

Early Picasso: the development of the artist through his palette

Symposium

Friday 27th November 2015 - Barcelona, Spain

This symposium presents the results of the project “Early Stages of Picasso through material characterization of different portraits”. The extensive study was possible thanks to the collaboration between the University of Barcelona and the Museu Picasso, Barcelona, by means of the resources of the European project CHARISMA and the facilities of the MOLAB Transnational Access Service. The complementary information obtained by different non-destructive techniques permitted a meticulous inspection of the brush strokes and materials distribution of six portraits created by Pablo Ruiz Picasso between 1895 and 1900. The palette that Picasso used in his first paintings is important to understand his evolution starting from his first artistic steps. In the meeting experts of the field will share their knowledge about the materials found on other paintings by Picasso belonging to different periods of his artistic career. They will focus on the key role that the technical investigations had on the understanding of the artist. Therefore, the symposium will highlight possible continuities and changes of his palette through time and unveil details of his so admired practice.

PROGRAM

9:00 Handover of the documentation

(Address: Aula magna, Universitat de Barcelona, Edifici Històric, Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585, 08007 Barcelona, Spain)

09:15 *Welcome and Introduction to the Early Picasso project and the MOLAB transnational access*

Jordi Alberch Vié: Vice-Chancellor for Research, University of Barcelona

Lluís Bagunyà Valls: Relacions institucionals of the Museu Picasso, Barcelona

Jose F. García: Professor at the Department of Analytical Chemistry, University of Barcelona

Presentations

9:30 - 10:15 *Early Stages of Picasso through material characterization of different portraits*

Clarimma Sessa, Jose F. Garcia, Department of Analytical Chemistry, University of Barcelona

10:15 - 11:00 *On Picasso 's trail: a reasoned study of six early portraits*

Reyes Jiménez de Garnica, Department of Preventive Conservation and Restoration, Museu Picasso, Barcelona

11:00 - 11:30 *Coffee break*

11:30 - 12:15 *Picasso 1901: Girl with a Dove*

Aviva Burnstock, Department of Conservation and Technology, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, UK

12:15 - 13:00 *The MOLAB transnational access investigating Picasso's paintings*

Francesca Rosi, CNR-ISTM Perugia Unit, Italy

13:00 - 17:00 **Break**

17:00 **Visit to the collection of the Museu Picasso:** a closer look at the six portraits investigated during the MOLAB campaign

(Address: Museu Picasso, Carrer Montcada, 15-23, 08003 Barcelona, Spain)

There will be simultaneous translation into English and Catalan

Further information on the web site <http://www.ub.edu/IRUG10BCN/Picasso.html>

Aula magna, Universitat de Barcelona, Edifici Històric, Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585, 08007 Barcelona

SESSION 1, 9:30 to 10:15

Clarimma Sessa, Department of Analytical Chemistry, University of Barcelona

Early Stages of Picasso through material characterization of different portraits

The collaboration between the University of Barcelona and the Museum Picasso of Barcelona, by means of the resources of CHARISMA program and the MOLAB (Mobil facilities for in situ non-invasive measurement), allowed an extensive study of six portraits created by Pablo Ruiz Picasso between 1895 and 1900/1 by remote analytical techniques. MOLAB is a mobile laboratory that includes a portable set of advanced analytical equipment, for in-situ non-invasive measurements on artworks provided by the Center SMAArt (Scientific Methodologies applied to Archaeology and Art) of the University of Perugia and the CNR-INO (Istituto Nazionale di Ottica Art Diagnostic Group, Florence). The use of the facilities is part of the activities included in the European project CHARISMA, which is an integrating activity project that offers an access to advanced scientific instrumentation, allowing scientist, conservators-restorers and curators to enhance their research.

During the symposium, a compendium of the results obtained in the analysis campaign and their interpretation will be presented. The study combines the results provided by the different analytical techniques and documentary researches to investigate Picasso's palette and his studio practice along the first years of his artistic career. Each portrait results to be a unique piece with own personality and structure. With a basic palette Picasso was able to play with the colours to create different shades and tones. The accurate inspection of the brush strokes and material distribution helps to notice important details, which allow an understanding of the *modus operandi* of the young artist.

The non-destructive techniques used in this study permitted to obtain useful information about the paintings, in terms of composition and structure. Several pigments were identified. A meticulous evaluation and comparison between all the complementary data available was important for this purpose. Key tool employed as guidelines for data interpretation were the subsurface images (NIR reflectography). Indeed, it was possible to demonstrate that the well-documented practice of the artist to reuse the canvas was common even during the first years of his career. Indeed, all the works present a complex layer structure with overlapped compositions.

The non-destructive punctual analysis techniques allowed achieving the elemental and molecular composition of a high number of spots of the surface layers accessible. Mappings of the compounds detected across the entire surface were created and it was possible to develop a rather complete idea of all the different areas of the artworks.

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SESSION 2, 10:15 to 11:00

Reyes Jiménez, Museu Picasso, Barcelona

On Picasso's Trail: A Reasoned Study of six Early Portraits

Avui es inqüestionable que els estudis de materials son un element clau per documentar les col·leccions. El Museu Picasso de Barcelona, com a centre de referència per l'estudi de la formació de l'artista, fa més d'un lustre que desenvolupa projectes de recerca en aquesta línia, amb dos propòsits imprescindibles, la conservació material de les obres i la documentació exhaustiva de la col·lecció.

L'estudi d'aquesta selecció de retrats recull l'essència de cinc anys d'enorme intensitat creativa, 1895-1900. Des de les primeres obres de La Coruña, la ciutat on Picasso va aprendre a pintar tutelat pel seu pare, fins els últims mesos del segle XIX en que es preparava per deixar Barcelona i marxar a Paris a consolidar el camí cap a la modernitat.

La complexitat estructural de cascuna d'aquestes pintures ens ha ofert un volum d'informació que, lluny de tenir caràcter subsidiari, facilita claus per resoldre incògnites d'estil i datació i ens apropa al procés de creació de l'artista.

Ha estat un privilegi poder participar en aquest projecte fruit de la col·laboració institucional europea, un treball d'investigació conjunt que ha aportat dades innovadores, objectives i contrastades, confirmant que Picasso, encara avui, és una pedrera en brut que traspasa fronteres .

Mes enllà del visible, hem aprofundint a les diferents estructures pictòriques tot travessant l'epidermis de la pintura. S'han determinats materials i desvetllat detalls de tècnica i composició, com en l'obra del *Vell*, amb un Picasso encara nen emmirallant-se en els mestres. Hem descobert una nova obra sota *Home amb barret*, una pintura anterior estretament lligada al seu pare i de la qual haurem de estudiar l'autoria. En *Josep Cardona i Furró*, una tela que Picasso va treballar tres vegades consecutives deixant l'empremta del paisatge urbà de la Barcelona finisecular. *Home a l'estil d'E Greco*, on aprofita un fragment d'acadèmia que testimonia el seu pas per l'escola de Llotja i obre un camp de recerca per iniciar la busca i classificació d'altres fragments desapareguts. *Carles Casagemas*, a més de descobrir una composició anterior hem pogut esbrinar la causa específica de la degradació que afectava a l'estabilitat de la pintura. Finalment en *Autoretrat amb perruca*, la obra central i eix del nostre projecte, veiem com la vitalitat creadora del mestre es manifesta en un joc de superposició d'imatges reflectint la plena integració a la societat catalana i preàmbul del procés de metamorfosi que li acompanyarà tota la vida.

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SESSION 3, 11:30 to 12:15

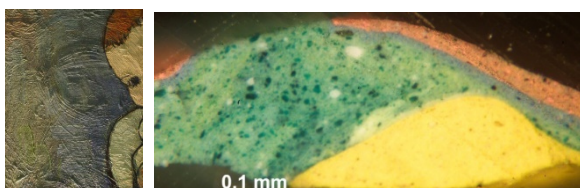
Aviva Burnstock, Department of Conservation and Technology Courtauld Institute of Art, London UK

Picasso 1901: Girl with a Dove

While Picasso's use of novel painting media for his later works has been recently investigated, more recently attention has been focused on the materials and techniques used for his early works. Noted by Ann Hoenigswald is Picasso's reworking of underlying images and reuse of components of the first image for the final composition throughout his working life. To contribute to study of the artist's practice at this early stage in his career, it will be presented a technical study of Picasso's iconic *Girl with a Dove*. This study is all the more pertinent as the painting was, until recently, owned by the Courtauld family and on display in the National Gallery and Courtauld Gallery in London, but now has been sold into a private collection

The study shows that for this work, Picasso re-used of part of an underlying image that relates to another painting in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, *Woman at a Fountain*. Context for this study is provided by an exhibition at the Courtauld Gallery *Picasso 1901 (January 2012-April 2013)* that includes the *Girl with a Dove* and other works by the master painted that year. In 1901 the artist travelled between his native Barcelona and Paris. It is not known whether he used different materials for his works in each location, or whether he took materials including canvases partly painted. Observations of his use of matte and glossy paints have led to speculation about his use of gouache and materials other than oil paint for some of his works from this year, including the *Girl with a Dove*. The technical study includes analysis of pigment and organic media to provide material evidence to test this hypothesis, and an analysis of his painting techniques used for this work in the context of work produced in this critical period is discussed. The study is based on an international interdisciplinary collaboration between the Curator of 20th Century and Contemporary Art at the Courtauld d Gallery, Barnaby Wright, Scientist Klaas Jan van den Berg and conservator/scientist Aviva Burnstock.

Above and below, Picasso Girl with a Dove 1901 raking light, showing aspects of seated figure in underlying paint with arm



extended that relates to an earlier composition.

Section from a sample from red hair of child showing underlying landscape.



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SESSION 4, 12:15 to 13:00

Francesca Rosi, CNR-ISTM Perugia Unit, Italy

The MOLAB transnational access investigating Picasso's paintings

MOLAB is a mobile facility that allows researchers to perform non invasive in situ investigations at the state of the art. It is a unique set of optical/spectroscopic instruments all sharing two essential features: the *portability*-for in situ investigation and the *non-contact running mode*- for non invasive investigation. At the present MOLAB is one of the platforms offering transnational accesses to European users within the H2020 project IPERION CH (www.iperionch.eu). During the activities of the FP7 project CHARISMA (www.charismaproject.eu), the MOLAB facility was interrogated for investigating a large corpus of Picasso's paintings in two of the most important artist's collections located in the Museu Picasso in Barcelona and the Musée Picasso in Antibes. The MOLAB access at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona was aimed at investigating the artist's technique of the young Picasso studying six portraits dated between 1895 and 1901. The artist's palette of his early period was revealed by combining the elemental and molecular information accessible through the spectroscopic non invasive techniques available in the MOLAB.

The Musée Picasso in Antibes has a unique collection of artworks executed by Picasso between September and November 1946. This is a crucial period of transformation for Picasso artistic production. The non-invasive investigation of the materials was aimed at determining the organic and inorganic composition of the paints in 17 artworks of the collection in order to evaluate the possible use of Ripolin brand materials.

A more detailed discussion on the nature and occurrence of the white paints will be presented. The multi-technique approach offered by the MOLAB and based on the combination of XRF, reflection mid and near-FTIR, Raman and UV-Vis reflection and emission spectroscopies will be detailed reporting on some examples. Within the MOLAB access at the Museu Picasso of Barcelona, the distinction between the different whites guided in the interpretation of the complex Picasso's painting structure.

Among other, the nature of the white pigments resulted a discriminating feature for the distinction of the different Picasso's compositions. In the collection of Antibes, four different types of zinc white paints were identified. Titanium dioxide (the anatase polymorph), barium sulphate, lithopone are the additional white compounds enabling the classification of the four white paints [1]. This material classification along with historical photographs and documents enabled a refinement of the chronology of some undated paintings.

[1] *Scientific investigation of an important corpus of Picasso paintings in Antibes: new insights into technique, condition, and chronological sequence*, F. Casadio, C. Miliani, F. Rosi, A. Romani, C. Anselmi, B. Brunetti, A. Sgamellotti, J-L Andral, G. Gautier, *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 2013, 52 (3) 184-204.

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