

Picasso

L'ENTERREMENT DE CASAGEMAS

1901



OIL ON CANVAS 100 X 90.2 CM

PABLO PICASSO

(1881 - 1973)

« *L'enterrement de Casagemas* »

(*La veillée funèbre - Le mort*)

Oil on canvas

H. 100 x L. 90.2 cm

39 3/8 x 35 5/8 inches

Signed lower right

Executed in 1901

COLLECTIONS

Ambroise Vollard, Paris

Pierre Loeb, Paris

Pierre Matisse, Paris

Edward G. Robinson, Beverly Hills

Stavros S. Niarchos, Paris

Edward G. Robinson, Beverly Hills

Private collection

EXHIBITIONS

« **Picasso** »

Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 1932, n°6.
- collection Pierre Loeb -

« **Picasso** »

Kunsthhaus, Zurich, 1932, n°5.
- collection Pierre Loeb -

« **Picasso-Blue & Rose Periods** »

Seligman Gallery », New York, 1936, n°2.
- collection Pierre Matisse -

« **The Robinson Collection** »

County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 1941.
- collection Edward G. Robinson -

« **Forty paintings from the Edward G. Robinson collection** »

*Museum of Modern Art, New York, National Gallery of Art, Washington,
1953, n°20.*
- collection Edward G. Robinson -

« **The Gladys Lloyd Robinson and Edward G. Robinson Collection** »

*County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, The California Palace of Honor,
San Francisco, 1956 - 1957, n° 37.*
- collection Edward G. Robinson -

« **The Niarchos Collection** »

*Knoedler Gallery, New-York,
The National Gallery, Ottawa, 1957-1958, n° 38.*
- collection Stavros Niarchos -

« **Picasso** »

The Tate Gallery, London, 1960, n° 8.

« **Bonne Fête Monsieur Picasso** »

UCLA, Los Angeles, 1961, n° 2.
- collection Edward G. Robinson -

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Volume I, Paris, 1992, reproduced page 212.



VERSO



HIGH RESOLUTION



“I started painting in blue when I learned of Casagemas's death”

"When I was a child my mother said to me, 'If you become a soldier you'll be a general. If you become a monk you'll end up being the Pope.' Instead I became a painter and wound up as Picasso."

When Pablo Picasso said these now well-known words long before his passing in 1973 he had already become the most notable, respected, influential and wealthy modern artist of the 20th century. Most definitely for many people the name Picasso is synonymous with the term art, and his reputation to this day is such that still no other artist approaches the genuine significance that his prodigious and diverse oeuvre represents. While he lived, he was already considered a legendary figure whose Blue and Rose periods were considered monumental in being historic hallmarks within the world of art. His participation in being the co-founder of Cubism would also bring him deserving worldwide recognition. And the works which followed in the coming decades were thought of as wonderful representations of his expertise and imagination. Correspondingly his statements about art, or anything else, were considered, and still are, as words voiced from some mythical Delphi Oracle. Yes, it was good to be Picasso. However, his life was not always as pleasurable, for before he became an iconic entity of the arts, with the museum directors, scholars, collectors, media, celebrities and the public all vying for his attention, there were years in his early life which represented the nadir of his existence as an artist and as a human being. Picasso's appointment with this segment of his life was certainly not planned, but as life happens, there was an evolutionary prelude to what was to become known as his Blue Period - and one of its paintings would always gently remind him of that period for the remainder of his life.

In the spring of 1901, being a long-time citizen of Spain and having previously acquired a distinctive expertise in the structure and execution of academic art, Pablo Ruiz y Picasso with the enthusiasm of youth was ready to place himself again within the center of the art world at that time - Paris. He had lived there for over two months in the late autumn of 1900 executing paintings and drawings, attending the Exposition Universelle's display of French art, and absorbing everything he could about the city's culture, museums and nightlife. But regretfully he had to return to Spain in late December resulting from the psychological instability of his very close friend, Carlos Casagemas, who had accompanied him to Paris. Having known Casagemas since the spring of 1899 Picasso had received financial assistance at times from his friend who came from a wealthy Spanish family. It was also Casagemas who had secured the studio apartment in which they took turns sleeping at different intervals to accommodate the artist's irregular hours both for painting and other nightlife activities. With the apartment being located in the bohemian section of Montmartre, here the artist was to execute his most well-known painting from his Paris 1900 stay, *Le Moulin de la Galette* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York) (see image), a depiction of a crowd of nightlife revelers within the famous dance hall which Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec had depicted years before.



Pablo Picasso - Moulin Galette 1900

But during this autumn Paris stay, Casagemas had progressively grown much more psychologically dependent upon the independent thinking Picasso which eventually made the artist, after their return to Spain, strongly suggest to Casagemas in January 1901 that he return to Paris without him.

Consequently, without Casagemas seemingly being always at his side, the young artist (who was to shorten his signature name to P.R. Picasso and in the coming months to simply Picasso) now sought out other opportunities to enhance his career. While he began to execute works Picasso became involved with the formation of a magazine in Madrid named *Arte Joven* (Young Art). With the magazine's commentaries on modern life he was to be its art editor and would contribute his own illustrations. However, in February, Picasso received the tragic news that on the 17th, Casagemas, while trying to kill his supposed lover, Germaine Gargallo (who Picasso and him had met originally in Paris in 1900), had also committed suicide during the murder attempt at the L'Hippodrome Cafe in Paris - Germaine had rejected Casagemas' advances resulting from his erratic personality, alcoholism, narcotics and impotency. Did Picasso feel sincerely guilty about his recent apparent abandonment of Casagemas? While Picasso did not attend his friend's funeral in Barcelona, many decades later Picasso would famously remark to his friend and biographer Pierre Daix, "It was thinking about Casagemas's death that started me painting in blue." (1) Nevertheless, Picasso would continue executing his brightly colored paintings until later in the year when his blue

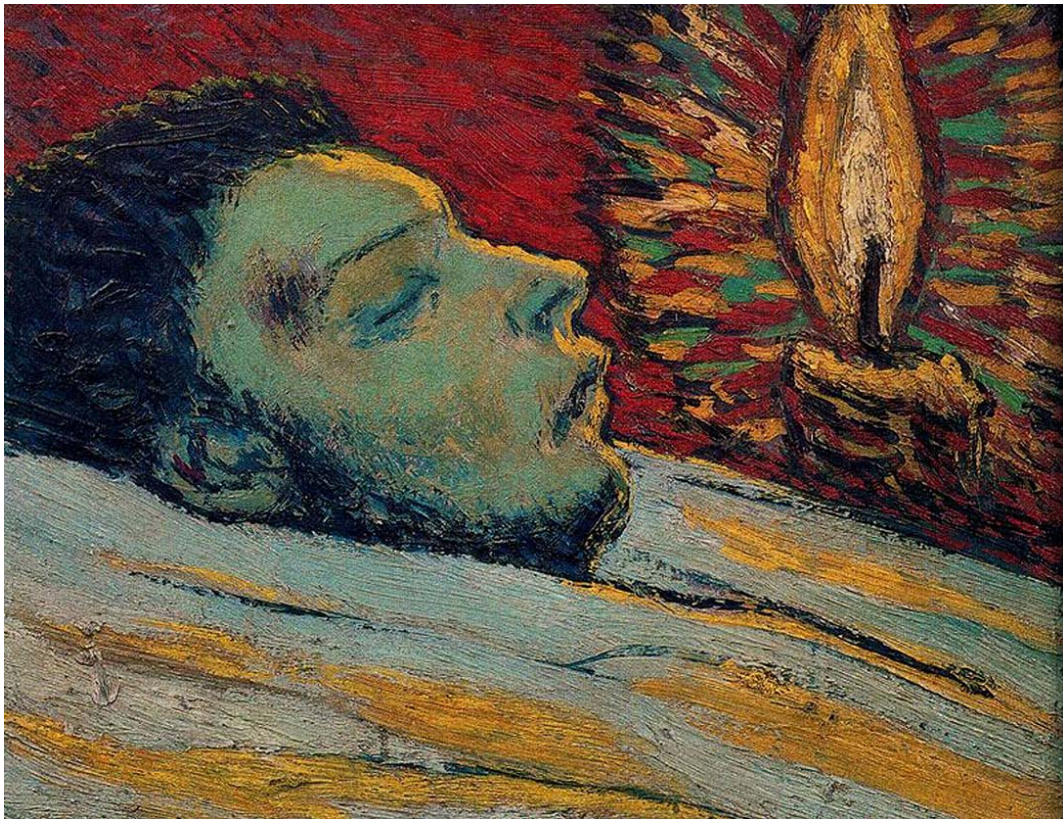
canvas images commenced - in Paris. Although Picasso was now selling works to Spanish collectors, and sending some to his Parisian dealer/promoter Pere Mañach (who was sending the artist a monthly stipend of 150 francs' courtesy of his wealthy Spanish manufacturer father), he still contemplated returning to Paris, the destination of many artists, where he truly believed this time its critics, art dealers and the public would recognize his genius similar to other notable Parisian artists. Finally, with the publishing closure of *Arte Joven*, and after Mañach eventually convinced the young Paris dealer Ambroise Vollard (who had exhibited artists such as Cezanne and Renoir) that Picasso's works were unique and would find favor in Paris, Picasso was offered an exhibition

of his works at Galerie Vollard beginning on June 24th. In May Picasso left Spain for the "city of light" with all of its wonderful opportunities that he hoped would now accelerate his career. Upon arrival in Paris, Picasso went to 130 Boulevard de Clichy which was the same apartment that Casagemas had lived in during his last days before his suicide and a short walk from where he committed the tragic act. Both Mañach and Picasso decided the apartment in Paris' Montmartre section would be appropriate for their own living, social and artistic requirements. Soon thereafter, Germaine, Casagemas' former lover, became Picasso's mistress, an affair that would last sometime just before the summer's end. Odette (Louise Lenoir), Picasso's former mistress of his previous Paris visit in the autumn of 1900 was of course not pleased, but she continued to be under the spell of the young Spaniard. As usual Picasso's propensity was to manipulate those around him in addition to their agreeing with his unspoken requirements of recognizing his genius. And with his return to Paris and the close associations mirroring Casagemas' memory, there obviously were some lingering thoughts about his departed friend, only now they were to be cast aside for the moment since Vollard's June exhibition was all that mattered.

While Picasso had brought with him his latest paintings from Spain the amount required for Vollard's exhibition was not enough. To resolve this dilemma just before the opening June 24th date he intensely executed the remaining amount needed to fill Vollard's gallery located on rue Laffitte. Once again, the works consisted of bright colors and a variety of subjects such as the women who frequented the smoke-filled interiors of urban nightlife as well as images of still lifes, horse racing, seascapes and children. Overall the exhibition not counting drawings contained 64 works including pastels and watercolors. The respected Picasso scholar and friend of the artist John Richardson notes, ***"...the Vollard exhibit was a stunning bravura performance for a neophyte, and it included some brilliant tours de force. Mañach's insistence on saleability paid off: the show was not only a succès d'estime; it was in a modest way, a financial success. Well over half the items sold."*** (2). With some favorable notices in the media the exhibition closed on July 14th and Picasso's first exhibition in Paris was taken as an excellent prophesy of things to come. In July, he writes to a friend in Barcelona: "My exhibition in Paris has had some success almost all the papers have treated it favorably, which is something." (3) And even Picasso's future rival as the reigning artist of the modern art world, Henri Matisse, would not have a Paris exhibition at Vollard's until 1904.

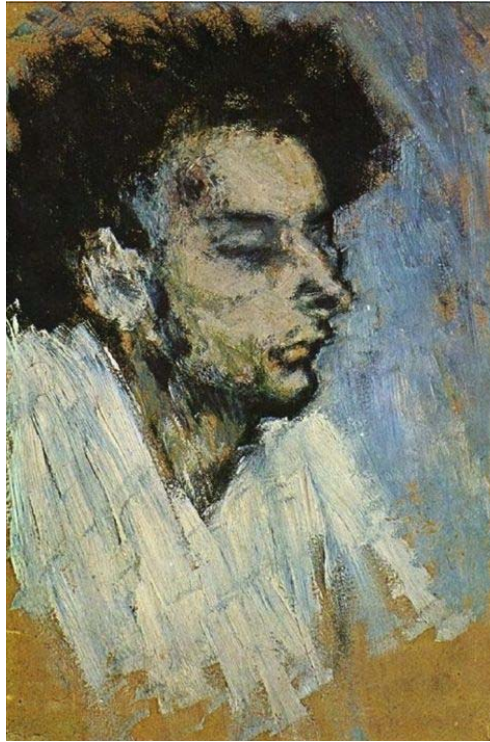
Yes, with his very determined personality of Picasso being Picasso even at that early age, he reasoned his expertise with the brush and pencil would soon be recognized resulting with a strong saleability of his future works. But alas it was not to be for during the summer in Paris he was only given a small amount of commissions for magazines and posters. Years later he recalled, "I really

had a lot of money but it didn't last long." (4) Vollard decided not to have a second exhibition making the artist's financial circumstance one of gradual desperation, and the memory of favorable Vollard reviews was now replaced by what he experienced on a daily basis within his Montmartre neighborhood. No longer able to afford his previous higher nightlife entertainment activities Picasso's life was being relegated to the status of an observer. The prostitutes, the hungry, beggars, alcoholics, disabled, the blind and the homeless were becoming ever more in his thoughts, not presently as subjects to be placed upon canvases, but images of what may be his future within the world of the dispossessed - specters who inhabited the same streets of those favorable beings with social and financial ability and status. With such thoughts of melancholia and still living at Casagemas' former apartment, in addition to having Casagemas' former girlfriend Germaine as his mistress, Picasso naturally began thinking about his departed close friend again. Indeed, the subject of death (his most extreme fear) and its finality verses life with its various levels of misery was always a favorite of Picasso, and it would influence his forthcoming works as well as those throughout his entire lifetime. Finally, with early September having arrived, and both Germaine and Odette no longer by his side, "le petit Goya" as he was sometimes called by his artist friends, decided to memorialize Casagemas' death on canvas. Although it was not planned, eventually there would be a series of paintings executed that would in essence allow Picasso to have his own private and psychological memorial service, on canvas, for his late close friend in addition to addressing an attempt to purge his guilt concerning their final estrangement. The Death of Casagemas (Musée National Picasso, Paris) (see image) with its burning radiating candle of bright colors reminiscent of the early summer is the first painting with its image of Casagemas on his deathbed showing the gruesome gunshot wound to his head.

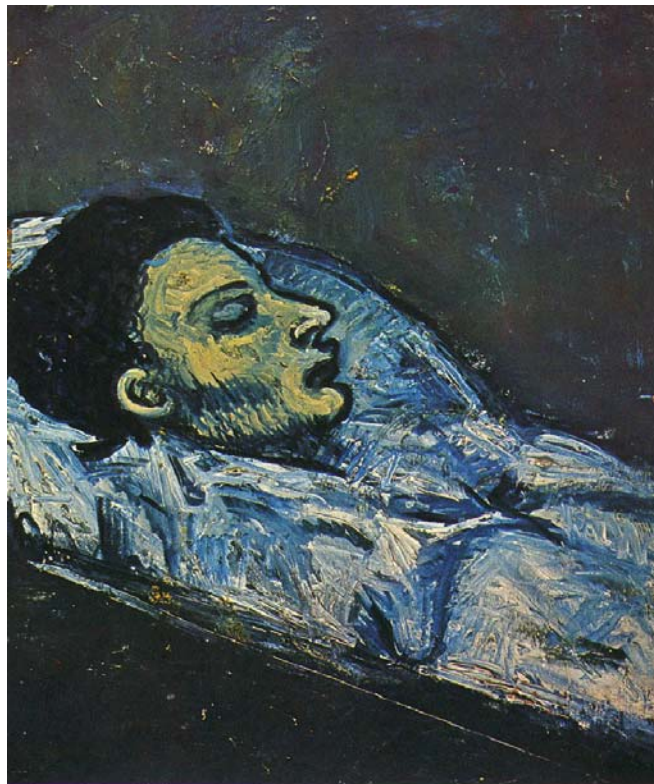


The death of Casagemas, 1901 - Pablo Picasso

Two more compositions would follow with the last one Casagemas in his Coffin (Private Collection) (see image) having a blue/green palette which some paintings would also possess in the future. (Picasso would always retain these compositions for his very private collection.)



Picasso - Le suicide de Casagemas



Picasso - The Death Of Casagemas

And soon thereafter two larger allegorical compositions were to be executed. 'The Mourners' was a traditional image of people mourning over the body of a departed shrouded Casagemas, whereas an even larger composition, Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas) (Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris) (see image), was executed with its allegorical subject of what is reality and what may possibly be.



Evocation -The Burial of Casagemas- 1901 - Pablo Picasso

While it was generally based upon the well-known El Greco 16th century Renaissance painting The Burial of Count Orgaz (Santo Tomé Church, Toledo),



El Greco - The Burial of the Count of Orgaz

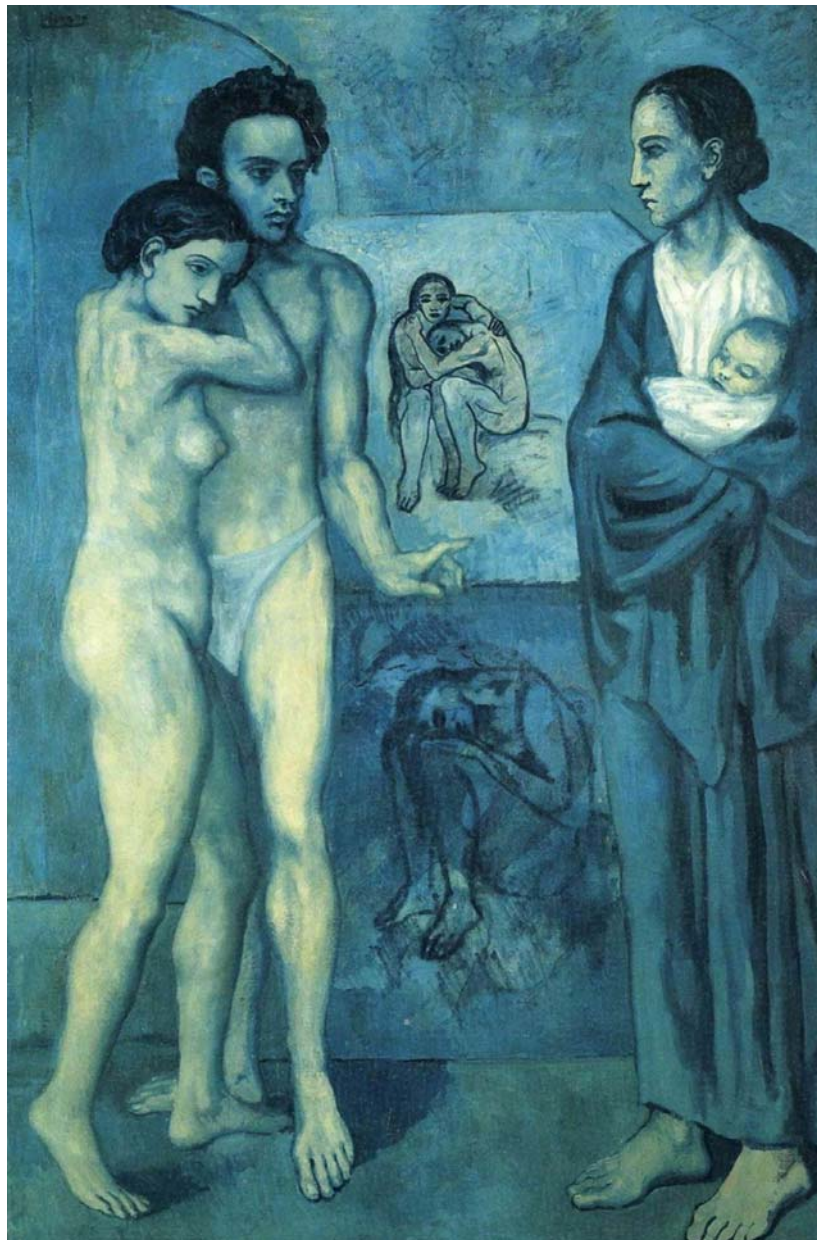
Picasso's composition was certainly not as religious in its iconography. The lower section was illustrated with the appropriate conservative religious setting of nine nearly faceless blue-robed mourners attending to a white-shrouded Casagemas at his burial in front of his mausoleum.



However, the top section was also composed of nine figures but they are noticeably different. Within the blue draped heavenly clouds are found naked prostitutes watching what is generally thought by scholars to be Casagemas ascending to heaven on a white horse while he is being kissed by probably a naked Germaine. And next to the children he could never have is placed a blue-robed motherly figure - the first of many to be depicted in future compositions.



For Picasso, the composition undoubtedly had elements of satire concerning his friend, but it also was an attempt to address his continual non-religious and existential beliefs concerning life and death. Indeed, with the composition divided equally between life and death, its iconography has always been a source of discussion with scholars. Picasso's friend and biographer Roland Penrose comments: "He had lived through his friend's tragedy so closely that it had become his own, and his new problem was to find adequate ways of expression...Since he had been led to descend into Hades it was essential for him to discover his own salvation. The rider on the white horse mounting into the clouds and the huddled mourners below were both subconsciously symbols of himself." (5) This would not be the last time Picasso's friend would be placed within a blue composition, for apparently the artist never had a complete catharsis regarding Casagemas' death. Two years later in the spring of 1903 with the execution of the monumental allegorical canvas *La Vie* (Cleveland Museum of Art) (see image),



La Vie (1903)

Picasso would address a resolution with his departed friend coupled with the seemingly universal subjects of birth, life, death and redemption. Standing in front of 2 paintings of 'crouching nudes' is a young standing nude Casagemas (whose face was substituted for Picasso's) holding a standing young nude woman (Germaine) while in the company of a blue-robe maternity figure holding a baby. *La Vie (Life)* is a recapitulation of the previous Blue Period oeuvre, and similar to the *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)* of 1901 its iconography has been debated by scholars and the public since its execution.

Thinking back to when the great Toulouse-Lautrec had passed in early September at the age of 36 Picasso would have certainly contemplated, as he had before arriving in Paris, his future as a great Parisian artist. While the influence of Toulouse-Lautrec (supposedly the only artist he ever wanted to meet) was evident with Picasso earlier in the year, the artist's canvases in autumn had now become very different with their predominant shades of blue and the choice of subjects. The decision to paint in blue would embrace a variety of applications as art historian Juan-Eduardo Cirlot describes:

"The idea of using one dominant colour, not just for one picture but for many, goes further than the concept of a 'series,' like Monet's cathedrals: it would be more accurate to call it a 'cycle' of even a whole microcosm. Picasso's idea was to live in a permanently blue world, and we say 'live' because for him painting 'is' life. This blue can be treated in the most varied ways - as a flat wash, to show contrasting light and shade (light blue against dark blue), with superimposed patches of greenish blue, lightened or intensified with various types of illumination. It can be restricted to the background and the dress of the figures or it can be used in the flesh-tints." (6)

For some time Vollard had expressed his disfavor with Picasso's compositions, specifically his negativity toward their increasingly blue auras, but the artist was adamant that his artistic course was the correct one. Pierre Daix, friend and biographer of Picasso comments:

"We must not forget that Picasso knew very well what was pleasing in his earlier work, and if he turned his back on it so obstinately it was because, for him, art does not exist on the level of its success nor on material circumstances, but is the very meaning of life. The blue was a conception of painting. He may have found that the coldness of blue suited the cold without fires, the cold of poverty and hunger, but it did not exclude the pleasure of color." (7)

With Vollard never acquiring any blue canvases until after 1905, not even Picasso's roommate/dealer Mañach could find any interested buyers which resulted in Picasso's financial position becoming increasingly worse with every passing week. In later years Picasso would comment, ***"It [the Vollard exhibition] went very well. It pleased a lot of people. It was only later when I set about to do some blue paintings that things went badly. That lasted for years."*** (8)

Moreover, his despondency was heightened by his still very crude ability to communicate in his smattering amount of French about his ambitious artistic compositions with art dealers and collectors who had the potential to slightly improve his bleak financial status. Nonetheless, Picasso continued his artistic perseverance with blue compositions regardless of their lack of sales, but years later in the 1960s, he would comment upon this specific time period and the enormous influence it had on him throughout his life regarding success:

"But success is an important thing! It has often been said that an artist should work for himself, for the love of art, and scorn success. It's a false idea. An artist needs success. Not only in order to live, but primarily so that he can realize his work. Even a rich painter should know success. Few people understand much about art, and not everyone is sensitive to painting. The majority judges a work of art in relation to its success. So why leave success to 'successful painters'? Each generation has them. But where is it written that success must always go to those who flatter the public taste? For myself, I wanted to prove that success can be obtained without compromise, even in opposition to all of the prevailing doctrines. Do you want me to tell you something? It is the success of my youth that has become my protective wall. The blue period, the rose period - they were the screen that sheltered me..." (9)

As the autumn progressed and having already executed canvases with their continually developed predominant blue emphasis (i.e., *Le Gourmet*, National Gallery Of Art, Washington, D.C. (see image)



Pablo Picasso, *Le Gourmet*, 1901

and the Seated Harlequin, Metropolitan Museum Of Art),



Picasso's Seated Harlequin- 1901

Picasso began executing images of women inmates (i.e., Woman with A Cap, Museu Picasso, Barcelona) who were prisoners and patients within the 17th century stone prison and venereal disease facility known as Saint-Lazare near Montmartre.



Woman with cap 1901 41x33cm oil/canvas. Museum Picasso, Barcelona

Many of these women having been marked with white caps and scarfs were incarcerated for prostitution and some still had their babies with them. The prison's miserable environment of hopelessness and depression was one of intrigue to Picasso, for the lives of its inhabitants intensely confirmed his own present psychological circumstances as well as his philosophy of what can happen between the alpha and omega of one's life. Variants of the Saint-Lazare women subject would recur in future blue period compositions (i.e., Portrait of Germaine, 1902, Picasso's former mistress, Private Collection;



Pablo Picasso. Portrait of Germaine, 1902

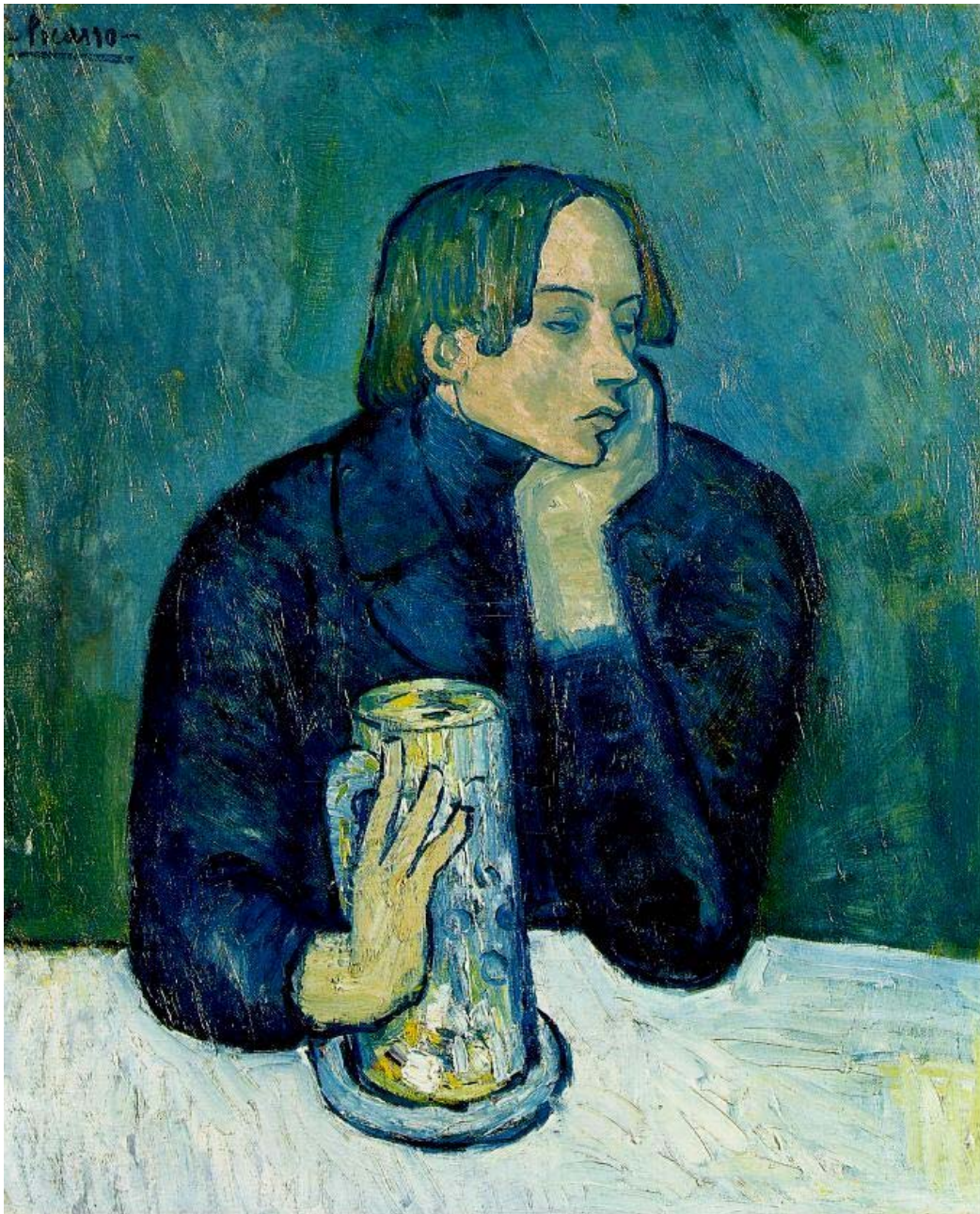
and Two Sisters -The Meeting, 1902, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg) (see image)



The Two Sisters, 1902 by Picasso

for interestingly as John Richardson points out, *"Where else could he find models that exemplified his equivocal view of sex as ecstatic and tender, but also guilt-inducing and bound up with suffering, even death."* (10)

Picasso's close friend and confidant, the poet Jamie Sabartès, had come from Barcelona to be with him. Knowing Picasso since 1899 he would become the artist's secretary in 1935 and would eventually publish a biography and other writings about his friend. Startled at first after viewing his friend's new style of painting and commenting, "I'll get used to it," soon after Sabartès' arrival Picasso would execute his portrait without his knowledge while he sat in a cafe with a tankard of beer in front of him. The portrait, with its descriptive brushstrokes and noticeable impasto, became the famous painting entitled *The Poet Sabartès - The Bock*, 1901 (Pushkin State Museum, Moscow) (see image).



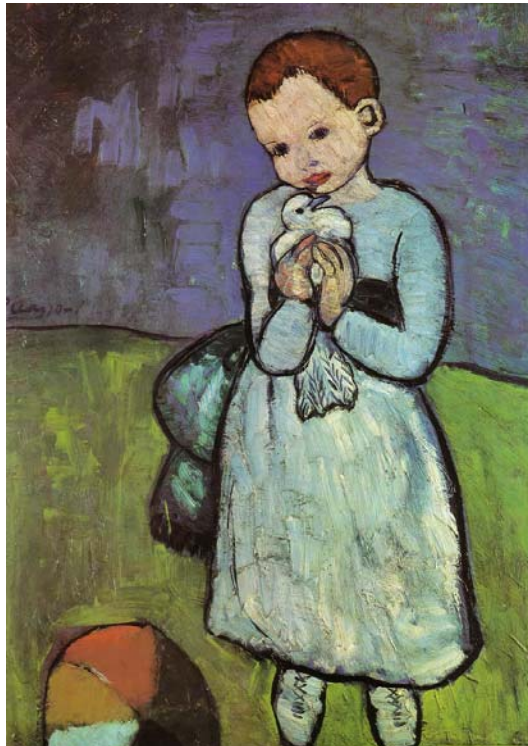
Pablo Picasso - The Poet Sabartes - 1901

Sabartès would describe the portrait as, ***"...I understood what it was that had caught my friend's inspiration: here is the specter of my solitude, seen from without..."*** (11)

In acquiring Picasso's trust during the artist's own very melancholy solitude that he was experiencing at that time, he explained to Sabartès what he had been thinking during the genesis of his new concept of painting in blue:

"Picasso believes that art emanates from sadness and pain. With this we agree. That sadness lends itself to meditation, and that grief is at the depths of life. We are passing through an age in which everything is still to be done by everybody, a period of uncertainty which everyone considers from the point of view of his own wretchedness. And since our life is passing through a period of grief, of sadness and of wretchedness, life, with all its torments, constitutes the very foundation of his theory of art... We affirm that expression can be pure only when it issues directly from the artist...If we demand sincerity of the artist, we must remember that sincerity is not to be found outside the realm of grief, which can be divined in all the pictures Picasso painted in 1901." (12)

While Picasso's profound statements tell us much about his thinking at the time, there were some moments of personal intimate emotions exhibited on a canvas that would be very different from subjects mirroring the "wretchedness" of life. The portrait of Sabartès was his interpretation of his dear friend's spiritual inner being. However, during the late summer Picasso had executed the iconic Child With A Dove (collection of The Emir Of Qatar) (see image)



Pablo Picasso Child Holding A Dove 1901

a composition of pleasant memories harking back to his own childhood when his father would paint pigeons. Extremely well known to the public with its wonderful display of tenderness, the consensus of Picasso scholars hold that it signifies the transition into the Blue Period (see Arts Council England link concerning export ban & recent price of painting before being sold to The Emir Of Qatar). <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/britain-s-favourite-picasso-heads-to-qatar-after-failure-to-raise-50m-8569405.html>

Yet later there was to be another composition of sincerity that would be executed in autumn. And although it would possess an oasis of introspective solitude very different from Picasso's former compositions, it would additionally mirror his daily grim thoughts of melancholia. It was to be eventually titled *Femme Sortant du Bain* (later at times referred to as: *Femme Sortant du Bain* or *Femme a la Toilette*).

Here within its very predominantly monochrome aura of blue melancholia Picasso would bring forth, complemented via remarkably expressive brushstrokes and vibrant areas of impasto, a compelling and memorable depiction of compassion, solitude and contemplation. While *Child with a Dove* was of the artist's memory of long ago, the signed *L'enterrement de Casagemas* (*its title probably assigned by someone other than Picasso since his preference was not to title his own paintings*) was of the present time having also been executed within the walls of his multiple story walk-up apartment/studio at 130 Boulevard de Clichy - Casagemas' old apartment. It would be the same apartment/studio that Picasso would thereafter execute during the autumn of 1901 same as *The Blue Room (Le Tub)*, *The Phillips Collection*, Washington, D.C. (see image).

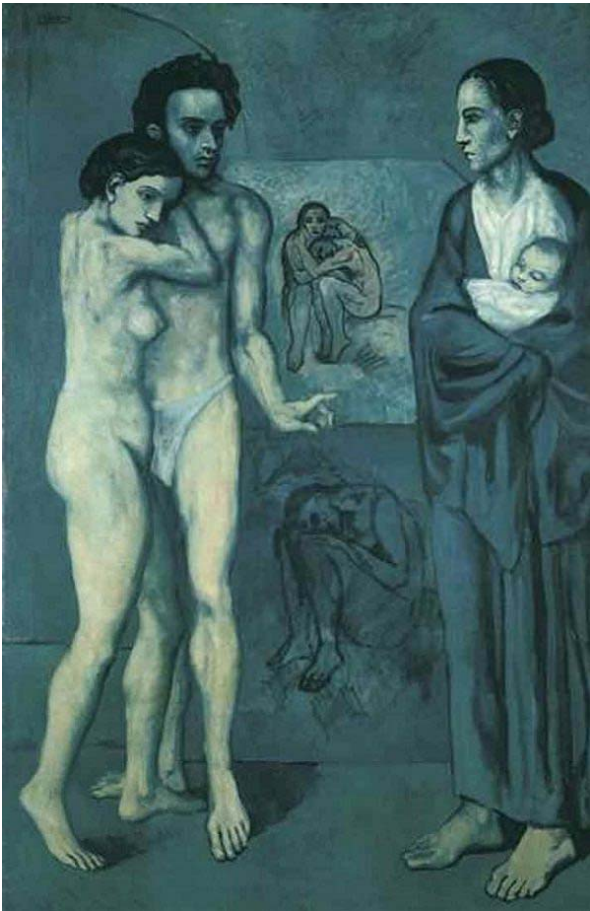


A blue room (A tub), 1901 - Pablo Picasso

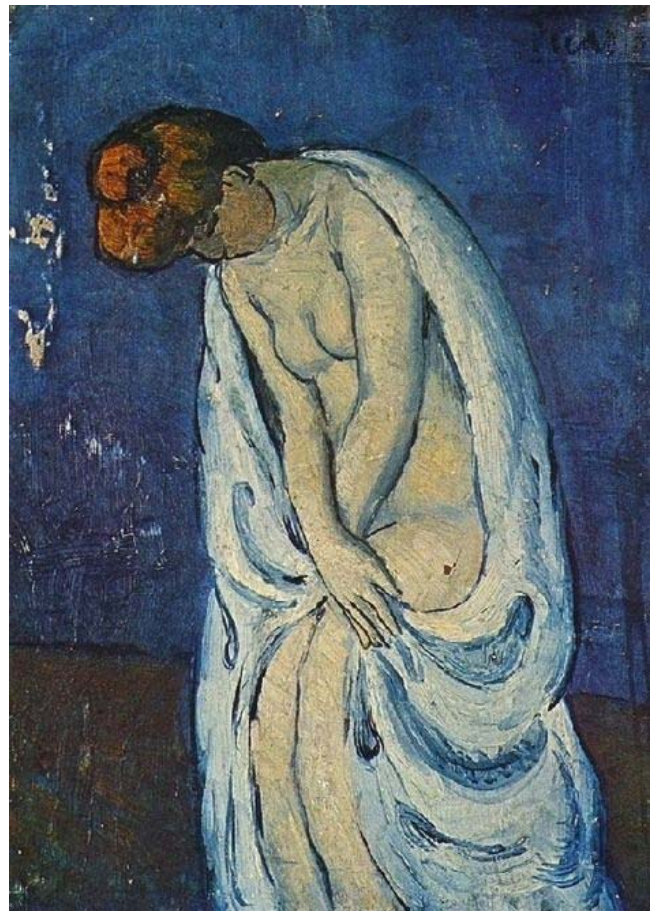
Very slightly echoing the magnificent interior compositions of Edgar Degas' bathing women but without any evidence of furnishings, we see before us in the seminal *Femme Sortant du Bain* a young and sensual partially nude woman named Blanche who was Picasso's mistress at that time. John Richardson describes Blanche as, "a mysterious girl," (13) and would further comment:

"By the fall of 1901, Picasso's life, like his work, had settled into a classic bohemian pattern, limited by the confines of Montmartre, limited, too, by poverty. Odette had faded from the picture: Germaine was with Pinchot [her future husband] and so was now a friend rather than a mistress. The artist's new girl was called Blanche; nothing is known about her. Drawings in an unpublished sketchbook confirm that she was elegant as well as pretty - probably a midinette, like Germaine. Her reign was short. By the end of the year, if not before, she seems to have been out of Picasso's life." (14)

Having completed her bathing (utilizing the apartment's shallow zinc pan which is not shown) she gently begins to cover herself with a blue-white peignoir (loose-fitting woman's robe or gown). Placed within an austere blue nebulous environment she stands upon an area that is equally austere in its dark shading (a similar colored shaded area will be found in some future compositions (i.e., *La Vie*, 1903, Cleveland Art Museum (see image).



Picasso - La Vie (1903)



Picasso, 1901 Femme sortant du bain

Our eyes of course have already been attracted to her isolated right hand whose fingers are somewhat elongated paralleling the carefully placed fingers and hands of other portrayed individuals in Blue Period compositions (i.e. The Poet Sabartès - Le Bock, 1901). Jamie Sabartès comments on his interpretation of Picasso's hands:

"...the hands in Picasso's blue work seem to seek one another's warmth. Some are outstretched as if the finger tips wished to touch what they are reaching for, hands that denote fear and throb with anxiety; some timid, others frozen with cold, others astir as if to banish solitude." (15)

She has also paused to partially cover her psychological vulnerability as she silently experiences the ambivalent state of undress where one is not totally nude nor clothed. Reaffirming Pierre-Auguste Renoir's statement of, "how drapery brings out the form," as she pulls the peignoir its fabric drapes in lush contours complementing the soft feminine contours of her modulated blue-tinted body which merges delightfully with her rose colored flesh. Future compositions of women would have draped garments too, but their contoured folds would be dark blue and with their heavy appearance they would signify an even greater sorrowful condition of their owners (i.e., Mother and Child, 1901,) Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; (see image)



Pablo Picasso. Mother and Child (Mother and Child), 1901

and Two Sisters-The Meeting, 1902, Hermitage Museum. (see image a few pages previously). Alone with her thoughts, represented by her eyes being closed in a self-imposed contemplation to psychologically blot out the world via darkness, this metaphorical artistic element will be observed in many forthcoming Blue Period figures (i.e., the iconic and slightly smaller dimensioned Woman Ironing, 1901, Metropolitan Museum of Art (see image).



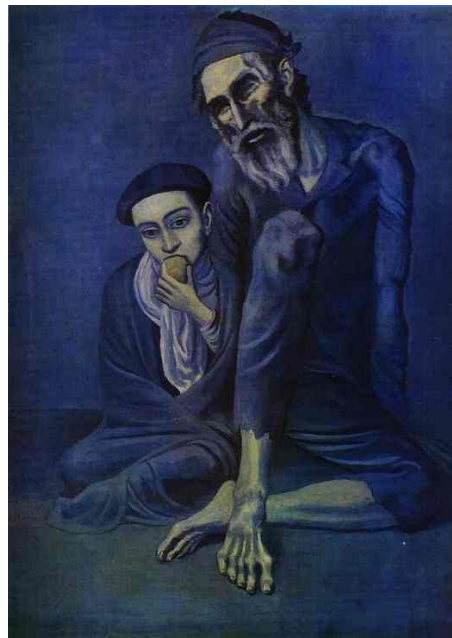
Pablo Picasso - 1901 - Woman Ironing - The Met

Said artistic element in L'enterrement de Casagemas would also foreshadow several later 1903 notable subjects having to do with a more severe category of solitude, that being the permanent physical condition which Picasso was extremely fearful of – blindness (i.e., The Blind man's Meal, 1903, The Metropolitan Museum Of Art;



The Blind man's Meal – 1903 - Met

The Old Jew, 1903, Pushkin State Museum;



Pablo Picasso. Old Jew and a Boy, 1903

and The Old Guitarist, 1903, The Art Institute Of Chicago (see image).



The Old Guitarist - 1903 - Picasso

Delving further into the subject of darkness, whether self-imposed or not, John Richardson observes that, *"...if the obsessively superstitious artist [Picasso] invoked the prospect of what he most feared in life, was not this a way of protecting himself against it."* (16) Being now aware of the artist's extreme fear of losing his sight, even partially similar to his father's dilemma, after viewing such canvases with their thought-provoking subjects we may remind ourselves of Picasso's metaphorical cryptic statement about the darkness in life and art: *"Painting is a blind man's profession. He paints not what he sees, but what he feels, what he tells himself about what he has seen."* (17) And eventually decades later in a very popular 1934 multi-edition aquatint, Picasso's philosophy and fear would still be in evidence as he depicts himself as a blind mythical Spanish minotaur being led by his then young mistress Marie-Thérèse Walter portrayed as a little girl - *Blind Minotaur Led By A Little Girl In The Night*, 1934 (Metropolitan Museum Of Art, and various museums (see image).



Blind Minotaur Led by a Little Girl in the Night, 1934, by Pablo Picasso

Blue Period compositions (i.e., *Woman Ironing*, 1901, The Metropolitan Museum Of, and its larger 1904 same titled interpretation in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; (see image))



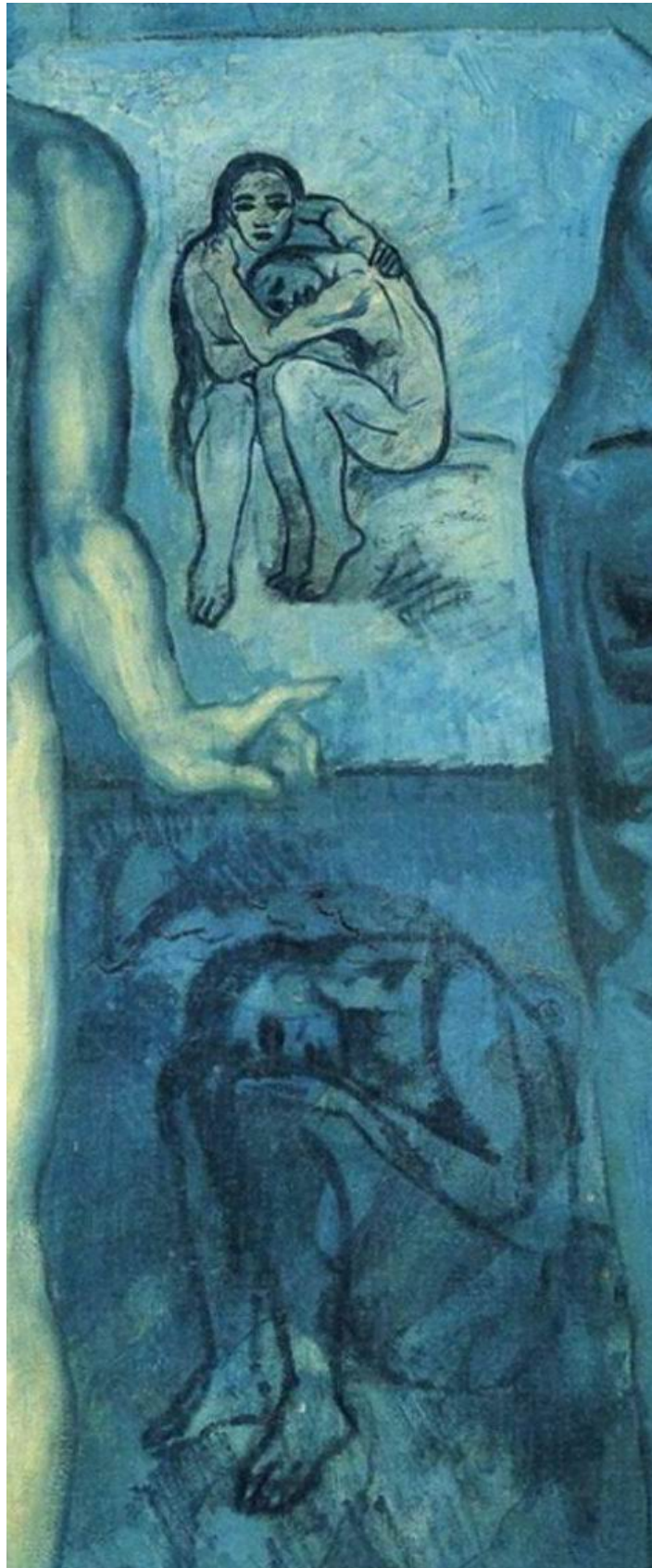
Pablo Picasso - 1904 - Woman Ironing -

La Soupe, 1902, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (see image)



Picasso - La Soupe, 1902, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

; the depicted 2 background paintings of 'crouching nudes' within La Vie, 1903, Cleveland Art Museum (see image);



Center of the Picasso - La Vie, 1903

and *The Old Guitarist*, 1903, The Art Institute of Chicago. Art historian Denys Chevalier comments:

"As Picasso defined it in plastic terms, this isolation weighs down the shoulders of the painter's models. They bend, they are bowed, they arch, as if succumbing to the weight of the fatality that crushes them. There is no question that this deformation, which appears almost consistently in all his paintings done toward the end of his stay in Paris, is symbolic in origin. It is neither gratuitous or arbitrary, but deliberate and profoundly significant. In Picasso's case, dramatization makes us come face to face with an alien world; not hostile, but alien and this world makes an impression on us only to the degree that, in our turn, we are equally and fundamentally separate, alienated beings." (18)

It is said that by viewing certain Picasso paintings one will be able to very partially understand his experiences and emotions at a given time of his life. Accordingly, as one observes the present painting, and remembering the severe financial and psychological deprivations that Picasso experienced during his Blue Period, especially in late 1901, he has suggested to us a sliver image of his life. Indeed, with his continual artistic ability to execute images that require keen observation, Picasso's *L'enterrement de Casagemas* is not just about the death of his friend Casagemas but those who knew him in deep contemplation and experiencing a resignation of his life - it also concerns the artist himself. Like the Renaissance artist Michelangelo who stated that, "every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it," Picasso wrenched out of the gloom and despair of his Paris late 1901 Blue Period life (the painting's seemingly blue-white marble striations in garb form) a serene and memorable depiction of compassion within his own life at that time. Yes, it is as if his personal humanity had emerged from that figurative slab of marble stone allowing himself to always remember his own vulnerability, and surrounding dismal circumstances, as compared to his valiant and unsuccessful attempts to persuade Parisians and others about the rationality and aesthetic importance of his blue canvases. Secondly, there is before us yet another underlying and wonderful allegorical interpretation: mirrored in the guise of this special Picasso new blue art form emerging away from the known past and even present 1901 artistic thinking of the art world. Interestingly, preceding interpretations partially explain why Picasso executed the composition with very bold brushstrokes as well as remarkable textured multi-layered impasto - all evidence of a great passionate intensity of purpose. And while the painting is larger... it was not easy for him to acquire larger canvases as those compositions executed decades later (when he could afford the larger canvases), He did seem to decide to acquire such a canvas for this special work, for all of Picasso's artistic and personal intentions have been exquisitely and thoughtfully accomplished within this intimate, stunning and historic portrayal of *c'est la vie* - Picasso's life.

Retaining very few Blue Period paintings for his private collection, with his very superstitious beliefs that some objects had certain mystical powers concerning life and death, specifically for him, Picasso did not want the public to view his long ago very personal memory of that time period in his life. Paralleling a seemingly *Portrait of Dorian Gray* Parisian aura, he sincerely felt the painting was always to be his and his alone. But, He allowed *L'enterrement de Casagemas* to be exhibited.

Being intensely private it was only after the artist's passing that the reality of the world's inquisitiveness would finally better understand the personal, complex and monumental life of Picasso. As already stated, the completely and independently developed L'enterrement de Casagemas has always been considered the companion work of the iconic painting entitled

Evocation -The Burial of Casagemas- 1901 - Pablo Picasso

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Recognized as one of Picasso's most well-known and important Blue Period compositions.

"This is a historic painting, the first manifestation of a subject that will come to obsess Picasso: a specific model in a specific studio at a specific time - descriptive as a diary entry, but allegorical in its implications." (19)

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that L'enterrement de Casagemas should certainly be equally described as such, as well as the painting being a descriptive diary entry with its own allegorical implications concerning Picasso's life - and its execution was at the beginning of Blue Period. although the majority of these canvases will parallel the present painting's concentration on a specific subject.

Furthermore, L'enterrement de Casagemas gives us another fascinating historical observation to contemplate: Casagemas faceless body, stylistically, foreshadows the abstract faces of the Mourners with closed eyes, and their complementing drooping heads, depicted later paintings as well.

Indeed, much like other Blue Period canvases, the figures within L'enterrement de Casagemas simply do not have to contend with groupings of distractions. The composition has been pared down to the essentials with its accompanying predominantly austere blue background (a trait in forthcoming canvases), allowing the observer to focus solely upon the Mourners in their solitude and melancholy contemplation of something unknown - again a forthcoming omnipresent Blue Period occurrence. And whereas L'enterrement de Casagemas has Casagemas modulated flesh color merging with a warm white/bluish color throughout his shrouded body), L'enterrement de Casagemas composition depicts the inanimate statue of all in the subjects in tinted blue. Certainly, the study of light being projected upon all figures has contributed to these apparitions with their illumination and shadows. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe Most faces including Casagemas are illusive and mysterious. And does not retain the same shadow as does Casagemas - apparently a possible artistic metaphor of gloom that is accompanying a person's troubled young life.

Finally, while this composition is indeed complementing and telling portraits of Picasso's life at that time, L'enterrement de Casagemas obviously mirrors a more personal revelation in approaching an understanding of the artist's thoughts and emotions.

Because of its significance within the artist's oeuvre, and having always been prominently exhibited since 1932 as well as in other respected Galleries (compared to the present painting being secluded in a private collection, virtually all scholarly publications which contain a detailed description on Picasso's early Blue Period include a section about Picasso and his relationship with Casagemas.

Picasso had come to Paris in the spring of 1901 to exhibit his knowingly artistic genius, but as history reminds us, the world usually does not initially recognize genius at its first glance especially from someone who is so young. It was Paris that would allow him to seek out new approaches in placing upon canvas images very different from the official parochial and academic thinking of his native Spain. But it was also Paris that would plunge him into the depths of despair, the nadir of his life, while he searched to create groundbreaking compositions that not only revolutionized the modern art world of the early 20th century, they would as well be considered a significant segment of its foundations. For the remainder of Picasso's 1901 stay in Paris his financial condition, vulnerability and despondency became worse with everyday reminding him of his dismal failure in being a respected and recognized artist. Accordingly, since he was now penniless and with no prospects in selling his blue paintings, after his father sent him train fare Picasso decided to return to Barcelona where he could live under the roof of his parent's home. However, in December just before his trip during early January of 1902, in recreating another aura of solitude and contemplation, he executed the bearded Self Portrait (Musée National Picasso) which not only mirrored his very serious dilemma but specifically evoked an intense personal pathos. (Paralleling *L'enterrement de Casagemas* in being a composition having a totally isolated figure void of any surrounding subject distractions, the unsigned Self Portrait would also remain in the artist's collection. But unlike the present painting, Picasso allowed his Self Portrait to be exhibited a number of times beginning in 1932.) Eventually Picasso would return to Paris late in 1902, and after another very extended stay in Barcelona in 1903 he would permanently return to Paris in 1904. And eventually after 1905, the year when the respected and influential American/Parisian collectors Leo and Gertrude Stein began collecting his blue canvases, the world (along with the formerly reluctant Parisian dealer Ambroise Vollard) finally took notice and recognized Picasso's genius. To that end, with their aesthetic, respected and contemplative depictions of the human condition, Picasso's Blue Period canvases (his first signature style) have always universally been very important destinations to be experienced and discussed as they distinctively grace the walls of the world's notable institutions.

(see image)



Pablo Picasso - Self-portrait, 1901. Oil on canvas, 81 x 60 cm.

Yes, Casagemas' death was the genesis of Picasso's decision to execute his intriguing, radical and monumental blue canvases (all three descriptive attributes that will be equally possessed by canvases within the forthcoming Rose and Cubist Periods). However, the artist's keen observation and personal experience of the many elements of life with its suffering, pain, sadness, passion, solitude, and its inevitable ending with death (his greatest fear), were all thoughts that never left him - even after he became the iconic Picasso known throughout the world with his accompanying ever increasing financial success. Indeed, on June 30, 1972 within just 9 months before his passing on April 8, 1973, Picasso executed a color drawing of himself, and unknowingly, this now very well-known and thought-provoking composition (among several other drawings at this approximate time) was to be his last significant colored self-portrait. Commenting to his friend Pierre Daix, Picasso said, ***"I did a drawing yesterday. I think I really hit upon something...It doesn't look like anything ever done."*** (21) Interestingly, the drawing was to be eventually titled Self-Portrait Facing Death (Private Collection) (see image), and Picasso's face is imbued with the same color which mirrored his life in the autumn of 1901.



Self-Portrait Facing Death - 1972 - Picasso

The groundbreaking and seminal blue canvas *L'enterrement de Casagemas* depicting the true loss he felt for his dear friend Casagemas in February 1901 in Paris obviously meant something very special to Picasso. He never discussed its appreciable array of very significant iconography nor why he executed it - but for certain, throughout his entire adventurous life, the painting always held Picasso's attention with its Greek chorus imagery reminding him of what life was during the bleak autumn of 1901 and the artistic blue epiphany that was profoundly and intellectually upon him. As an enduring and memorable composition that compels the viewer to stand before it seeking a psychological dialogue with the artist, *L'enterrement de Casagemas* is not only regarded as being an early and very personal hallmark within the documentation of Picasso's life, it is especially a very unique celebration of that life. We may never completely know the reasoning for his true position to this painting, but similar to other unanswered Blue Period mysteries, no doubt Picasso would have certainly been pleased with this circumstance.

SOURCE NOTES:

- 1) Pierre Daix, *La Vie de peintre de Pablo Picasso*, Paris, 1977, p. 470
- 2) John Richardson, *A Life Of Picasso*, vol. 1, New York, 1991, p. 199
- 3) Marilyn McCully, *A Picasso Anthology*, Princeton, 1981, p. 35
- 4) Pierre Daix, *La Vie de peintre de Pablo Picasso*, Paris, 1977, p. 49, no. 25
- 5) Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, New York, 1958, p. 80
- 6) Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, *Picasso: Birth Of A Genius*, New York, 1972, pp. 127, 133
- 7) Pierre Daix & Georges Boudaille, *Picasso, The Blue and Rose Periods*, London, 1967, p. 56
- 8) *Ibid*, p. 154
- 9) Brassai, *Picasso and Company*, Garden City, 1966, p. 132
- 10) John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1, New York, 1991, p. 219
- 11) Jamie Sabartès, *Picasso: An Intimate Portrait*, New York, 1948, p. 63

- 12) Ibid, p. 65
- 13) John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1, New York, 1991, p. 218
- 14) Ibid, p. 224
- 15) Jamie Sabartès, *Picasso: An Intimate Portrait*, New York, 1948, p. 67
- 16) John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1, New York, 1991, p. 279
- 17) Jean Cocteau, "War and Peace," part I, *Journals*, 1956, p. 49
- 18) Denys Chevalier, *Picasso: The Blue and Rose Periods*, New York, 1969, pp. 36 & 43
- 19) John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1, New York, 1991, p. 226
- 20) Pierre Daix, *Picasso, Life and Art*, Paris, 1987, p. 29
- 21) Pierre Daix, *La Vie de peintre de Pablo Picasso*, Paris, 1977, p. 399

Picasso, Angel Fernández de Soto, and Casagemas

