

fururism and cubism to give his vision that extra edge. The picture's original title is written on the back: 'All being is flaming suffering.' In an apocalyptic holocaust, a blue deer lifts its head to a falling tree; there are red foxes on the right, green horses at the top left. Colours are used for symbolic reasons: and blue for Marc is the colour of hope. Yet hope is soon to be extinguished in this cataclysmic destruction of animal life.

Shortly before his death in action on the Western Front, Marc sent a postcard of *The Fate of Animals* to his wife. 'It is like a premonition of this war, horrible and shattering,' he wrote. 'I can hardly conceive that I painted it. It is artistically logical to paint such pictures before a war - but not as stupid reminiscences afterwards, for we must paint constructive pictures denoting the future.'

The war took a heavy toll of the expressionist generation. It killed Marc and his young friend Macke. Both Kirchner and Kokoschka were brought to the edge of insanity: Kirchner's health was indeed permanently broken, and he was an invalid in Switzerland until his suicide at the advent of the Second World War. Kokoschka's survival must be attributed to his toughness, and to a final refusal to accept the 20th century at all. For Kokoschka remains the last great 19th century painter, who has been able to carry on during a long and successful career as if the artistic events described in this book had never occurred at all.

101 FRANZ MARC (1880-1916)
The Fate of Animals, 1913. Oil on
canvas, 6' 5" x 8' 8" (195 x 263.5).
Kunstmuseum, Basel



Of all the revisions of pictorial language proposed in the 20th century, cubism has been the most radical. It led immediately to the conception of the painting as primarily an object, which in turn made possible both a totally abstract art and an extension of painting, first into collage and relief and then into sculpture. The distinction between the arts of painting and sculpture breaks down in the mid-20th century as a result of the cubist revolution.

Cubism was essentially an intellectualization by two young painters, Picasso and Braque, of certain practices that they had noticed in the painting of Cézanne. Cézanne's approach to landscape and still-life was always empirical, in a sense un-self-conscious; and he died without ever feeling that he had found a solution to the problems of pictorial representation that faced him. With all the aggressive assurance of youth, Picasso and Braque simplified the problem and propounded a solution that at least satisfied them. But the solution only raised new questions, which led to fresh innovations.

The moment of crisis came in 1906, the year of Cézanne's death. A small group of his paintings were shown in the Autumn Salon, in preparation for the memorial exhibition to be organized a year later; they had a profound effect on Picasso. Other important influences were coming to bear on Picasso's painting at this time, particularly that of archaic and primitive sculpture, and the consequence was that angry masterpiece that he painted in the winter of 1906-07, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (III. 109).

Picasso's work before 1906 does not prepare us for the explosion of *Les Femmes d'Alger*. Born in Malaga in 1881, the son of an art teacher, Picasso was gifted with extraordinary natural talents. He quickly learnt from the Old Masters in the Prado, from the art magazines that circulated in Barcelona where he spent his youth, and

from the new painting which he saw in Paris on repeated visits from 1900 until 1904, when he made his permanent home in the French capital.

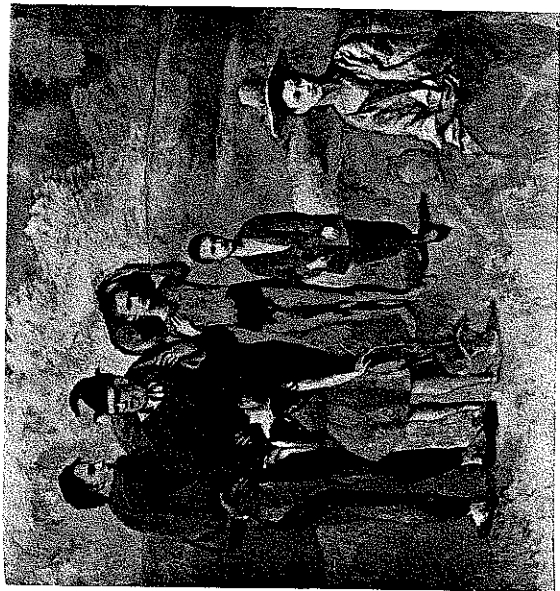
Picasso's formation was an eclectic one, and reflects his restless temperament. The influences of Daumier, Lautrec, Bonnard, Puvis de Chavannes, Degas, even Munch and Rossetti are visible in his early paintings and drawings. But by 1903 when he painted *La Vie* (Ill. 102) Picasso's individual temperament made itself clearly felt. This was his largest and most ambitious picture to date, and, as the title suggests, was nothing less than a statement about the meaning of life. It is a Gauguinesque allegory, not precisely explicable. The three pairs of figures, like the women in Munch's *Dance of Life* (Ill. 80), evidently represent three stages of existence — perhaps first love, experience (and also disillusion?), and then maternity. They are very substantial figures; the one on the right stands like a column, and the draperies instead of concealing the elongated bodies seem to make them even more expressive than the nudes. The picture is monochromatic: nothing but varying hues of blue, the colour that dominates Picasso's work at this time, chosen here because of its associations with melancholy, with infinity — *l'azur* of Mallarmé's sonnets.

In his early studies for *La Vie*, Picasso's setting is clearly the artist's studio — yet another echo of that Velasquez motif which haunted Courbet and Manet and others among Picasso's immediate predecessors. But what is striking about Picasso's variation of the theme is the degree of personal involvement — a passionate, subjective emotionalism that all but swamps the picture.

Picasso may well have been aware of this, because when he settled in Paris in 1904 he began to reduce the sentimental content of his work. Instead of picturing beggars, whores, starving children and their mothers, he takes his subjects from the world of the theatre and the circus — at one remove, as it were, from reality. *The Acrobat Family* of 1905 (Ill. 103) is a direct extension of *La Vie*, here with a whole family rather than a couple. Again there is no explicit message, no drama — the stylized figures are caught in a timeless, motionless state of trance. But they are *acrobats*, stoically enduring a drab and insecure existence, very different from that other life, full of tension and excitement, which they present for our entertainment in their circus performances.



102 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
La Vie, 1903. Oil on canvas, 6' 6"
× 4' 2" (197 × 127.3). Cleveland
Museum of Art (Gift of Hanna Fund,
1945)



103 PABLO PICASSO (1881-
The Acrobat Family, 1905. C
canvas, 7' 7" 6" (213 × 229). N.Y.
Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.)

Picasso delights in this duality, which of course lies at the heart of every theatrical performance. He remained fascinated by the theatre throughout his career, even to the extent of writing plays, and he was always projecting himself as an actor, clowning about, playing different parts in his own painting. When he painted *The Acrobat Family*, however, he surely intended us to see the fate of circus performers, condemned to a rootless occupation and unstable relationships, as symbolic of the fate of humanity. This, at any rate, is how the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, interpreted the picture. It hung in the castle at Duino where he was staying at the time the First World War broke out, and in his fifth Duino elegy Rilke begins by meditating on Picasso's picture:

*Wer aber sind sie, sag mir, die Fahrten, diese ein wenig
Flüchtigen noch als wir selbst, die dringend von früh an
wringt ein wem — wem zuliebe
niemals zufriedener Wille?*

'But tell me, who are they, these acrobats, even a little more fleeting than we ourselves, so urgently, ever since childhood, wrung by an (oh, for the sake of whom?) never-contented will?'

(translated by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender.)

For Rilke, even the composition underlined his interpretation: the figures are grouped into an enormous D, shape, D being the first letter of the German *Dassein*, an untranslatable word meaning existence in its most real and tangible form.

In *The Acrobat Family*, Picasso exchanged his blue-dominated palette for a pink-dominated one. This was part of his search for a less emotional, more objective art. He was now looking closely at Greek vase painting and Etruscan and archaic Greek sculpture in the Louvre. His interests quickly expanded to include ancient Iberian carving, and, even more revolutionary, African sculpture. The evidence of the assimilation of this new material can be seen in *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

Les Femmes d'Alger marks a new beginning for Picasso. Up to this point he had been working on the margins of modern art. He was a latter-day symbolist, with affiliations with the humanist tradition of socially-aware realist painting. The line of pictorial experiment followed by Manet and Cézanne and Seurat had left him indifferent. This was 'pure painting', and as such irrelevant to the great issues with which Picasso wanted to concern himself. Yet he found that he needed contact with 'pure painting' in order to be able to express those ideas. Two French painters, Matisse and Braque, showed the Spaniard how this could be done.

Matisse was the rival, Braque the collaborator and friend. Matisse's *Joie de Vivre* (Ill. 88) was exhibited only months before Picasso began work on an even larger canvas; it had brought Matisse to prominence as the leader of the avant-garde. *Les Femmes d'Alger* was in some respects a reaction to it – the revelation of that violent, dark side of life which Matisse thought unsuitable for artistic representation. It is a night picture, contrasting with the sun-filled daylight of the *Joie de Vivre*.

The title, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, was an afterthought, given to the picture years later by one of Picasso's friends, who had been told that the women where whores depicted in a brothel in Carrer d'Avinyo (Avignon Street), Barcelona. This may be true, but it is not the point of the picture. What Picasso intended originally was some kind of allegory. In his early studies for the painting a sailor is the central figure, surrounded by nude women; a second sailor enters from the left, pulling back a curtain. He is carrying a skull – evidently intended as a

memento mori, the classic reminder of the transitory nature of human life.

All this theatricality disappeared when Picasso tackled the big canvas. He suppressed the sailors to concentrate on the nudes. As he painted them, the form of their figures began to seem more important than their symbolism. Iberian figures of the pre-Roman period had strongly attracted Picasso by their massive strength and directness, and the second and the third women, their heads especially, are based on this source. The first figure on the left was also begun in this style, but later altered; and the fourth and fifth women, on the right, show the direction in which he was moving. For here the influence of masks from the French Congo is overt – in the elongation of the faces, the concavities below the eyes, and the hatched striations on the cheeks.

African sculpture was a new enthusiasm of the young painters in Paris. First Vlaminck, then Derain and Matisse, began to look at it in the ethnographical museums and to buy examples for themselves. Picasso followed suit in 1906-07, exactly at the time he was working on *Les Femmes d'Alger*. Hitherto nobody had considered such sculptures works of art: they were curious specimens, without aesthetic value. The revolutionary change was in seeing qualities in them that made them art-objects, equal to any produced by civilized peoples. Two aspects of African sculpture were to be particularly relevant. One was their social function – their use as magic tokens in ritual ceremonies; the other was more formal – the fact that the artist who carved them was evidently not concerned with recording visual appearance, but rather with expressing an idea about it. Thus non-representational forms are given a representational character only by means of a symbolic arrangement.

At first, neither of these aspects was fully appreciated. Picasso liked Negro sculpture because it seemed to corroborate something he had observed in Cézanne and was now attempting in his own painting – a new way of representing three-dimensional forms on a two-dimensional surface. Why should one be constricted to a single viewpoint in painting a figure? Why not try to make on the canvas a synthesis of different views? Cézanne had begun to move around a figure, around the objects in a still life – as in the *Woman with the Coffee Pot* (Ill. 31). Picasso, in the squatting figure of *Les*

Demoiselles, took this practice much further, and, with the analogy with African art in mind, broke away from what he could see and painted instead what he *knew* must exist. Thus emerged the simultaneous vision of the cubists, expressed at its most dramatic by the head that combines full-face and profile, such a common feature in Picasso's later work.

In colour and composition, *Les Demoiselles* is indebted to Cézanne's *Bathers* pictures. Certain poses are echoed, almost to the point of quotation. The shallow space construction, and the way figures are related to background are equally derivative from Cézanne. This is not a criticism of Picasso: he was after all one of the first to recognize the supreme greatness of Cézanne, and this was a way of demonstrating his personal allegiance. But in the last resort there remains something unresolved about *Les Demoiselles*, as if the disparate elements had not been welded together, as if the tremendous artistic struggle which the picture represented had not been without casualty. Picasso certainly considered the work unfinished, for he made no attempt to exhibit it until 1937.

Yet the work soon acquired a subterranean reputation. Apollinaire, the poet who wrote about art and enjoyed the company of painters, brought a young painter to meet Picasso, and his first sight of the *Demoiselles* changed his life. This was Georges Braque (1882-1963). His early painting had been in the fauve manner of Matisse, very brightly coloured and directly painted. Thinking about Cézanne had changed all this, but Braque was still unsure of his new direction. Picasso showed him the way, and the *Grand Nu* (Ill. 104) that Braque painted in the winter of 1907-08 is in effect a variant of one of the *Demoiselles* figures. It differs from the Picasso picture, however, in that no African influence is discernible; the debt is exclusively to Cézanne.

Braque's understanding of the implications of Cézanne's work was more complete than Picasso's. Both young painters had read the recently published letters of advice that Cézanne had written to Emile Bernard, and brooded on the meaning of the exhortation to 'treat nature by the sphere, the cylinder, the cone.' Did this mean that one should search for geometrical forms behind natural appearances? In the summer of 1908 both painted landscapes in which they attempted this. Braque's *Trees*

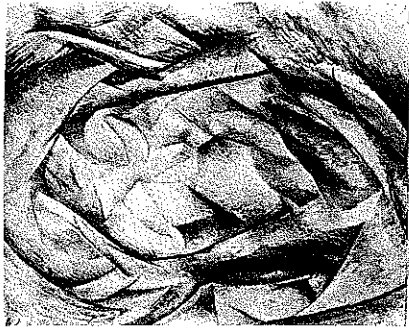
at *Estaque* (Ill. 105) was one of the group of pictures in which the regularity of natural forms was so pronounced that a critic, Louis Vauxcelles, described the landscapes as being made up of 'little cubes'. Out of this casual and condescending remark the term 'cubism' was to spring.

A more significant feature of Braque's painting, however, is its treatment of space. Anything illusionistic seemed inappropriate: Braque wanted a new kind of pictorial space, which he called 'tactile' or 'manual'. The suggestion of an infinitely extensible depth was now replaced by a tentative faceting of forms so that every element could be clearly expressed and related to the picture surface. Braque changed his palette too, because colour had a new part to play; its function was now no longer to be descriptive, but constructive.

The marriage of Braque's spatial concern to Picasso's formal ones was consummated in such pictures as Picasso's *Dryad* of 1908 (Ill. 106). One might say that Picasso's nude is here let loose in Braque's forest. For Picasso this represented a diminution of the African element and a greater concentration on Cézanne. But the primitive character of the painting is unaltered, though it displays Picasso's admiration for the Douanier Rousseau (Ill. 93) as much as it does for any more exotic example.

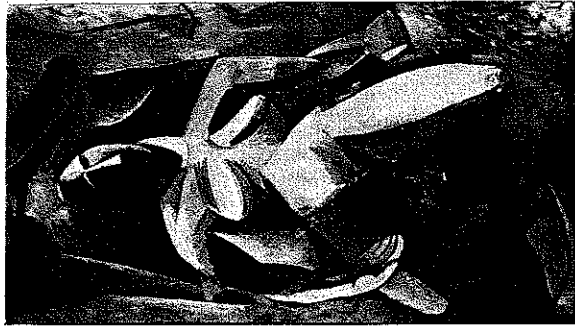
Working together 'rather like mountaineers roped together', Braque and Picasso pushed these pictorial innovations to a logical conclusion. The faceting of figures and objects was extended to the space around them, so that space and volume formed a continuous whole and the picture took on a tangible surface. Colour remained severely restricted to a monochromatic palette of greys and browns and ochres: it was for the moment the least important pictorial element.

Picasso's *Girl with Mandolin* (Ill. 107) is still recognizable, but the figure begins to disappear into the picture. There is a paradox here. Picasso wanted the analytical precision in his treatment of the subject offered by the process of combining multiple viewpoints. He told his dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler: 'In a painting of Raphael's you can't measure the exact distance from the tip of the nose to the mouth. I want to paint pictures in which this would be possible.' Yet at the same time he could not resist the general feeling that matter was insubstantial, so that these geometrized forms are extended

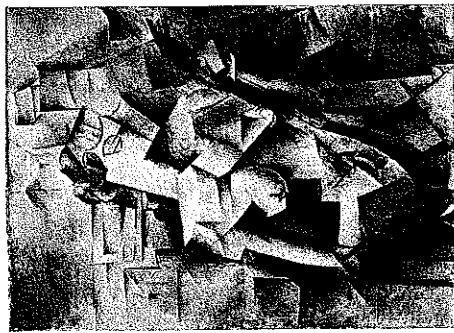


105 GEORGES BRAQUE (1882-1963) *Trees at Estaque*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 23" (73 x 60). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

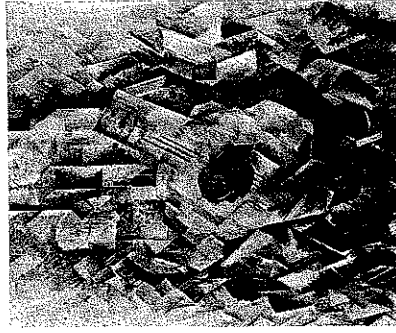
106 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973) *Dryad*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 6' 1" x 3' 7" (188 x 107). The Hermitage, St. Petersburg



104 GEORGES BRAQUE (1882-1963) *Grand Nu*, 1907-08. Oil on canvas, 4' 8" x 3' 4" (140 x 99). Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (Donation Alex Maguy-Glass)



107 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Girl with Mandolin, 1910. Oil on
 canvas, 39½" x 28¾" (100 x 73).
 Museum of Modern Art, New York
 (Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest)



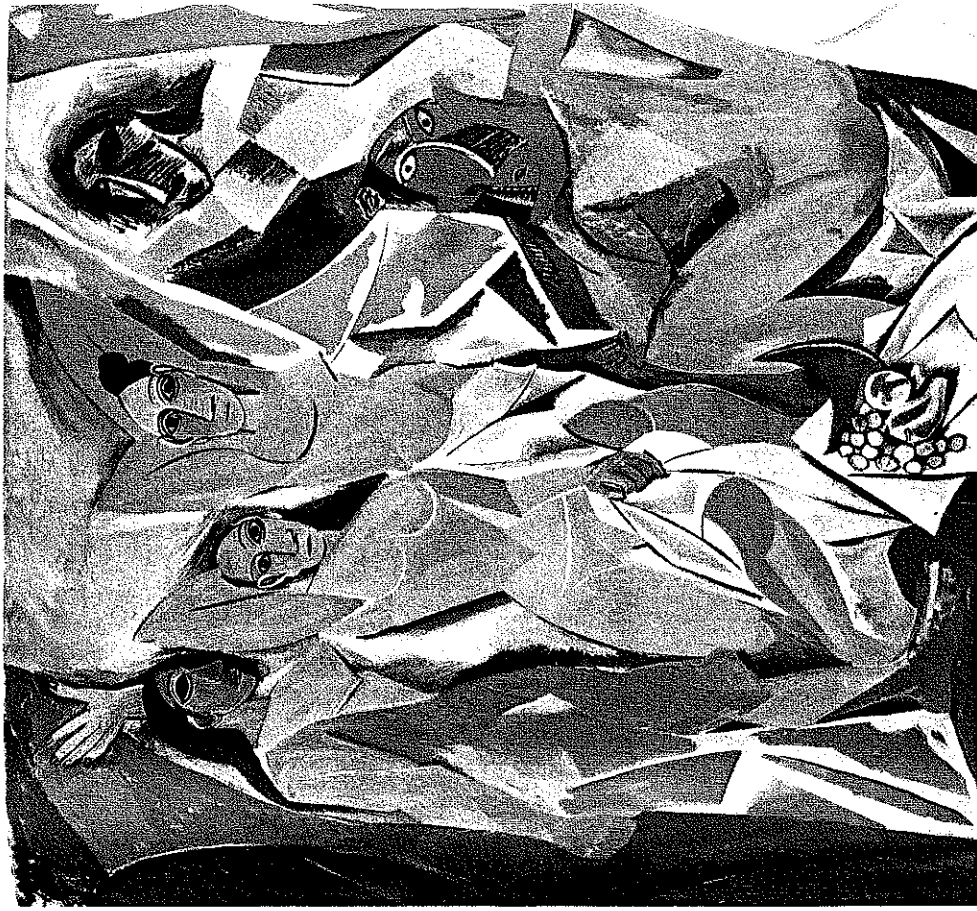
108 GEORGES BRAQUE (1882-
 1963) *Mandore*, 1909-10. Oil on
 canvas, 28½" x 23½" (72.5 x 59.5).
 Tate Modern, London

into the space around them. Bergson's concept of life as flux, and Einstein's denial of the fixed state and the solidity of objects are relevant here: such ideas did not necessarily have a direct influence on Picasso and Braque, though they were perhaps more aware of them than is realized.

There is a further consideration: why should the nude girl in Picasso's picture hold a mandolin? It is not an instrument one would expect to find in a studio or an artists' café - the social context of early cubist painting. The answer lies partly in the comparable subject-matter of Corot's studio interiors, partly - and more revealingly - in the poetry of Mallarmé. Kahnweiler tells us that Mallarmé was very important for the cubists after 1907, and the mandolin is a favourite symbol in his poems. It offers a multiplicity of allusions - the instrument makes music and thus creates art; it is shaped like a womb, and this suggests another, analogous creation. Braque too paints the *Mandore* at the same time (Ill. 108), and in this still-life Mallarmé's poetic technique of fragmenting experience and then reordering it in the work of art finds a close parallel in cubist painting. Mallarmé had also asked questions about the role of chance in artistic creation: the painters were not yet ready to take up their implications, but they were soon to do so.

Braque's dissolution of forms was more extreme than Picasso's, perhaps because he felt less inhibited when painting still-lives, which he preferred to figure subjects. In the *Mandore* light is diffused, the broken, faceted planes are tipped now in this direction, now in that, echoing one another across the picture surface. For Braque the fragmentation 'was a means of getting closer to objects within the limits that painting would allow. Through fragmentation I was able to establish space and movement in space, and I was unable to introduce objects until I had created space.' This kind of painting has been called *analytical* cubism, but the term is misleading. Picasso and Braque began by adapting Cézanne's analytical approach, but they soon found it too empirical and unsystematic. 'There was no question of *starting from* an object; we *went towards* it,' said Braque. 'And what concerned us was the path one had to follow in order to be able to *go towards* objects.'

Following such a path meant imposing an abstract structure on the picture, and making the object conform.



We can see how this works in Picasso's figure paintings of 1910 and 1911, where the body is articulated like a piece of scaffolding. Contours are rejected as unreal and restraining, the closed form of the figure is decisively pierced, at times even a suggestion of movement is introduced. In Picasso's *Mandolin Player* of 1911 (Ill. 110) a pyramidal construction is imposed on the painting, and the forms have now lost any suggestion of volume. They are flattened into planes of colour, which merge and overlap; the only linear definition is given in the form of straight lines and arcs. Yet to counteract the increasing

109 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1919)
Les Femmes d'Alger, 1906-
 Oil on canvas, 8' x 7' 10" (244 x 23
 Museum of Modern Art, New York
 (Lillie P. Bliss Bequest)

abstraction of their paintings, both Braque and Picasso had introduced a new compensatory element – a different kind of reference to the object, made by the introduction of such devices as a *trompe-l'œil* nail, simulated lettering, a passage of wood-graining. The idea may initially have been to emphasize the flatness of the surface, but its philosophical implications could not now be ignored. The fact was that by the end of 1911 Picasso and Braque had taken cubism to the point where they were faced with a dramatic choice. Only the initiated could discern any subject in their pictures, so hermetic had they become. Either they must abandon the link with the object altogether, and allow the painting to establish its own logic and meaning, or they must establish a new relationship between painting and the external world. They chose the latter course.

In a sense the solution, for Braque and Picasso, was inescapable. They could not conceive of an objectless, *i.e.* an abstract, picture. It would simply be a pattern, a piece of decoration – what other meaning could it have? It is only because Mondrian took a different view that we, wise after the event, can propose the existence of such a dilemma at all.

In any case, the introduction of *trompe-l'œil* passages, with their built-in implications, provided the cubists with an answer. Picasso early in 1912 made the *Still-life with Chaircaning* (Ill. 112), in which he pasted onto his canvas a piece of oilcloth that simulated the splir-cane weaving of a chair seat. A length of rope was added as a frame. This use, first of pasted paper (*papier collé*), then of attached objects (*collage*), revolutionized painting. Illusionism was now so totally abandoned, and the flat surface of the painting so paramount, that such additions became aesthetically acceptable. But the method blurred the division between painting and object to the extent that one could conceive a situation in which it would be impossible to decide which was which. This was the significance of Marcel Duchamp's exhibiting signed ready-made objects in 1917.

In the *Still-life with Chaircaning* Picasso offered a statement of the stage reached in 1912. Objects in painting can be treated in a number of different ways, he seems to say. They can be analyzed, as in an engineer's working drawing which gives us a precise specification and measurements. They can be presented as painted

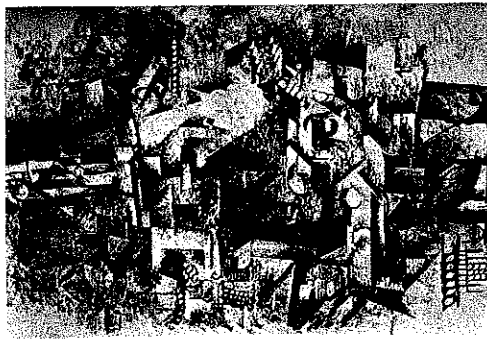
equivalents – the shell in the picture, for example – or they can be their actual selves. Painting can be crammed with allusions; jokes can be made – puns such as the use of the first three letters of *journal* to suggest *joyjou* or *jouet*, the French words for a toy or plaything. Picasso begins again to use colour after all those years when it had been banished as a difficult and potentially disruptive element. After all, how can a lemon be painted except with lemon paint?

This new development of cubism called for a revised label, and Picasso's friend Kahnweiler proposed 'synthetic'. He wrote: "Instead of an analytical description the painter can if he prefers also create in this way a synthesis of the object, or, in the words of Kant "put together the various conceptions and comprehend their variety in one perception". To put it another way, using the same terminology, it was, like African sculpture, a conceptual and not a perceptual art, in which the idea of the object comes before any attempt to record its appearance.

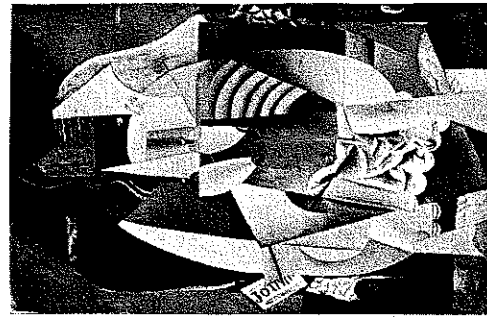
By 1912 the aesthetic argument that had begun on the death of Cézanne six years earlier had reached a conclusion. The logic according to which Picasso and Braque had progressed so unhesitatingly now seemed to have reached its term. It was entirely in character that Braque should settle down in 1913 and 1914 and paint a series of still-lives with musical instruments in the now definitive cubist style, whereas Picasso should suddenly grow restless again and begin to branch out in different directions.

One was the extension of collage into fully three-dimensional construction, involving the use of scrap wood, cardboard boxes, anything that came easily to hand (see p. 180). He also reintroduced bright colours, painting in dots and dabs, to increase the decorative content of his pictures. He also seems to have wanted to bring back the passionate, emotional quality of the early pre-cubist period and in the *Woman in an Armchair* of 1913 (Ill. 111) the disturbing, disruptive element reappears, with the added force of Picasso's new pictorial language.

The outbreak of war in the summer of 1914 upset the rhythm of Picasso's development – not completely, as with Braque who was at once mobilized into the French army, but profoundly enough to make one suspect that



110 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Mandolin Player, 1911. Oil on
canvas, 39 1/2" x 27" (100 x 69).
Galerie Beyeler, Basel



111 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Woman in an Armchair, 1913. Oil
on canvas, 4' 10" x 3' 2" (146 x 97).
Private Collection

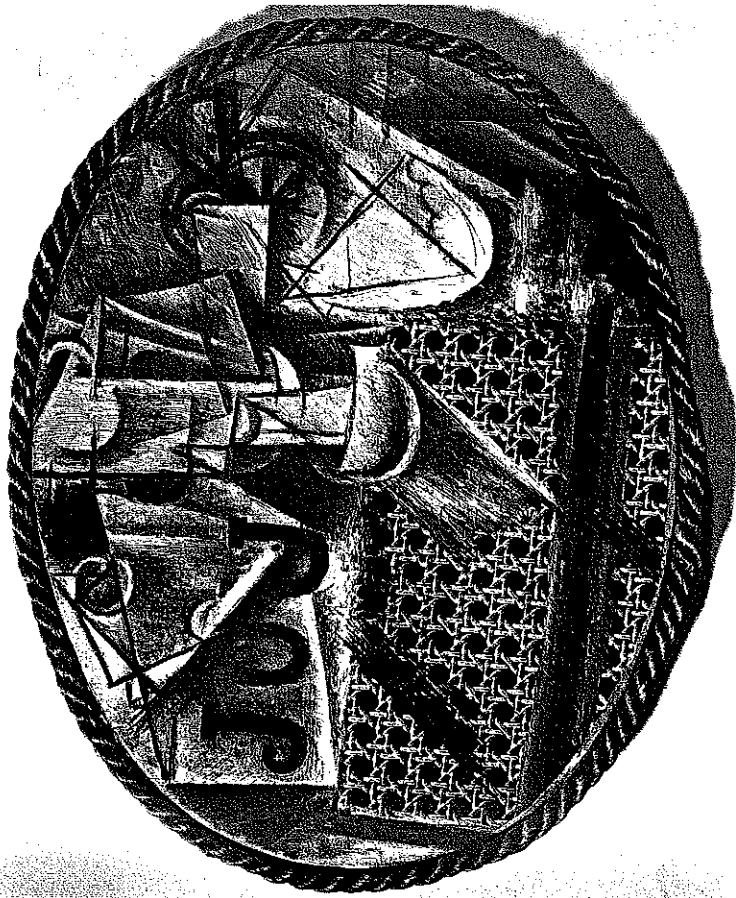
he was never again able to work with quite the same conviction. It is the same melancholy phenomenon observable in Matisse and in the work of the expressionists, for art cannot withstand a society in total turmoil, and although unrest can be stimulating, the collective insanity of total war is doubly destructive. What Picasso and Braque had achieved in the cubist revolution and its aftermath was to remain both an inspiration and a touchstone.

The discoveries of Braque and Picasso did not go unremarked, despite their disinclination to exhibit in public. At the 1911 *Salon des Indépendants* a group of young painters showed cubist work, and this was the first of a series of manifestations that lasted until the war. The most remarkable paintings at the 1911 exhibition were the *Nudes in the Forest* of 1909-10 (Ill. 113) by Fernand Léger (1881-1955) and one of the Eiffel Tower pictures by Robert Delaunay (1885-1941). These two men were friends, and like Braque and Picasso they too were able to extend the language of painting.

Léger's *Nudes in the Forest* at first seems alarmingly mistitled. No idyllic pastoral here: are not these naked figures at work felling trees? That Léger should choose an everyday scene that deliberately eschews any poetic interpretation is typical. So is the way in which the human bodies are reduced to machine-like tubular shapes. Léger was later to elaborate his aesthetic, but its essentials are already present in this early work.

Delaunay's choice of the Eiffel Tower as a subject is equally characteristic. Ever since its appearance at the great exhibition of 1889, this miracle of engineering ingenuity posed a challenge to artistic judgment. Was it a hideous piece of useless machinery or a new kind of sculpture? Douanier Rousseau had taken a positive attitude to the Tower and included it in his paintings, but Delaunay's choice of subject is more provocative, coming as it did after his pictures of the Gothic cathedrals of Saint-Séverin and Laon.

The machine now became a live issue for painters, as for architects, joining the associated problem of the representation of movement that had interested them for some decades. It was at this point - February 1912 - that the Italian futurists first exhibited in Paris; their impact was immediate and sensational.



112 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Still-Life with Chaircaning, 1919
Oil and waxed canvas glued on canvas
10 1/2" x 13 1/2" (27 x 35). *Musee Picasso, Paris*

Futurism began as a literary movement, with the first manifesto launched in 1909 by the poet, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. It was followed a year later by the two manifestos of futurist painting signed by five young Italian artists, of whom Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916) was the most important. The futurists knew what they wanted - to get rid of the stultifying weight of the Italian past, and to use their art to celebrate modern urban existence. In Marinetti's phrase, 'a roaring automobile, which seems to run like a machine-gun, is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.' The futurist painters proclaimed themselves 'the primitives of a new and transformed sensibility.'

But although the futurists wanted their paintings to express speed, violence, dynamic movement and the passage of time, their technique was inadequate to the task. In search of a pictorial language, they turned to Paris and discovered first the neo-impressionism of Seurat and Signac, then the cubism of Picasso and



113 FERNAND LÉGER (1881-1955) *Nudes in the Forest, 1909-10*. Oil on canvas, 3' 11" x 5' 7" (120 x 170). Rijksmuseum Kröller Müller, Otterlo

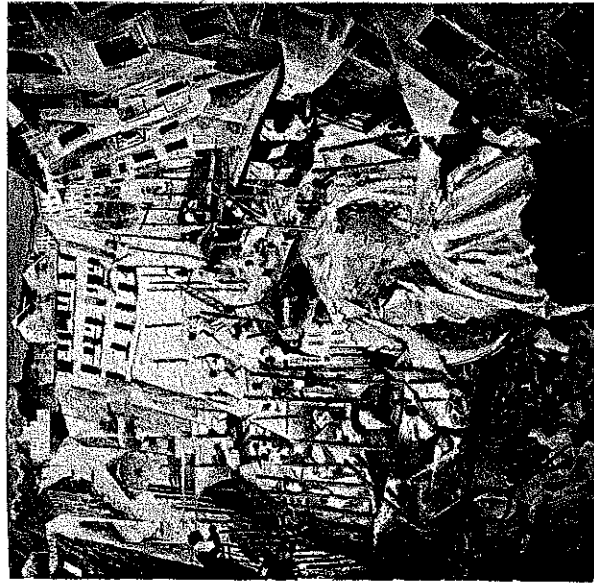
Braque. This taught them how to break through the surfaces of objects and show them moving in space. Boccioni's *The Street enters the House* of 1911 (Ill. 114) is one of the first successful futurist paintings: it was among those shown in Paris in 1912. The artist's mother stands at the balcony of her apartment, looking down at the street below: all the bustle and activity of the city street rise up to meet her. Boccioni expresses this by such devices as shifting viewpoints, and a fragmentation of forms to represent the light and noise of the street entering the building. Although he is here heavily indebted to Delaunay's Eiffel Tower paintings, in the months that followed, Boccioni went on to develop a mature futurist art. This is more evident in his sculptures than in his paintings, and they will be considered in a later chapter.

The futurist contribution to the artistic dialogue in Paris was to draw attention to two particular lines of investigation — that of the representation of movement, and that of devising a pictorial equivalent to the machine. And through their interest in neo-impressionism they contributed to the revival of interest in colour.

These three strands are interconnected, as can be seen in the pre-war work of Léger and Delaunay. In a series of experimental paintings executed in 1912-13 both artists carried these ideas very close to total abstraction, without venturing to commit themselves completely. Léger wanted to find a new pictorial means of reflecting modern life. He pushed the already machine-like forms of his paintings, derived from human bodies, limbs, trees, clouds, smoke, etc., into still less recognizable shapes,

calling the results *Contrasts of Forms*, or even *Geometric Elements*. The abstracted forms in these pictures begin to take on a life of their own: Mondrian, for one, was impressed by their use of primary colours, black linear structure, rhythmic movement and simple contrasting shapes.

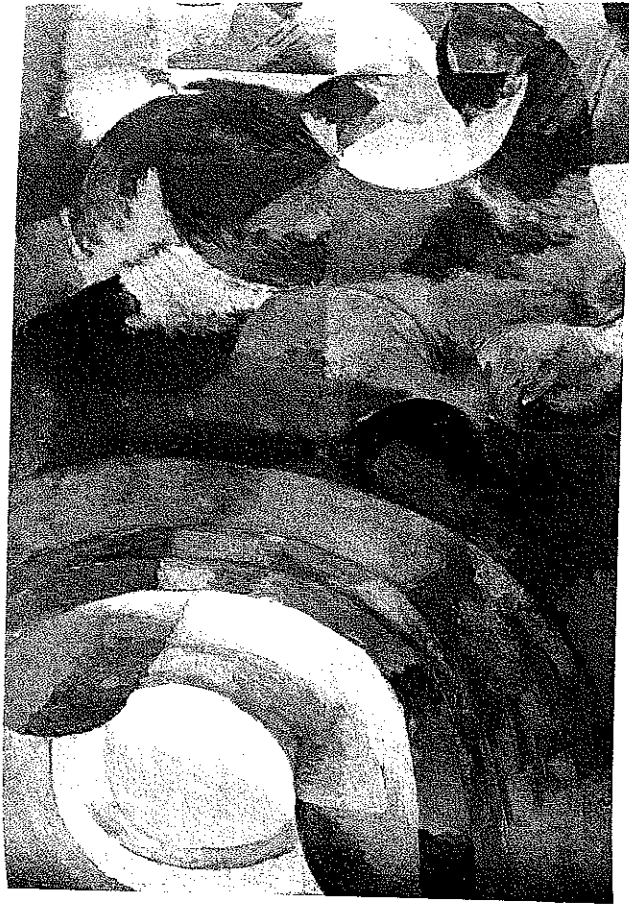
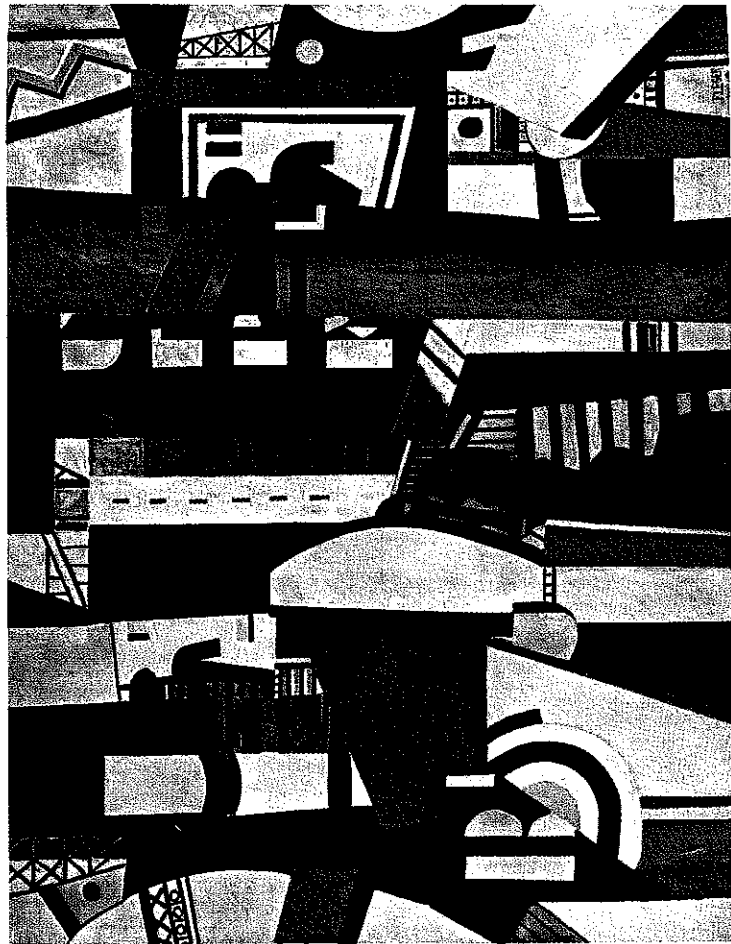
As far as Léger was concerned, however, these pictures were experiments which he thought neither self-sufficient nor worth exhibiting. But we can see how he used the pictorial knowledge gained in his first great painting, *The City* of 1919 (Ill. 115). This enormous canvas succeeds where futurist paintings failed. It lifts the everyday activity of city life onto the timeless plane of art, effecting a reconciliation of restless movement and crude shapes and colours in a composition of unmistakably grand design. Like other Léger paintings of the period, *The City* appears to be constructed out of interchangeable machine parts. The artist, Léger held, has only to reassemble a collection of given objects: 'I have no imagination,' he once asserted. All the human figures are reduced to robots: there is an explicit philosophical devaluation of the person in this phase of Léger's work, a prerequisite to the new vision of the last great compositions.



114 UMBERTO BOCCIONI (1916) *The Street enters the House, 1911*. Oil on canvas, 39½" x 51" (100 x 130). Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover

Delaunay's dedication to modern life was less extreme than Léger's. His series of Eiffel Tower pictures became studies of views through windows, with only vestigial traces of the Tower itself. Delaunay had become fascinated with colour theory, believing, reasonably enough, that it was time to bring such ideas to bear on cubist theory and practice. 'Colour is *form and subject*', he wrote at the end of his life, and he believed that art should be confined to the rhythmic interplay of contrasting areas of colour. In 1912-13 he painted a series of *Disks* (Ill. 116), based on the colour wheel. Such pictures have been called the first entirely non-objective paintings created by a French artist, and in his later career Delaunay himself was inclined to look back on them as major pioneering statements. But their exact status must remain in doubt. Were they more than demonstration pieces, experiments, like Léger's *Contrasts of Forms*? It is by no means clear that Delaunay regarded them at the time as complete and resolved works of art. His more considered paintings of the pre-war period celebrate the city of Paris, the Cardiff football team and Blériot's first flight across the Channel. Even the discs,

115 FERNAND LÉGER (1881-1955) *The City*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 7.7" x 9.10" (231 x 293.5). The Philadelphia Museum of Art (A. E. Gallatin Collection)



when exhibited in Berlin, were entitled *Sun and Moon*, as though to suggest some cosmic symbolism. For Delaunay's so-called early abstractions are essentially paintings of light — light as the source of all life and energy, as it is of all colours. Thus they belong in that transitional category between symbolism and abstraction which will be discussed in the next chapter.

One other pre-war derivation from cubism remains to be considered. In the winter of 1911-12, Marcel Duchamp (1887-1969) painted the second, larger, version of his *Nude descending a Staircase* (Ill. 117). Almost certainly conceived independently of futurism, it incorporates movement and a machine analogy more completely and effectively than any Italian picture. Duchamp's interest in slow-motion photography helped him translate his interpretation of body movements into a quasi-mechanical drawing. He developed this mechanistic anatomy in *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, which was conceived in 1912, begun in New York in 1915, and abandoned in an unfinished state in 1923 (Ill. 118). Here, with wire, oil paint and lead foil applied to glass panels, Duchamp translates the act of copulation into a diagram of pseudo-machine parts working

116 ROBERT DELAUNAY (1881-1941) *Disks: Sun and Moon*, 1913. Oil on canvas, diam. 4' 5" (13). Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam



117 MARCEL DUCHAMP (1887-1968) *Nude descending a Staircase II*, 1911-12. Oil on canvas, 4'10" x 2'11" (1247 x 659). The Philadelphia Museum of Art (Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection)

together harmoniously. The implications of this erotic masterpiece will be considered later: it is important here to stress its source in cubist painting of the immediately pre-war period. For if we reflect that Mondrian's development of a totally abstract art, and the revolutionary movements of suprematism and constructivism in Russia are also dependent on paintings that were done in Paris between 1910 and 1914, the claim that almost all of 20th century art has its roots in this particular moment would seem to be justified.

Because of the total nature of the war that broke out in the summer of 1914 and the resultant large-scale mobilization, the development of art was affected as never before. Twenty-five years later, with World War II, European painting was again dealt a blow from which it took years to recover. On both occasions, for most young men painting simply stopped, and often they faced insuperable problems in starting again. A few were able to put their war-time experience to good effect - Léger claimed to have found a new reality in his contacts with ordinary French people, and in his enforced familiarity with military equipment, but he was the exception. For too many good painters, whether they were actively involved or not, the war was a disaster, after which they were never able to paint so well again.

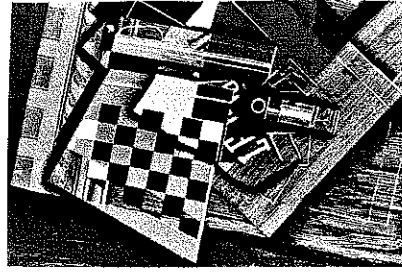
Innovations in art usually come from young men, and with the French, Germans, Italians and English serving in their respective armies, little could be expected from them. This caused the first major dispersal in the history of modern painting. Now that Paris was engaged in war, it was from Mondrian in Holland, Malevich in Moscow, Duchamp in New York, and Arp and the Dadaists in Zürich that the new ideas came.

Indeed in Paris there had already begun the retrenchment which was to become a widespread tendency in the 1920s. Picasso, as a Spaniard, was not directly involved in the war, and in a mood of escapism entered into a love affair with the Diaghilev ballet company, like himself rootless and aristocratic refugees from the war. His life and his work were affected in many different ways: most fundamental, perhaps, was the sharpening of his concept of the artist as actor, playing a succession of often antagonistic parts, which dominates all of his post-cubist activities.

It was another Spaniard who, with the sculptor Lipchitz, made the only real contribution to cubism in the war years - Juan Gris (1887-1927), a friend and protégé of Picasso's. Gris came into cubism in 1912 at the synthetic stage, which was a way of painting perhaps temperamentally more sympathetic to him than to either Braque or Picasso. He at once began to use such mathematical formulae as the golden section in the planning of his still-lives. It was clear that abstract proportions played a greater role in such pictures as the *Chessboard* of 1915 (Ill. 119) than actual shapes; or rather that he chose objects, like the chessboard, for abstract reasons.

Gris's description of his own practice is the classic definition of the final phase of synthetic cubism: 'I try to make concrete that which is abstract . . . Mine is an art of synthesis, of education . . . Cézanne turns a bottle into a cylinder, but I begin with a cylinder and create an individual of a special type: I make a bottle - a particular bottle - out of a cylinder. That is why I compose with abstractions (colours) and make my adjustments when these colours have assumed the form of objects.'

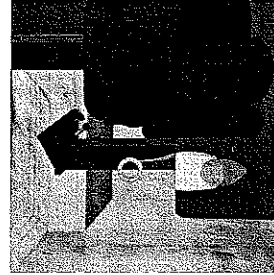
This statement of Gris's first appeared in 1921 in the magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, which was edited by Amédée Ozenfant (1886-1966) and the Swiss painter-architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier (1888-1965). They had reacted against the pretty, rococo cubist still-lives and the disturbing figure subjects (e.g. Ill. 111) that Picasso was painting around 1914, and against the way in which cubism was becoming a mannered, decorative style in the hands of its minor practitioners. Only Gris's obsession with mathematics and Léger's fascination with the machine seemed to point the way forward. Out of this situation purism was born. A typical purist still-life of 1920 by Ozenfant (Ill. 120) is impersonal in form and content. That picturesque selection of café and studio properties that satisfied Picasso as the raw material for still-life painting is here replaced by a careful choice of obviously machine-made utensils. And the design, with its careful arrangement of shapes and its precise contours, demonstrates the same concern for order and rationality that industrial design, in theory at least, ought to possess. The purists were every bit as idealistic as the abstract painters of De Stijl (see Chapter Seven), whose work they paradoxically found so inhuman.



119 JUAN GRIS (1887-1927) *Chessboard*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 36 3/4" x 28 3/4" (92 x 73). Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago of Mrs. Leigh Block with a contribution from the Ada Turnbull Herlihy

(Opposite)

118 MARCEL DUCHAMP (1908-1968) *The Bride Stripped Bare*, 1915-23. Lead and glass, 9'1" x 27'5" x 17'5". The Philadelphia Museum of Art (Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Bequeathed by Katherine S. Dreier)



120 AMÉDÉE OZENFANT (1906-1966) *Bottle on a Grey Table*, 1920. Canvas, 32" x 39 3/4" (81 x 100). Kunstmuseum, Basel



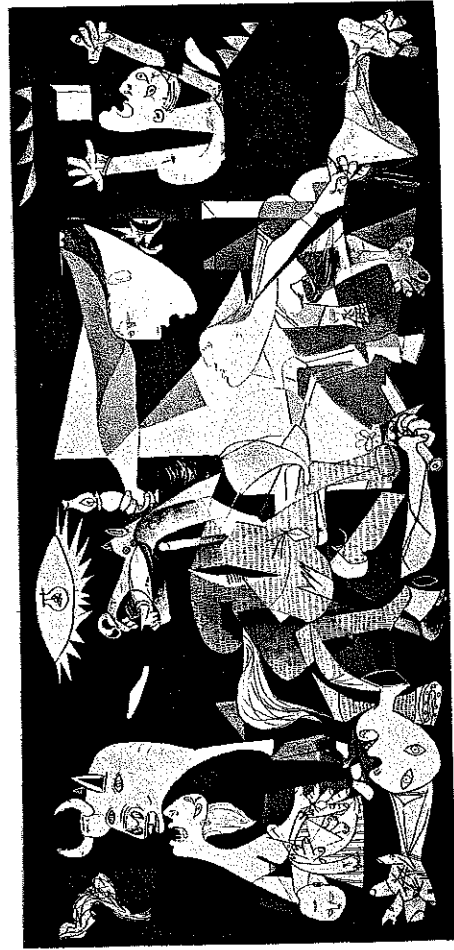
121 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Mother and Child, 1921. Oil on canvas,
 4' 8½" x 5' 4" (143.5 x 162.5).
 Art Institute of Chicago (Mary and
 Leigh Black Charitable Foundation;
 Maymar Corporation; Mrs Maurice
 L. Rothschild, My and Mrs Edwin E.
 Hobin, Hertle Fund)

Both movements were a part of the neo-classicism that affected all the arts in Europe after the end of World War I. A recall to order was the rallying cry. Experiment, as had been practised so avidly in the ten years from 1905 to 1915, was out of fashion; what was needed now was calm, logic, an absence of rhetoric. For a few years until the disruptive advent of surrealism, order was all.

Nobody was more sensitive to this new mood than Picasso himself. Given to playing several roles as an artist, he not only continued to design post-cubist still-life and figure compositions which possess greater clarity and less passion than before; he also painted a series of frankly figurative 'classical' paintings, which at first seemed like a renunciation of all his experimentation from 1906 onwards. In the over-life-size *Mother and Child* of 1921 (Ill. 121), the woman, wearing a simple shift, rests on a timeless anonymous shore: the child's gesture responds to her tender glance. The forms of the colossal figures are given great amplitude, so that the mother and her child become not just a portrait of Picasso's wife and infant son but an image of maternity; Picasso here succeeds in raising his private emotions to the level of universal human statement.

This happened again in 1937, when Picasso was invited to paint a mural for the Spanish Republican Government pavilion at the Paris exhibition. Outraged by the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica he made a public declaration (Ill. 122) that is unmistakable in its meaning, its message of outrage and of compassion for the victims of violence. Picasso here drew the disparate strands of his work together - the intense emotionalism of the early blue period, cubist disintegration and re-ordering of form in a new spatial context, the monu-

122 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Guernica, 1937. Oil on canvas, 11' x
 23' 4" (351 x 872). Collection Museo
 Nacional Reina Sofia, Madrid



123 GEORGES BRAQUE (18
 1963) *Studio II*, 1949. Oil on can-
 4' 5" x 5' 4" (130 x 162). Kun-
 sammlung Nordrhein-Westfa
 Dusseldorf

mental quality of the classic figures, and the private and in part subconscious symbolism that utilizes bullring imagery, which he was to develop alongside the surrealists in the later 1920s and 1930s. The artistic innovations of 20th-century art are here provided with what might be called a moral justification.

In general, however, Picasso's later work confronts us with a bewildering profusion of ideas that can both delight and make us despair. No great artist has been so prolific, so un-self-critical, so self-indulgent. 'I use things as my passions tell me,' he said, and this is just the trouble, for everyday passions can be as trivial and as superficial as many of the later paintings, which are sometimes insensitive in colour and design. But there are always shining exceptions, and as a draughtsman with pen or burin or lithographic crayon Picasso remains without equal. He displays such constant inventiveness and humour - qualities equally present in his sculpture - that for a moment one forgets the problems of evaluation raised by all his post-cubist work. For Picasso is like an

old actor for whom the distinction between reality and illusion has become obscured: painting remains a compulsive act, but this protean jester leaves us with the uneasy feeling that he is rarely as committed to it as he was when a young man.

All this is particularly evident if one compares Picasso with his great French contemporaries, Matisse, Braque and Léger. They achieved that distinctive late style, in which artists of genius match a consummate technical mastery (albeit subject to physical limitations) with a heightened awareness, to display an artistic vision of greater strength and clarity than before. Matisse's view of life finds its ultimate expression in the cut-out paper designs (see *Ill. 91*) that he could only with great difficulty put together. Picasso never quite reached that state of serenity.

After the exciting years of close association with Picasso, Braque elected for a life of concentration and reflection. Everything was to be subsumed into the act of painting. Braque's late works embody no set of values, avoid symbolism of any kind, and offer us nothing apart from a demonstration of what a painting is, and how it is created in space and time. This is the significance of the sequence of eight *Studio* pictures (*Ill. 123*) painted between 1948 and 1955. The setting provides the objects needed to make the picture: they are quite impersonal, as Braque noted in his *Cahiers*, 'Objects do not exist for me except in so far as a harmonious relationship exists between them and also between them and myself. When one attains this harmony one reaches a sort of intellectual non-existence which makes everything possible and right.'

In seeking this harmony, the artist places objects in a space of his own making. This is a constantly changing process, because as the picture progresses all the relationships change. Finally, there is nothing more to be said, and one stops. Braque's best paintings are like the sonnets of Mallarmé, works of formal perfection made out of depersonalized fragments of experience, and imbued with a mysterious sense of the impermanence of the world as compared with the permanence of art.

Braque was one of the first painters to attempt to transcend Romanticism, showing how a break can be made with attitudes that have dominated European thought for more than a century. How far this can be



124 FERNAND LÉGER (1955) *Les Loisirs: Homage to David, 1948-49. Oil on canvas, 6' 1" (154 x 185). Musée Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris*

achieved is still an open question, given human inability to unlearn what had already been experienced, but that it is worth a try, perhaps Picasso's dilemma makes plain.

When Léger gave *Les Loisirs* of 1948 (*Ill. 124*) a subtitle: *Homage to Louis David*, he too suggested a return to the painting that immediately precedes Romanticism as a prime objective of his art. For Léger was a communist, and the magisterial figure compositions of the last years — *The Cyclists*, *The Construction Workers* (1950), *The Country Outing* (1954) and *The Grand Parade* (1954) — proffer a vision of a new and socially just society: the view of man given here is an explicitly post-Romantic one. We understand now that the obsession with the machine was a means to an end — a way of getting rid of the idea of the artist as an isolated man of genius, a hero figure, cut off from society and cultivating his own personality.

Léger's ordinary people, at work and at play, show the same freedom evinced by the dissociation of colour and form in the paintings. But paradoxically, for all its theoretical proletarianism, Léger's remains a sophisticated, intellectual art. This is in no way to denigrate its quality, or to belittle Léger's major contribution to the development of cubism. In certain mural paintings at least he carried cubism into pure abstraction, though it was left to Mondrian to make the decisive step in this direction, and to offer in his work a clearer vision of a new society than Léger was able to attain.

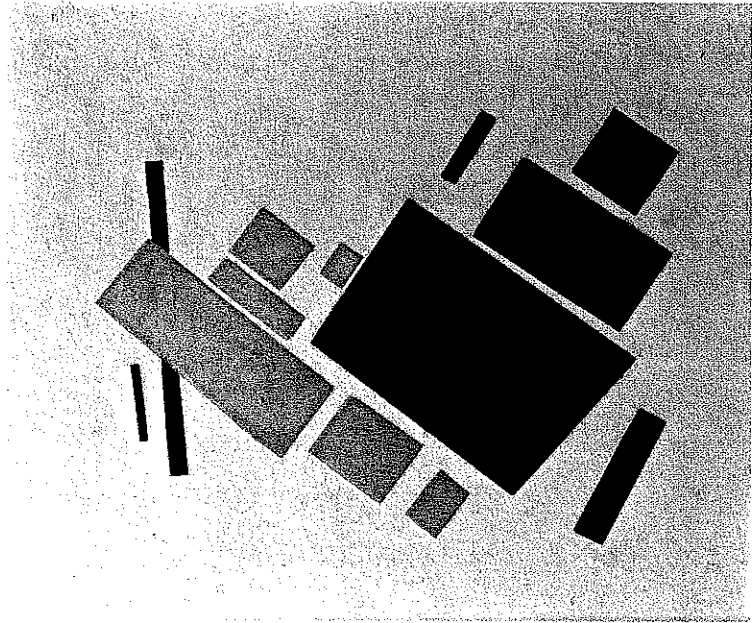
Abstract art was the inevitable result of the reaction against naturalism that began in the 1880s. As we have seen, it took two main directions, according to whether the emphasis was placed on content or on form. In the first category were the symbolists, with their emphasis on the spiritual meaning of painting; in the second were the post-impressionists, who did not deny art its spiritual rôle but thought that a renewal of pictorial language should come first. It needed a particular conjunction of both streams for abstract art to emerge.

It is perfectly clear that art grew more *abstracted* in the last decades of the 19th century and the first of this, but that is not quite the same thing as a totally *abstract* art, which for all this time was no more than an unattainable idea. An original concept is unthinkable until it occurs to somebody: from that moment on it tends to be a commonplace. This is what happened with abstract art, and the two men who can really be said to have invented a new kind of painting were Kandinsky and Mondrian. Unlike Picasso and Braque in the making of cubism, they worked independently and their painting has nothing in common stylistically. But Kandinsky provided the philosophical justification for an abstract art and Mondrian showed what it could look like.

The story begins with the exhibition in Moscow in the late 1890s of one of Monet's *Haystack* paintings. It was seen by a young Russian intellectual, Vassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), on whom it left a lasting impression. As he said many years later: 'Deep inside me was born the first faint doubt as to the importance of an "object" as the necessary element in painting.' Kandinsky suspected what now seems plain, that in the *Haystack* pictures, like the contemporary series of *Cathedrals*, Monet was more concerned with recording his own changing perceptions than with depicting the object.



125 VASSILY KANDINSKY
(1866-1944) *Study for Composition IV*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 3' 1" x 4' 5" (95 x 128). Tate Modern, London



126 KASIMIR MALEVICH
(1878-1935) *Suprematist Composition: Airplane Flying*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 23" x 19" (56.5 x 48.5). Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York