

Cubism

- **Since its emergence over 100 years ago, Cubism has been regarded as one of modern art's most famous and fascinating art movements.** Cubism is closely associated with iconic artists like Pablo Picasso, whose avant-garde approach to everyday subject matter turned art history on its head.

- **Avant-Garde:**

the advance group in any field, especially in the visual, literary, or musical arts, whose works are characterized chiefly by unorthodox and experimental methods.

- **Featuring fractured forms and topsy-turvy** (upside down) **compositions, Cubism abandoned** (neglected, cast off, forsaken) **the figurative portrayals found in genres of art and moved toward total abstraction.** This aspect—along with its unique evolution and lasting influence—has made Cubism one of the 20th century’s most celebrated forms of art.
- **Genres:**
 - a class or category of artistic endeavor having a particular form, content, technique, or the like:
 - *Fine Arts* .paintings in which scenes of everyday life form the subject matter.
 - a realistic style of painting using such subject matter.

What is Cubism?

- Cubism is an art movement that made its debut in **1907**. **Pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque**, the style is characterized by **fragmented subject matter deconstructed in such a way that it can be viewed from multiple angles simultaneously.**



*Pablo
Picasso,
'Girl with a
Mandolin'
(1910)*

History

- **At the turn of the century, Post-Impressionism and Fauvism—movements inspired by the Impressionists' experimental approach to painting—dominated European art. French painter, sculptor, printmaker, and draughtsman **Georges Braque** contributed to the Fauvist movement with his polychromatic paintings of stylized landscapes and seascapes.**

Georges Braque, Detail of 'Landscape at La Ciotat' (1907)



- In 1907, Braque met Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, and designer Pablo Picasso. At this time, Picasso was in his “African Period,” producing primitive works influenced by African sculpture and masks. Like Braque’s Post-Impressionist paintings, these pieces played with form (and sometimes color), but remained figurative.



*Pablo
Picasso,
'Gertrude
Stein' (1905-
1906)*

- After they met, however, Braque and Picasso began working together, deviating further from their previous styles and collaboratively creating a new genre: *Cubism*.

Phases

PROTO-CUBISM

- Before the movement was underway, both Picasso and Braque applied elements of the soon-to-be style to their respective genres. This **fascinating transition into Cubism is especially apparent in two of their works: *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907) and *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1908).**
- *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* is perhaps Picasso's most famous piece from his African Period. Dated 1907, it was created on the cusp of Primitivism and Cubism, as evident in the figures' mask-like faces and the fragmented subject matter.

Pablo Picasso, 'Les Femmes d'Alger' (O. J. R. Version O) (1911)



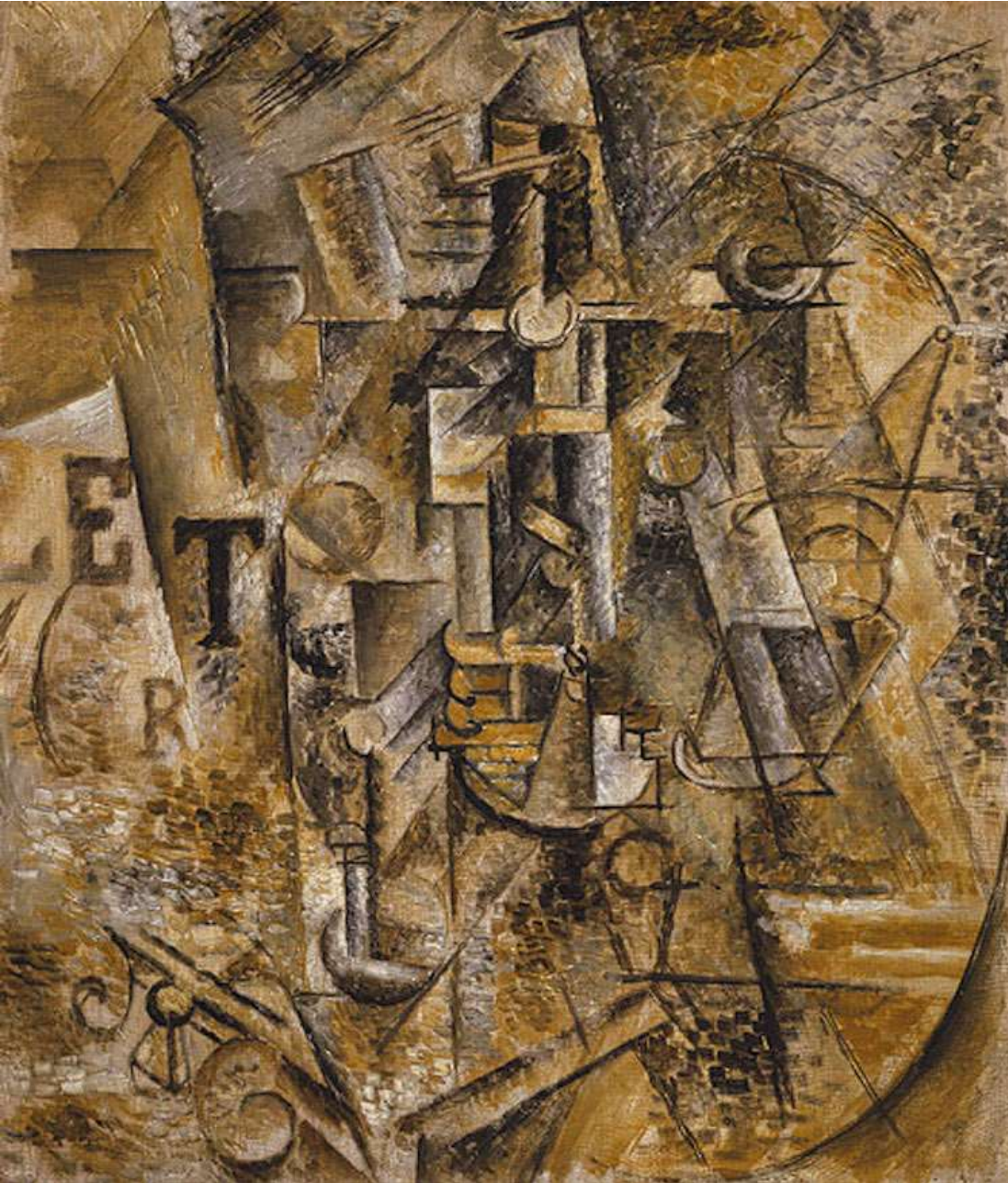
- *Viaduct at L'Estaque* depicts Braque's interest in playing with perspective and breaking subjects into geometric forms—key Cubist traits.



*Georges
Braque,
'Viaduct at
L'Estaque'
(1908)*

ANALYTIC CUBISM

- The first official phase of the movement is known as Analytic Cubism. This period lasted from 1908 through 1912, and is characterized by chaotic paintings of fragmented subjects rendered in neutral tones.



*Pablo
Picasso,
'Still Life
with a
Bottle of
Rum'
(1911)*

- **The fractured forms often overlap with one another, displaying the subject from multiple perspectives at once.**



Georges Braque, 'Still Life with Metronome' (1909)

Metronome:

a mechanical or electrical instrument that makes repeated clicking sounds at an adjustable pace, used for marking rhythm, especially in practicing music.

- Picasso also applied the principles of Analytic Cubism to his sculpting practice, culminating in a collection of busts and figures that emphasize the phase's experimental approach to perspective.

Pablo Picasso, 'Head of a Woman' (1909–10)



- At this time, other artists interested in the avant-garde joined Picasso and Braque, including Spanish painter Juan Gris.



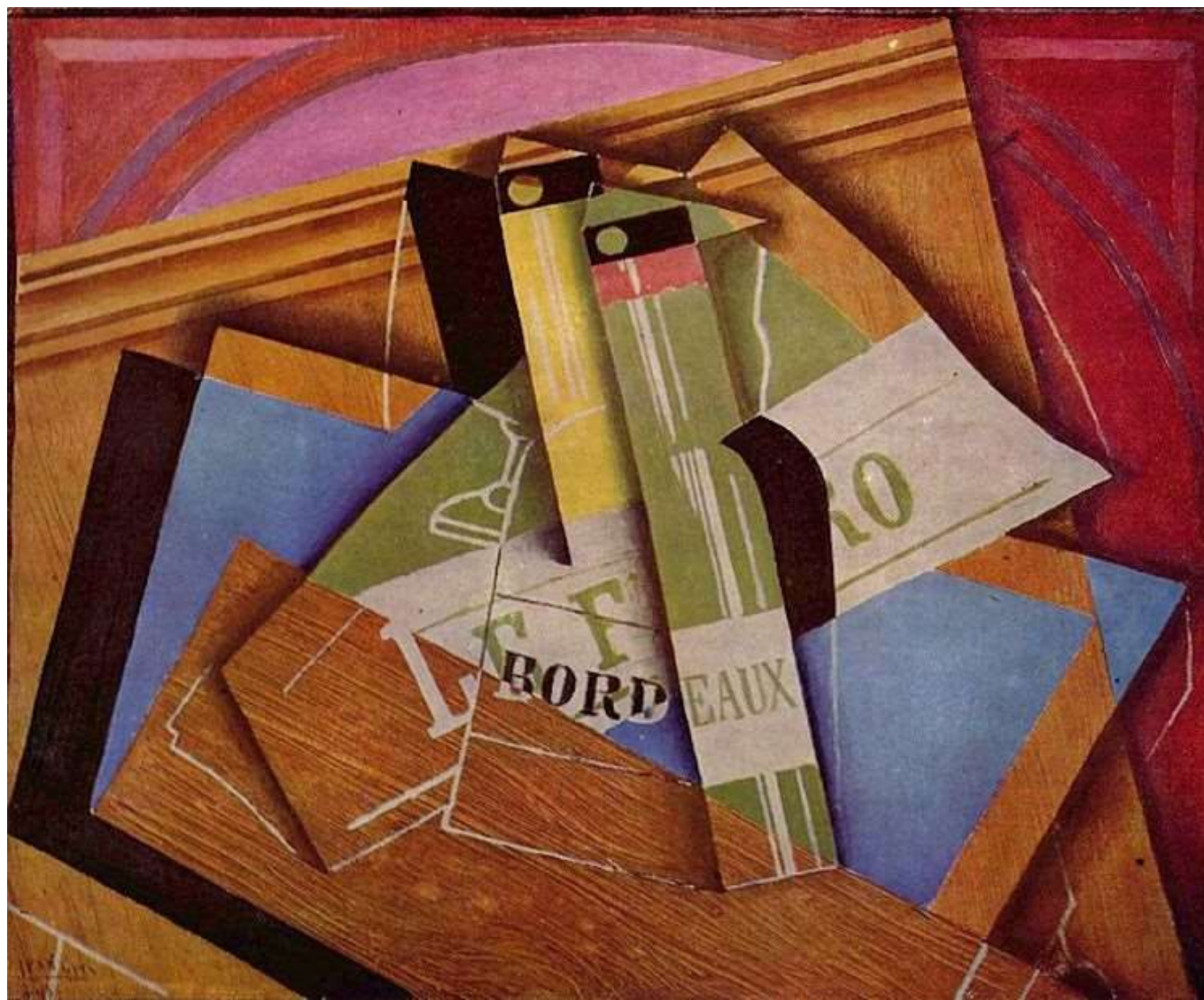
*Juan Gris,
'Portrait of
Picasso'
(1912)*

- Gris would go on to become another well-known Cubist painter, particularly known for his role in Synthetic Cubism

SYNTHETIC CUBISM

- Synthetic Cubism is the movement's second phase, emerging in 1912 and lasting until 1914. During this time, Picasso, Braque, Gris, and other artists **simplified their compositions and brightened their color palettes.**
- **Synthetic Cubism showcases an interest in still-life depictions, rendered as either paintings or collage art.**

Juan Gris, 'Still Life with Bordeuaux Bottle' (1919)



Georges Braque, 'Rum and Guitar'
(1918)





*Pablo
Picasso,
'Head'
(1913-1914)*

Precursors

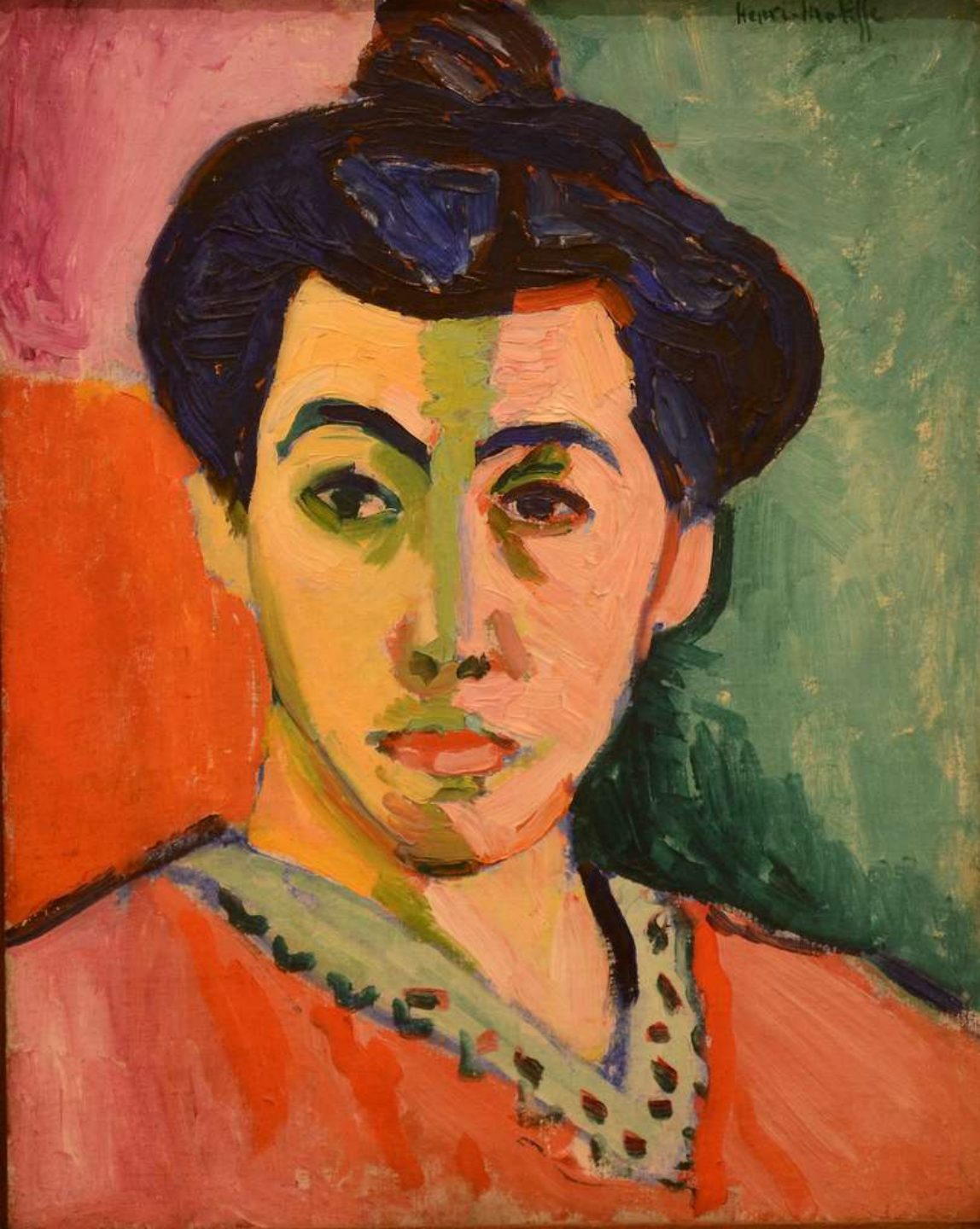
- Given the popularity of Post-Impressionism and Braque's own relationship with Fauvism, it is no surprise that both movements played a pivotal role in shaping Cubism.
- POST-IMPRESSIONISM
- **Cubists borrowed several artistic elements employed by Post-Impressionist painters—namely, Paul Cézanne.**
- **These include flat planes of color, geometric forms, and, most significantly, a distorted sense of perspective.** “The hard-and-fast rules of perspective which it succeeded in imposing on art were a ghastly (shockingly frightful or dreadful; horrible) mistake which it has taken four centuries to redress (he setting right of what is wrong),” Braque explained to *The Observer* in 1957. “Cézanne, and after him Picasso and myself, can take a lot of credit for this. Scientific perspective forces the objects in a picture to disappear away from the beholder instead of bringing them within his reach as painting should.”

Paul Cézanne, 'Mont Sainte-Victoire' (1904-1906)



FAUVISM

- **In addition to Post-Impressionism, Cubist art was inspired by Fauvism.**
- On top of Braque's association with the movement, this influence was strengthened by Picasso's relationship to Matisse, an artist renowned for using blocks of artificial color and repeating patterns to compose a scene. "You have got to be able to picture side by side everything Matisse and I were doing at that time," Picasso recalled in the 1960s. "No one has ever looked at Matisse's painting more carefully than I; and no one has looked at mine more carefully than he."



*Henri
Matisse,
'Portrait
of
Madame
Matisse'
(1905)*

Influence

- Like other modern art movements, Cubism would eventually influence—several other genres of art.
- Futurists found inspiration in Cubism's energetic compositions, while Surrealists adopted and adapted collage art. Similarly, the idea of deconstructing subjects into fragments influenced artists associated with the Dada, De Stijl, Bauhaus, and Abstract Expressionist movements.



*Marcel
Duchamp
(Dadaist),
'Nude
Descending
a Staircase
No. 2'
(1912)*

- In addition to these modern genres, Cubism's influence is also evident in contemporary art. From Cubist tattoos to graffiti inspired by Picasso's portraits, these playful pieces showcase the timeless aesthetic, captivating compositions, and lasting legacy of Cubism.