

Steptoe

Diversity & Art: A Virtual Tour

Pablo Picasso

Spain (1881-1973)

Femme à la Mantille

from *Le Carmen des Carmen*



Work

Alan Riding, British author, journalist and longtime correspondent of *The New York Times*, on the occasion of the exhibition *Picasso-Carmen: Sol y Sombra* presented in 2007 at the Musée Picasso in Paris, wrote that many women “served as Pablo Picasso's muses, but they were not enough. He also sought inspiration from fictional women. And who better than Carmen . . .”

A fictional and sensual character from the novella by Frenchman Prosper Mérimée and passed on to eternity through Georges Bizet's similarly named opera, Carmen is profoundly Spanish, and, for Picasso, emblematic of his deep southern Spanish roots in Andalucía, a Spanish autonomous community, which is recognized as a historical nationality.

While Carmen makes her appearance in many instances in Picasso's work, his livre d'artiste *Le Carmen des Carmen*, which he illustrated in 1949 and included engravings, presents an unexpected rendition of Carmen. According to art historian James Voorhies, Picasso's mantilla bedecked woman in *Le Carmen des Carmen* is “surprisingly tame,” simple and austere.

About the Artist

One of the defining artists of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso was born on October 20, 1881, in the city of Malaga, in Andalusia, Spain, though he spent most of his adult life in France. The son of an academic painter and art teacher, Picasso surpassed his father in painting by the age of 13, and left behind a remarkable legacy and more than 20,000 works of art.

Among his most famous and important works are *Les Femmes d'Alger* and *Guernica*, a poignant depiction of the bombing of Guernica, Spain, by German and Italian forces during the Spanish Civil War, an event that traumatized Picasso.

Co-founder of the Cubist movement, and at the cusp of most artistic developments for the better part of the 20th century, Picasso influenced modern and contemporary art more than any other artist of his time. Ancient and tribal art played an important role in urging Picasso towards Cubism. While the influence of African tribal art on him has been researched and well documented, it is only recently that art historians are looking into the influence upon Picasso of the ancient Cyclades, the Greek islands on the Aegean Sea.