

Picasso's *Guitar* and *Weeping Woman*



Pablo Picasso's *Le guitarist* (1910). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. [enlarge](#)

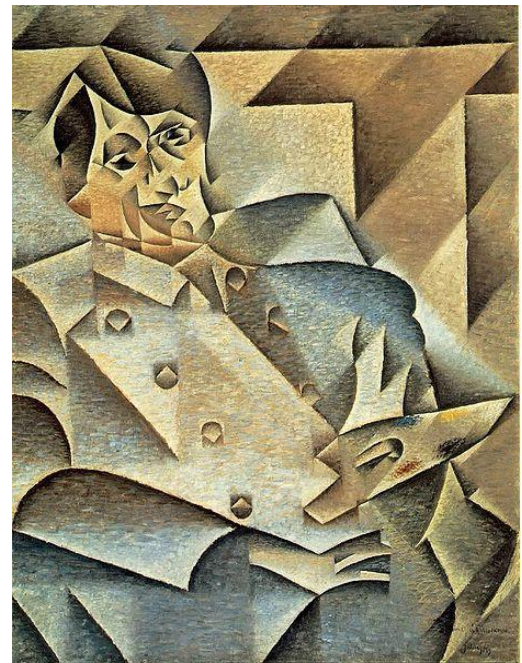
areas of paint to emphasize this plural viewpoint.

Characteristically of cubist paintings, the boundaries of the singular object are seemingly merged with its background, the planes of each intermingling with the other to create an ambiguous sense of space. In cubism we witness the multiplicity and differentiation of any given distinct object simultaneously blended within its inclusive ubiquitous context.

Building upon cubism and influenced by what is called classicalism and surrealism, some of Picasso's later works express the interplay of diversity and universality in

Cubism is a 20th century avant-garde art movement that revolutionized European painting, and sculpturing, and inspired related movements in architecture, literature and music. Its pioneers included Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne and Georges Braque. Influenced by primitivism, Iberian and African art, and using natural forms such as cylinders, spheres, and cones, the cubist breaks up, analyzes and re-configures an object in abstract form, depicting it from a multiplicity of viewpoints. It is as if an object had all its faces made visible at the same time on a single picture plane. Using such universal forms as cylinders, spheres and cones, the painted surface intersects at seemingly random angles to render it into

multifaceted



Juan Gris' *Portrait of Picasso* (1912). Art Institute of Chicago.

still another dimension. In these paintings, Picasso strives to bring the varied idiosyncratic viewers of his paintings into the universal themes conveyed within them. Take for instance Picasso's *Weeping Woman*, a portrait of his lover and "private muse," Dora Maar. It is a study in just how much pain can be expressed in the human face. As a unique and individual viewer in a social mass of differentiation, Picasso is asking you to imagine yourself in and as a part of the universal face of pain. In one interpretation, as you gaze over the face, you are drawn to the center, where the flesh seems peeled away by the corrosive action of the tears, revealing something deeper, the hard white bone. The



Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (1937). Tate Gallery, London.

handkerchief in her mouth is like shards of glass. The eyes are as black apertures beckoning you inside, to be hit "like a punch in the stomach" as "she cries and cries" without end (Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*, 13 May 2000). This painting is part of Picasso's protest works, including



Picasso's *Guernica* (1937). Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid

the seminal *Guernica*, showing the suffering and torment of the Basque people after the bombings by German warplanes.

Picasso is seeking to convey the deepest and universal of human emotions, of which all of us can feel like a punch to our stomachs.