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Note: The Editor regrets having omitted in the last issue of this Bulletin a notice to the effect that the three articles published there belonged to the group written in honor of Chloe Hamilton Young, the bulk of which appeared in the last Spring issue (Vol. XXVIII, No. 3).

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1. Pablo Picasso, *Woman with a Fan*, ink, early 1905

Oberlin
Picasso’s Drawing, Woman with a Fan:

The Role of Degas in Picasso’s Transition to his “First Classical Period”

Picasso’s drawing, Woman with a Fan (fig. 1), executed early in 1905 and acquired by the Museum in 1949, is related in motif, as Charles P. Parkhurst has pointed out, to Picasso’s painting of the same title, signed and dated 1905 and now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Averell Harriman (fig. 2).¹

The painting, in which the silhouetted figure strikes a stiff and hieratic pose, can be related to the studies of Egyptian and Assyrian art which Picasso is reported to have made in the Louvre during his early years in Paris.² Even the quality of the contours would seem to betray the nature of Picasso’s inspiration. Functioning in much the same way as an edge will function in a relief, the line, with its sensitive and controlled modulations, seems to catch the light and to suggest subtly the movement of the forms within a narrow range of spatial layers. In

² See Jaime Sabartés, Picasso, Documents iconographiques, Geneva, 1954, p. 61. The similarity between the pose of the figure in Picasso’s painting and those found in Assyrian relief sculpture is pointed out by Helen F. Mackenzie, Understanding Picasso, Chicago, 1940, plate III.
broader terms, the painting reveals Picasso's growing concern around 1905 with ancient art in general, a concern which was soon to bear fruit in the works of his so-called "first classical period," later in 1905 and in 1906.3

The treatment of the figure in our own, probably earlier drawing is strikingly different from that of the painting, however, both in its character and its inspiration. The model is drawn from life, seated in profile, with her hands loosely placed and inert in her lap. The line which defines her is vigorous yet masterfully subtle at the same time, as it stops and starts abruptly or thickens emphatically to suggest through shadow the turning of the forms within their spatial ambiance. The girl slumps slightly in her seat, and the position of her figure on the page helps to convey and to underscore this aspect of her posture. Although the figure as a whole is placed somewhat left of center, the torso nevertheless occupies the middle of the field and could be vertically bisected by an imaginary central axis against which we measure and perceive the forward thrust of the girl's chin at the left and the exaggerated roundness of her back, further played off against the vertical frame, which dominates the field at the right. Her garment suggests the tunic and puffed gauze skirt of the ballet dancer, and her lean, angular body, coarse features and sullen expression are those of the circus girls who may have served upon occasion as Picasso's models.4 Both the costume and the physical type presented here are familiar to us, as they were no doubt to Picasso, from the oeuvre of Degas, the artist who, in the late nineteenth century, had emphasized the off-stage reality of the traditionally formal and glamorous ballerina, revealing her surprising commonness and lack of grace in countless drawings, paintings and statuettes (e.g., fig. 3).5 It is Degas' preoccupation with such marginal theatrical figures as well as his preference for physical types and poses which deviate sharply from classical canons of poise and perfection that establishes the late nineteenth century tradition out of which Picasso's drawing comes.

3 What Picasso may have learned during these years of the classical drawing manner from Greek mirror backs and vases (especially the white ground lekythoi) does not affect his own drawing style significantly until his so-called "second classical period," in the late teens and early twenties. The refined, continuous outline technique of the ancients is used only rarely with any consistency by Picasso during the 1905-1906 period, and then only in the multiple graphic media (see, e.g., The Watering Place, a dry-point engraving of 1905, in Bernhard Geiser, Picasso, Peintre-Graveur. Catalogue illustré de l'oeuvre gravé et lithographié, 1899-1931, Berne, 1933, no. 10).

4 See, e.g., Christian Zervos, Pablo Picasso, Paris, 1932, VI, nos. 692 and 698.

5 The dancer with a fan is a motif which appears frequently in Degas' work. See P.-A. Lemoisne, Degas et son œuvre, 4 vols., Paris, 1946-49, IV, p. 140 for thematic index, "Danseuses debout avec éventail."
2. Picasso, *Woman with a Fan*, oil, 1905

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Averell Harriman
Not only the nature of the motif which Picasso has chosen for his drawing of early 1905 but the spirit with which he has rendered it strongly suggests the attraction that Degas' art may have held for him at this time, an attraction which was not as incompatible with the changes soon to take place in Picasso's work as one might at first assume. Aside from its independent artistic merit, Picasso's drawing is of interest to us here for what it reveals about an aspect of the artist's taste during a critical transitional phase of his early career and for what it may further suggest about the rôle which older art might have played for him at such times. In particular, it can help us to see Picasso's sensitive response to the past in these instances as a complex and meaningful reflection of his changing interests and goals.

During his early years in Paris, while still serving his apprenticeship to the nineteenth century, Picasso drew relatively little upon the example of Degas, alluding on occasion to thematic types developed by the older artist, but interpreting these, stylistically and expressively, in a far different manner. In The Blue Room, for example, a picture of 1901 (fig. 4), the nude model washing herself in a tub would appear to paraphrase one of Degas' favorite subjects. Yet the emphasis here is not upon the intimate activity of the somewhat stiffly posed model but upon the decorative patterning and organization of the surface. Absent, clearly, are the oblique angles of vision and the vigorous arrested movement with which Degas had created his effects of unposed naturalness and spontaneity, his non-idealized conception of the nude in modern life. Similarly, in the Woman Ironing of 1904 (fig. 5), though working within a thematic genre developed by Degas, Picasso once again abandons the formal naturalism of the nineteenth century prototype, to produce instead, with the figural contortions and pervasive unnatural tonality of his "Blue Period," a mannered expression of pathos and despair.

While stimulated by the range of thematic material with which Degas had dealt, Picasso, prior to 1905, had been little affected by either the formal or the expressive character of Degas' art, absorbing indirectly and at random only those aspects of his style which had been transmitted by such younger nineteenth century followers of Degas as Toulouse-

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7 Compare Picasso's painting, for example, with such works by Degas as The Tub, a pastel of 1886 in the Louvre (Lemoisne, op. cit., III, n. 872).

5. Picasso, *Woman Ironing*, oil, 1904

New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
Justin K. Thannhauser Collection

Worcester, Mass.: Worcester Art Museum, the Dial Collection
Lautrec. The Oberlin drawing, however, would suggest on Picasso's part around 1905 a more direct and closer attentiveness to the spirit of Degas' work than he had previously shown, an attentiveness and deepened insight which are not without significance, particularly if we consider the direction in which Picasso's own art was now about to move.

During the year which followed, as Picasso proceeded to make his transition, via classicism, from the emotive symbolism of his earlier work to the more objective, plastic orientation of his first mature style, there was much in the work of Degas which he might have found instructive and to which he might have become newly receptive, for Degas was an artist who had interpreted the life of his own time in a formal language evolved in part from studies of the classical Renaissance. Later in 1905, for example, when Picasso undertook a study for a projected but never realized composition entitled The Watering Place (fig. 6), he turned for his general theme of boys and horses as well as for the frieze-like disposition of his principal forms to a classical tradition which is exemplified by the processional frieze of the Parthenon. The group at the extreme left in Picasso's study, consisting of a rider with arm upraised on a rearing horse in profile, might even have been conceived with a well-known prototype from the North frieze in mind. Yet the assimilation of these figures to the landscape background by means of a large oval configuration is a controlled and rhythmic method of composing in depth which, though classical in feeling, has no Classical precedent. Instead, it recalls Degas' earlier treatment of race-track scenes (e.g., fig. 72), a theme involving equestrian figures in a landscape which

9 In the Moulin de la Galette, a painting of 1900 which is often likened to works by Toulouse-Lautrec in the same genre (e.g., At the Moulin Rouge of 1892), Picasso, for example, uses such compositional devices, developed by Degas and later exploited by Toulouse-Lautrec, as the cutting of a major foreground figure by the frame and the placement of tables in the foreground to create a diagonal movement into space. See Mackenzie, op. cit., plate I.


11 Several drawings from the period of Picasso's academic training in Spain bear witness to his early and enforced familiarity with a standard, academic repertoire of Classical imagery. Zervos, op. cit., VI, nos. 1, 4-9, illustrates these youthful studies, done between 1892 and 1894, including a drawing (n.4) after a cast of the "Theseus" figure from the East pediment of the Parthenon.

12 Lemoine, op. cit., III, n. 878. See, also, nos. 767 and 1145. All three pictures were once the property of Degas' dealer, Durand-Ruel.

13 Picasso's possible debt in this work to Degas' jockey scenes was first pointed out by this writer in an unpublished paper, delivered at Columbia University, Winter, 1964. In 1966 observed also by Reff, "Review of Picasso, the Formative Years," p. 267.
had offered this nineteenth century artist a modern-day counterpart to the formal processions, parades and battle scenes that he had admired in older art. From youthful studies of works like those of Benozzo Gozzoli in the Medici-Riccardi Chapel in Florence,\textsuperscript{14} Degas had first become aware of the compositional problems which are posed and can be solved by the calculated juxtaposition of horses seen from various points of view. It was precisely with such classic formal problems that Picasso, too, in 1905, was beginning to come to grips, in a very similar way.

During a brief period, from mid 1905 to mid 1906, Picasso's art became consistently classicizing as he turned away from both the pictorial symbolism and thematic realism of his earlier pictures and began to see his canvas not as a vehicle for making literary statements about the condition of mankind and society, but as a field upon which more purely visual problems might be explored and worked out. In these terms, the transformation in approach and intent which is revealed by a

\textsuperscript{14} One of these is illustrated by Walker, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 181, fig. 18.
comparison between Picasso's painting of 1905, Woman with a Fan (fig. 2) and the life drawing in the Oberlin Collection from which the painting may in part have evolved (fig. 1) can be considered as a reflection of the changes which, on a broader scale, were to affect Picasso's art as a whole at this time. The drawing, though a product of the goals and attitudes which Picasso was about to abandon, contains too, however obliquely, indications of those which he would soon embrace, for it reveals Picasso's deepening appreciation during this crucial period of transition for an older contemporary, an artist whose work offered a personal combination of both the tendencies between which Picasso himself was moving at this time. It was at this moment more than at any other in his early career that the art of Degas, viewed in these terms, would have had particular relevance for Picasso, and it was at this moment, our drawing suggests, that Picasso may have taken his first really close and considered look at this older master's work. When Picasso drew the Woman with a Fan early in 1905, it was Degas' characteristic thematic choices and interpretations that held the greatest appeal for him. But during the next months, as his own orientation gradually shifted, he would have become even more receptive to still another aspect of this artist's style. In particular, Degas' surprisingly traditional formal concerns and classical sense of pictorial structure were qualities which Picasso would more readily have come to recognize and to value in the older artist's work, as they began to assume a more significant place in his own.

Norma F. Broude