

**Chapter 1 : Guernica Meaning: Analysis & Interpretation of Painting by Pablo Picasso**

*Picasso Was a Punk Paperback - May 30, by Walt Herring (Author) out of 5 stars 1 customer review.*

In 1911, the Titanic had yet to sink, cinema was a flickering newsreel of the Boer war, Scott of the Antarctic was still alive and the Wright brothers travelled to Europe to publicise their invention of powered flight. This is one centenary worth thinking about. Culturally, the 20th century began in 1911. Consider the dates of other works of high modernism. You can make a case for many beginnings of modern art. After Olympia, the late 19th century and early 20th century seem with provocative works of art that engage specifically with the same sexual territory as Picasso: So what is so new, so radical about this painting? Five pink women are entangled in silver and blue draperies. Two of them stand with arms raised to flaunt their breasts, staring at you out of huge black eyes. The other three are masked: On a plate, there is a collection of blatantly meaningful fruit: This is a painting of nudes in which there is scarcely a curve to be seen - elbows sharp as knives, hips and waists geometrical silhouettes, triangle breasts. The painting is square to the eye in reality there are a few centimetres more to its height than its width, which disposes you to attend to space and symmetry. Or rather, the squareness puts you on your mettle, to look at this perpetual motion machine that never loses its vitality. Certainly, it matches the work artists had traditionally put into history paintings and frescoes. Picasso knew he was doing something important, even revolutionary - but what? He started out with the idea of a brothel scene. The painting was to have a male customer in it, a sailor, or the artist himself. It would have been a shocking slice of contemporary Parisian life, not that far removed from Toulouse-Lautrec or all the other cynically honest "painters of modern life". This is true even in reproduction. In order to interpret it, you must look away, or unfocus your eyes. Actually looking at the picture means moving constantly from one facet to another; it never lets you settle on one resolved perception. Most of all, this is a painting about looking. Picasso looks back at you in the central figure, whose bold gaze out of huge asymmetrical eyes has the authority of a self-portrait. What he painted in is a work of art that looks back at you with furious contempt. What struck Picasso about African masks was the most obvious thing: Modernism is an art that wears a mask. It does not say what it means; it is not a window but a wall. Picasso picked his subject matter precisely because it was a cliché: The great, lamentable tragedy of 18th- and 19th-century art, compared with the brilliance of a Michelangelo, had been to lose sight of the act of creation. Modernism in the arts meant exactly this victory of form over content. In this painting Picasso anticipates the discoveries he made explicit in his cubist pictures: Such a tremendous unbinding of desire was unprecedented in art, not to mention Christian culture. Breton, the leader of the surrealists, saw in it a painting about the revolutionary menace of the unconscious, and he was right. Even in a world that no longer worships painting, this painting is unsurpassed. It anticipates the end of painting, gladly contemplates the cultural destructions Picasso was to step back from. So - a centenary. If you care about modern art, this is its centenary. Works of art settle down eventually, become respectable.

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