

Picasso's Guernica is unique and unlike any other photograph or painting of a historical war scene. Historical photographs show scenes and capture moments in time, but when viewing them an intangible "wall" exists between the viewer and the photograph. The difference between photographs and original paintings is that the painting allows the viewer to break through the "wall" and actually experience the feelings and emotions expressed in the painting.

"We only see what we look at and to look is act of choice." ("Ways of Seeing" 8)

"The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject, they are showing you what they want you to see." ("Ways of Seeing" 10) Photographs are taken for a reason; there are many other angles or other scenes a photographer can choose from and it is up to the photographer to decide which one the viewer sees. In essence, the viewer only sees one aspect of the image captured with the lens of the camera. For example, "when only the head of a figure is visible in a picture which appeals to visual thinking-as distinguished, for example, from a news photograph which many make use of the sense of sight merely for the purpose of informing us of what went on in a certain place-that figure is always to be seen as being incomplete." (Arnheim 11) The eye cannot continue beyond the borders of the photograph and the wholeness of the picture is lost.

In a painting, the artist has painted all of the elements to be seen simultaneously.

"The spectator may need time to examine each element of the painting but whenever he reaches a conclusion the simultaneity of the whole painting is here to reverse or qualify his conclusion." ("Ways of Seeing" 26) A painting maintains its own authority, the painting does not capture momentary appearances it creates its' own. In doing so the viewer becomes a part of the painting, when the viewer steps away from the painting he

is no longer an influence or a part of the painting. Paintings can not be seen in two places at the same time, "when the camera reproduces a painting, it destroys the uniqueness of its image." ("Ways of Seeing"13)

The uniqueness is destroyed because the painting now travels to the spectator rather than the spectator to the painting. "The viewer, views it in his or her surroundings and it is influenced by their surroundings." ("Ways of Seeing" 19) "The true meaning of Picasso's Guernica is lifted out of space and time coordinates in the civil war to become a summa on all wars and all victims." (Nash 17)

"On April 26, 1937 German planes dropped bombs on the town of Guernica and caused many civilian casualties." (Bar 200) When news reached the world, public outcries arouse because "the town was the first ever to be bombed in order to intimidate a civilian population." ("Success and Failure" 166) In January of 1937 Picasso was commissioned by the Spanish Government to paint a mural for its building at the World's Fair in Paris. "He played with the subject of the Spanish Civil War but after the bombing occurred, "he was influenced to paint about the incident." (Arnheim 18) His first sketch was done on May 1, 1937, just 34 days later Guernica was completed. (Mallen)

Guernica was a unique painting for Picasso to create because he never wanted to be influenced by the outside world. Historians argue that Guernica is the exception and Picasso allowed him-self to be influenced and expressed his views. "This assumption has encourage historians predispose to seek political motivation in works of art to read Guernica as Picasso's statement on the issues of the Spanish Civil War." (Chip 69) It is known that Picasso was an artist who tried avoiding any social responsibilities. A long time friend, D.-H. Kahnweiler often stated that "he was the most apolitical man he had

ever known." (Chipp 6) Picasso did speak with an American correspondent once and stated, "I have not painted the war because I am not the kind of painter who goes out like a photographer. But without question the war is in these paintings I have done." (Nash 13)

When the viewer strips away all of the political issues associated with Guernica, "it is a painting about how Picasso imagines suffering; and in it he is painting his own suffering as he daily hears the news from his own country." ("Success and Failure" 169) Guernica does not affect the painting, the painting affects Guernica.

"Rather than re-create a disastrous event he had not even witnessed, he was searching for a motif of personal significance that would convey the intensity of his feelings about everything he was reacting to." (Chipp 71) Guernica is a rather complex intermingled collage of emotions felt by Picasso, "he himself has called the painting an allegory-but never fully explained the symbols he had used and this is probably because they have too many meanings for him." ("Success and Failure" 167)

On one level of Guernica, "Picasso found some of his feelings through the spectacle event of bull fighting." (Chipp 46) As a child Picasso was fascinated by bullfighting, a national pastime in his home country of Spain, and grew to admire the tradition. "Bullfighting may shift violently in the bullring from a celebration of human artistry, skill, and courage to the misery of a brutal death in the arena's bloodied sands." (Chipp 47)

When Picasso made his first sketch of Guernica, he related the first concept to the only moment in the bullfight when there are no victors, only victims, the *corrida*. The *corrida* occurs when the bull is enticed to attack the horse and while the bull gores the

horse, the picador drives his lance into the bull's straining neck muscles. "For the bull this means that although he is enjoying a moment of ecstatic gratification, he is also suffering grave damage to his offensive capabilities-his powerful neck muscles-that will make him a more ready victim to the matador's sword in the final act." (Chipp 50) "The violence of the bull-horse struggle is an excellent visual analogue of the agony of the human victims of Guernica as well as that of the Spanish people, divided and locked in a suicidal civil war while reeling under the assaults of foreign invaders." (Chipp 71)

Another aspect of Guernica that expresses suffering to the viewer is that the horse is depicted without a peto. A peto is a padded coat that the horse is required by law to wear in order to help ease its suffering.

Before 1927 when this law went into effect, both animals were doomed to die in the ring and always suffered greatly during the encounter, "thus giving the first act of the corrida a poignant aspect of suffering." (Chipp 50) This aspect of suffering may have been used to symbolize the helpless suffering that was endured by the people of Guernica.

Another important figure that dominates the painting is the mother holding the dead child which "may have been inspired by a photograph." (Chipp 92) Guernica is unique because Picasso painted images through his eyes and with brush strokes, his paintings were logical in his mind and not influenced by outside sources.

In dealing with this image in one of his sketches he again strikes a personal cord with the people of Spain by putting the distraught mother in a familiar pose. "Picasso now isolate the mom and child as he had with the suffering horse, makes these figures more compact and congested, creating an agonized image even more like depicting in Goya's Disasters of War." (Chipp 94) In Goya's The Disasters of War, number 13, the

women has her arms out and head arched back, weakened and exhausted by the events unfolding around her. The mother holding a baby in Guernica expresses the same feeling of exhaustion and her head is arched back in a similar way. The difference lies in Picasso's use of color versus Goya's black and white sketches. Goya captured events on the canvas similar to the way a picture captures time on film. Guernica, with its colors and abstractness, goes beyond simply capturing a moment and actually brings the image to life in the viewer's mind.

Through all the things mentioned and making references to things people identify with, Picasso successfully takes the viewer into Guernica. The viewer can almost feel the same heartache and terror that the people of Guernica felt. "We are made to feel their pain with our eyes." ("Success and Failure" 169)

R.L. Haeberle and Peter Brandt's photograph/poster is essentially the same scene as what Picasso would have seen when he painted Guernica. The photograph is not detached from time nor space, "we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights." ("Ways of Seeing" 10) The poster shows the true brutality of war, the slaughtering of innocent civilian women and children. Haeberle and Brandt created the poster as "an outcry against the brutal slaughter of war." (Heyman 116) The question "and babies?" is raised further emphasizing the brutality.

The poster is gruesome and very disturbing however, it does not stir the same kind of feelings and emotions as Guernica. Unlike Guernica, the poster takes a horrid slice of life and freezes it in time. The viewer of And Babies? does not feel like a part of the image, instead only sympathy is felt for the victims. And Babies? is nauseating and

the viewer quickly turns away from it. The poster is something the viewer does not want to stare at very long. Picasso's version of *And Babies?*, *Guernica*, forces the viewer to face the harsh realm of war and actually takes them into the scene. The longer the viewer stares into *Guernica*, the stronger the emotions seem to build up until the viewer is literally consumed by the painting. Picasso uses not only the images of brutality, but also underlying images that stir up thoughts in the unconscious. "People have also found evidence of cryptic references from Vishnu and the Rape of Europa to Pinocchio and Hitler." (Nash 49) This is why Picasso paints instead of taking pictures, these are two similar scenes portrayed with different mediums and generate distinctly different reactions to them.

Prior to Picasso, a brilliant artist was commissioned by General Palafox to "examine the ruins of the Peninsular Wars (1808-1814) going on in Spain in order to illustrate the glories of its citizens." (Perez Sanchez 185) Francisco Goya drew and painted countless numbers of war scenes depicting hangings, beatings, killings, and mutilations. These drawings were never published in his lifetime but came out years later and are now his famous *Disaster of War* etchings.

The drawing *Grande Hazana! Con Muertos!*, in the *Disaster of War* series, shows a gruesome scene of three men tied to a tree and mutilated because of the war crime of high treason. Unlike the poster *And Babies?*, Goya was not trying to horrify the viewer, instead Goya painted because he wanted the viewer to look into and reflect on the painting. "The victims' faces even show calm, and the beautiful proportions of the bodies invite viewing." (Perez Sanchez 200) "Rather, Goya set out to incite reflection before these images, for heroic feats can never be the fruit of excesses of bloody cruelty,

heroism, or love of country." (Perez Sanchez 201) "Perhaps a reason for this print was in reaction to a murder of a General that was widely known and the murder was perhaps the first of its' kind." (Perez Sanchez 200) "Essentially the general was accused of being a traitor and was killed by his own men, and after his execution he was dragged, mutilated and hung on a public promenade." (Perez Sanchez 201) Similar to the bombing of Guernica, which was also the first of its' kind, so was the execution and mutilation of the general. Goya and Picasso both painted so that the viewer could reflect on the scene in hope that similar situations will be avoided in the future. Guernica is unique from Goya because Goya froze the scenes he drew while Picasso brings Guernica to life.

All three images share a common thread, they all have a high shock value and show that serious moral boundaries have been crossed. Artists have always expressed themselves through drawings, paintings, or photographs so that when something similar occurs, it can be brought into the public eye for reflection and questioning.

The discussion on Picasso's Guernica and Goya's Disaster of War prints, shows the aspect of how paintings capture the viewer and draws them into the image. It also presents the difference between Guernica and the Disaster of War prints; mainly that Picasso painted the scene so that it would live out in the viewer's mind while Goya froze scenes in time. The poster And Babies?, while still a similar scene to that of Picasso's and Goya's paintings, inhibits the viewer from entering the image. A "wall" exists that stops the viewer from being engrossed by the photograph.

The painting is a complete sentence, while the photograph is missing a verb or a noun thus rendering it an incomplete sentence. Picasso once wrote on the separation between paintings and photographs, "one simply paints-one doesn't paste one's ideas on a

painting, if the painter has ideas, they come out of how he paints things." Picasso's Guernica is truly unique because he was "simply painting" and not "pasting ideas" or freezing time like Disaster of War.