

CUBISM AND THE SIGN:

Picasso's Cubism: Politics and/or Semiosis

Picasso's primitivism is part of a cultural discourse in which "Africa" conveyed widely accepted meanings that cannot be extricated from allusions to its art and people. – Patricia Leighton, "The White Peril and *l'art nIgre...*"

The extraordinary contribution of collage is that it is the first instance within the pictorial arts of anything like a systematic exploration of the conditions of representability entailed by the sign. – Rosalind Krauss, "The Name of Picasso"

- I. Picasso's escape from paternal academy, and provincialism, Barcelona → Paris
 - A. The international "Youth Style" (Jugendstil, Joven Tut, Arte Joven magazines)
 - B. Impressionist modes and motives
 - C. "Blue period"
 - 1) the depressed *flâneur*
 - 2) a "Moorish" Spaniard in France
- II. The Demoiselles d'Avignon – interpretive lightning-rod
 - A. Picasso's "exorcism" – of what?
 - B. Modern abstraction
 - 1) African sculpture as "*raisonnable*" (conceptual)
 - 2) towards a system of visual signs
 - C. Colonialist critique through performing the primitive?
- III. Cubism– hermetic language, or popular culture?
 - A. "Braque, c'est ma femme" – the codes of a private language
 - 1) Georges Braque - wit, conceptualism, pattern
 - 2) Pablo Picasso - weight, sculptural concerns, "modeling"
 - B. The force of caricature in the portraits
 - C. Opening out to newspaper and commodity culture through collage (Krauss vs. Leighton)
- IV. Cubist constructions and the conceptual force of African sculpture

(Slide list on verso)

Slide List (selected) for 7:1

all works are by Picasso unless noted, oil on canvas unless noted

El Quatre Gats, 1899, lithographic poster

La Vie, 1903

Saltimbanques, 1905

Gertrude Stein 1906

Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907

Babangi-speaking people, Mask, carved wood (French Congo, probably 19th c)

Georges Braque, Standing Nude, 1907-08

Braque, Houses at L'Estaque, 1908

Picasso, House in a Garden, Rue des Bois, 1908

Braque, Violin and Palette, 1909-10

Picasso, Portrait of Ambroise Vollard, 1909-10

Braque, The Portugese, 1911

Picasso, The Aficionado, 1912

Ma Jolie, 1911-12

Still Life with Chair Caning, 1912, collage

Au Bon Marché, 1912-13, collage

Bowl with Fruit, Violin, and Wineglass, or, as Krauss identifies it, The Violin (Violin and Fruit) 1913 collage

Guitar, 1912 cardboard reconstructed in sheet metal and wire

Grebo peoples, late 19th century mask owned by Picasso

The Absinthe Glass, 1914, edition of painted bronzes