

Picasso, Pablo

By [Annette Becker](#)

Picasso, *Pablo*

Artist

Born 24 October 1881 in Málaga, Spain

Died 08 April 1973 in Mougins, France

Summary

A citizen of neutral Spain, Pablo Picasso did not fight in the war, but his avant-garde artwork accompanied war culture right up to its use in camouflage.

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Introduction

Three artists parted ways on mobilization day: [André Derain \(1880-1954\)](#) and the two inventors of cubism, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and [Georges Braque \(1882-1963\)](#). The [neutral](#) Spaniard saw the two Frenchmen off on a train for the front, but did not enlist himself. While Picasso's interest in the war focused on his friends who were mobilized, killed, wounded or maimed – like Braque and [Guillaume Apollinaire \(1880-1918\)](#), whose portrait he painted as an artilleryman, then wounded –, he focused above all on his work, between cubism, pointillism and a certain tendency for neo-classicism which in 1919 was called a “return to order”.

Cubism and the War

At the start of the war, cubism was incorrectly perceived as a German invention and scorned as “*kubist Kultur*”, partly because Picasso's art dealer was the German [Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler \(1884-1979\)](#) who was forced to flee to [Switzerland](#). And yet cubism and its fragmentation of pictorial space – like all of the modernisms, futurism and vorticism – influenced [camouflage](#). According to [Gertrude Stein \(1874-1946\)](#), when Picasso saw the first

camouflaged canons in Paris, he exclaimed, “we created that”.¹ In Rome, where he went with [Jean Cocteau \(1889-1963\)](#), Picasso worked as a set painter on the ballet *Parade* choreographed by [Léonide Massine \(1896-1979\)](#) for [Serge Diaghilev's \(1872-1929\)](#) Russian ballet, set to music by [Eric Satie \(1866-1925\)](#). On 18 May 1917, *Parade* premiered at the Châtelet theatre in Paris, but the avant-gardism of the whole show and of Picasso's cubist masks more particularly enraged the audience. He went back to Harlequins – perhaps the camouflage in his own war.

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Notes

1. Stein, Gertrude: *Autobiographie d'Alice Tokias*, Paris 1934, (in English, 1933). [↑]

Selected Bibliography

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- [Becker, Annette: **Voir la Grande Guerre. Un autre récit, 1914-2014**, Paris, 2014: Armand Colin.](#)
- [Richardson, John: **A life of Picasso, 1907-1917. The painter of modern life**, vol. 2, New York, 1996: Random House.](#)

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External Links

- [Pablo Picasso \(The Museum of Modern Art\) \(Database\)](#)
- [Pablo Ruiz Picasso \(Article\)](#)
- [Raynal, Maurice: Picasso, Munich 1921: Delphin-Verlag \(Internet Archive\) \(Book\)](#)

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