ALMINE RECH

Picasso 1906

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Museo Reina Sofía, with the exceptional support of the Musée Picasso Paris, has organized *Picasso 1906*. The Great Transformation, which closes the official commemorative program of international exhibitions and suggests a major revision of criteria on the key role played by the artist in the creation of modern art.

The great contribution of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) to this landmark development is generally considered to be the painting of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1907. However, that work can now be regarded as a point of arrival, the final outburst of a whole complex process that had developed throughout 1906 and up to late February or early March, 1907. During that period, the artist's creative activity took place in three settings: Paris, Gósol (a Pyrenean village in the province of Lérida), and Paris again.

Picasso's production in that specific period has been viewed until now as an epilogue to the rose period or a prologue to the aforementioned work. Nothing could be farther from the truth. 1906 was not just another year in the artist's career. It was an artistically significant moment, not recognized as such until now, when the Málaga-born artist's experiments opened up his work to new languages. As the curator, Eugenio Carmona, states in the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition, this was "Picasso's first contribution to the full notion of modern art."

During this phase, for instance, Picasso transformed the academic concept of the 'nude', though with precedents in some works produced since 1904, and he turned the body into a site of linguistic and cultural experimentation to which he introduced sensuality, with an especially important place reserved for the male nude. This also opened the doors for the performative presence of gender.

Another distinctive feature of this Picasso is his sense of transculturality, which emanates from his biographical details and the formation of his personality. The young Picasso of that time was an Andalusian who had emigrated to Barcelona and had been traveling to Paris since 1900. When he returned to Barcelona in 1906, he brought with him a whole set of transforming relationships and experiences in the bohemian atmosphere of the Parisian avant-garde, where he had had an opportunity to meet dealers and collectors (with a key role played by Gertrude Stein) and major contemporary artists. This was decisive for his own definition as an artist, which was also influenced by his interest in homoerotic or ethnological photography and its reproduction in widely circulated magazines, and by libertarian or anarchist thought.

At that time, he also carried out a re-reading of the history of art through his dialogues with El Greco, Corot, and Cézanne, and by means of the appropriation of ancient art with the use of primeval, 'primitivist', and even non-European cultural referents (archaic Greek, Egyptian, Etruscan, Iberian, Catalan Romanesque, Mesopotamian, Polynesian, etc.). By then, he also already knew and had assimilated the so-called art nègre or 'Black art' before his famous visit to the Trocadéro in 1907.

Throughout the eight rooms which make up this exhibition, the works of Picasso are therefore shown alongside pieces from different periods of European and African culture similar to those the artist might have seen at the time, establishing both formal and intellectual correspondences, citations, appropriations, or dialogues. These works allow us a highly informative glimpse of the complexity of the cultural and creative processes experimented with by Picasso in 1906.

Exceptionally for the occasion, the show thus gathers more than 120 works from private collections and leading institutions such as the MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museums of Art of Baltimore, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, Dallas, and Chicago in the United States, the Musée Picasso, the Louvre, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the National Archaeological Museum, the Prado, and the Picasso Museums of Barcelona and Málaga in Spain.