

Cubisme (at the Met) C_Ollage

& the Theory of Relativity

Leonard A Lauder Collection

Curated by Emily Braun (Lauder's curator)
and Rebecca Rabinow (Met curator)

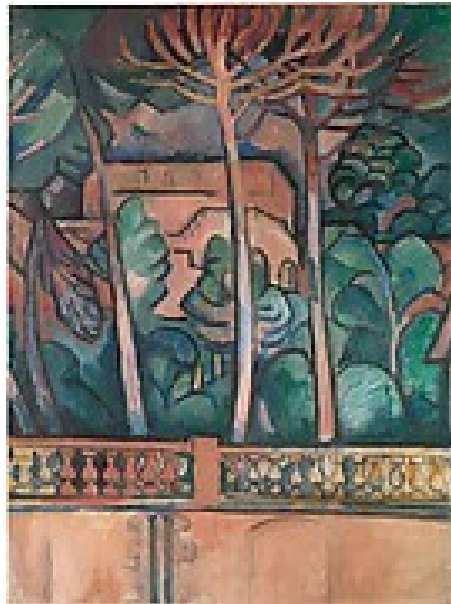
viewed 6 Nov, written 5 December 2104



Picasso Head of a Man with a Mustache 1913

This is not a review, per se, rather a collection of my notes about what interested me most from the point of view of a collage artist. There is a very strong connection between cubism and collage. Braque and Picasso competed with each other to come up with new ways to incorporate printed texts and patterns in their paintings and even kept secrets from each

other. Many of my comments are directly connected to methods I use to manipulate space in my collages; how I show many facets of space at the same time.



Braque Terrace at the Hotel Mistral Autumn 1907

This painting interests me because of the edges of the geometric forms in the sky. Cubism emphasizes the edges of each form which is easily exploited with collage. The trees and the sky are depicted with similar geometric shapes. The exhibition label describes this as “Reverse perspectival spaces, wherein highly sculptural forms push towards rather than recede into depth”



Braque Trees at L'Estaque (another example of the description above)

In Picasso's Woman with a Book (Spring 1905) the pictorial space and narrative space are not differentiated. The landscape in the background (upper left) could be trees or it could be a painting hanging on the wall.



Woman with a Book (Spring 1905)

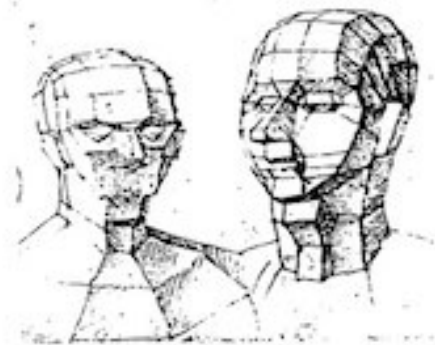
According to the exhibition label for the painting below; “the cubist analysis of the body into component parts finds historic precedence in Durer’s 16th century perspectival studies of heads and Renaissance artists studies of heads to show musculature.”



Picasso Nude in an Armchair Summer 1909



Durer Study of a Head 1532

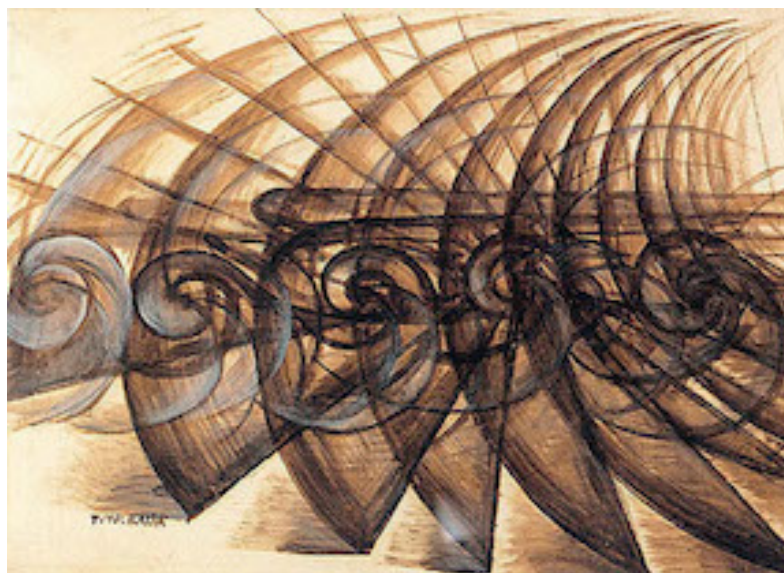


Vesalius Fabrica 1533

One of the most recognizable features of Cubism is the depiction of faceted structures, as in Picasso's Sugar Bowl and Fan. The faceted construction of the fan sets the pattern for other areas of the painting and introduces elements of Futurist imagery.



Picasso Sugar Bowl and Fan Autumn 1909



Giacomo Balla Speed of a Motorcycle 1913

Picasso depicted this hillside scene using interlocking facets of colour that determine whether a given shape should be understood as land or sky. This is particularly of interest to me because I treat the sky in my collages as part of the landscape and give it the same level of activity, movement, weight and attention as other parts of the scene. If something is happening on the land, it is also happening in the sky.



Picasso Landscape 1908

From 1909-1911 Braque and Picasso were constantly experimenting with what has been defined as “Analytical Cubisme”. Their paintings cannot be differentiated. “They shattered profiles of objects in order to reveal their salient characteristics from varied points of view within a flattened pictorial space”.

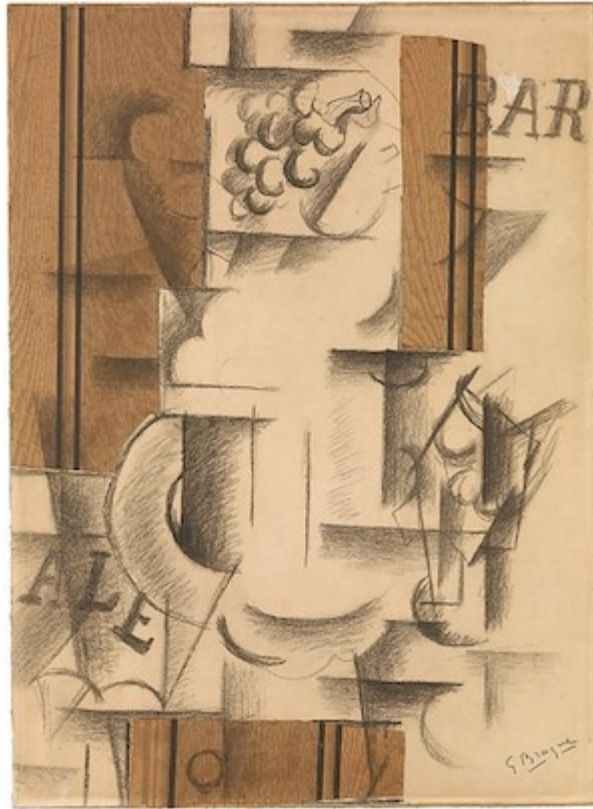


Braque Still Life with Metronome 1909

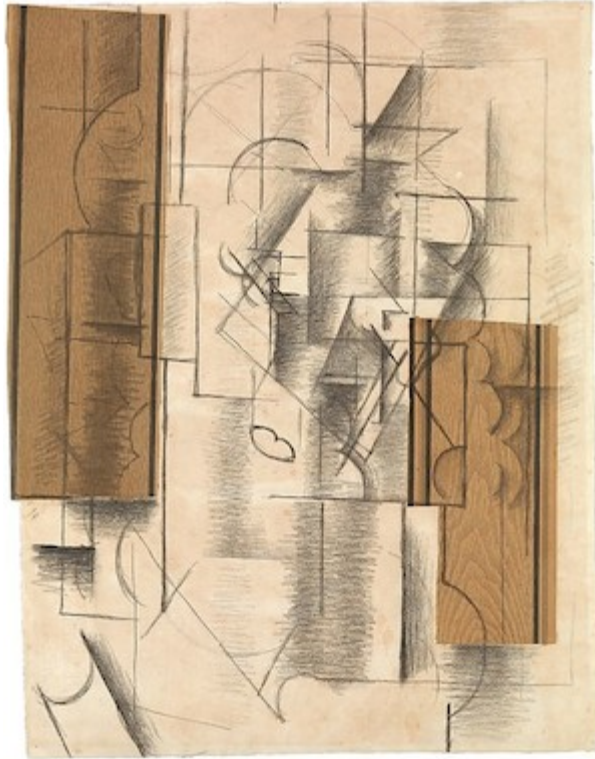


Picasso Still Life with Fan: l'Independant 1911

Braque distributed the weight and dimensions of Cubist facets evenly across the surface. In contrast, Picasso's forms are more compact and tend to accumulate toward the center of the image.



Braque's Fruit Dish and Glass Autumn 1912 is the first time Braque used faux bois (wood) papier collé (glued paper). He waited for Picasso to go to Paris (they were in Argenteuil, not too far away) before he used the papier collé!!



Braque Head of a Woman Autumn 1912

Braque drew on the papier collé on Head of a Woman to blur the distinction between real and fake, hand-drawn and mechanically printed.



Picasso Student Reading a Newspaper 1913

Picasso mimicked some printed designs and images on paper were extended by drawing beyond the edges of the printed paper. (see above)

Synthetic Cubisme started in 1913. Picasso played with form, recognizing that the shape of a man's shoe could be repurposed as the arm of a chair, a hand with bent fingers could be depicted in the same way as a wine glass or a tassel hanging from drapery.



Picasso Man with Guitar 1915

Synthetic Cubism can be characterized chiefly by an increased use of colour and the imitation or introduction of a wide range of textures and material into painting.



Picasso Seated Man 1915

Many of these examples of Picasso and Braque's experimentation with shape, space, form and the representation of many facets of a three-dimensional shape on a two-dimensional plane reinforce strategies I employ and exploit when making a collage. I cannot tell how much I was influenced by my art history classes and even earlier visits to museums in Paris where I explored their work as a 12 year old and decided to be an artist. Or if I developed these methods, over time independent of the inventiveness of Braque and Picasso.

I also am aware of the influence Einstein's Theory of Relativity had on the Cubists and was pleased to see mention of this on the Met's wall text at the beginning of the exhibition. If time and space are relative it makes sense that we can depict many facets of a three dimensional form on a two dimensional plane. And, even more significant is if the Cubists influenced Einstein or if Einstein's theories were predominant.

I could write much more, showing examples of many twentieth century artist/ icons who draw their inspiration from the revolution in art around the turn of the last century and augmented by Cubism, but I will leave that to you to discover and make your own conclusions.