

## The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

**Artist:** Pablo Picasso  
**Title:** *Le Couple* (1947)  
**Medium:** lithograph  
**Notes:** signed: Picasso  
exhibited: *Picasso: Paintings, Sculpture, Ceramics, Drawings, Graphics*,  
Exhibition Hall, TCD, 17 May – 30 August 1969, cata. no. 34.  
*The College Gallery 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Retrospective*, Douglas Hyde Gallery,  
TCD, 3 June – 5 July 1980, cata. no. 77.

b. 1881, Málaga, Spain d. 1973, Mougins, France

The work of Pablo Picasso permeates the consciousness of modern art. While he was primarily a painter, his sculptures, ceramics, prints and theatre designs are also important parts of his oeuvre, and have impacted each respective discipline. As a result of his great artistic credentials, the mythology that surrounds Picasso's early life is phenomenal. Apparently at 14 he passed the examination for the senior course in classical art and still-life in the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Barcelona easily, and was then allowed to skip the first two classes because of his prowess. Also relating to his talent, his father is said to have given Pablo his paintbrushes and other tools and vowed to never paint again. Clearly there is a certain lyricism in these stories, but there is no doubt that Picasso was outstanding, even at an early age.

He got initial instruction from his artist father, and attended several art schools (such as the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid) but abandoned this traditional route for his own intensive, everyday study of works at the Prado in Madrid. However, after his meeting with Spanish modernists such as the artist Casagemas, and the poet Sabartés, he abandoned classicism. This caused friction with his parents, as they were not approving of his new experimental direction. In 1900 Picasso moved to Paris with Casagemas. There he signed his first contract; the dealer Pedro Manach offered him 150 francs per month in exchange for artworks. From this time onwards he was very restless, and moved around various centres of art without really ever settling.

In terms of Picasso's artistic development, there are several distinct periods. The Blue Period, from 1901 to 1904, saw Picasso painting in a sombre style, with a palette consisting mainly of blues. In these works he dealt with social injustices and outcast figures. In contrast, his tones and themes lightened from 1905 to 1906 in his Rose Period; this was inspired by the circus performers and harlequins. It marks out his first experience of financial security as an artist, as the art dealer, Ambroise Vollard took an interest in these paintings.

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Essentially, Cubism was born out of Picasso's own fascination with non-Western art and the primitivist interest occurring in Europe at the time. Traditionally, his *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* is seen as the starting point of the movement; the heads of several of the women are replaced by mask-like images, and the space in the picture is flattened. However, his collaboration with Georges Braque allowed the expansion of the initial idea, leading to several years of innovation. Analytical Cubism saw the fragmentation of the subject, pushing Cezanne's block-work painting technique to the limit. Moving on from this, in Synthetic Cubism they used ready-made items to create collages, mostly still lifes; they also painted during this time, playing similarly with the boundaries of illusion and reality.

It is difficult to summarise Picasso's life after the "break-up" of Cubism around 1918. He was not bound by stylistic allegiances and fought against that which he thought was artistic entrapment. He experimented with classicism, surrealism and the work of the Old Masters, and with mediums like printmaking, ceramics, graphic design and sculpture. However, no matter what he did, he received favourable critical attention; this has built up to a crescendo in present times, manifesting itself in a kind of Picasso-mania. This attention is thoroughly well-deserved, as he is one of the greatest (if not *the* greatest) artists of the twentieth century.

Other works by the artist can be found in: Crawford Art Gallery, Cork; The Hunt Museum, Limerick; the National Galleries of Scotland; Musée National Picasso, Paris; Museu Picasso, Barcelona and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Information contained in this article is from [www.arthistoryarchive.com](http://www.arthistoryarchive.com) and [www.oxfordartonline.com](http://www.oxfordartonline.com).

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