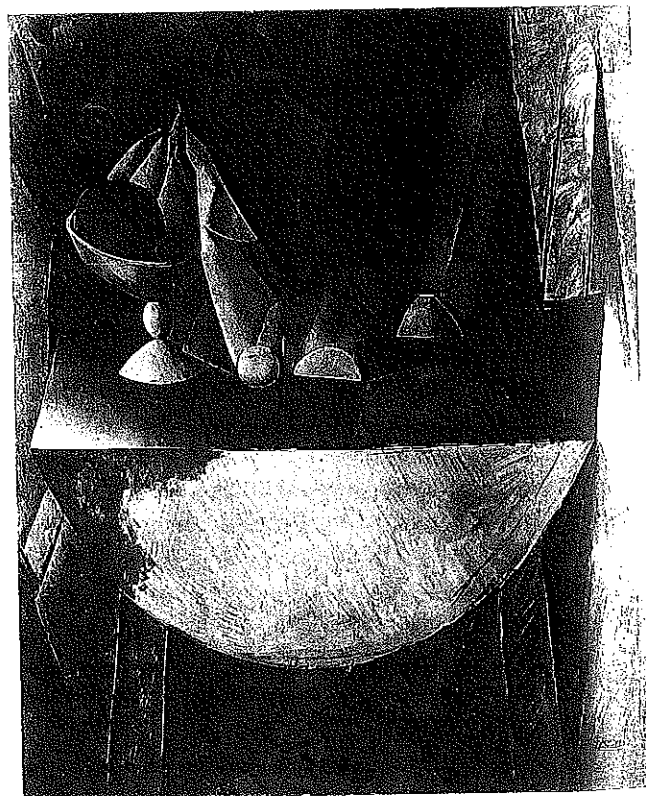
Like many of Matisse's and Picasso's greatest paintings, *Three Women* is in the collection of Russia's Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. The work was purchased by the brilliant Russian collector Sergei Shchukin, who was brought to Picasso's studio by Matisse in September 1908. He purchased *Three Women* from Leo and Gertrude Stein, who, because of strained relations with one another, began to sell their collection in 1913.

### "Analytic Cubism," 1909–11

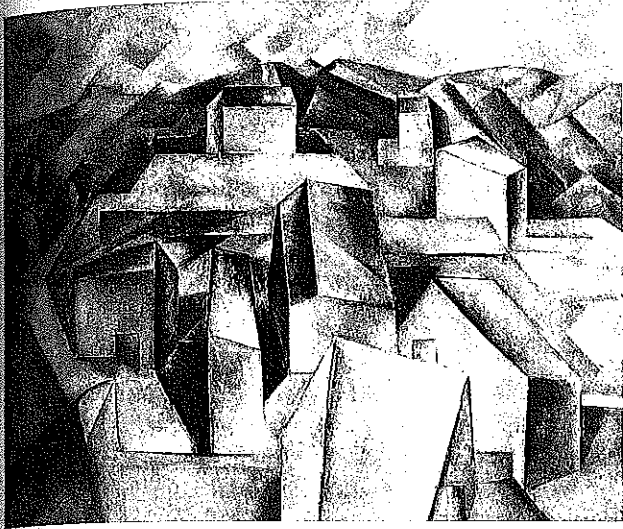
Although all of Picasso's paintings discussed to this point have depicted the figure, he frequently worked in the genre of still life throughout the development of Cubism, as did Braque. Materials drawn from the café and the studio, the milieux most familiar to these artists, became standard

motifs in their work. Newspapers, bottles of wine, or food—the objects literally within their reach—were often elliptically coded with personal, sometimes humorous allusions to their private world.

Picasso's majestic painting *Bread and Fruit Dish on a Table* (fig. 10.13) is an especially intriguing example of still life, since the artist initiated it as a figurative composition and then gradually transformed the human figures into bread, fruit, and furniture. We know from small studies that Picasso was planning a painting of several figures seated and facing the viewer from behind the drop-leaf table seen here (just like one in Picasso's studio). William Rubin has proposed that Picasso used turpentine to rub out most of the figures' upper halves from his canvas, but retained their legs, thus explaining the strange, planklike forms under the table. Other shapes from the old composition were retained to take on new identities in the still life. For example, the loaves of bread at the right, mysteriously propped up against a backdrop, were once the arms of a figure. At the opposite end of the table sat a woman, whose breasts were retained as fruit in a bowl. Thus, Picasso makes a sly visual pun on a hackneyed symbol of fecundity and womanhood, while balancing this rounded, feminine form with the phallic loaves at the opposite end of the table. Rubin, who reads these gendered forms as stand-ins for Picasso and his companion, Fernande Olivier, has proposed that even through the apparently neutral medium of still life Picasso could "tap the sentiments and



**10.13** Pablo Picasso, *Bread and Fruit Dish on a Table*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 64½" × 52¼" (164 × 132.5 cm). Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum.



**10.14** Pablo Picasso, *Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro*, summer 1909. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 31 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (65 × 81 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

particulars of his most intimate life and thought." Just as in *Family of Saltimbanques* and *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, he concludes, the anecdotal elements fall away as the pictorial components are gradually concentrated in a more strictly frontal and iconic composition. Rubin has interpreted the stylistic duality at play in this composition—with its highly finished, almost naïve rendition at the left and the much looser handling at the right—as Picasso's preoccupation at the time with the work of Rousseau (on the left) and Cézanne (on the right).

Picasso spent the summer of 1909 in the Spanish hill town of Horta de Ebro (today Horta de San Juan), where his early Cubist style reached its apogee. Among the landscapes he made that summer is *Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro* (fig. 10.14) in which the stucco houses of the village, seen from above, are piled up into a pyramidal structure of such refinement and delicate coloration that the Expressionist intensity of *Demoiselles* seems a distant memory. Painted in facets of pale gold and gray, the highly geometricized houses are presented in multiple, often contradictory perspectives. Rather than creating forms that recede predictably into the distance, Picasso often reversed the orthogonals to project toward the viewer. His juxtaposition of light and dark planes enhances the overall sculptural configuration but fails to convey any single or consistent light source. The result is a shimmering, prismatic world where space and mass are virtually synonymous. Even the sky has been articulated into a crystalline pattern of intersecting planes—realized through subtle shifts in value of light gray or green—that suggests a distant mountain range.

During this crucial summer Picasso also made several paintings and drawings of Olivier, including portrait studies that articulate the sculptural mass of her head into a series of curving planes. After returning to Paris in September he worked in the studio of a friend, the Catalan

sculptor Manuel Hugué, known as Manolo, and sculpted a head based on his Horta studies of Olivier. Several bronzes (fig. 10.15) were then cast at a later date from the artist's original plaster casts. Picasso, who is arguably one of the most inventive sculptors of all time, had experimented with sculpture intermittently for several years. With *Woman's Head (Fernande)* he recapitulates in three dimensions the pictorial experiments of the summer by carving Olivier's features into facets as geometric as one of his Horta hillsides. Despite its innovative treatment of plastic form as a ruptured, discontinuous surface, this sculpture still depends upon the conventional methods and materials of modeling clay into a solid mass and making plaster casts (two were made) from the clay model that are then used to cast the work in bronze. *Woman's Head* exerted considerable influence on other Cubist sculptors, such as Aleksandr Archipenko and Henri Laurens (see figs. 10.31, 10.34), but Picasso later said it was "pointless" to continue in this vein. In 1912 he embarked upon a much more radical solution for Cubist sculpture.

While Picasso was concentrating on his sculpture, Braque spent the winter of 1909 in Paris, composing several still lifes of musical instruments. Braque was an amateur musician, and the instruments he kept in his studio were common motifs in his paintings throughout his career. He preferred violins, mandolins, or clarinets to other objects, for they have, he said, "the advantage of



**10.15** Pablo Picasso, *Woman's Head (Fernande)*, fall 1909. Bronze, 16 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 9 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (41.3 × 24.7 × 26.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



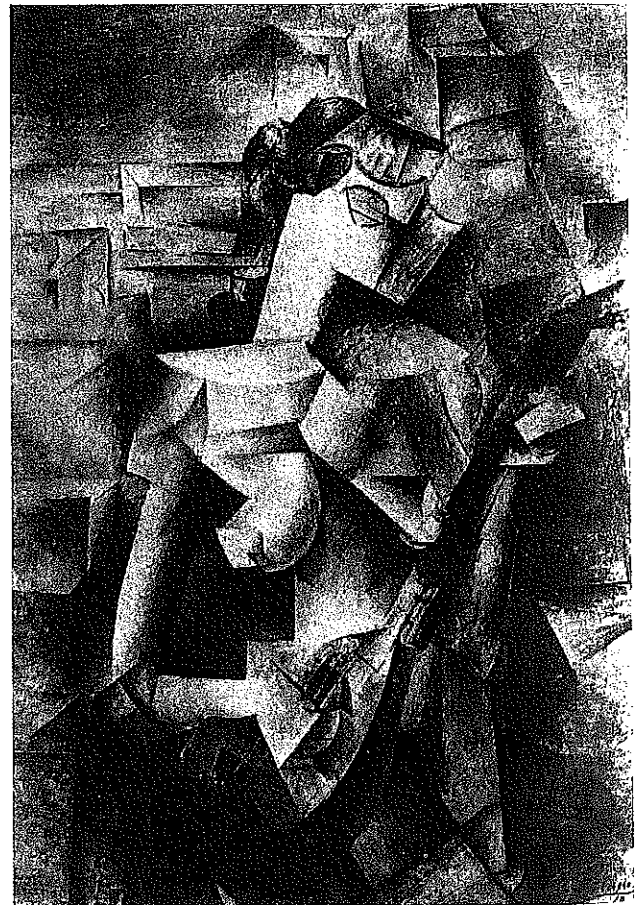
**10.16** Georges Braque, *Violin and Palette*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 36½ × 16¾" (91.7 × 42.9 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

being animated by one's touch." Despite the intensified fragmentation that Braque had by now adopted, the still-life subjects of *Violin and Palette* (fig. 10.16) are still easily recognizable. Within a long, narrow format he has placed, in descending order, his palette, a musical score propped up on a stand, and a violin. These objects inhabit a shallow, highly ambiguous space. Presumably the violin and music stand are placed on a table, with the palette hanging on a wall behind them, but their vertical disposition within the picture space makes their precise orientation unclear. Although certain forms, such as the scroll at the top of the violin neck, are rendered naturalistically, for the most part the objects are not modeled continuously in space but are broken up into tightly woven facets that open into the surrounding void. At the same time, the interstices between objects harden into painted shards, causing space to appear as concrete as the depicted objects. It was this "materialization of a new space" that Braque said was the essence of Cubism.

At the top of *Violin and Palette* Braque depicted his painting palette, emblem of his metier, hanging from a

carefully drawn nail. The shadow cast by the nail reinforces the object's existence in three-dimensional space. By employing this curious detail of *trompe l'oeil*, Braque calls attention to the ways in which his new system departs from conventional means of depicting volumetric shapes on a flat surface. In so doing, he declares Cubism's defiance of the Renaissance conceptions of space that had been under assault since Manet, in which art functions as a mirror of the three-dimensional world, and offers in its place a conceptual reconfiguration of that world. This kind of artistic legerdemain, in which different systems of representation simultaneously exist within one painting, was soon to be most fully exploited in Cubist collage and *papier collé*.

Picasso also treated musical themes in his Cubist compositions. One of the best-known examples is his *Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier)* (fig. 10.17), made in Paris in the spring of 1910. Still working from nature, Picasso hired a professional model named Fanny Tellier to pose nude in his studio. When this portrait is compared with Braque's *Violin and Palette*, Picasso's style appears somewhat less radical than Braque's. The figure still retains a sense of the organic and, in some areas, is clearly detached from the background plane by way of sculptural modeling, seen especially in the rounded volumes of the model's right

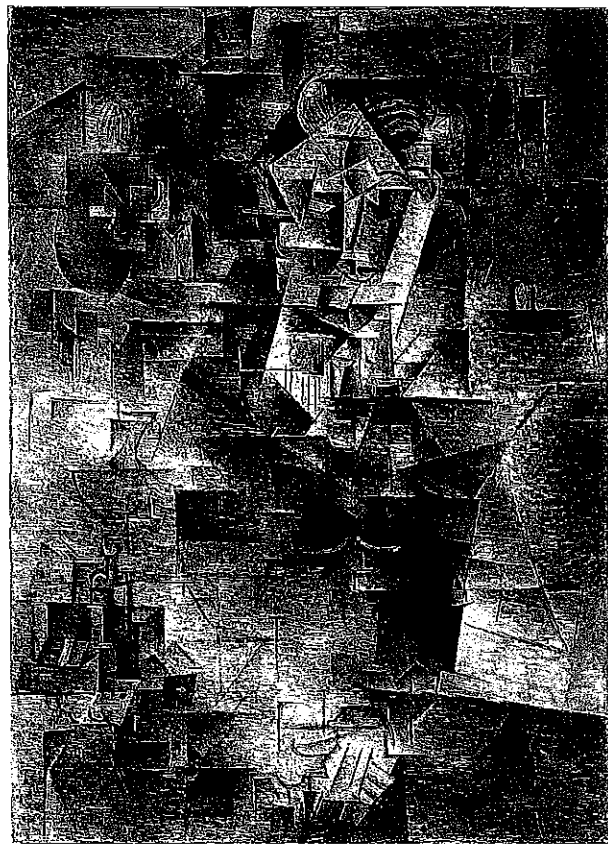


**10.17** Pablo Picasso, *Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier)*, late spring 1910. Oil on canvas, 39½ × 29" (100.3 × 73.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

breast and arm. Picasso's chromatic range, however, is even more restricted than that found in Braque's still life. Employing soft gradations of gray and golden brown, Picasso endowed this lyrical portrait with a beautifully tranquil atmosphere. Robert Rosenblum has rightly compared *Girl with a Mandolin* with Camille Corot's meditative depictions of women in the studio with musical instruments. In the fall of 1910 both Picasso and Braque saw an exhibition of Corot's work in Paris and were much impressed.

By 1910 Picasso and Braque had entered the period of greatest intensity in their collaborative, yet highly competitive, relationship. Over the next two years they produced some of the most cerebral, complex paintings of their careers, working with tremendous concentration and in such proximity that some of their compositions are virtually indistinguishable from one another. For a time they even refrained from signing their own canvases on the front in order to downplay the individual nature of their contributions. "We were prepared to efface our personalities in order to find originality," Braque said. "Analytic Cubism," in which the object is analyzed, broken down, and dissected, is the term used to describe this high phase of their collaboration.

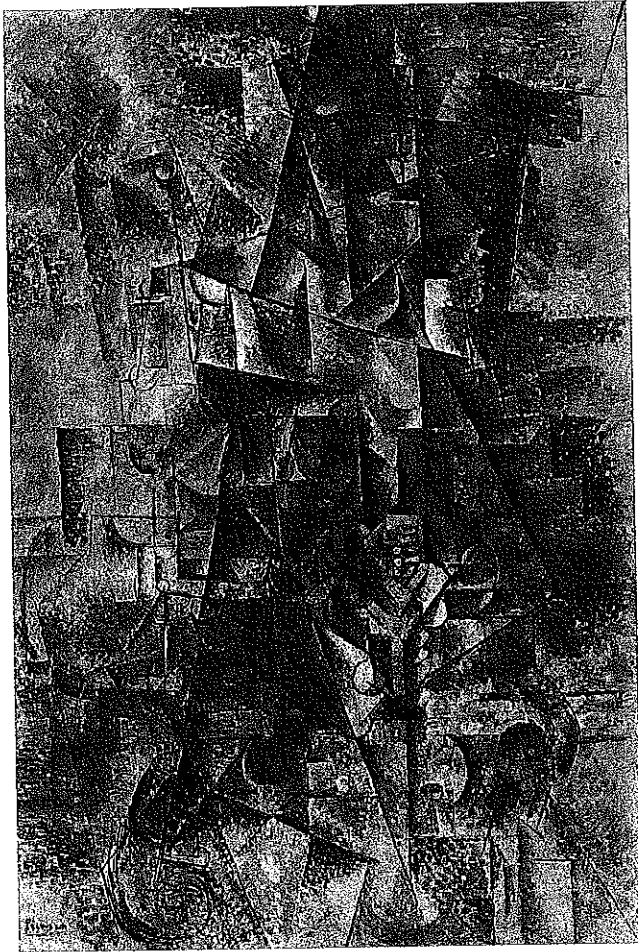
One of the masterpieces of Analytic Cubism is Picasso's *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler* (fig. 10.18), made a few months after *Girl with a Mandolin*. The painting belongs to a series of portraits of art dealers that Picasso made in 1910. Kahnweiler was an astute German dealer who had been buying works by Braque and Picasso since 1908. He was also a critic who wrote extensively about Cubist art, including the first serious theoretical text on the subject, which interprets the style in semiological terms as a language of signs. In this portrait, for which Kahnweiler apparently sat about twenty times, the modeled forms of *Girl with a Mandolin* have disappeared, and the figure, rather than disengaged from the background, seems merged with it. Here the third dimension is stated entirely in terms of flat, slightly angled planes organized within a linear grid that hovers near the surface of the painting. Planes shift in front of and behind their neighbors, causing space to fluctuate and solid form to dissolve into transparent facets of color. Although he delineated his figure not as an integrated volume but as a lattice of lines dispersed over the visual field, Picasso nevertheless managed a likeness of his subject. In small details—a wave of hair, the sitter's carefully clasped hands, a schematic still life at the lower left—the painter particularized his subject and helps us to reconstruct a figure seated in a chair. Though Picasso kept color to the bare minimum, his canvas emits a shimmering, mesmerizing light, which he achieved by applying paint in short daubs that contain generous admixtures of white pigment. The Italian critic Ardengo Soffici, whose early writings about Picasso and Braque helped bring the Italian Futurists in contact with Cubism, referred to the "prismatic magic" of such works.



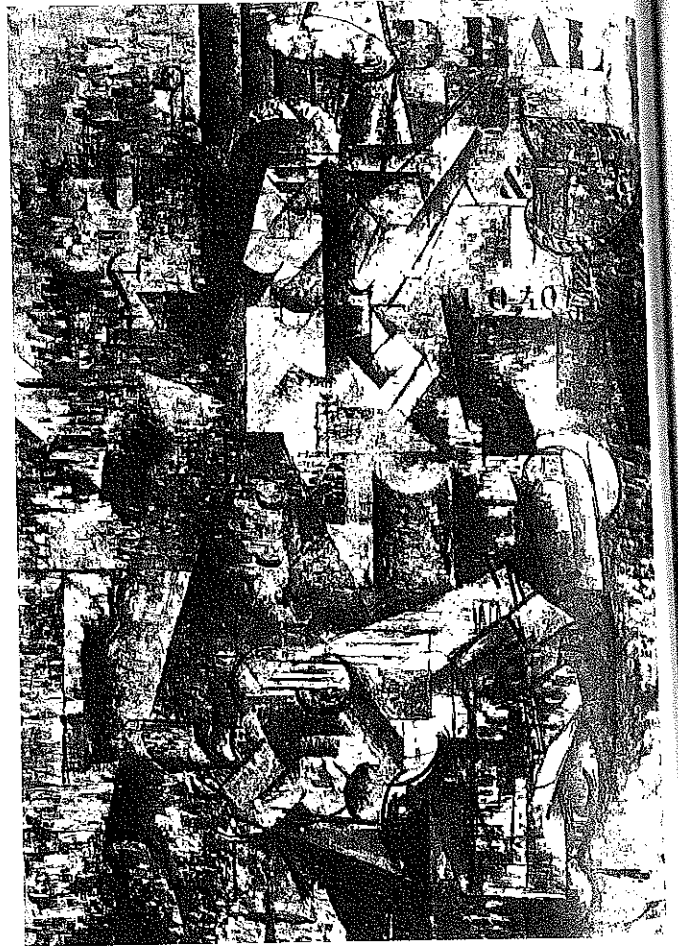
10.18 Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 39½ × 28¾" (100.6 × 72.8 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.

The degree to which the pictorial vocabularies of Picasso and Braque converged during the Analytic phase of Cubism can be demonstrated through a comparison of two works from 1911. Picasso's *Accordionist* (fig. 10.19) dates from the astonishingly productive summer of that year, which he spent with Braque in Céret, a village in the French Pyrenees. At a nearly identical state of exploration is Braque's *The Portuguese (The Emigrant)* (fig. 10.20), begun in Céret after Picasso's departure and completed in Paris. Both artists reorder the elements of the physical world within the shallow depths of their respective compositions, using the human figure as a pretext for an elaborate scaffolding of shifting, interpenetrating planes. The presence of the figure is made evident principally by a series of descending diagonal lines that helps concentrate the geometric structure down the center of the picture. That structure opens up toward the edges of the canvas where the pictorial incident diminishes, occasionally revealing the painting's bare, unpainted ground. Both Picasso and Braque at this stage used a stippled, delicately modulated brushstroke so short as to be reminiscent of Seurat, though their color is restricted to muted gray and brown. Variation in values in these hues and in the direction of the strokes creates almost imperceptible change and movement between surface and depth.





**10.19** Pablo Picasso, *Accordionist*, summer 1911. Oil on canvas, 51¼ × 35¼" (130.2 × 89.5 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



**10.20** Georges Braque, *The Portuguese (The Emigrant)*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 46½ × 32" (117.2 × 81.3 cm). Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum.

However indecipherable their images, Braque and Picasso never relinquished the natural world altogether, and they provided subtle clues that aid in the apprehension of their obscure subject matter. In the *Accordionist* (which represents a young girl, according to Picasso, not a man, as critics have often presumed) curvilinear elements near the bottom edge of the painting stand for the arms of a chair, while the small circles and stair-step patterns toward the center indicate the keys and bellows of an accordion. *The Portuguese (The Emigrant)*, Braque said, shows "an emigrant on the bridge of a boat with a harbor in the background." This would explain, at the upper right, the transparent traces of a docking post and sections of nautical rope. In the lower portion are the strings and sound hole of the emigrant's guitar. Braque introduced a new element with the stenciled letters and numbers in the painting's upper zone. Like other forms in *The Portuguese*, the words are fragmentary. The letters D BAL at the upper right, for example, may derive from *Grand Bal*, probably a reference to a common dance-hall poster. While Braque had incorporated a word into a Cubist painting as early as 1909, his letters there were painted freehand as a descriptive local detail. For *The Portuguese* he borrowed a technique from

commercial art and stenciled his letters, which here function not as illusionistic representations but as autonomous signs dissociated from any context that accounts for their presence. Inherently flat, the letters and numbers exist "outside of space," Braque said. And because they are congruent with the literal surface of the painting, they underscore the nature of the painted canvas as a material object, a physical fact, rather than a site for an illusionistic depiction of the real world. At the same time, they make the rest of the image read as an illusionistically shallow space. Braque's introduction of words in his painting, a practice soon adopted by Picasso, was one of many Cubist innovations that had far-reaching implications for modern art. Like so many of their inventions, the presence in the visual arts of letters, words, and even long texts is today commonplace (see figs. 21.16, 26.1, 27.21).

#### "Synthetic Cubism," 1912–14

In May 1912 the Cubists' search for alternative modes of representation led Picasso to the invention of collage, initiated by a small but revolutionary work, *Still Life with Chair Caning* (fig. 10.21). Within this single composition Picasso combined a complex array of pictorial vocabularies,

each imaging reality in its own way. Painted on an oval support, a shape Picasso and Braque had already adopted for earlier Cubist paintings, this still life depicts objects scattered across a café table. The fragment of a newspaper, *Le Journal*, is indicated by the letters JOU that, given the artist's penchant for puns, could refer to *jouer*, meaning "to play" and implying that all this illusionism is a game. Over the letters Picasso depicted a pipe in a naturalistic style, while at the right he added the highly abstracted forms of a goblet, a knife, and a slice of lemon.

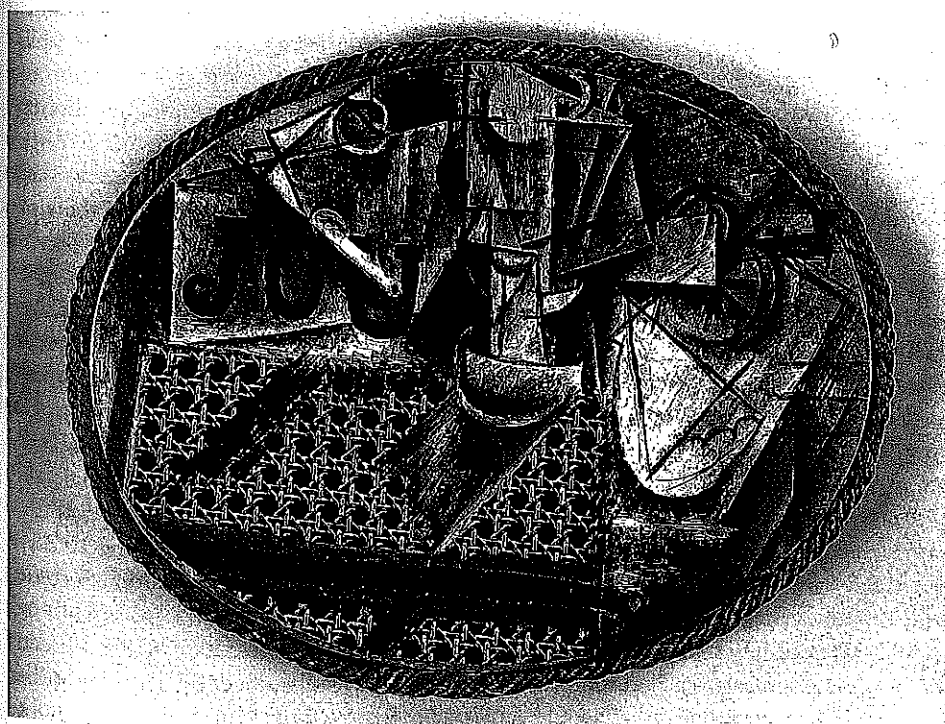
The most prominent element here, however, is a section of common oilcloth that has been mechanically printed with a design simulating chair caning. Picasso glued the cloth directly to his canvas. While this *trompe l'oeil* fabric offers an exacting degree of illusionism, it is as much a fiction as Picasso's painted forms, since it remains a facsimile of chair caning, not the real thing. After all, Picasso once said, art is "a lie that helps us understand the truth." But he did surround his painting with actual rope, in ironic imitation of a traditional gold frame. The rope could have been suggested by a wooden table molding (see the table in fig. 10.25, for example) or the kind of cloth edged with upholstery cord that Picasso had placed on a table in his studio. Combined with the oilcloth, a material from the actual world, the rope encourages a reading of the painted surface itself as a horizontal tabletop, a logical idea, given the presence of still-life objects. Such spatial ambiguity is one of the many ways Picasso challenged the most fundamental artistic conventions. His incorporation of unorthodox materials, ones not associated with "high" or "fine" art, offered a radically new connection to the external world and an alternative to the increasingly hermetic nature of his Analytic Cubist compositions. Around the same time

he and Braque were reintroducing color to their Cubist paintings with bright, commercial enamel paint.

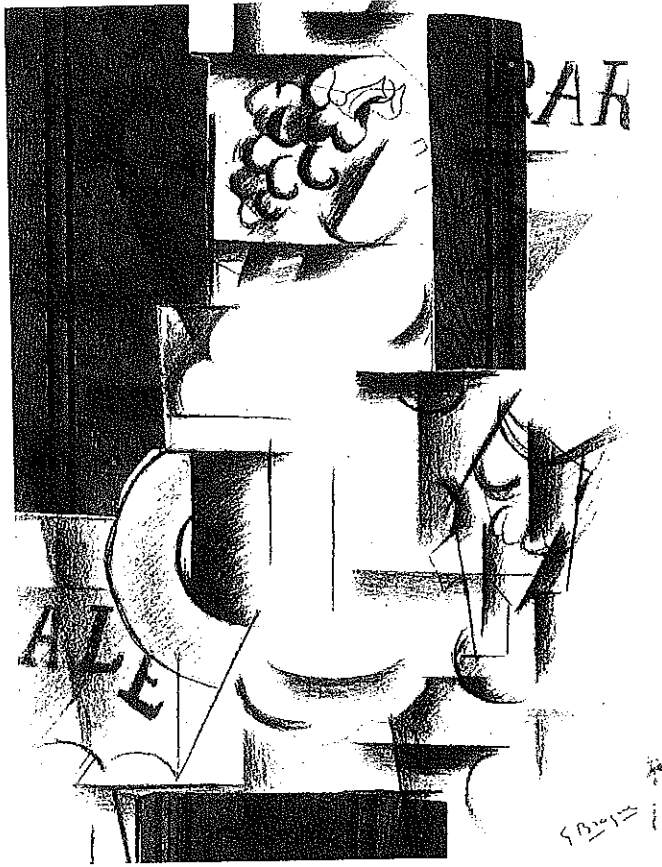
Following Picasso's invention of collage, Braque originated *papiers collés* (pasted papers). While this technique also involved gluing materials to a support, it is distinguished from collage in that only paper is used and, as Rubin has explained, "the sign language of the entire picture is in harmony with what is glued on." Collage, on the other hand, capitalized on disparate elements in jarring juxtaposition. It was this medium's potential for improbable, provocative combinations (see fig. 14.4) that ultimately attracted the Dada and Surrealist artists.

Braque made his first *papier collé*, *Fruit Dish and Glass* (fig. 10.22), in September 1912, during an extended stay with Picasso in Sorgues, in the south of France. It has been proposed that Braque deliberately postponed his experiment until Picasso, who regarded any idea as fair game for stealing, had left Sorgues for Paris. Once he was satisfied with the results, Braque presented them to Picasso. "I have to admit that after having made the *papier collé*," he said, "I felt a great shock, and it was an even greater shock for Picasso when I showed it to him." Picasso soon began making his own experiments with Braque's "new procedure."

The precipitating event behind Braque's invention was his discovery in a storefront window of a roll of wallpaper printed with a *faux bois* (imitation wood-grain) motif. Braque had already used a house painter's comb to create *faux bois* patterns in his paintings, a technique he passed on to Picasso, and he immediately saw the paper's potential for his current work. Like the oilcloth in *Still Life with Chair Caning*, the *faux bois* offered a ready-made replacement for hand-wrought imagery. In *Fruit Dish and Glass* Braque



**10.21** Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912. Oil and oilcloth on canvas, edged with rope, 10 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (27 × 37 cm). Musée Picasso, Paris.



**10.22** Georges Braque, *Fruit Dish and Glass*, September 1912. Charcoal and pasted paper on paper, 24 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (62 × 44.5 cm). Private collection.

combined the *faux-bois* paper with a charcoal drawing of a still life that, judging from the drawn words “ale” and “bar”, is situated in the familiar world of the café. With typical ambiguity, the cutouts of pasted paper play multiple roles, both literal and descriptive. Although their location in space is unclear, the *faux-bois* sections in the upper portion of the still life are signs for the wall of the café, while the rectangular piece below represents a wooden table. In addition, the *faux bois* enabled Braque to introduce color into his otherwise monochrome composition and to enlist its patterns as a kind of substitute chiaroscuro. At this point Braque was thinking of the *papiers collés* in relation to his paintings, for virtually the same composition exists as an oil.

Once Picasso took up the challenge of Braque’s *papier collé*, the contrast in sensibility between the two became obvious. While Braque relied on his elegant Cubist draftsmanship to bind the imagery of his *papiers collés* together, Picasso immediately deployed more colorful, heterogeneous materials with greater irony and more spatial acrobatics. In one of his earliest *papiers collés*, *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Wine Glass* of 1912 (fig. 10.23), a decorative wallpaper establishes the background for his still life (and implies that the depicted guitar is hanging on a wall). Picasso bettered Braque by actually painting a simulated wood-grain pattern on paper, which he then cut out and inserted into his

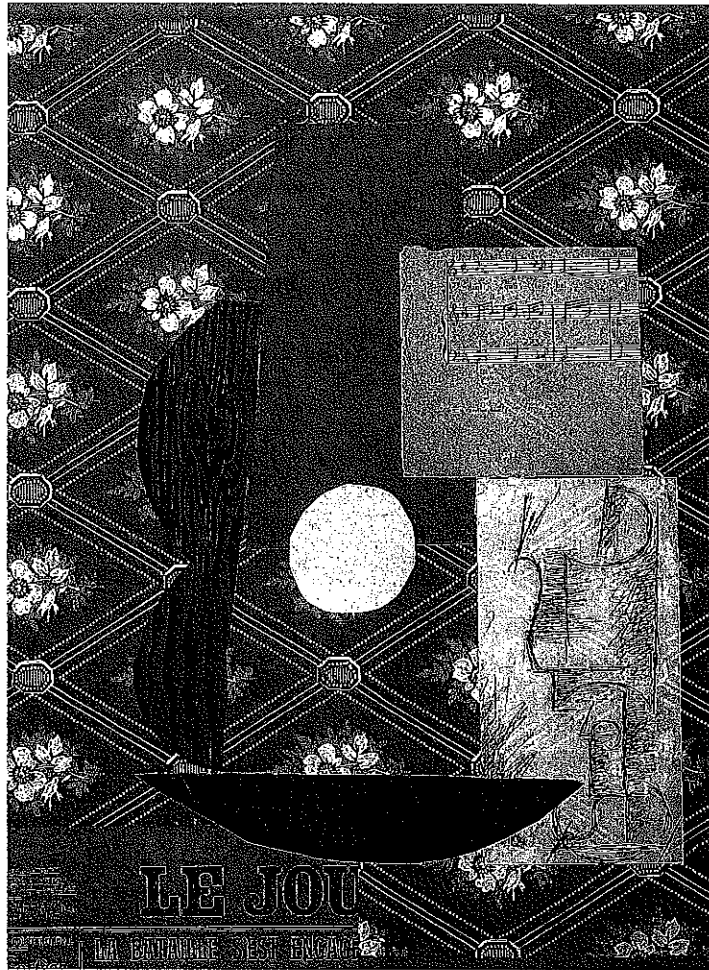
composition as part of a guitar. But the instrument is incomplete; we must construct its shape by decoding the signs the artist provides, such as a section of blue paper for the bridge and a white disk for the sound hole.

As in Picasso’s collage *Still Life with Chair Caning*, different signifying systems or languages of representation are here at work, complete with charcoal drawing (the glass at the right) and a guitar-shaped cutout of painted *faux bois* paper. We have seen the way in which the Cubists represented newspapers in their painted compositions. The next step was to glue the actual newsprint to the surface of a *papier collé*. In this example, even the headline of the Paris newspaper *Le Journal*, LA BATAILLE S’EST ENGAGÉ (the battle is joined), has a dual message. It literally refers to the First Balkan War then being waged in Europe and thus adds a note of contemporaneity. Some specialists have argued that its deeper meaning is personal, that it is Picasso’s friendly challenge to Braque on the battlefield of a new medium; others have read it as more directly political, an effort to confront the realities of war. By appropriating materials from the vast terrain of visual culture, even ones as ephemeral as the daily newspaper, and incorporating them unaltered into their works of art, Braque and Picasso undermined definitions of artistic authenticity that made it the exclusive province of drawing and painting, media that capture the immediacy of the individual artist’s touch. As always, this was accomplished with irony and humor—here again, JOU implies “game” or “play.” It was a challenge that had profound consequences for twentieth-century art, one that in many ways still informs debates in contemporary art.

The inventions in 1912 of collage and *papier collé*, as well as Cubist sculpture (discussed below), essentially terminated the Analytic Cubist phase of Braque and Picasso’s enterprise and initiated a second and more extensive period in their work. Called Synthetic Cubism, this new phase lasted into the twenties and witnessed the adoption and variation of the Cubist style by many new practitioners, whose work is addressed later in this chapter. If earlier Cubist works analyzed form by breaking it down and reconstructing it as lines and transparent planes, the work after 1912 generally constructs an image from many diverse components. Picasso and Braque began to make paintings that were not primarily a distillation of observed experience but, rather, were built up by using all plastic means at their disposal, both traditional and experimental. In many ways, Synthetic Cubist pictures are less descriptive of external reality, for they are generally assembled with flat, abstracted forms that have little representational value until they are assigned one within the composition. For example, the bowl-shaped black form in figure 10.23 is ambiguous, but once inserted in the composition, it stands for part of a guitar.

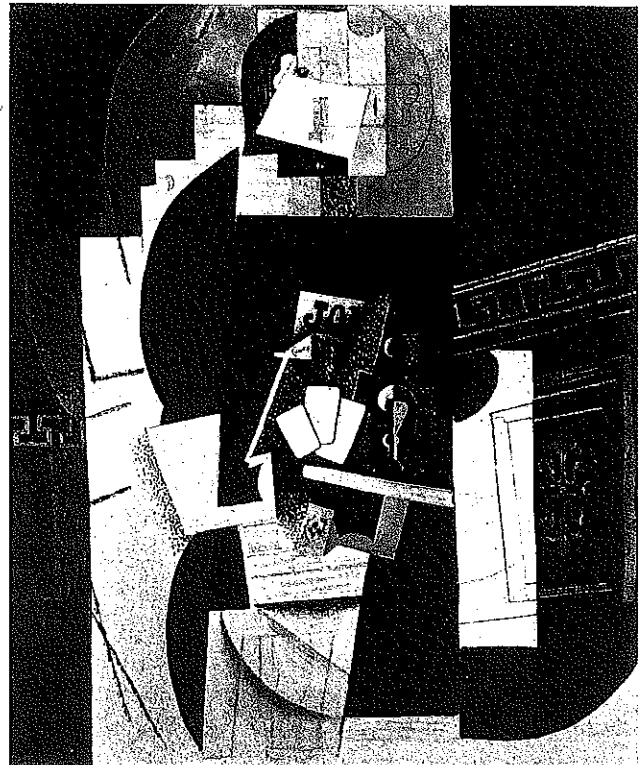
The dynamic new syntax of Synthetic Cubism, directly influenced by collage, is exemplified by Picasso’s *Card Player* (fig. 10.24), from 1913–14. Here the artist has

**10.23** Pablo Picasso, *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Wine Glass*, Fall 1912. Pasted papers, gouache, and charcoal on paper, 18¾ × 14¾" (47.9 × 37.5 cm). McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas.



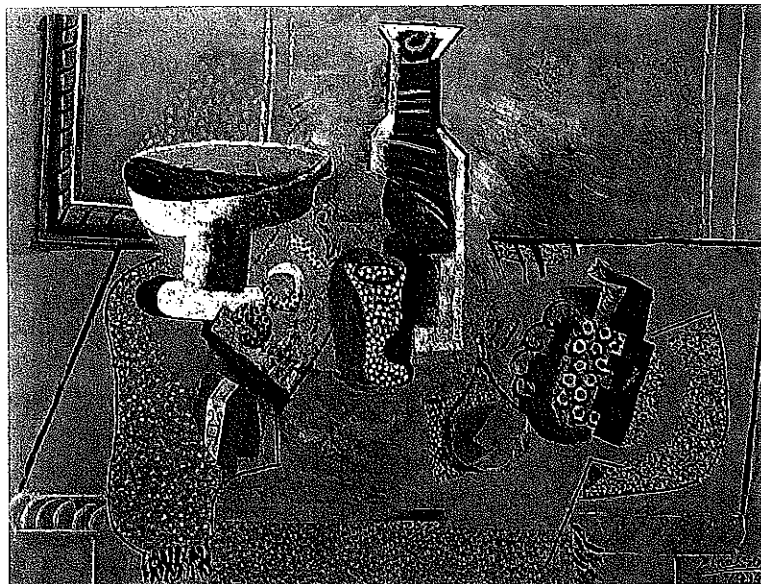
replaced the shimmering brown-and-gray scaffolding of *Accordionist* (see fig. 10.19) with flat, clearly differentiated shapes in bright and varied color. We can make out a moustachioed card player seated at a wooden table, indicated by the *faux bois* pattern, on which are three playing cards. Below the table Picasso schematically inscribed the player's legs and on either side of the sitter he included an indication of wainscoting on the back wall. Here the cropped letters *JOU*, by now a signature Cubist conceit, have an obvious relevance. Picasso emulates in oil the pasted forms of collage and *papiers collés* by partially obscuring with a succeeding layer of paint each of the flat shapes that make up the figure.

After 1913 the principal trend in paintings by both Picasso and Braque was toward enrichment of their plastic means and enlargement of their increasingly individual Cubist vocabularies. In Picasso's *Green Still Life* (fig. 10.25), we can easily identify all the customary ingredients of a Cubist still life—compote dish, newspaper, glass, bottle, and fruit. Following the intellectual rigors of Analytic Cubism, the artist seems to delight here in a cheerfully decorative mode. Alfred Barr, an art historian and the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, called this decorative phase in Picasso's work *Rococo Cubism*. Here Picasso has disposed his still-life objects in an open, tangible space and, using commercial enamels,



**10.24** Pablo Picasso, *Card Player*, winter 1913–14. Oil on canvas, 42½ × 35¼" (108 × 89.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**10.25** Pablo Picasso, *Green Still Life*, summer 1914. Oil on canvas, 23½ × 31¼" (59.7 × 79.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



adds bright dots of color that resemble shiny sequins. The entire ground of the painting is a single hue, a bright emerald green, which Picasso allows to infiltrate the objects themselves. In so doing, he reiterates the flatness of the pictorial space and deprives the objects of volume. Picasso painted *Green Still Life* in Avignon during the summer of 1914. Perhaps the optimistic mood of his work at this time reflects the calm domesticity he was enjoying there with Eva Gouel, his companion since 1911. But this sense of wellbeing was soon shattered. In August 1914 war was declared in Europe; by the end of 1915 Eva was dead of tuberculosis.

Braque, who was called up to serve in the French military (along with Guillaume Apollinaire and André Derain), said goodbye to Picasso at the Avignon railroad station, bringing to an abrupt end one of the greatest collaborations in the history of art. The war terminated the careers of many of Europe's most talented young artists and writers, including Apollinaire and Raymond Duchamp-Villon in France, Franz Marc and August Macke in Germany, and Umberto Boccioni in Italy. Picasso remained in Paris until 1917, when he went to Rome with the writer Jean Cocteau and worked on stage designs for the Ballets Russes. The postwar work of Braque and Picasso is discussed in chapter 14.

### Constructed Spaces: Cubist Sculpture

Even in the hands of great modernist innovators such as Jean Arp or Constantin Brancusi (see fig. 9.11), sculpture was still essentially conceived as a solid form surrounded by void. These sculptors created mass either through subtractive methods—carving form out of stone or wood—or additive ones—building up form by modeling in wax or clay. By these definitions, Picasso's *Woman's Head (Fernande)* (see fig. 10.15), regardless of its radical reconception of the human form, is still a traditional solid

mass surrounded by space. Like collage, constructed sculpture is assembled from disparate, often unconventional materials. Unlike traditional sculpture, its forms are penetrated by void and create volume not by mass, but by containing space. With the introduction of constructed sculpture the Cubists broke with one of the most fundamental characteristics of sculptural form and provoked a rupture with past art equal to the one they fostered in painting.

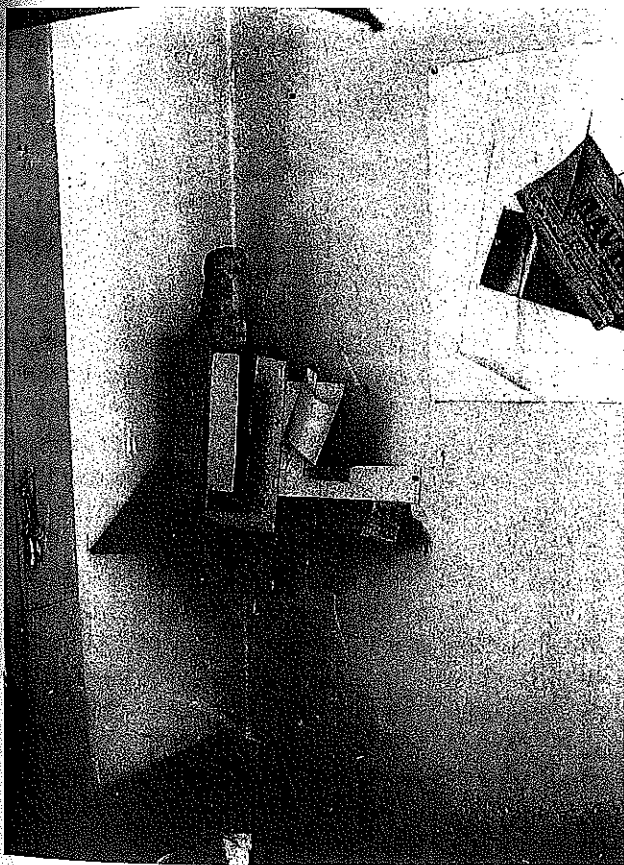
### Braque and Picasso

Documents prove that constructed Cubist sculpture was invented by Braque and that, as Rubin has demonstrated, it predated the first *papiers collés*. Nevertheless, no such works from his hand exist. Because he did not preserve the works, it is assumed that he thought of them principally as aids to his *papiers collés*, not as an end in themselves. According to Kahnweiler, Braque made reliefs in wood, paper, and cardboard, but the only visual record of his sculpture is a 1914 photograph of a work taken in his Paris studio (fig. 10.26). This unusual composition represents a familiar subject, a café still life, assembled from paper (including newsprint) and cardboard on which Braque either drew or painted. He installed his sculpture across a corner of the room, thus incorporating the real space of the surrounding studio into his work. This corner construction possibly influenced the corner-hung Counter-Reliefs of the Russian Constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin (see fig. 11.24), who may have visited Picasso's or Braque's studio during a 1914 trip to Paris.

Though constructed sculpture was Braque's invention, it was Picasso, typically, who made the most thorough use of it. His first attempt in the new technique is a guitar made from sheet metal, which he first prepared in October 1912 as a maquette made simply of cardboard, string, and wire (fig. 10.27). Picasso's use of an industrial material such as sheet metal was highly unorthodox in 1912; in the years

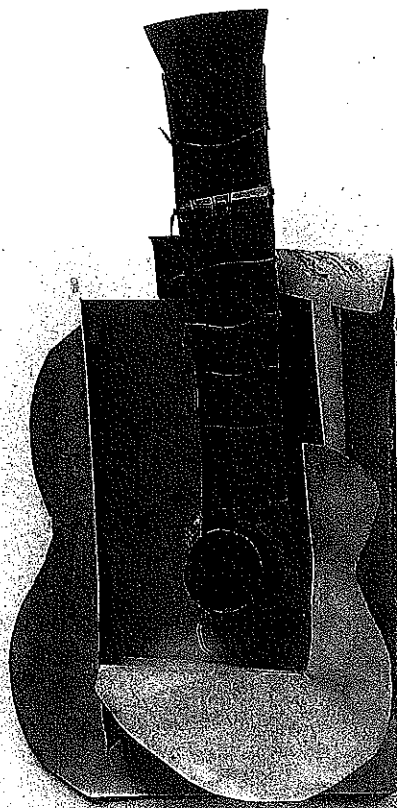
since, it has become a common sculptural medium. Clearly, the guitar was a significant impetus behind his *papiers collés*, for photographs taken in the artist's studio show it surrounded by works in this medium. In many ways, Picasso's guitar sculpture is the equivalent in three dimensions of the same motif in his *papiers collés*, *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Wine Glass* (see fig. 10.23), made several weeks later.

Through a technique of open construction, the body of the cardboard guitar has largely been cut away. Volume is expressed as a series of flat and projecting planes, resulting in a quality of transparency previously alien to sculpture. Picasso made the guitar sound hole, a void in a real instrument, as a projecting cylinder, just as he designed the neck as a concavity. The morphology of the guitar was directly inspired by a Grebo mask from the Ivory Coast in Africa, in which the eyes are depicted as hollow projecting cylinders. Picasso owned two such examples, one of which he bought in August 1912, during a visit to Marseilles with Braque. *Guitar* was revolutionary in showing that an artist's conceptual inventions of form are signs of or references to reality, not mere imitations of it. They can be entirely arbitrary and may bear only a passing resemblance to what they actually denote. Thus the sign for the guitar's sound hole was stimulated by a completely unrelated source—the eyes of an African mask.



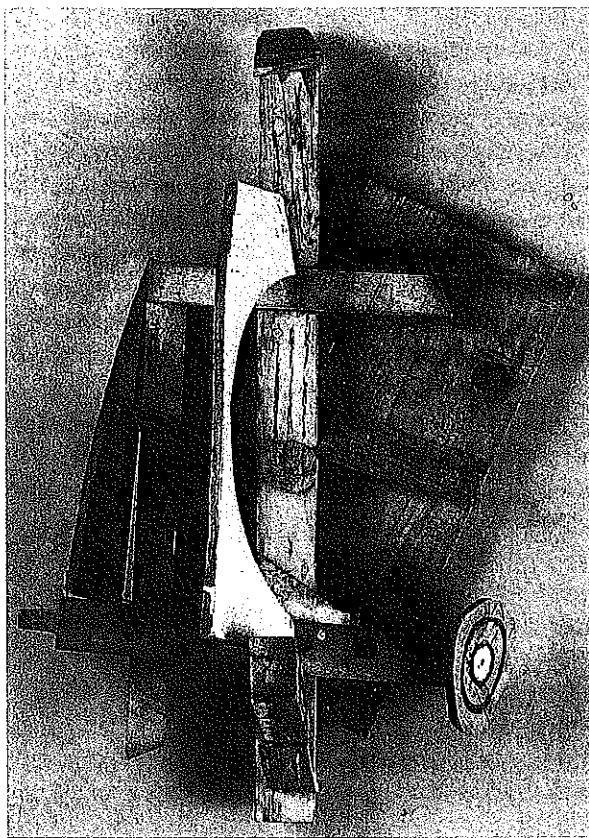
**10.26** Georges Braque, 1914. The artist's Paris studio with a paper sculpture, now lost.

We know from a 1913 photograph that Picasso inserted his cardboard guitar into a relief still-life construction on the wall of his studio. In an even more fascinating sculptural ensemble, also recorded only in a contemporary photograph, he drew a guitarist on a canvas and gave the figure projecting cardboard arms that held an actual guitar. A real table with still-life props on it completed the composition. In this remarkable tableau Picasso closed the breach that separated painting and sculpture, uniting the pictorial realm with the space of the external world. Much of modern sculpture has addressed this very relationship, in which a sculpture is regarded not as a discrete work of art to be isolated on a pedestal, but rather as an object coexisting with the viewer in one unified space. In two subsequent constructions, *Mandolin and Clarinet*, 1913 (fig. 10.28), and *Still Life*, 1914, both assembled from crudely cut, partially painted pieces of wood, Picasso furthered the explorations initiated by *Guitar*. *Mandolin and Clarinet*, composed mostly of scrap wood, demonstrates the artist's uncanny ability to envision the formal potential of found materials. Wood, which he and Braque had previously represented illusionistically, is now present as itself. In *Still Life* a curved section of wood stands for a table, on whose edge Picasso glued actual upholstery fringe. On the table he depicts a still life of food, a knife, and a glass. Unlike his



**10.27** Pablo Picasso, Maquette for *Guitar*, Paris, October 1912. Construction of cardboard, string, and wire (restored), 25½ × 13 × 7½" (65.1 × 33 × 19 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

constructed sculptures, which were essentially reliefs, Picasso's *Glass of Absinthe* (fig. 10.29) was conceived in the round and was originally modeled by conventional methods in wax. Absinthe is a highly addictive, stupor-inducing liquor, so lethal that by the end of 1914 it was outlawed in France. Upon completion of the wax model of *Glass of Absinthe*, Kahnweiler had the work cast in bronze in an edition of six, to each of which the artist added a "found object," a perforated silver spoon, as well as a bronze sugar cube. He hand-painted five variants and coated one with sand, a substance that first Braque and then he had added to their paint medium. The bright color patterns on this example are similar to those found in the artist's contemporary paintings (see fig. 10.25). Picasso cut deep hollows in the glass to reveal the interior, where, as in the previous *Still Life*, the level of fluid reads as a horizontal plane. In this adaptation of collage methods to the medium of sculpture, Picasso adapts objects from the real world for expressive purposes in the realm of art. This lack of discrimination between the "high" art media of painting and sculpture and the "low" ephemera of the material world remained a characteristic of Picasso's sculpture (see figs. 15.51, 20.3) and proved especially relevant for artists in the fifties and sixties (see figs. 20.10, 21.54).



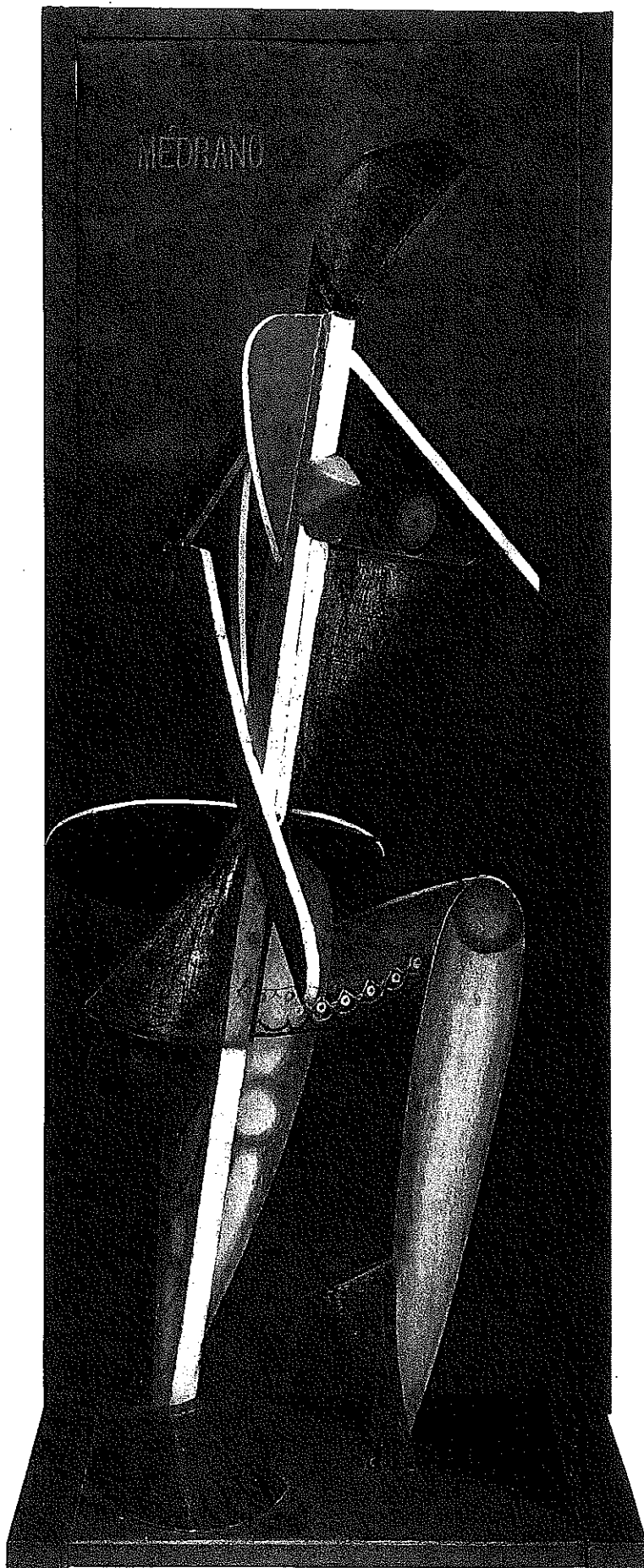
**10.28** Pablo Picasso, *Mandolin and Clarinet*, Fall 1913. Painted wood construction with cardboard, paper, and pencil marks, 22 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 9" (58 × 36 × 23 cm). Musée Picasso, Paris.



**10.29** Pablo Picasso, *Glass of Absinthe*, spring 1914. Painted bronze with silver absinth spoon, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (21.6 × 16.4 × 8.5 cm); base diameter 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (6.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

### Archipenko

Aleksandr Archipenko (1887–1964) has a strong claim to priority as a pioneer Cubist sculptor. Born in Kiev, Ukraine, he studied art in Kiev and Moscow until he went to Paris in 1908. Within two years he was exhibiting his highly stylized figurative sculptures, reminiscent of Gauguin's, with the Cubist painters at the Paris Salons. By 1913 he had established his own sculpture school in the French capital, and his works were shown at Berlin's Der Sturm Gallery and in the New York Armory Show (see chapter 18). In 1913–14 Archipenko adapted the new technique of collage to sculpture, making brightly polychromed constructions from a variety of materials. He based some of the figures from this period on performers he saw at the Cirque Médrano, the circus that had also been one of Picasso's favorite haunts. In *Médrano II*, 1913 (fig. 10.30), Archipenko assembled a dancing figure from wood, metal, and glass, which he then painted and attached to a back panel, creating a stagelike setting. This work was singled out for praise by Apollinaire in his review of the 1914 Salon des Indépendants. In the manner of constructed sculpture,



**10.30** Aleksandr Archipenko, *Médrano II*, 1913. Painted tin, wood, glass, and painted oilcloth, 49 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 20 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (133.2 × 51.4 × 31.8 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Archipenko articulated volume by means of flat colored planes. Thus, the dancer's entire torso is a single plank of wood to which her appendages are hinged. Her skirt is a conical section of tin joined to a curved pane of glass, on which the artist painted a delicate ruffle. Over the next few years, Archipenko developed this idea of a figure against a backdrop in his so-called sculpto-paintings, which are essentially paintings that incorporate relief elements in wood and sheet metal.

*Walking Woman*, 1918–19 (fig. 10.31), typifies Archipenko's later freestanding sculptures. In 1915 he began using the void as a positive element in figurative sculpture, effectively reversing the historic concept of sculpture as a solid surrounded by space. He believed that sculptural form did not necessarily begin where mass encounters space, but "where space is encircled by material." Here the figure is a cluster of open spaces shaped by concave and convex solids. Although Picasso's Cubist constructions were more advanced than those of Archipenko, the latter's Cubist figures had more immediate influence, first because they were more widely exhibited at an early date, and second because they applied Cubist principles to the long-familiar sculptural subject of the human figure, which revealed the implications of mass-space reversals more readily.



**10.31** Aleksandr Archipenko, *Walking Woman*, 1918–19. Bronze, height 26 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (67 cm). Courtesy Frances Archipenko Gray.



**10.32** Raymond Duchamp-Villon, *The Horse*, 1914. Bronze [cast c. 1930–31], 40 × 39 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (101.6 × 100.1 × 56.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

### Duchamp-Villon

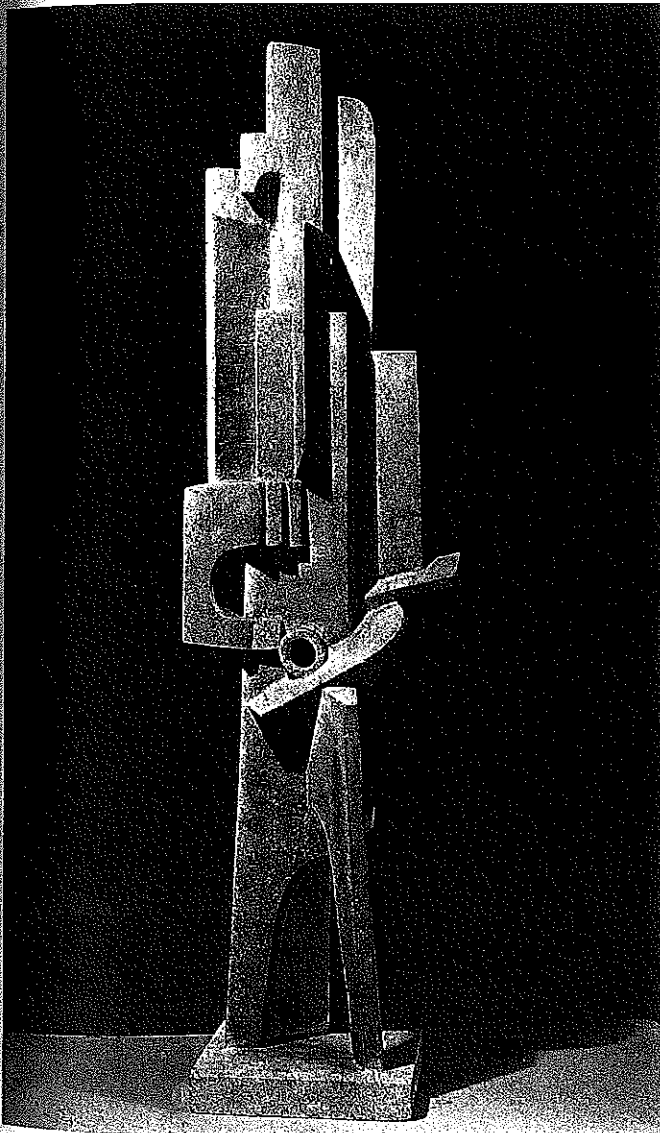
The great talents of **Raymond Duchamp-Villon** (1876–1918) were cut short by his early death in the war in 1918. He was one of six siblings, four of whom became artists—the other three are Marcel Duchamp and Jacques Villon (whose work is discussed below) and Suzanne Duchamp. In 1900 Duchamp-Villon abandoned his studies in medicine and took up sculpture. At first influenced by Rodin, like nearly all sculptors of his generation, he moved rapidly into the orbit of the Cubists. In his most important work, the bronze *Horse*, in 1914 (fig. 10.32), the artist endows a preindustrial subject with the dynamism of a new age. Through several versions of this sculpture he developed the image from flowing, curvilinear, relatively representational forms to a highly abstracted representation of a rearing horse. The diagonal planes and spiraling surfaces resemble pistons and turbines as they move, unfold, and integrate space into the mass of the sculpture. "The power of the machine imposes itself upon us to such an extent," Duchamp-Villon wrote, "that we can scarcely imagine living bodies without it." With its energetic sense of forms being propelled through space, *Horse* has much in common with the work of the Italian Futurist Umberto Boccioni, who had visited the studios of Archipenko and Duchamp-Villon in 1912 and whose sculptures (see fig. 11.11) were shown in Paris in 1913.

### Lipchitz

Cubism was only one chapter in the long career of **Jacques Lipchitz** (1891–1973), though no other sculptor explored as extensively the possibilities of Cubist syntax in sculpture. Born in Lithuania in 1891 to a prosperous Jewish family,

Lipchitz arrived in Paris in 1909 and there studied at the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. In 1913 he met Picasso and, through the Mexican artist Diego Rivera, began his association with the Cubists. He also befriended a fellow Lithuanian, Chaim Soutine, as well as Amadeo Modigliani, Brancusi, Matisse, and, in 1916, Juan Gris. During this time he developed an abiding interest in the totemic forms of African sculpture. In 1913 he introduced geometric stylization into his figure sculptures and by 1915 was producing a wide variety of Cubist wood constructions as well as stone and bronze works. For Lipchitz, Cubism was a means of reexamining the essential nature of sculptural form and of asserting sculpture as a self-contained entity, rather than an imitation of nature.

In a series of vertical compositions in 1915–16, including *Man with a Guitar* (fig. 10.33), Lipchitz edged to the brink of abstraction. Conceived as a structure of rigid,

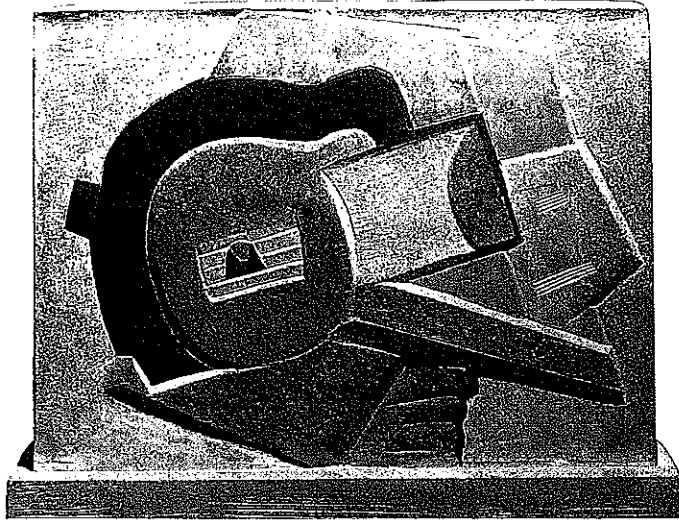


**10.33** Jacques Lipchitz, *Man with a Guitar*, 1915. limestone, 38¼ × 10½ × 7¾" (97.2 × 26.7 × 19.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

intersecting planes, *Man with a Guitar* is an austere rendition of a familiar Cubist theme and was derived from the artist's earlier and more legible wood constructions of detachable figures. Late in life, Lipchitz, who often compared these abstracted sculptures to architecture, wrote about them in his autobiography, *My Life in Sculpture*: "I was definitely building up and composing the idea of a human figure from abstract sculptural elements of line, plane, and volume; of mass contrasted with void completely realized in three dimensions." Lipchitz preferred modeling in clay to carving in stone, and most of his later sculptures, which gradually increased in scale, were developed as clay models and plaster casts that were then cast in bronze or carved in stone by his assistants. A bronze from 1928, *Reclining Nude with Guitar*, shows how the artist was still producing innovative forms within an essentially Cubist syntax. In the blocky yet curving masses of the sculpture, Lipchitz struck a characteristic balance between representation and abstraction by effecting, in his words, "a total assimilation of the figure to the guitar-object." This analogy between the guitar and human anatomy was one already exploited by Picasso. From the thirties to the end of his life, expressiveness became paramount in Lipchitz's sculpture and led to the free, rather baroque modeling of his later works. He moved to the United States to escape World War II in Europe and produced many large-scale public sculptures based on classical and biblical subjects.

### Laurens

**Henri Laurens** (1885–1954) was born, lived, and died in Paris. He was apprenticed in a decorator's workshop and for a time practiced architectural stone carving. By the time of fully developed Analytic Cubism, he was living in Montmartre, immersed in the rich artistic milieu of the expanded Cubist circle in Paris. First introduced to the group by Léger, he was especially close to Gris and Braque, whom he met in 1911. After his initial exposure to Cubism, Laurens absorbed the tenets of the style slowly. His earliest extant constructions and *papiers collés* (two media that are closely related in his oeuvre), date to 1915. Like Archipenko, whose Cubist work he knew well, Laurens excelled at polychromy in sculpture, integrating color into his constructions, low reliefs, and freestanding stone blocks. Referring to the long tradition of color in sculpture from antiquity to the Renaissance, he emphasized its function in reducing the variable effects of light on sculptural surfaces. As he explained, "When a statue is red, blue, or yellow, it remains red, blue, or yellow. But a statue that has not been colored is continually changing under the shifting light and shadows. My own aim, in coloring a statue, is that it should have its own light." His 1918 construction, *Bottle and Glass*, is a very close transcription in three dimensions of the cut and pasted papers of a collage made the previous year. Laurens used concave, convex, and cutout forms to signify volume and void. Thus,



**10.34** Henri Laurens, *Guitar and Clarinet*, 1920. Painted limestone,  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ " [ $36.7 \times 36.8 \times 8.9$  cm]. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

the wine bottle is indicated as both a white cylinder and a cutout silhouette in wood.

By 1919 Laurens had abandoned construction and embarked on a series of still-life sculptures in rough, porous stone. Drawing on his background in architectural stone carving and inspired by his love of French medieval sculpture, he carved *Guitar and Clarinet* (fig. 10.34), 1920, in very low relief and then reinforced these flattened volumes with delicate, mat color. In both style and iconography, the series has many affinities with Gris's paintings of the same period, as well as Lipchitz's relief sculptures of 1918. After 1920 Laurens relaxed the geometries of his Cubist style, adopting more curvilinear modes devoted to the depiction of the human figure.

### An Adaptable Idiom: Developments in Cubist Painting in Paris

In 1911, while Picasso and Braque were working together so closely that it is difficult to distinguish between their works, a number of other emergent Cubist painters in France began to formulate attitudes destined to enlarge the boundaries of the style. Of these, Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger also became talented critics and expositors of Cubism. Their book *On Cubism*, published in 1912, was one of the first important theoretical works on the movement. In Paris Gleizes and Metzinger met regularly with Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, and Henri Le Fauconnier at the home of the Socialist writer Alexandre Mercereau, at the café Closerie des Lilas and, on Tuesday evenings, at sessions organized by the journal *Vers et prose*. At the café these painters met with older Symbolist writers and younger, enthusiastic critics, such as Guillaume Apollinaire and André Salmon. (They were not, however, close to Cubism's inventors, Braque and Picasso.) In 1911

the group arranged to have their paintings hung together in the Salon des Indépendants. The concentrated showing of Cubist experiments created a sensation, garnering violent attacks from most critics, but also an enthusiastic champion in Apollinaire. That year Archipenko and Roger de La Fresnaye joined the Gleizes-Metzinger group, together with Francis Picabia and Apollinaire's friend, the painter Marie Laurencin (1881-1956). Laurencin had portrayed Apollinaire (seated in the center), herself (at the left), Picasso, and his lover Fernande Olivier in her 1908 group portrait (fig. 10.35), whose naive style is reminiscent of Rousseau.

The three brothers Jacques Villon, Marcel Duchamp, and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, the Czech František Kupka, and the Spaniard Juan Gris were all new additions to the Cubist ranks. In the Salon des Indépendants of 1912 the "Salon Cubists" were so well represented that protests against their influence were lodged in the French parliament. Although Picasso and Braque did not take part in these Salons, their innovations were widely known. By then Cubist art had been shown in exhibitions in Germany, Russia, England, Spain, and the United States. The Italian Futurists, as we shall see, brought an expressionist variant of Cubism back to Italy in 1911. In 1912 Kandinsky published works of Le Fauconnier and other Cubists in his yearbook *Der Blaue Reiter*, and Paul Klee visited the Paris studio of Delaunay. Marc and Macke soon followed.

As these artists began to push the original Cubist concepts in various directions, testing limits in the process, they demonstrated that Cubism was a highly flexible and adaptable idiom. Delaunay was developing his art of "simultaneous contrasts of color" based on the ideas of the color theorist Michel Eugène Chevreul, who had so strongly influenced Seurat, Signac, and the



**10.35** Marie Laurencin, *Group of Artists*, 1908. Oil on canvas,  $25\frac{1}{2} \times 31\frac{1}{4}$ " [ $64.8 \times 81$  cm]. The Baltimore Museum of Art.

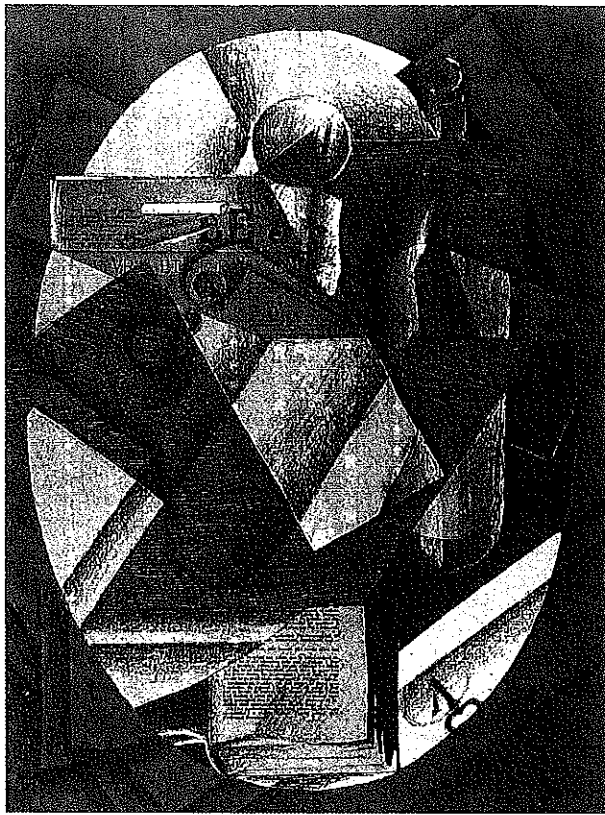
Neo-Impressionists (see chapter 3). In a large exhibition at the Parisian gallery La Boétie, held in October 1912 and entitled (probably by Jacques Villon) "Section d'Or" (golden section), entries by Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Kupka signaled innovative alternatives to the Cubism of Picasso and Braque.

During 1912 and 1913 Gleizes and Metzinger's *On Cubism* was published, as well as Apollinaire's book *Les Peintres Cubistes* and writings by various critics tracing the origins of Cubism and attempting to define it. Even today, when we are accustomed to the meteoric rise and fall of art movements and styles, it is difficult to appreciate the speed with which Cubism became an international movement. Beginning in 1908 with the isolated experiments of Braque and Picasso, by 1912 it was branching off in new directions and its history was already being written.

### Gris

**Juan Gris** (1887–1927) was born in Madrid but moved permanently to Paris in 1906. While Gris was not one of Cubism's inventors, he was certainly one of its most brilliant exponents. Since 1908 he had lived next to his friend Picasso at the old tenement known as the Bateau Lavoir and had observed the genesis of Cubism, although he was then occupied in making satirical illustrations for French and Spanish journals. However, by 1912 he had produced a masterly and personal interpretation of Cubism with his portrait *Homage to Pablo Picasso*, which is akin to studies of heads made by Picasso in 1909, but which turns the shifting planes and refracted light of Cubism into a regular grid. Such mathematical control was quite unrelated to anything that Picasso, Braque, or the other Cubists had attempted. Gris's sensibility differed significantly from Picasso's: he was not drawn to the primitive, and his work is governed by an overriding refinement and logic. In fact, he later made compositions based on the classical notion of ideal proportion called the golden section.

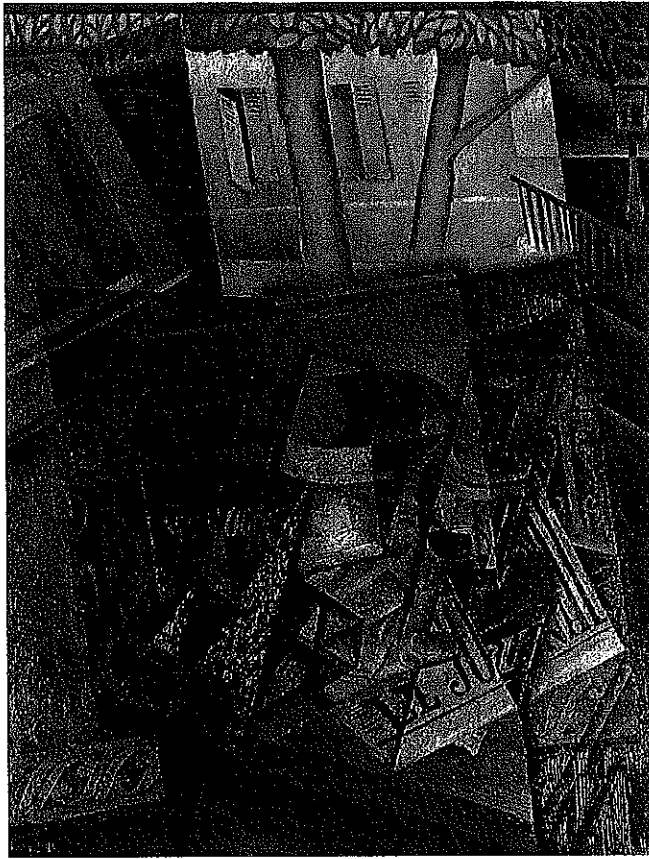
Gris was closer to Braque and Picasso than were other members of the Cubist circle, and he was aware of their latest working procedures. By 1912 he was making distinctive collages and *papiers collés* with varied textural effects, enhanced by his rich color sense. He tended to avoid Picasso's heterogeneous media and subversive approach to representation, preferring to marshal his pasted papers, which he usually applied to canvas, into precise, harmonious arrangements. *The Table*, 1914 (fig. 10.36), depicting a typical Cubist still-life subject, incorporates Braque's *faux bois*, along with hand-applied charcoal and paper. Although the canvas is rectangular, the objects are contained within an oval format (the table itself is also rectangular) that seems to exist by virtue of a bright, elliptical spotlight. To achieve the layered complexity of this composition, Gris reordered the data of the visible world within at least two independent spatial systems. The foreshortened bottle of wine at the far right (which partially disappears under the *faux-bois* paper) and the open book at the



**10.36** Juan Gris, *The Table*, 1914. Pasted and printed papers and charcoal on paper, mounted on canvas, 23½ × 17½" (59.7 × 44.5 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

bottom of the canvas are described as solid volumetric forms and exist in a relatively traditional space, one that positions the viewer above the table, looking down. The open book is drawn, but the text is an actual page from one of Gris's favorite detective novels. Toward the center of the work, a glass, bottle, and book, lightly inscribed in charcoal, are virtually transparent. They tilt at a precarious angle on what appears to be a second wooden table; introducing an altogether new space that is synonymous with the flat, upright surface of the painting. Perhaps the headline in the pasted newspaper, *LE VRAI ET LE FAUX CHIC* (real and false chic), refers not just to French fashion, but to the illusionistic trickery at play here.

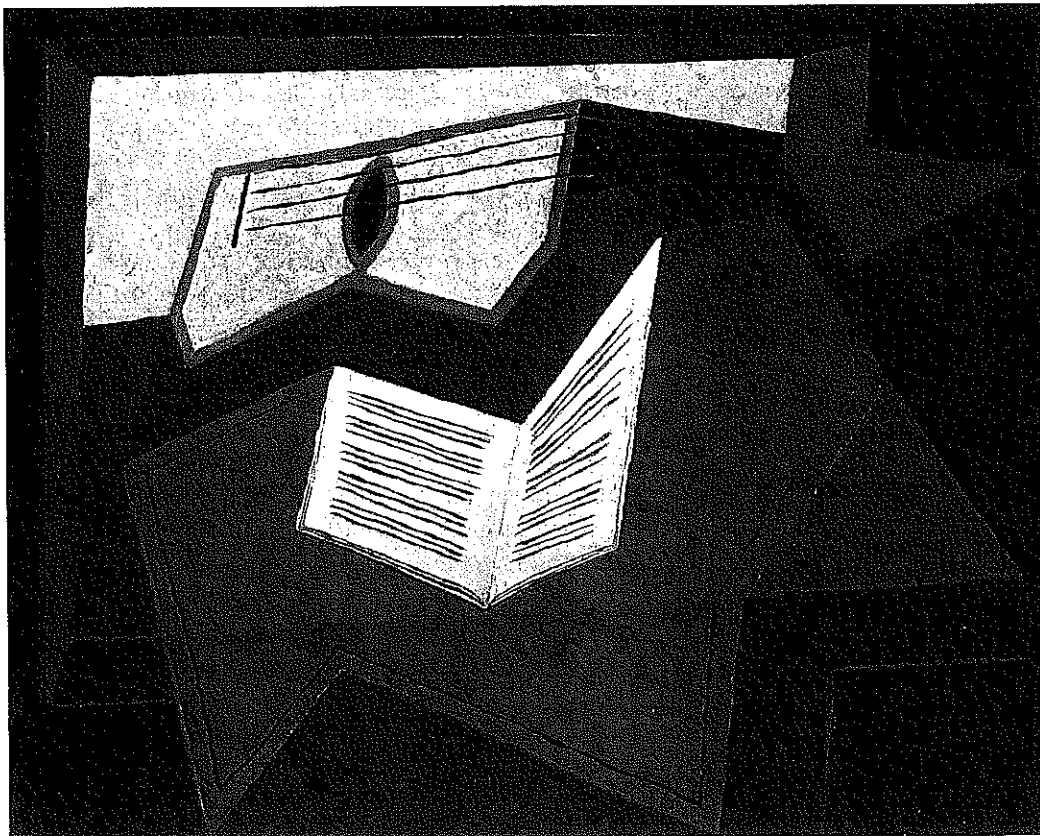
Gris ceased making collages after 1914 but continued to expand his Cubist vocabulary in painting and drawing. In *Still Life and Townscape (Place Ravignan)* (fig. 10.37) he employed a common Cubist device by mixing alternative types of illusionism within the same picture. In the lower half, a room interior embodies all the elements of Synthetic Cubism, with large, intensely colored geometric planes interlocking and absorbing the familiar collage components: the fruit bowl containing an orange; the newspaper, *Le Journal*; the wine label, "Médoc". However, this foreground pattern of tilted color shapes leads the eye up and back to a window that opens out on a uniformly blue area of simple trees and buildings. Thus the space of the picture shifts abruptly from the ambiguity and



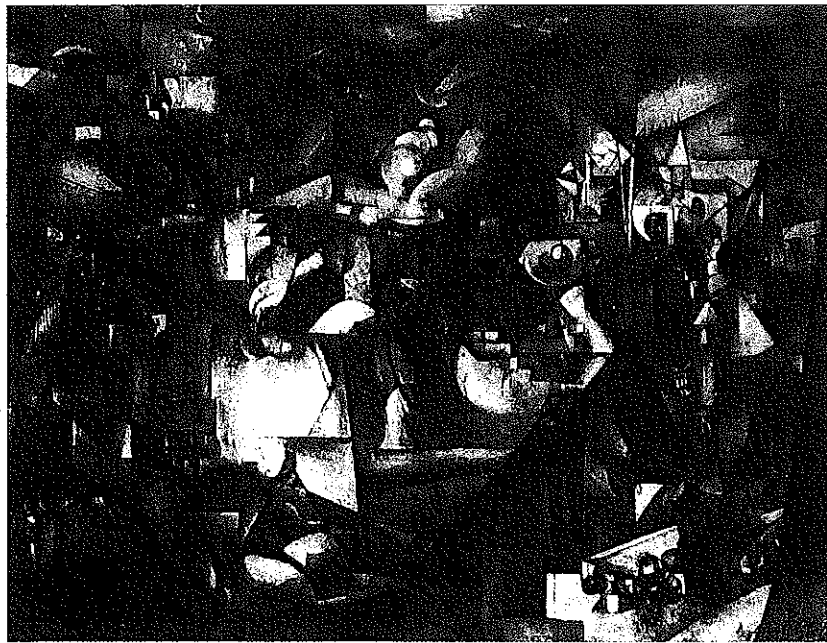
**10.37** Juan Gris, *Still Life and Townscape (Place Ravignan)*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 45" × 35" (116.5 × 89.2 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

multifaceted structure of Cubism to the cool clarity of a traditional Renaissance painting structure: the view through the window.

Gris was instrumental in bringing to Cubism a light and color that produced a decorative lyricism. At the end of his short life, however, he was beginning to explore an austere manner in which objects were simplified to elemental color shapes. In *Guitar with Sheet of Music* (fig. 10.38), a work of 1926, he reduced the familiar objects of Cubist still life to stark, simple shapes and eliminated from his colors the luminous iridescence of earlier works. Here paint is applied as a mat surface that reinforces the sense of architectural structure and at the same time asserts its own nature as paint. The bright primary colors—the blue of the sky, the yellow of the guitar's body, the red of the cloth—are framed by neutral tones. The table and window frame are composed of low-keyed brownish tones that merge imperceptibly, all within the deep shadow of the room. Within this subdued but beautifully integrated color construction the artist has created, through the linear geometry of his edges, a *tour de force* of shifting planes and ambiguous but structured space. The window frame merges at the lower left with the edge of the table. Meanwhile, the diagonal yellow line that bounds the red cloth on the left is drawn perfectly straight, yet is made to bend, visually, by the deeper value of the cloth as it (presumably) folds over the edge of the table. In one of the last works of his brief career, Gris integrates effects of architectural recession, sculptural projection, and flat painted surface into a tightly interlocked pictorial harmony.



**10.38** Juan Gris, *Guitar with Sheet of Music*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 25" × 31" (65.1 × 81 cm). Private collection.

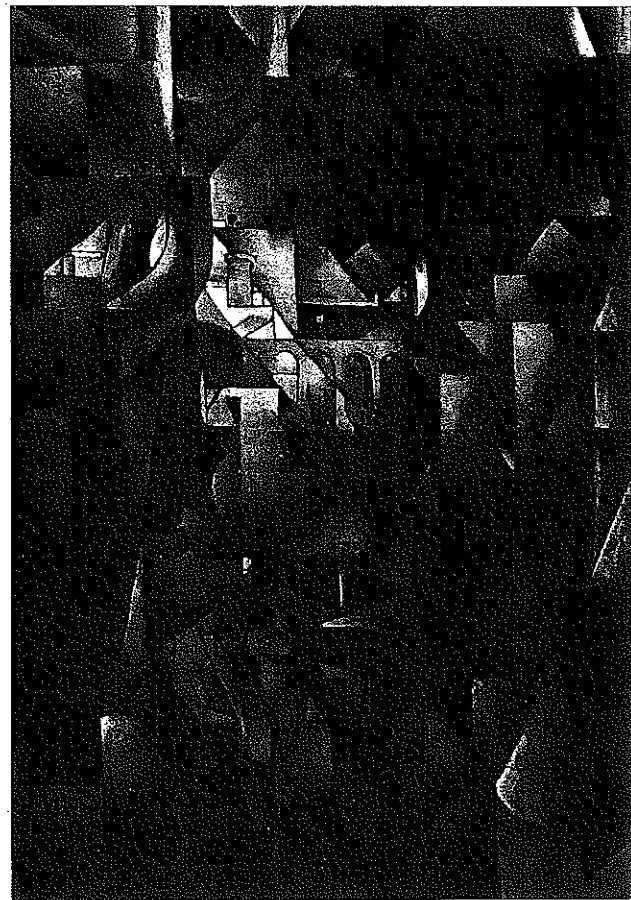


**10.39** Albert Gleizes, *Harvest Threshing*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 8'10" × 11'7" (2.7 × 3.5 m). Private collection.

### Gleizes and Metzinger

The contributions of **Albert Gleizes** (1881–1953) and Metzinger to the Cubist movement are usually overshadowed by the reputation of their theoretical writings, specifically the pioneering book *On Cubism*, in which much of the pictorial vocabulary of Cubism was first elucidated. Gleizes in particular was instrumental in expanding the range of the new art, in both type of subject and attitude toward that subject. His monumental 1912 painting *Harvest Threshing* (fig. 10.39) opens up to a vast panorama, the generally hermetic world of the Cubists. In its suggestions of the dignity of labor and the harmonious interrelationship of worker and nature, Gleizes explores a social dimension foreign to the unpeopled landscapes of Picasso and Braque. Although the palette remains within the subdued range—grays, greens, and browns, with flashes of red and yellow—the richness of Gleizes's color gives the work romantic overtones suggestive of Jean-François Millet (see fig. 1.19). In his later works, largely a response to the breakthrough *Simultaneous Disk* paintings of Robert Delaunay (see fig. 10.44), Gleizes turned to a form of lyrical abstraction based on curvilinear shapes, frequently inspired by musical motifs.

The early Cubist paintings of **Jean Metzinger** (1883–1956) are luminous variations on Cézanne, whose posthumous 1907 retrospective in Paris left an indelible impression on countless artists. *The Bathers* (fig. 10.40), no doubt informed by Gris's immediate example, illustrates Metzinger's penchant for a carefully constructed rectangular design, in which the romantic luminosity of the paint plays against the strict geometry of the linear structure. For a time Metzinger toyed with effects derived from the



**10.40** Jean Metzinger, *The Bathers*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 58¼ × 41⅞" (148 × 106.4 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Italian Futurists, later moving easily into the Synthetic Cubist realm of larger shapes and more vivid color. He received his first solo exhibition in 1919 at Léonce Rosenberg's Galerie de l'Effort Moderne in Paris, which was dedicated to a rigorous form of Cubism dubbed "crystal" Cubism, an apt designation for Metzinger's paintings at that time. Toward the end of World War I he began to assimilate photographic images of the figure or architectural scenes into a decorative Cubist frame. His later style, strongly influenced by Fernand Léger's work of the twenties, was an idealized realism for which Cubist pattern was a decorative background—a formula that enmeshed many of the lesser Cubists.

### Léger

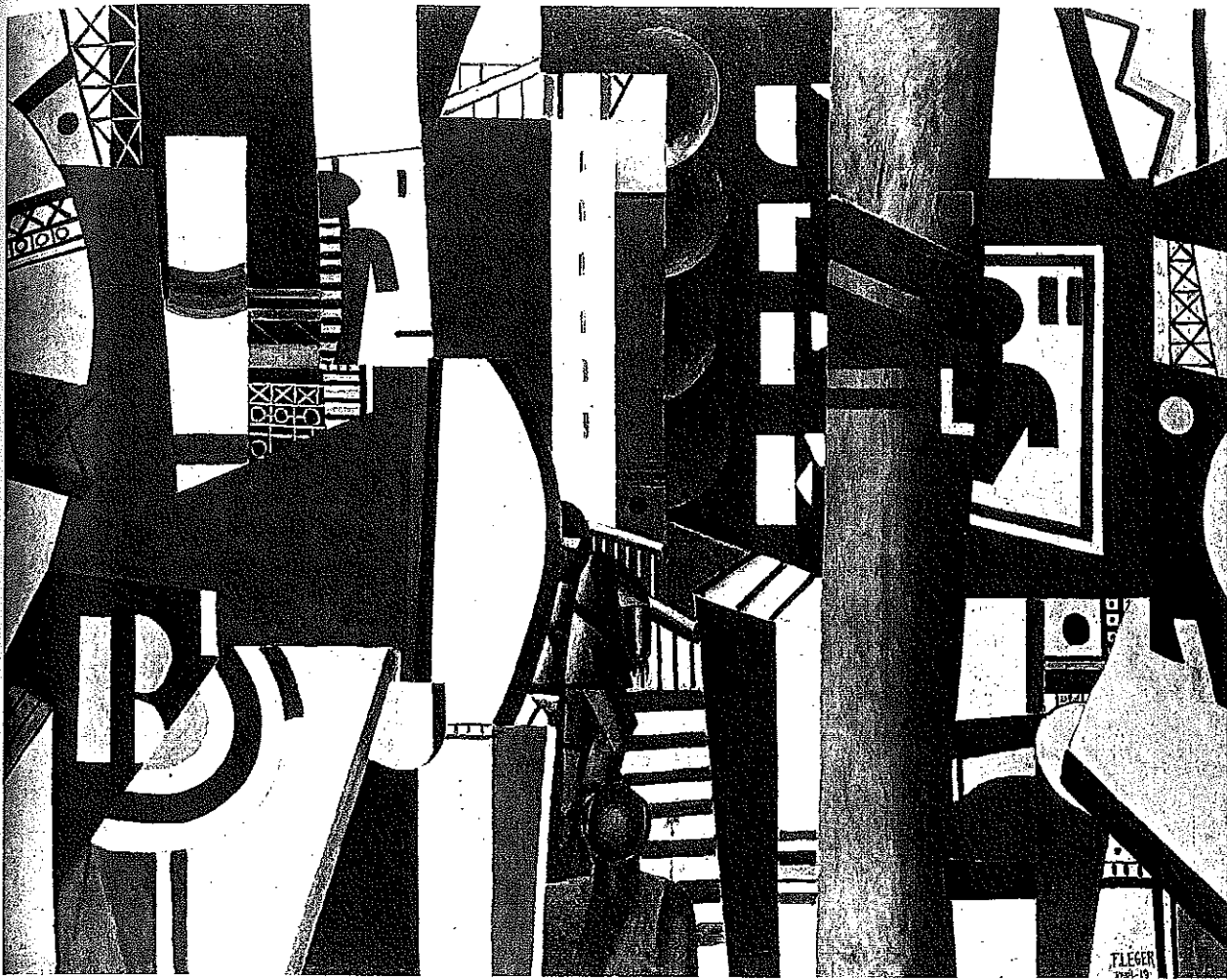
One almost inevitable development from Cubism was an art celebrating the ever-expanding machine world within the modern metropolis, for the geometric basis of much Cubist painting provided analogies to machine forms. In his 1924–25 essay, *The Machine Aesthetic: Geometric Order and Truth*, Fernand Léger (1881–1955) wrote: "Each artist possesses an offensive weapon that allows him to intimidate tradition. I have made use of the machine as others have used the nude body or the still life." Léger was not interested in simply portraying machines, for he opposed traditional realism as sentimental. Rather, he said he wanted to "create a beautiful object with mechanical elements."

Léger was from Normandy, in northwest France, where his family raised livestock. This agrarian background contributed to his later identification with the working classes and to his membership in the Communist Party in 1945. Once he settled in Paris in 1900, Léger shifted his studies from architecture to painting and passed from the

influence of Cézanne to that of Picasso and Braque. One of his first major canvases, *Three Nudes in the Forest* (fig. 10.41), is an unearthly habitation of machine forms and wood-chopping robots. Here Léger seems to be creating a work of art out of Cézanne's cylinders and cones, but it is also clear that he knew the work of artists such as Gleizes and Metzinger. The sobriety of the colors, coupled with the frenzied activity of the robotic figures, whose faceted forms can barely be distinguished from their forest environment, creates an atmosphere symbolic of a new, mechanized world. In 1913 Léger began a series of boldly nonobjective paintings, called *Contrastes de Formes* (contrasts of forms), featuring planar and tubular shapes composed of loose patches of color within black, linear contours. The metallic-looking forms, which interlock in rhythmical arrangements like the gears of some great machine, give the illusion of projecting toward the viewer. At first these shapes were nonreferential, but the artist later used the same morphology to paint figures and landscapes. Léger's experience as a frontline soldier in World War I was a powerful, transformative event for his life and art. He was struck by the camaraderie of the soldiers in the trenches, and while impressed by the technology of modern warfare, he was stunned by its destructive power. His combat experience strengthened his identification with the common man and reinforced his resolve to abandon abstract painting, dedicating himself to the subjects of contemporary life. With his monumental postwar canvas *The City* (fig. 10.42), 1919, Léger took another major step in the exploration of reality and the painted surface. In earlier canvases he had modeled his forms heavily, so that they seemed to project out from the surface of the canvas. Now he used the vocabulary of Synthetic Cubist collage to explore a



**10.41** Fernand Léger, *Three Nudes in the Forest*, 1909–10. Oil on canvas, 47¼ × 66⅞" (120 × 169.9 cm). Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, the Netherlands.



10.42 Fernand Léger, *The City*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 7'7" × 9'9" (2.3 × 3 m). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

variety of new forms. The rose-colored column in the foreground of *The City* is modeled volumetrically, for example, and some forms, set at an angle with dark edges, suggest tilted planes and the illusion of perspectival depth. On the other hand, forms such as the large stenciled letters are emphatically two-dimensional. Literal elements—machines, buildings, robot figures mounting a staircase, and signs—commingle with abstract shapes to produce fast-tempoed, kaleidoscopic glimpses of the urban industrial world. Léger's later work is discussed in chapter 14.

### Other Agendas: Orphism and Other Experimental Art in Paris, 1910–14

Unlike Léger, Robert Delaunay (1885–1941) moved rapidly through his apprenticeship to Cubism and by 1912 had arrived at a formula of brilliantly colored abstractions with only the most tenuous roots in naturalistic observation. His restless and inquisitive mind had ranged over the entire terrain of modern art, from the color theories of Chevreul and the space concepts of Cézanne to Braque and Picasso. In 1911 and 1912 he exhibited with *Der Blaue Reiter* in Munich and at *Der Sturm* Gallery in Berlin in 1912. This early contact with the German avant-garde, and



10.43 Robert Delaunay, *Eiffel Tower in Trees*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 49¾ × 36½" (126.7 × 92.7 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



especially the paintings and writings of Kandinsky (see chapter 8), helped to make Delaunay one of the first French artists to embrace abstraction. He also joined the Cubists at the highly controversial Salon des Indépendants of 1911, where Apollinaire declared his painting the most important work in the show. Delaunay avoided the figure and the still life, two of the mainstays of orthodox Cubism, and in his first Cubist paintings took as themes two great works of Parisian architecture: the Gothic church of Saint-Séverin and the Eiffel Tower. He explored his subjects in depth, and each exists in several variations. The series of paintings on the subject of the Eiffel Tower was begun in 1909. Like a work by Cézanne, the 1910 *Eiffel Tower*

*in Trees* (fig. 10.43) is framed by a foreground tree, depicted in light hues of ocher and blue, and by a pattern of circular cloud shapes that accentuate the staccato tempo of the painting. The fragmentation of the tower and foliage introduces not only the shifting viewpoints of Cubism, but also rapid motion, so that the tower and its environment seem to vibrate. With his interest in simultaneous views and in the suggestion of motion, Delaunay may be reflecting ideas published by the Futurists in their 1910 manifesto.

Delaunay called his method for capturing light on canvas through color "simultaneity." Like František Kupka, he adapted the color theories of Chevreul to his art. In *Window on the City No. 3*, 1911–12, which belongs to a

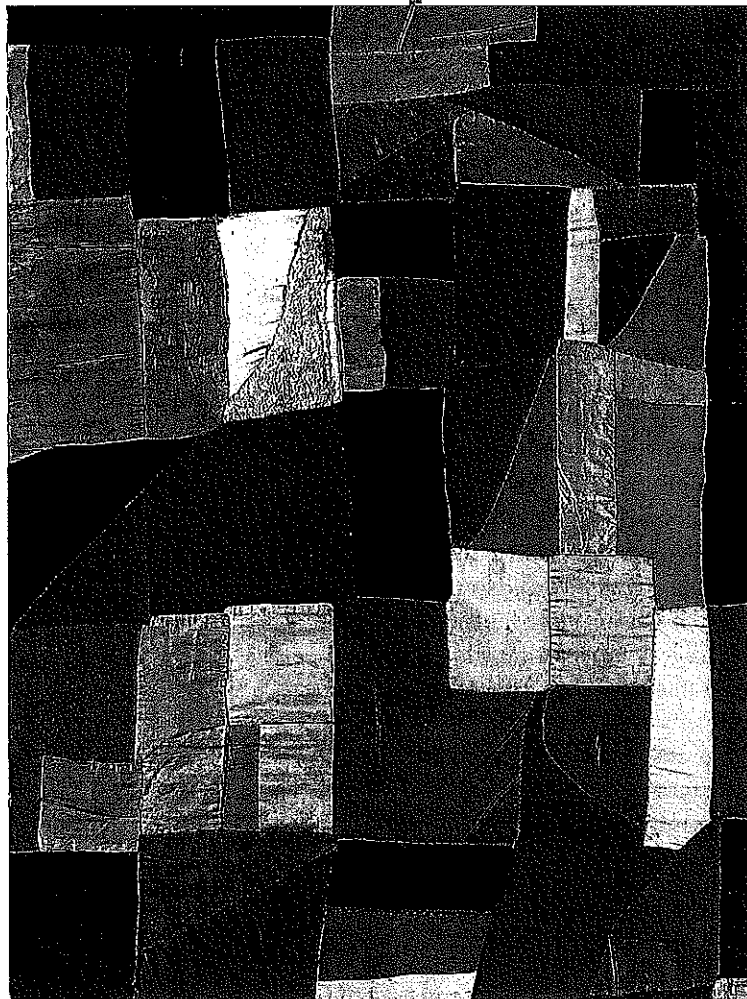


**10.44** Robert Delaunay, *Simultaneous Contrasts: Sun and Moon*, 1913 [dated 1912 on painting]. Oil on canvas, diameter 53" (134.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

series based on views of Paris, Delaunay applied his own variation of Chevreul's simultaneous contrast of colors for the first time. He used a checkerboard pattern of color dots, rooted in Neo-Impressionism and framed in a larger pattern of geometric shapes, to create a dynamic world of fragmented images. This is essentially a work of abstraction, though its origin is still rooted in reality. In the spring of 1912 he began a new series, *Windows*, in which pure planes of color, fractured by light, virtually eliminate any recognizable vestiges of architecture and the observed world. Throughout this period, however, he continued to paint clearly representational works alongside his abstractions.

In his *Disk* paintings of 1913 (fig. 10.44) Delaunay abandoned even the pretense of subject, creating arrangements of vividly colored circles and shapes. While these paintings, which Delaunay grouped under the title *Circular Forms*, have no overt relationship to motifs in nature, the artist did, according to his wife, Sonia Delaunay, observe the sun and the moon for long periods, closing his eyes to retain the retinal image of the circular shapes. His researches into light, movement, and the juxtaposition of contrasting colors were given full expression in these works.

Born Sonia Stern in a Ukrainian village in 1885, the same year as Robert Delaunay, **Sonia Delaunay** (1885–1979) moved to Paris in 1905. She married Robert in 1910 and, like him, became a pioneer of abstract painting. Her earliest mature works were Fauve-inspired figure paintings, and her first abstract work (fig. 10.45), dated 1911, was a blanket that she pieced together with scraps of material after the birth of her son. This remarkable object, which Delaunay said was based on examples made by Russian peasant women (and has much in common with the geometric pieced “crazy quilts” of nineteenth-century America), foreshadowed the abstract paintings she had begun to make by 1913. In those paintings, called *Simultaneous Contrasts*, Delaunay explored the dynamic interaction of brilliant color harmonies. While they had much in common with Robert's work, they gave evidence of a creative personality quite distinct from his. After World War I Sonia Delaunay devoted more time to textile design. When worn, her clothing literally set into motion the geometric patterns she had first explored in 1911. Her highly influential designs were sold throughout America and Europe.



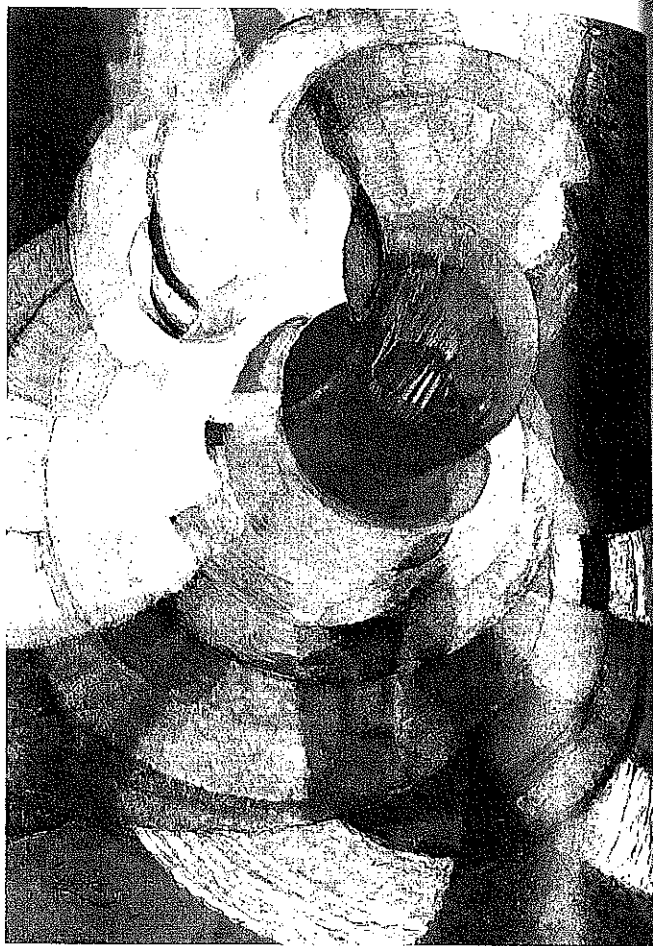
**10.45** Sonia Delaunay, *Blanket*, 1911. Appliquéd fabric, 42 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 31 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (109 × 81 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Born in the Czech Republic (then Bohemia, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire), **František Kupka** (1871–1957) attended the art academies of Prague and Vienna. The many forces in those cities that shaped his later art include exposure to the spiritually oriented followers of Nazarene art, decorative Czech folk art and other forms of ornament, knowledge of color theory, an awareness of the art of the Vienna Secession, and a lifelong involvement with spiritualism and the occult. Settling in Paris in 1896, he discovered chronophotography and the budding art form of cinematography. These contributed to his notion of an art, still based on the human figure, that suggested a temporal dimension through sequential movement. In this he shared concerns with the Futurists, though he developed his ideas before he saw their work in Paris in 1912.

Throughout his life Kupka was a practicing medium and maintained a profound interest in Theosophy, Eastern religions, and astrology. The visionary, abstract art he developed in Paris, beginning in 1910, was based on his mystical belief that forces of the cosmos manifest themselves as pure rhythmic colors and geometric forms. Such devotion to the metaphysical realm placed him at odds with most of the Cubist art he encountered in Paris. Though he arrived at a nonobjective art earlier than Delaunay, and though he was the first artist to exhibit abstract works in Paris, Kupka was then relatively unknown compared with the Frenchman, and his influence was not immediately felt. In 1911–12, with the painting he entitled *Disks of Newton* (fig. 10.46), Kupka created an abstract world of vibrating, rotating color circles. While his prismatic circles have much in common with Delaunay's slightly later Simultaneous Disks, it is not entirely clear what these two artists knew of one another's work.

In 1912 Apollinaire named the abstract experiments of Delaunay, Léger, Kupka, and others Orphism, a term that displeased the highly individualistic Kupka. Apollinaire defined the style as one based on the invention of new structures "which have not been borrowed from the visual sphere," though the artists he designated had all relied on the "visual sphere" to some degree. It was, however, a recognition that this art was in its way as divorced as music from the representation of the visual world or literal subject. Kandinsky, it will be recalled, equated his abstract paintings—done at about the same time—with pure musical sensation (see fig. 8.18).

Within a few years of one another, artists at various points on the globe achieved an art of nonrepresentation in which the illusion of nature was completely eliminated and whose end purpose was organization of the artist's means—color, line, space, and their interrelations and expressive potentials. Those artists included Kupka and the Delaunays in France; Kandinsky in Germany; Mikhail Larionov and, subsequently, Kazimir Malevich in Russia; Percy Wyndham Lewis in England; and Piet Mondrian and the artists of *de Stijl* in the Netherlands. The developments in Russia and the Netherlands, for which the invention and



**10.46** František Kupka, *Disks of Newton* (Study for *Fugue in Two Colors*), 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 39½ × 29" (100 × 73.7 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

dissemination of Cubist styles were crucial, are examined in chapter 11. The quest for an abstract vocabulary continued during the twenties, but World War I had disrupted creative effort everywhere. New forces and new attitudes were beginning to make themselves felt.

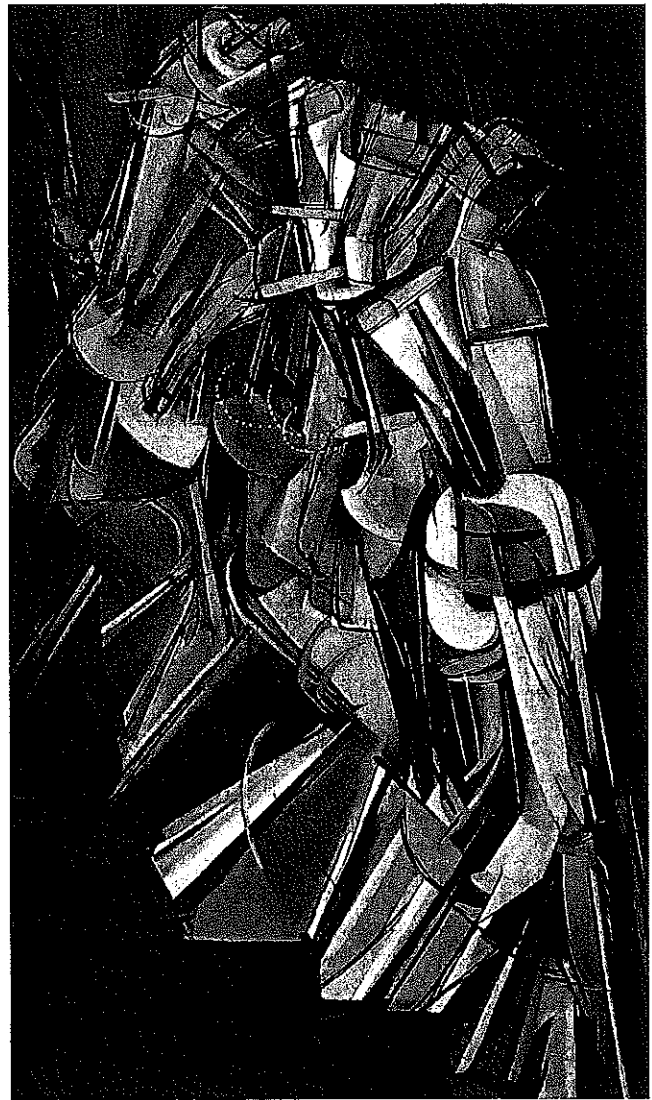
Among the first artists to desert Cubism in favor of a new approach to subject and expressive content was **Marcel Duchamp** (1887–1968), one of the most fascinating, enigmatic, and influential figures in the history of modern art. As previously noted, Duchamp was one of four siblings who contributed to the art of the twentieth century, though none was nearly so significant as Marcel. Until 1910 he worked in a relatively conventional manner based on Cézanne and the Impressionists. In 1911 he painted his two brothers in *Portrait of Chess Players* (fig. 10.47), obviously after coming under the influence of Picasso and Braque's Cubist explorations. The space is ambiguous and the color is low-keyed and virtually monochromatic, partly because Duchamp painted it by gaslight rather than daylight. The linear rhythms are cursive rather than rectangular, while the figures are characterized by tense energy and individuality; their fragmentation gives them a fantastic rather than a physical presence. Even at the

moment when he was learning about Cubism, Duchamp was already transforming it into something entirely different from the conceptions of its creators, producing what leading Cubists regarded as a creative misreading of its principles. The game of chess is a central theme in Duchamp's work. In his later career, when he had publicly stopped making art, chess assumed a role tantamount to artistic activity in his life.

During 1911 Duchamp also painted the first version of *Nude Descending a Staircase*, a work destined to become notorious as a popular symbol of modern art. In the famous second version, 1912 (fig. 10.48), the androgynous, mechanized figure has been fragmented and multiplied to suggest a staccato motion. Duchamp was fascinated by the art of cinema and by the nineteenth-century chronophotographs of Étienne-Jules Marey, which studied the body's locomotion through stop-action photographs, similar to those of Eadweard Muybridge and Thomas Eakins (see fig. 2.33). Marey placed his subjects in black clothing with light metal strips down the arms and legs that would, when photographed, create a linear graph of their movement. Duchamp similarly indicated the path of his figure's movement with lines of animation and, at the elbow, small white dots. He borrowed the Cubists' reductive palette, painting the figure in what he called "severe wood colors." Cubists on the selection committee for the 1912 Salon des Indépendants objected to the work for its literary title and traditional subject. Duchamp refused to change the title and withdrew his painting from the show. Throughout his life he used and subverted established artistic modes; in *Nude* he freely adapted Cubist means to a peculiarly personal expressive effect. The rapidly descending nude is not a static form analyzed as a grid of



10.47 Marcel Duchamp, *Portrait of Chess Players*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 39¾ × 39¾" (101 × 101 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.



10.48 Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 58 × 35" (147.3 × 88.9 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

lines and planes as is, for example, Picasso's *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler* (see fig. 10.18). Instead, by depicting the figure in several successive moments at once, Duchamp implies movement through space. Although the Futurists were also interested in the pictorialization of movement, they regarded the nude as an outdated subject, ill-suited to their celebration of the new industrial age. Duchamp admired some of the works he saw in the first Futurist exhibition held in Paris in February 1912, but he had little sympathy for the group's rhetoric and unrelenting faith in technology. He said that while his painting had some "futuristic overtones," it was clearly more indebted to Cubism. *Nude Descending a Staircase* was shown in New York at the enormous 1913 Armory Show, the first international exhibition of modern art in the United States. The painting outraged American critics; one derided it as an "explosion in a shingle factory." Thanks to this exhibition, by the time Duchamp came to America in 1915 his reputation was already established.

Duchamp was an instinctive Dadaist, an iconoclast in art even before the creation of the Dada movement, so it is natural that he should have been immediately recognized by the first Dadaists and Surrealists as a great forerunner. From an attack on Cubism that involved a new approach to subject, he passed, between 1912 and 1914, to an attack on the nature of subject painting, and finally to a personal reevaluation of the very nature of art. This phase of his career is properly examined in chapter 13.

Duchamp's elder brother Gaston, who took the name Jacques Villon (1875–1963), was at the other extreme from Marcel, a committed Cubist. In 1906 he moved to Puteaux, on the outskirts of Paris, where he had a house that adjoined Kupka's. Puteaux, and particularly Villon's studio, became a remarkable nucleus of Cubist activity (the other being Montmartre, where Picasso and Braque worked) that eventually attracted Villon's brothers, Gleizes, Léger, Picabia, and Metzinger, among others. Villon established a personal, highly abstract, and poetic approach to Cubism, one he maintained throughout his long life. In addition to painting, he also made prints, a medium well suited to his particular Cubist idiom. The crystalline structure of jagged triangular shapes in the drypoint print

depicting his sister, *Yvonne D. in Profile*, 1913, is indicated solely through parallel lines. They switch directions and densities, creating volumetric rhythms and a sense of shifting light over the surface.

Francis Picabia (1879–1953) began as a Cubist, though he later turned to Dada (see chapter 13). Until 1912 he was involved with the Cubist activities of Gleizes and Metzinger and exhibited with the Section d'Or, after which he turned to Orphism. In 1913 he spent five months in New York, where his works were included in the Armory Show and where he became a kind of self-appointed spokesman for the European avant-garde. There he met the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who gave him a show at his 291 Gallery. (Picabia subsequently contributed to Stieglitz's journal, *Camera Work*.) Upon his return to Paris he made a number of abstract paintings, including *Catch as Catch Can* (fig. 10.49). The image is supposedly a recollection of having watched a Chinese wrestler one evening in the company of Apollinaire, but the writhing, metallic planes of subdued color hardly coalesce into any identifiable imagery. Picabia abandoned Cubism in 1915, the year that, with Duchamp and Man Ray, he founded the American wing of Dada (see chapter 13).



**10.49** Francis Picabia, *Catch as Catch Can*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (100.6 × 81.9 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

