Braque and Picasso in the Dark Years: A comparative consideration of the still-life paintings completed during the Occupation of Paris, 1940-1944

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Braque and Picasso in the Dark Years:

A comparative consideration of the still-life paintings completed during the Occupation of Paris, 1940–1944

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Chapter 1: An Introduction

The pairing of Georges Braque (1882–1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) summons to mind their groundbreaking collaboration that led to the invention of Cubism in the years before World War I. From approximately 1907, when they first met, until 1914, the two artists forged an intimate working relationship. The close proximity of their studios at the time—both men lived and worked in Montmartre on the Right Bank of Paris—facilitated nearly daily discussions and exchanges. The partnership was so profound that they often equated it to that of spouses within a marriage, mountaineers roped together, or the aviation pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright. Taking Paul Cézanne’s radical reconfiguration of perspective and chiaroscuro as their initial model, together they demolished the conventions of the Western pictorial tradition, all the while leaving traditional genres of subject matter intact.

Braque and Picasso’s revolutionary rapport ended in August of 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. On August 2, 1914, Picasso accompanied Braque and fellow artist André Derain to the train station in Avignon, and the two enlisted Frenchmen traveled to Paris for deployment. Picasso’s statement that he “never saw them again,” while not historically accurate, symbolically underscored the finality of his professional relationship with Braque.¹ Never again would Braque and Picasso have the same creative dialogue that they experienced in the years prior to World War I. Even though they eventually shared an art dealer, Paul Rosenberg (1881–1959),

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their personal lives, social circles, and aesthetic choices had little in common during the interwar period.  

Gravely injured in May of 1915 during World War I, Braque required a lengthy convalescence that prevented him from fully returning to his artistic practice until the summer of 1917. Having been absent from his studio for nearly three years, he attempted to resume his work where he had left off. Braque’s paintings over the next two decades (and throughout much of his later career) remained linked to a Cubist style, although in the 1920s he also explored a version of classicism in a series of female figures, the Canephorae, and incorporated mythological motifs into his works of the early 1930s. By the middle of that decade, Braque returned to the subject of still life with renewed interest, incorporating experimental paint handling, complex compositions, and bold color. 

Picasso remained in Paris during the war and in 1917 began designing stage sets and costumes for Serge Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes. Beyond this foray into theater, over the following decades Picasso experimented with a range of styles and subject matter. In a constant state of metamorphosis, his art moved between neo-classicism, surrealism, and a wholly new, expressive mode of Cubism, while his subject matter expanded to include history painting and mythology. 

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the two artists found themselves once more united in circumstance and in studio practice. On September 1, Germany invaded Poland; two days later, France, along with Britain, declared war on Germany. For the next eight months, the French experienced the drôle de guerre, or phony war, named for the lack of direct military action. In the spring of 1940, however, the Germans advanced along the Western Front: the

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2 Whereas Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler represented both artists during their heroic partnership, his exile from France during World War I caused Braque and Picasso to find different dealers in the immediately ensuing years. Braque found initial support from Léonce Rosenberg—signing a contract with Rosenberg from 1917 until 1920—yet he returned to Kahnweiler from 1920 until 1923. By 1924, Braque changed representation again, signing a contract with Paul Rosenberg, who had become Picasso’s dealer in 1918.
French government abandoned Paris on June 10, declaring the capital an open city. The Germans arrived and began the Occupation on June 14. Under the terms of the June 22 armistice, France was divided into the Occupied Zone in the north, including Paris, and the Free Zone in the south. With these conditions in place, the French government—under the leadership of Marshal Philippe Pétain—organized itself in the Free Zone, in the town of Vichy. Hitler arrived in Paris one day after the signing of the armistice, after making sure that the official French capitulation occurred in the same location, Rethondes in the forest of Compiègne, and in the same railway car, where the Germans surrendered in humiliation to France at the end of World War I. The Führer made a rapid tour of the city, stopping at the capital’s most famous sites in what would be his only visit to Paris, though he left his military and cultural representatives there in full control and they soon carried off most of the city’s art treasures.3

The fall of France had dire consequences for the civilian population, including artists. Many artists fled, either to the Free Zone outside of the French capital or to other countries altogether.4 Several of the surrealists, as well as other avant-garde artists, including André Breton, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, Jacques Lipchitz, and André Masson, escaped to the United States. Alberto Giacometti returned to Switzerland, while Joan Miró, who in 1939 was initially with Braque on the northern coast of France in Varengeville, where the Frenchman had a house, returned to Spain. Although countless artists remained in the country, many chose to spend the war years in the southern Free Zone. Henri


Matisse was primary among this group; having reportedly considered leaving for Brazil, the artist remained, reasoning that “if everyone who has any values leaves France, what remains of France?” Many of the German nationals living in France at the start of the war found themselves interned, including Hans Bellmer, Max Ernst, and Wols. Ernst later made his way to the United States through the efforts of Varian Fry, an American journalist who enabled many refugees to escape Europe through the Emergency Rescue Committee, while Bellmer and Wols, both released at the end of the drôle de guerre in 1940, hid in the Free Zone for the remainder of the war.

Braque and Picasso made the difficult decision to stay in Occupied Paris. While they were not alone in this decision, they were uniquely similar in how they proceeded with their daily lives during the next four years. Other artists, such as Derain and Jean Dubuffet remained in or near Paris during the Occupation, yet accommodated themselves to the Germans. (Derain was among those artists who traveled to Germany on a Nazi-sponsored propaganda trip, while Dubuffet stopped painting at the war’s start and developed a wine business that prospered from sales to the Nazi armed forces.) Although both Braque and Picasso sought refuge outside of the capital during the initial months of the war, both men returned by the fall of 1940, after the signing of the June armistice. Hindered by the demarcation line that separated the two zones—a “virtual sealed frontier” that could only be crossed if special paperwork was obtained—neither artist traveled or worked outside of the city for the next four years.6 Instead, their worlds were restricted to Paris, and even more so to the confines of their immediate neighborhoods and the


walls of their respective studios. Braque hunkered down with his wife, Marcelle, in their home near Parc Montsouris on the Left Bank, his studio located on the top floor. Picasso, abandoning his apartment on rue la Boétie on the Right Bank, settled into his studio on the rue des Grands Augustins on the Left Bank by 1942, where he could be near to his mistress, Marie-Thérèse Walter, and their daughter, Maya, who resided within walking distance on the Île Saint-Louis, and to his companion Dora Maar, whose apartment on the rue de Savoie was just around the corner from his own.

While the Nazis initiated a cultural policy in France that was less severe than the one imposed in Germany, it nonetheless profoundly affected the creative practice of French artists, in addition to curtailing of civil liberties. The persecution of Jews, including their exclusion from professional activity (and their eventual round-up), carried over from Germany, but in the cultural realm the Nazi objective was otherwise to present a façade of normalcy within France. This intention meant that art schools and exhibitions resumed shortly after the signing of the armistice, although under the auspices of Occupation forces. The German Propaganda-Abteilung (Propaganda Ministry) established a branch in Paris and oversaw all cultural activity: the agency’s approval was required before any type of exhibition, salon, or other such artistic event could proceed. The policy ultimately resulted in self-censorship and the strong prevalence of traditional French painting amongst the publically exhibited art, even if abstract art also found a berth. As scholar Steven Nash describes the Parisian climate at this time, “the artistic content was decidedly conservative, and the criticism that accompanied it markedly right wing, but, on

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7 For further reading on the exhibition of abstract art during the war years, see Michèle Cone, “‘Abstract’ Art as a Veil: Tricolor Painting in Vichy France, 1940–44,” *Art Bulletin*, vol. 74, no. 2 (June 1992): 191–204.
the surface at least, an air of normality prevailed, even if much of the patronage came from Occupation forces.

Living under the Occupation, Braque and Picasso faced the daily uncertainties and hardships that came with military surveillance, loss of civil freedoms, round-ups of suspected enemies, censorship, and shortages of supplies. Although the national acclaim of Braque and the international luster of Picasso helped them stave off persecution or arrest (a possibility, given their modernist style anathema to Nazi ideologues), it did not spare them from the food rationing, lack of heating, curfews, or scrutiny by Nazi soldiers that were endured by all who remained in the Occupied Zone. Both artists continued to work inside the four walls of their studios, yet they suffered the daily discomfts of depravation and restrictions on their expressive freedom, since they could not exhibit or circulate with total independence. Picasso, in particular, was the focus of scrutiny because of his highly publicized anti-Fascist views. German forces apparently heeded a request from General Francisco Franco’s regime to curtail Picasso’s ability to exhibit, retaliation for the artist’s completion of *Guernica* (1937) and the print series *Dream and Lie of Franco* (1937), which directly critiqued the Spanish dictator. Furthermore, with the absence of their dealer Rosenberg, who fled from France in 1940, the economic livelihood of both artists was precarious.

Neither artist fully acquiesced to the Occupation forces, and while their work did not explicitly critique the Nazis, both Braque and Picasso represented wartime themes in real as well as allegorical terms. In 1939, responding to a survey in the French art journal *Cahiers d’art* conducted by art historian Georges Duthuit about the influence of world events on artists, Braque stated:

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9 Cone, *Artists Under Vichy*, 133.
Changes of régime necessarily affect the life of the painter since, like everyone else, he endures his age. But his work depends too much on the past for him to accommodate to the changes of the hour with a clear conscience. . . . Fulfillment requires physical time; if it takes ten years to conceive and execute a canvas, how is the painter supposed to stay abreast of events? A painting is not a snapshot. Once again, this does not mean that the painter is not influenced, concerned and more by history; he can suffer without being militant. Only let us distinguish, categorically, between art and current affairs.¹⁰

In turn, as the war came to a close in 1944, Picasso declared:

I have not painted the war because I am not the kind of painter who goes out like a photographer for something to depict. But I have no doubt that the war is in these paintings I have done. Later on perhaps the historians will find them and show that my style has changed under the war’s influence. Myself, I do not know.¹¹

At the end of World War II, Braque’s and Picasso’s friends and colleagues lauded the men’s actions as examples of the French spirit and symbols of resistance for having spent the duration of the war years living and working in Paris under the Occupation. The photographer Brassaï (1899–1984), speaking about Picasso, explained to the French poet Jacques Prévert toward the end of 1943, “He stayed. His presence among us is a comfort and a stimulant not only for us his friends, but even for those who do not know him.”¹² Some four decades later, on the occasion of a Braque exhibition at the Maeght Foundation in 1980, the French poet Francis Ponge (1899–1988) pointedly recalled, “During the Second World War, the presence or rather the idea of Braque (that of the man and the work) permitted us, no matter where in France we found ourselves, not only not to despair, but in hope and patience . . . with all its risks, to


¹² Brassaï, Conversations avec Picasso, 82, as quoted in Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 134. A slightly different wording of this statement can also be found in Brassaï, Picasso and Company, trans. Francis Price (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966), 65.
fight.”13 Such statements by their peers about character, resilience, and inspiration have been taken up in recent decades by scholars seeking to bring new attention to the wartime production of Braque and Picasso. On the whole, there are far more studies on Picasso than on Braque; Picasso’s history of taking a political stance, as opposed to Braque, who remained unmistakably silent on such matters, lends itself to this attention. While scholarship for both artists suggests that the war influenced their style and imagery, the discourse on Picasso more clearly and consistently makes this argument, while the writing on Braque is more ambiguous. By comparing the two artists’ work and actions, this thesis aims to demonstrate that they were more closely aligned in wartime comportment and artistic production than the current scholarship might indicate.

_Braque: The Late Works_, an exhibition organized by the Royal Academy of Arts in 1997, was one of the first studies on the artist to consider the content of his wartime production. Dealing with the period from 1941 until the artist’s death in 1963, the exhibition treated the war years as a mere prelude to what was termed the “three great cycles of paintings,” all of which came after World War II: billiard tables, studios, and birds.14 While the exhibition’s curator, John Golding, acknowledged that the wartime paintings tended toward austerity and were “at times even tragic in their implication,” he did not elaborate on these observations and dwelled, instead, on a purely formal analysis of the works.15

A more comprehensive analysis had to wait until the publication of Alex Danchev’s 2005 biography, _Georges Braque: A Life_, which devotes an entire chapter to the period of war and

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13 Francis Ponge, “Bref condensé de notre dette à jamais et re-co-naisssance à Braque particulièrement en cet été 80,” as quoted in Danchev, _Georges Braque: A Life_, 278.


Occupation. While Danchev’s text mainly concerns Braque’s daily routine rather than his art, it provides crucial information that informs the artist’s iconography of the period. Danchev suggests that Braque’s sense of foreboding was evident in the “quiverings and intimations” found in the sudden appearance of skulls in his paintings of 1938. He carefully traces Braque’s movements across France in the spring of 1940 as the artist sought refuge during the German invasion. He documents the artist’s limited exhibitions during the Occupation, most notably the 1943 Salon d’Automne, as well as his very few interactions with the Nazis. Ultimately, Danchev characterizes Braque’s comportment as one of “active passivity”: in his view, Braque pointedly avoided either confrontation or compliance, while creating still lifes that served as “battle pieces” with their understated, but telling iconography. Though an oxymoron, Danchev’s term “active passivity” is a useful one that has influenced my understanding of Braque’s wartime works.

In 2013, the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum in St. Louis organized Georges Braque and the Cubist Still Life, 1928–1945, the only exhibition to date that has focused exclusively on the artist’s mid-career. In her essay for the catalogue, Karen Butler analyzes the works within the social and political context of the war and Occupation. Moving beyond the daily wants and hurdles reconstructed by Danchev, Butler examines publications dating from the period: Braque’s previously mentioned 1939 Cahiers d’art interview with art historian Georges Duthuit on the correlation between historical events and artistic production; the largely positive critical reception of Braque’s exhibition at the 1943 Salon d’Automne; and Jean Paulhan’s 1944 Cahiers d’art essay, “Braque ou le sens du caché,” in which the French writer defended “Braque’s right to aesthetic autonomy” and to create a “hidden world” within his work (a particularly potent sentiment amidst the French épuration, the purge of suspected collaborators that followed the

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16 Danchev, Georges Braque: A Life, 205.

17 Ibid, 210, 223.
Butler finds that the paintings possess an ambiguity that defies straightforward analysis and, perhaps purposefully on the part of the artist, simultaneously appealed to both “radical and conservative critics alike.” Butler argues that the artist’s stated views about his work as well as the critical reading of it “tended to highlight the autonomous nature of his Cubist pictorial worlds, [and] it is precisely in their insistent lack of political engagement that one can locate the historical specificity.” She concludes that the paintings “are about the war precisely by being not about the war,” a statement as confounding as the images themselves, though one that reinforces Danchev’s concept of Braque’s “active passivity.”

As noted above, Picasso’s World War II period has been more trenchantly addressed than that of Braque, with direct connections made between contemporaneous events and his paintings. Immediately after the war, in 1946, Harriet Janis and Sidney Janis published Picasso: The Recent Years, 1939–1946. Finding Picasso’s paintings to have “perhaps the most overpowering impact of any he has ever done,” the Janises describe a “fierce energy and challenging imagery” contained within, which they see as evidence that the war’s impact is present within Picasso’s work. Indeed, they state, “that the war had a great effect upon Picasso as a person with a deeply felt sense of social responsibility is self-evident. An examination of his canvases

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19 Ibid, 24.

20 Ibid, 29.

21 Ibid.

chronologically will show its strong influence upon the mood and temper of his work.” In particular, they found “symbolic overtone” in the appearance of skulls and death heads. As the Janises aptly state, Picasso’s political affiliations—most especially his 1944 allegiance to the Communist party—affect the reception of his work, as evidenced by the mixed reactions his works received at the Salon de la Libération that same year. They credit much of the vocal dissent to “the lay public of Paris,” who attended purely for “the excitement caused by the artistically and politically reactionary elements.” Yet, “countering shallow diatribes is the genuine appreciation of poets, writers, artists, collectors, and others, who, wherever possible, give moral and spiritual support to the painter.” Although now outmoded, the Janis publication remains informative as a period piece, most especially for giving an early account of the postwar reception of Picasso’s work.

Mary-Margaret Goggin, in her 1985 PhD dissertation *Picasso and his Art during the German Occupation, 1940–1944*, was the first to construct a systematic, chronological catalogue of the artist’s wartime works. Her objective was “to determine to what extent and in what ways the circumstances of the Occupation are reflected or expressed in Picasso’s art of those years” through a “complex interweaving of historical, personal, and artistic influences.” Overall, Goggin asserts that many of the images can in fact be linked to daily duress, and argues that after Picasso met Françoise Gilot in May of 1943, his new love was the source of inspiration for the remainder of the war. While hers is the most comprehensive study up to that point in time,

23 Ibid, 12.
24 Ibid, 14.
Goggin recognized that later scholars who would have access to the archives of the Musée Picasso in Paris (which were not yet opened to researchers at the time of Goggin’s dissertation) would augment, even alter, her theses.

The 1992 exhibition *Picasso and Things*, organized for the Cleveland Museum of Art by Jean Sutherland Boggs, included twenty-six still-life paintings from the war years, each of which is given an in-depth iconographical examination. Turning to existing sources, Boggs interweaves previous scholarship in order to offer more nuanced considerations of the evolution of various series within the artist’s oeuvre. That same year, Michèle Cone’s *Artists Under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution* was the first study to look at the ways in which artists collaborated or resisted through their art and exhibitions, taking into account Nazi cultural policy in France. In her chapter on Picasso, Cone attempts to determine to what degree the artist resisted or collaborated. In the paintings of the period, she sees “the tension of waiting” and “signs of confinement,” indicative of life in Occupied Paris, “albeit in forms perhaps only obvious to those who endured these years in particularly intense expectation.”

Indeed, she asserts that “conscious of the danger posed by the Germans watching over his work, Picasso seems to have held back his partisanship intensely. . . . But a social or even a political subtext can often be detected,” for instance, in the paintings of bull’s skulls. Ultimately, Cone concludes that Picasso navigated a fine line between his associations with the Nazi soldiers who visited him in his studio (including Gestapo agents and others who arrived “in various guises . . . on spying missions” and those genuine admirers who repeatedly called on him, such as German soldiers Ernst Jünger and Gerhard Heller) and members of the resistance who fought for France’s

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27 Cone, *Artists Under Vichy*, 141.

28 Ibid, 143.
freedom. Cone sees this fine line as analogous to the style and subject matter of his paintings—neither overtly antagonistic, yet in no way pleasant, obliging, or escapist.29

In a similar revisionist vein, Laurence Bertrand Dorléac’s *The Art of the Defeat: France 1940–1944*, published in 1993, analyzes the cultural initiatives of the defeated French state and the Vichy regime. Dorléac traces the French administration’s facilitation of the Nazi’s art looting, its self-imposed censorship, its upholding of the Nazi’s exclusionary measures aimed at Jewish citizens, and the leading French artists’ 1941 Nazi-sponsored tour of Germany. She also analyzes the visual culture of Vichy propaganda, most specifically propaganda that extolled artisanal craftsmanship and regionalism. By contrast to this faux revivalism prevalent throughout France, Dorléac asserts that “one of the few artists to stay the course of the modernist adventure was undoubtedly Picasso, in disgrace for embodying everything nobody wanted any longer, if in fact they had ever accepted it.”30 While many of France’s artists heeded the call for a return to French tradition, participating in what Dorléac terms “active collaboration,” Picasso remained unique in his steadfastness to his modernist ideals. She concludes that, during the war and even long afterwards, the French conservatives saw Picasso “not as the champion of a vanishing world—which he was—but rather as the most dangerous defender of ‘modern art’ and a society that was advancing too fast.”31

In the 1998 exhibition *Picasso and the War Years, 1937–1945*, organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the curator Steven Nash provided additional depth to the topic

29 Ibid, 131, 149. Information regarding the visits from German soldiers Jünger and Heller comes from the soldiers’ autobiographies, published in 1980 and 1981, respectively. Mary-Margaret Goggin initially benefitted from these publications in her 1985 dissertation, *Picasso and his Art During the German Occupation*, 193, 205, 207.


31 Ibid, 220.
of Picasso’s wartime activity, a result of the newly opened Picasso Archives at the Musée Picasso in Paris. Despite a more nuanced outline of Picasso’s wartime experience than previously established, Nash maintains the common view that “Picasso referenced the war in ways often oblique but powerful.” Following Cone, he places Picasso’s Occupation-period activities, personal and artistic, in a middle ground, balanced between opposing claims that Picasso was a Resistance hero and, alternately, a collaborationist traitor. Such claims surfaced immediately after the Liberation, mostly based on rumors, yet remained a part of the discourse until new archival documentation became accessible to scholars. Nash finds that the genre of still life was a “key vehicle of expression for Picasso” during the war years, and that the “quotidian, nondescript subjects [within] speak loudly.” This perception, that the war made its presence known throughout Picasso’s still lifes and portraits, pervades each contributing essay within the exhibition catalogue. Indeed, Brigitte Baer, writing about the many portraits of women, observes that Picasso’s “work of this period stinks of war, or rather of the German Occupation, more than that of any other artist during the period.”

Although the wartime iconography and styles of Braque and Picasso have been analyzed in some depth, no single study exists comparing their respective lives and work during this period. This thesis engages in that task, and argues that a close study of their actions and attitudes during the war years reveals they were united in a similar form of resistance, by


34 Ibid, 31, 37.

necessity restricted, cautious—even silent—in their actions and speech, yet visible and coherent in their art. Resistance in this sense does not mean open militant engagement or underground activities against the Occupiers, but a refusal to self-censor, to leave France, or to curtail their creative practice. They incorporated similar motifs and mannerisms evocative of hardship, hunger, darkness, and cold, implicitly criticizing life under the Nazi regime, including French collaborators and a fallen nation. It was not life as normal. The commonalities found in their works suggest that Braque engaged with wartime concerns more than previous scholarship has allowed, and reopens the question of a conscious dialogue between the two artists.

Opportunities for communication between the artists did indeed exist during the war years: both their studios were located on the Left Bank—Braque’s near the Parc Montsouris in the 14th arrondissement and Picasso’s on rue des Grands Augustins in the 6th arrondissement. Records indicate that Braque occasionally joined Picasso at local restaurants such as Le Catalan, where the Spaniard frequently gathered with his closest friends (including Maar, Jaime Sabartés, Georges Hugnet, Louise and Michel Leiris, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Robert Desnos, Jacques Prévert, Pierre Reverdy, and Paul and Nusch Éluard). Additionally, in March of 1944 Braque attended the gathering in the apartment of the Leirises for the presentation of Picasso’s play Le Désir attrapé par la queue (Desire Caught by the Tail). As suggested by the Picasso biographer Pierre Daix, “It would be interesting, one day, to set the late Cubist work produced by Braque and Picasso side by side to verify that, although they were no longer ‘roped together on the mountain,’ their innovative complicity remained intact.” While each artist


37 Dorléac, Art of the Defeat, 219.

painted other subject matter during this period—most notably female figures, which for Braque represented a binary play of light and shadow and for Picasso revealed a sense of confinement and oppressive space—it is the still-life genre during this later period that ties the two artists.

Certainly there were differences between each artist’s circumstances that must be taken into consideration. Braque was a French citizen and therefore inherently safer in the occupied capital. Picasso was a Spaniard—a less problematic identity than that of other foreign nationals whose countries opposed the Nazis—but his status was precarious because of his outspoken opposition to the Franco regime. Conversely, because Picasso was internationally renowned, it was difficult for the Nazis to persecute him and he benefited from the protection of a small group of Germans, among them the sculptor Arno Breker, who was Hitler’s favorite artist and a cultural ambassador for Occupied Paris. The less famous Braque navigated his own unavoidable run-ins with the Nazis, particularly since German officers occupied the building across the street from his home. Ultimately neither was assured that the decision to remain in Occupied Paris would be without consequence. This uncertainty made Braque and Picasso equals in a dangerous situation.

The restricted circumstances of their lives had a direct and immediate impact on their respective work, in ways startlingly similar. Both Braque and Picasso focused on still-life painting, a logical choice given their severely reduced social circles and restricted movement throughout the city. It also allowed for the portrayal of seemingly benign subject matter that did not provoke Nazi retribution; even though few opportunities, if any, existed for either artist to publically exhibit his work, Nazi soldiers nevertheless paid visits to both Braque and Picasso in their studios. While still-life paintings traditionally included religious or allegorical messages related to displays of worldly abundance and the transience of life (to which both artists alluded),
Braque and Picasso also used the genre to create coded self-portraits. Focused—at times obsessively—on ordinary objects, the artists infused their still lifes with personal sentiments and formed surreptitious records of life under the Occupation. By narrowing the range of the most humble of genres, these two artists found a way to express the psychological intensity of the period. There is grim stoicism but not despair, a tone, I argue, that qualifies as a form of inner resistance, yet one mediated and made visible in representation.

To be clear, their subject matter did not include overtly patriotic or defiant symbols, and necessarily so, since such work would be considered a provocation or be censored. Yet as artists who worked in the “Judeo-Marxist-decadent” mode expressly targeted by the Nazis—vanguard styles that included Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Dadaism—Braque and Picasso nonetheless remained vulnerable to the hostile occupying forces. Whereas several French modernists continued to exhibit their work, including Pierre Bonnard, Matisse, and younger artists just arriving on the art scene, such as the Tricolor painters, Braque and Picasso did not show their current paintings in public throughout the Occupation.39 (The exception was Braque’s presence in the 1943 Salon d’Automne, to be discussed in chapter 4). Though their works could occasionally be found in Parisian galleries, these were typically earlier paintings and not representative of their current production. Despite these obstacles, Braque and Picasso still created within the walls of the studio, communicating the dire mood and situation through evocative color schemes, sparse settings, and constricted space. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that although the collegiality Braque and Picasso enjoyed during the Cubist period was impossible to replicate, the two artists demonstrated a shared sensibility during the Occupation that found no parallel among their contemporaries.

39 For a brief review of artists who exhibited in Paris during the Occupation, see Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 12–13.
Chapter 2: Skulls in the Studio

The skull, an evocative object commonly used to symbolize death and the transience of life, appeared in numerous paintings by Braque and Picasso in the late 1930s and later during the Occupation. Before this time, the skull had not been an object of sustained interest in their painting. The two artists were unique among their peers, the so-called École de Paris, in using this venerable motif during this period of national duress, and they managed to infuse it with new urgency through modernist devices of space, color, and composition, all informed by their earlier Cubist experiments. This chapter expands on existing scholarship on Braque’s and Picasso’s wartime oeuvre through a close analysis of the changes in iconography that occurred in their respective depictions of the skull in the context of historical events. Their respective series of still lifes reveal a strange mix of denial and foreboding in the period immediately before the drôle de guerre. Both artists remained outside the French capital during the early stages of the conflict, carefully considering their options: to stay in France or to go abroad. Each man’s actions—or reactions—to Hitler’s onslaught on Central and Western Europe reveal the anxiety and upheaval experienced across the country. Their skull still lifes turned into images of despair and perseverance after both artists decided to return to Paris and continue to paint, defiantly, under the Nazi yoke between June of 1940 and August of 1944. Braque and Picasso were not only united in the difficult circumstances of their daily lives, but also in the manner with which they represented their dire predicament as artists and in solidarity with the French populace.

To understand the full meaning of the skull in these series, one must look to the years prior to the outbreak of the war. Tensions across the continent grew throughout much of the 1930s in response to the Great Depression, German rearmament, and the rise of Fascism and
Nazism, including in France, where far right factions took hold. Indeed, even seemingly pleasant occasions could have uneasy undertones, as evidenced by Braque’s trip to Germany in 1936 to study artworks, especially masterpieces by the sixteenth-century masters Lucas Cranach the Elder and Matthias Grünewald. The artist later recalled observing the oppressive atmosphere there, and claimed he was followed everywhere by the German police. The scrutiny he experienced was likely a result of his designation (along with Picasso, as well as many others) by German authorities as a “degenerate” artist. Works by both Braque and Picasso were among those vilified and removed from German museums in a campaign to purge the nation of art deemed unacceptable, which culminated in the infamous *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition of 1937.

Yet it was the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) that served as a prelude to the horrors of World War II, especially the bombing of civilian populations, and first prompted reactions in the tone and imagery of artists in France and Spain. The war’s effect on Picasso was most readily apparent. Not only did he have family and friends in Spain but also Picasso remained attuned to his native country’s civil war through his close association with several Communist friends who supported the Spanish Republic. Among them was the French poet Paul Éluard, who in 1935 introduced Picasso to Dora Maar, who was a politically active anti-Fascist. When German forces acting on behalf of General Francisco Franco and the Spanish Nationalists bombed a small village in northern Spain on April 26, 1937, Picasso responded with *Guernica* (fig. 1), a singular

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41 See Stephanie Barron, “*Degenerate Art*: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany” (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991) for more information about both the 1937 *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition and the 1939 Galerie Fischer Auction, in which confiscated works by “degenerate” artists, including paintings by both Braque and Picasso, were sold to profit the German war effort.
work that quickly became an anti-war symbol worldwide. Earlier in the year a delegation from the Spanish Republican government had approached Picasso and requested that he contribute a mural to the Spanish Pavilion of the upcoming 1937 International Exposition in Paris. The artist found inspiration lacking and delayed work for nearly three months. The news of the bombing of the town of Guernica served as a catalyst and Picasso quickly began work on a composition that responded to the brutal attack of unarmed civilians.

_**Guernica**_ did not explicitly depict the event itself, but used powerful archetypes and a stark black, white, and grey color scheme to speak to the atrocities of war. In the large-scale narrative composition, measuring approximately 11 by 25 feet, a startled bull and a distressed horse appear amidst various human figures: a dying soldier sprawls in the foreground; a mother holds her dead child at the left; a woman runs into the scene from the right; another leans out the window of a building holding a candle; and a fourth throws her arms upward towards the flames that consume a building behind her. All of the figures, save for the dead child, open their mouths in wrenching cries that express the physical and emotional agonies brought on by the attack. A bare light fixture hangs from the center, suggesting a drably lit interior, but whatever walls once stood have been blown apart and replaced by the resulting chaos.\(^{42}\) Lights, lantern, and flames cannot mitigate the moral darkness of the scene. The monochromatic palette is widely considered the result of Picasso having learned of the murderous event through black-and-white photographs published in newspapers.\(^{43}\)

The bull and horse were leitmotifs in Picasso’s interwar oeuvre, even as their meanings often changed. Indeed, debates exist in the scholarship over the significance of the bull and...

\(^{42}\) For further analysis of the spatial uncertainty within _Guernica_, see T. J. Clark, “Picasso and Tragedy,” in eds. T. J. Clark and Anne M. Wagner, _Pity and Terror: Picasso’s Path to Guernica_. Exhibition catalogue (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2017).

horse in *Guernica*, a result of Picasso’s own reluctance to comment on the painting and his deliberate encouragement of ambiguous or multiple readings, as with his later wartime still lifes.\(^{44}\) Other motifs that appeared in the monumental canvas for the first time would continue to engage Picasso after the work’s completion, notably the figure of a weeping woman. Primarily inspired by the features and personality of Maar, the weeping woman allowed Picasso to concentrate on the expression of agony, evinced through falling tears and an anguished cry (fig. 2). As the scholar Elizabeth Cowling describes such works, “by focusing on the head and generalizing and abstracting it, Picasso focused on grief as an absolute, not on its anecdotal causes or on the stricken individual.”\(^{45}\) He concentrated on raw emotion alone and sought to express “the torture, bestiality and hideousness of suffering.”\(^{46}\) Interestingly, such epic drama and expressions of physical pain largely disappeared in his work during the Occupation, even in his depiction of nudes and other figures. The iconography of *Guernica*, however, left certain traces: the ceiling lamp, the candle, and the reduced black, white, and grey palette find their place—albeit with a different emotional resonance—in Picasso’s wartime works.

Picasso agreed to create the mural for the Spanish Pavilion in part because he had previously accepted the role of honorary director of the Museo Nacional del Prado, bestowed on him by the Spanish Republican government in September of 1936. Although he did not travel to Madrid in person for this role, Picasso knew of the efforts undertaken at the museum to


\(^{46}\) Ibid, 594.
safeguard the collection from possible air raids during the country’s civil war.\footnote{See Gertje Utley, “From Guernica to The Charnel House: The Political Radicalization of the Artist,” in Nash, Picasso and the War Years, 71, 238n18.} Museum staff initially removed the collection from the walls and stored it on the lower levels of the building. But when bombs began to fall on the city in November of 1936 (including bombs that landed on the Museo del Prado), the staff decided to send the most important works to Valencia, where the government of the Spanish Republic operated in exile.\footnote{For a full account of the Prado’s efforts to safeguard the collection, as well as the efforts by other European museums that followed, see Nicholas, The Rape of Europa, 49–56.} A year later, in an effort to ensure their continued safety, the works were moved again, to the north near Barcelona. By the spring of 1939 danger loomed once more, and the Prado’s treasures were ultimately moved from the north of Spain through France to Geneva, where they were placed on view at the Musée d’Art et d’Histoire through September 8, 1939.\footnote{John Richardson asserts that Picasso provided personal funds that helped to make the transport to Geneva possible. John Richardson, “How Political Was Picasso?,” New York Review of Books, November 25, 2010. Indeed, Alfred Frankfurter indicated that funds were given by “English and French collectors, as well as by a few Americans,” see Alfred Frankfurter, “Rescued Prado at Geneva: The Epochal Exhibition of the Spanish Art Treasures,” Art News (July 15, 1939): 7–9, 20. For further information about the Geneva exhibition, The Masterpieces of the Prado Museum, see “Spain’s Art Treasures at Geneva,” Magazine of Arts, vol. 32, no. 7 (July 1939): 425–26; and John Russell, “Masterpieces Caught Between Two Wars,” New York Times, September 3, 1989.} Given the rarity of such an exhibition of museum masterpieces, the Geneva event received widespread coverage in the international press and a large attendance: even Picasso reportedly went.\footnote{Nicholas, The Rape of Europa, 52.}

Many European museums closely followed the actions taken in Spain and began preparations for the possible evacuations of their own collections. As early as 1936 the Musée du Louvre put in place detailed contingency plans, compiled coded lists of the most significant pieces of art, evaluated possible storage locations within the country, planned evacuation paths, and constructed crates. With the announcement in August of 1939 of an imminent German-
Soviet nonaggression pact, Parisian museums closed to the public and a full implementation of the plan for safeguarding the art ensued. These efforts attest to the high value Europeans placed on their cultural heritage, an encouraging fact, perhaps, for living artists such as Braque and Picasso who ultimately found the courage to stay and make art in Occupied Paris.

It was during these unsettled times that both Braque and Picasso independently turned to painting a somber new element: a skull, sometimes human, and in Picasso’s case, sometimes animal. The skull had appeared, albeit rarely, in Picasso’s pre-World War I work and then occasionally in the following decades, but for Braque it was an entirely new motif, in anticipation, if not a premonition, of the war. The skull’s timely presence attests not only to the artists’ common experiences, but also to their training and temperament: two artists who once aggressively overturned the Western pictorial tradition and were thus well-versed in its iconography and traditions.

The skull first appeared in Braque’s paintings in 1938, as one object among many in depictions of the artist’s studio. 51 He painted at least eleven compositions with the motif over the next five years; seven of these date from the period between January of 1938 and September of 1939 (figs. 3-9), at which point war was declared and (with the onset of the drôle de guerre) Braque temporarily abandoned painting for nearly a year. 52 At least three of these seven (figs. 4, 51 According to Danchev, skulls began to appear in Braque’s still-life compositions in 1937, but Danchev is likely referring to the skull’s presence within the artist’s sketchbooks. Danchev, Georges Braque: A Life, 205.

52 Braque did not paint from approximately September 1939 to September 1940; instead, the artist experimented with sculpture.
6, 7) were included in Braque’s April 1939 exhibition of recent work at Paul Rosenberg’s gallery, which would be his last public show in Paris until the Salon d’Automne in 1943.\textsuperscript{53}

The theme of the artist’s studio was itself a relatively new departure for Braque. From 1936 through the end of 1939, the artist painted approximately a dozen compositions with this self-reflexive subject matter.\textsuperscript{54} Braque focused on creating increasingly complex compositions that gave precedence to a strong—even garish—play of color and pattern. Within these intricately constructed and densely layered interiors, he incorporated the same play of textures that he had been using throughout his entire career: faux bois, faux marble, wainscoting, and decorative floral wallpapers. Lest the identity of the setting be in doubt, he also included the tools of the trade—palette, brushes, and an easel. When Braque first incorporated the skull into these studio still lifes it appears like a mere artist’s prop, and the skull’s potent symbolism is obscured by the riot of color and pattern. Indeed, in \textit{Studio with Black Vase} (fig. 3), the skull is barely identifiable. Braque placed it behind the similarly greyish-brown hued artist’s palette on the table at right, with only the back of the cranium and an ear to the left made visible.

Yet the death’s head is unmistakable in \textit{The Easel} (fig. 4), \textit{Studio with Skull} (fig. 5), and \textit{Baluster and Skull} (fig. 6), even as its scale and coloration compares in visual impact with the other objects in Braque’s interior. Placed on a table off to the right in each of these compositions, the skull is decidedly not the principal focal point of the 1938 paintings, though it does not need to be, for its uncanny sockets and frozen grin inevitably capture the viewer’s attention, startle, and unsettle. Braque took care not to overemphasize its presence, carefully embedding the

\textsuperscript{53} Photographs of the April 1939 exhibition at Rosenberg’s gallery show these paintings. Reproduced in Butler, “Georges Braque and the Cubist Still Life,” 17.

\textsuperscript{54} Jean Leymarie, \textit{Georges Braque} (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1988), cat. no. 54. Braque would continue exploring the theme of the artist’s studio after the war, from 1949 to 1956, when he painted a series of eight paintings known as the \textit{Atelier} series.
cranial form into the intricate compositional web, where it nonetheless emerges as a distinct entity with its own loaded symbolism. In *Studio with Skull* and *Baluster and Skull* the impact of the skull becomes even more pronounced as Braque changed the focus from that of the larger studio space to a close up of a lone tabletop, tilted aggressively toward the viewer.

Significantly, in *Studio with Black Vase*, *The Easel*, and *Studio with Skull* Braque portrayed the skull in tones that match those of the artist’s palette and placed the two objects in proximity or in direct relation to one another. In the latter two works, paintbrushes inserted into the thumbhole of the palette form an upward diagonal that points directly toward the skull. By focusing on playful juxtapositions of objects that examined formal characteristics such as shape, color, and material, Braque seemed to be diverting attention from the underlying anxiety creeping into his compositions at this time. In this regard, Braque shows himself to be a master of deflection, if not of dissembling, through his use of color: one is struck by the array of rose pink, lime green, deep violet, and burnt orange. Yet the strong accents of black strike discordant notes that add to the anxious tone of the skull. As Alex Danchev has opined, these canvases revealed, the “quiverings and intimations” within the artist as world events became increasingly tense.55 The initial appearance of the skull within the artist’s studio represents an undeniable sense of foreboding.

These studio images may also be interpreted as vanitas allegories or memento mori (a Latin phrase meaning “remember you must die”). Vanitas pictures traditionally contain skulls and other symbols of mortality—for instance, hourglasses, extinguished candles, fruit, or flowers—that speak to the fleeting nature of life and the futility of worldly pleasures. It has been suggested that *Studio with Black Vase*, *The Easel*, and *Studio with Skull* are inherently vanitas

55 Danchev, *Georges Braque: A Life*, 205. Danchev’s statement is similarly discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis.
pictures because they combine the skull with objects that evoke the senses: a vase with a flower painted on it (smell), a pipe (taste), a mandolin/guitar (sound), paint brushes (touch), and the painting itself (sight).\textsuperscript{56} Or one might interpret the juxtaposition of skull and artist’s palette as an allusion to the destiny of the artist: does the inevitability of death make mockery of his earthly ambition, or will his art stand the test of time?

Braque actually used the word vanitas as the title for the three subsequent skull paintings. In these works, painted in 1938 and 1939, gloom prevails. Gone are the objects of the painter’s craft. Braque exchanged the signs of his métier—the palette and brushes—for a cross and a rosary, religious symbols of particular importance to his wife, Marcelle, a devout Catholic.\textsuperscript{57} Whereas in previous compositions the artist’s paintbrushes traced a strong diagonal line to direct attention toward the skull, now the arms of the cross play a similar role. In the still highly decorative \textit{Vanitas I} (fig. 7) faux bois, wallpaper, and other patterned materials compete with the still life, but as the trio of pictures progressed, the color scheme and mood darkened further. \textit{Vanitas II} (fig. 8) and \textit{Vanitas} (fig. 9) focus in on the three objects—skull, rosary, and cross—set in front of a radically simplified, somber space. While the paintings that depict the artist’s studio with a skull had implied the presence of the artist, as well as the potential act of painting, in \textit{Vanitas} any activity seems stalled, even useless, in the face of mortality and fleeting time. Prayer appears to be the only resort.

Throughout the remainder of his life, Braque insisted, incredulously, that his still lifes with skulls (along with the cross and rosary) did not refer to the impending conflict or the dire wartime years. Rather, he asserted that he chose the skull purely for its shape, color, and


suitability within the larger assembly of objects. In 1958, when art historian John Richardson asked him specifically about his use of the motif from 1938 to 1943, Braque replied that “these were painted not as allusions to the fact that mankind is mortal, but because I was fascinated by the tactile quality of the rosary and the formal problems of mass and composition posed by the skull.” 58 To be sure, Braque deliberately made visual puns between the shape of the skull and that of the palette in the studio pictures (see figs. 3-5). This trope was initiated by Picasso in 1914, when he first paired the two objects in his Musical Instruments and Skull (fig. 11). One might also argue that the inherently tactile nature of the rosary—an object meant to be held in the hand as the fingers actively move along the beads to count prayer—substituted for the paintbrushes and palette of the artist. Braque accented the textures of these objects in the third Vanitas. Nonetheless, Braque’s retrospective comments on the series of skull paintings, perhaps a way of distancing himself from the hard memories of those years or of conforming to the dominant formalist paradigm of the postwar climate, belie their implicit meaning and historical reality.

By contrast to Braque, who turned to the skull for the first time in the late 1930s, Picasso first painted the motif in 1908, in Composition with Skull (fig. 10), and it reappeared at various times in his career until his death in 1973. As was the case with much of Picasso’s subject matter, the skull assumes different meanings according to the vicissitudes of the artist’s personal life. Scholars typically associate Composition with Skull with the death of one of Picasso’s friends, whose identity has been debated. 59 In addition, Jean Sutherland Boggs considers the


59 The Hermitage Museum dates Composition with Skull to 1908, although scholarship on the painting varies between a dating of 1907 and 1908; the dispute over dating is related to differing suggestions by art historians as to whose death may be alluded to within the painting. The various hypotheses are recounted in Jean Sutherland Boggs, Picasso and Things (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992), 54.
presence of the skull in this painting as a commemorative “memento mori for artistic genius, in particular, for Paul Cézanne,” who had died in 1906. Picasso visited the two separate memorial exhibitions for the artist held in Paris in 1907. In 1914, he incorporated the skull in the previously mentioned *Musical Instruments and Skull*, in a playful, if eerie, formal juxtaposition with the artist’s palette. This work represents the only instance of the motif’s appearance in Picasso’s early Cubist paintings, and is likely due to a personal tragedy, namely the terminal illness of his lover Eva Gouel. The 1920s and 1930s represent a largely joyful period within Picasso’s life; as such, very few instances of skulls exist during this period. When the skull does appear, in two related examples from the summer of 1925 (figs. 12-13), it takes the form of a ram’s head rather than a human skull. In these two paintings Picasso experimented with opposing formal differences, seen in the compositional structure (abundance versus sparseness), palette (color versus monochrome), and textures (patterned versus flat surfaces).

In concert with Braque’s paintings, the skull, or a variant thereof (in the form of bulls’ heads), made a powerful re-entrance into Picasso’s oeuvre at the end of 1938 as European tensions heightened. In a series of four still lifes all dated to November of that year, Picasso depicted the head of a bull, or alternatively, that of a minotaur (part man, part bull) (figs. 14-17); both types bear characteristics reminiscent of the bull’s head in *Guernica* from the prior year.

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60 Ibid, 54.

61 An exhibition of seventy-nine watercolors was held in June at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune and an exhibition of fifty-six works was held in October at the Salon d’Automne. For a discussion of the impact of these exhibitions, see Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, 50–57.


63 Neil Cox notes that classic memento mori objects (such as candles, books, and skulls) appear every now and again within Picasso’s oeuvre. However, these specific objects rarely appear within his work during the 1920s, a decade that Cox asserts is one of the most dynamic periods within the artist’s career for still-life compositions. See Neil Cox, “Après nature: las naturalezas muertas de Picasso en los años veinte,” in *Picasso en el taller* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, 2014), 27.
With eyes that stare out at the viewer, the bulls’ heads appear lifelike, yet their placement on a pedestal subsumes them under the category of sculpture or prop. Picasso placed them among other objects: a lit candle, an artist’s palette and brushes, and an open book; this intriguing mix of components culled from both traditional vanitas compositions and those of the artist’s studio correlates to the paintings that Braque produced at nearly the same moment. These still lifes emit a similar sense of disquiet, though not to the same degree as Braque’s works, given the latter’s inclusion of an actual human skull. In the earliest two works within the series, Picasso depicted the heads in somber or black hues, which contrast with the brilliant red and orange colors of the latter two that give an inkling of the flayed sheep heads he would paint nearly a year later in Royan during the drôle de guerre.

In January 1939, Picasso evolved his subject matter, creating an increasingly ominous tone in a series of animal skulls (figs. 18-20), with a bull’s cranium alongside a pitcher and pieces of fruit. He was likely responding to events in Spain, both political and personal. Continued advances by Franco’s regime resulted in the conquest of Catalonia in January of 1939. Around that same time, Picasso’s mother died in Barcelona on January 13, 1939. Despite the harsh and haunted appearance of the animal, the bright color scheme, ripe fruit, and even a blossoming tree in the third picture preserve a sense of ongoing life and hope. Those sentiments would not last for long.

Both Braque and Picasso spent a portion of the summer of 1939 outside of Paris, as was their habit, and both continued to avoid the capital throughout the duration of the drôle de guerre. Braque and his wife, Marcelle, were at their house in Varengeville when the Allies declared war
on Germany on September 3. Though they had considered fleeing to Geneva before the war began, the Braques ultimately remained in France. Rather than return to Paris in January as their routine typically dictated, they stayed on in Varengeville through May of 1940. The uncertainty of world events likely played a role in this decision; Braque wrote to his dealer, Rosenberg, that “the turbulence that’s arisen” had stopped him from painting during the fall of 1939. Instead, the artist devoted his time to creating sculpture from stones found on the nearby beach.

On May 10 the Germans attacked along the Western front—France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—precipitating the couple’s hurried and irregular movements throughout the country during the subsequent months. The outbreak of hostilities no doubt brought back memories of the trauma Braque experienced first-hand in World War I. He and Marcelle traveled south to Bordeaux, visiting Rosenberg, who was temporarily seeking refuge in nearby Floirac. The group likely discussed their options, though Rosenberg’s Jewish identity put him in immediate danger and at greater personal risk. Braque had brought his canvases with him from Varengeville, and left them in the secure vaults of the National Bank for Commerce and

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64 Braque purchased land in Varengeville in 1930 and built a house and studio there by the following year. Throughout the 1930s, he typically spent February through July in Paris, and August through January in Varengeville. See Danchev, Georges Braque: A Life, 186.

65 Braque to Paul Rosenberg, October 6, 1939, as quoted in Danchev, Georges Braque: A Life, 206.

66 Detailed information regarding Braque’s movement during this time is provided in Danchev, Georges Braque: A Life, 206–10. See also Manneville, “Chronologie,” 284–85.

67 On May 11, 1915, while in Carency on the western front, Braque was hit on the head by shrapnel from an exploding shell and gravely wounded. His serious injuries necessitated an immediate trepanation surgery at a field hospital before he was sent to Paris, in June 1915, for further hospitalization. A lengthy convalescence followed, during which he briefly lost his eyesight. It was nearly a year before Braque was released and demobilized, in April 1916. With further convalescence in Sorgues after his demobilization, Braque did not return to Paris until the fall of 1917. It has been suggested that the events leading up to World War II resonated in particular with Braque after his experience in World War I. See Butler, “Georges Braque and the Cubist Still Life,” 19.
Industry in nearby Libourne. Leaving Rosenberg, Braque and his wife traveled to Paris and gathered their valuables, including 120 of Braque’s paintings that their housekeeper Mariette Lachaud had removed from the stretchers for transport. Taking Lachaud and her mother with them, they returned to Varengeville, stopping in Pacy (northwest of Paris) along the way. Braque’s sister resided there with their mother, and he reportedly took a considerable sum of money to her. The group then turned south, to visit Lachaud’s aunt in La Valade in the Limousin region. Braque and Marcelle stayed for about three weeks before departing for nearby Barbézieux, where they encountered André Derain and his wife. The two couples traveled to Gaujac, near the Pyrenees, where they stayed with Derain’s cousin.

On June 22, 1940, France capitulated and signed an armistice with Germany. In July, after countless weeks of fearful preparations and peregrinations, the Braques returned to their home in Paris, located on the rue du Douanier (today known as rue Georges Braque), alongside the Parc Montsouris in the 14th arrondissement on the Left Bank. Braque found the house opposite his own confiscated by Germans for use as officers’ quarters. The Germans left the Braque residence and his upstairs studio unoccupied, although not untouched: the enemy forces had entered and stolen the artist’s accordion.

Picasso’s actions revealed a similar disquiet as the war began. The artist had spent his summer holiday in 1939 in Antibes, on the Mediterranean coast. By the end of August, Jaime Sabartés, Picasso’s secretary and a member of the entourage that had joined the artist in the south of France, recalled that a “warlike tempo” had taken over life in the coastal town: “Troops, and more troops, kept arriving [in Antibes]. Schools, garages, and all the big buildings were

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68 Braque’s decision to leave paintings in the vault of the bank of Libourne was at the urging of Rosenberg, who stored 162 paintings from his own inventory there. The vaults of both Braque and Rosenberg would later by discovered by the Nazis. See Hector Feliciano, *The Lost Museum: The Nazi Conspiracy to Steal the World’s Greatest Works of Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 65–66, 73.
requisitioned. For days, the roads leading to the Alps were filled with military formations. Tourists left the hotels, which automatically filled up with officers.\(^{69}\) The scene was doubtless unsettling; Picasso departed Antibes early and returned to Paris by August 27 to find the city mobilized. He remained in the French capital for only a few days, long enough to surmise the gravity of the situation. On September 3—the day the Allies declared war on Germany—Picasso fled the capital along with Sabartés and his wife, his chauffeur, Marcel, and Maar. The group left at midnight, driving all night until they reached Royan, on the western coast of France, the next day.\(^{70}\) Marie-Thérèse Walter and Picasso’s daughter, Maya, were already installed in the seaside town. Royan remained Picasso’s home base throughout the *drôle de guerre* and until the autumn of 1940, although the artist made several trips back to Paris throughout the year. An ordinance requiring all foreigners in Royan to have a special permit to remain in France prompted Picasso’s return to Paris within the first week of his arrival in the town. While back in Paris for the day to obtain the permit, he experienced an air raid warning and spent an hour in a bomb shelter.\(^{71}\)

In October of 1939, as Picasso settled into Royan amidst the onset of the *drôle de guerre*, he completed a series of still lifes with sheep skulls. Their genesis lies in the drawings he made in a sketchbook upon his arrival in Royan.\(^{72}\) As Sabartés recounted:

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\(^{70}\) The date of Picasso’s departure from Paris for Royan varies slightly between sources; while the date is most commonly given as September 3, some sources indicate his departure occurred as early as September 1.


\(^{72}\) Although sources differ as to the exact number of sketchbooks Picasso filled while in Royan, the count commonly lies between six and eight. Kirsten Powell states that Picasso produced six sketchbooks from September 1939 to June 1940 (Kirsten Powell, “‘La Drôle de guerre’: Picasso’s ‘Femme nue se coiffant’ and the ‘Phony War’ in France,” *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 138, no. 1117 [April 1996]: 237), yet
The first sketches done in Royan represent the horses which he saw on the road. . . . These drawings are the point of departure of his work at Royan, which reflects his tragic mood upon arriving at the place he had chosen as a haven. When the events that drove him from Paris have been forgotten, it will suffice to observe the date on the works of this period to understand his anguish at that time.\textsuperscript{73}

After making these first sketches, Picasso continued to record his observations while exploring the town with Sabartèş during their daily walks together. These perambulations often took them to the market, and among the vendors they visited was a butcher, where Picasso purchased sheep heads to feed his dog, Kazbek.\textsuperscript{74} In a sketchbook dating from September 30 to October 29, Picasso rendered numerous realistic drawings that examine the anatomical form of the skulls.\textsuperscript{75} Almost immediately these sketches began to serve as the inspiration for larger works—three canvases total—in which Picasso invested deeper meaning, and artistic license, in the rendering of the dead animals.

Each composition was more complex than the preceding, but nevertheless defined by the stark simplicity of its subject matter. In \textit{Flayed Head of a Sheep} (fig. 21), a single skull is placed in a nondescript setting, the flesh and sinew that cling to the bone elaborated with painterly brushstrokes of bright vermillion, and rows of teeth defined in stark white. Two days later, Picasso painted \textit{Still Life with Sheep’s Skull} (fig. 22), which juxtaposes the head—now solely bone with no flesh remaining—with bloody ribs in homage to Francisco Goya’s \textit{Still Life with Sheep’s Head} (fig. 23). The close proximity of Royan to Bordeaux, where Goya lived from

\textsuperscript{73} Elizabeth Cowling states Picasso had produced eight sketchbooks of drawings in Royan by the time he returned to Paris in August 1940 (Cowling, \textit{Picasso: Style and Meaning}, 616).

\textsuperscript{74} Sabartès, \textit{Picasso: An Intimate Portrait}, 190–91.


1824 until his death in 1828, possibly served as an inspiration. Moreover, Goya’s painting passed through Rosenberg’s gallery in 1937 before being acquired by the Louvre that same year; Picasso would have had the opportunity to study it closely at that time. In his composition, Picasso made the sheep skull the dominant object (versus the ribs in Goya’s version), and the animal’s open mouth, as if depicted mid-cry, is in direct correlation to the portraits of weeping women he produced during the preceding two years. Picasso traded the quiet stillness of Goya’s example for a composition filled with emotion.

A week and a half later, Picasso concluded this series with *Three Sheep Skulls* (fig. 24), which depicts the skulls piled atop each other in a vertical composition that evokes Cézanne (fig. 25). Picasso again focused on the bloody mass of flayed heads, yet with even more brusque swathes of paint than the two prior examples. His purposeful depiction of one of the skulls turned upside down increases the sense of repulsive gore. As Steven Nash suggests, “whereas Picasso had moderated his memento mori subjects from 1938 with the hope-filled symbols of books, palettes, and candles, these still lifes dating after the outbreak of World War II are single-mindedly, unremittingly concerned with one subject—death.” Gone is the context of the butcher shop suggesting that the animals were slaughtered for the pleasure or survival of humankind. Tellingly, when Picasso next depicted a skull, it no longer took the form of an animal.

Picasso made another trip to Paris in November, at which time he placed many of his paintings in the vaults of a local bank. He spent another two weeks in Paris in December of 1939,

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and again in February of 1940. He returned once more to the capital in mid-March of 1940, staying until mid-May. When news was received that the Germans had overtaken the French army at Sedan, Picasso returned to Royan immediately. Sabartés described the chaos that awaited him there:

Royan became crowded with people. The heat became unbearable; the French troops were falling back and requisitioning houses. The first queues in front of the bakeries appeared, restaurants were jammed and the news that reached us was distressing. . . . In the street we met . . . many other persons who passed through the city with the intention of taking a boat to Bordeaux or of seeking refuge in the south. Finally, one Sunday afternoon, the German troops entered. Our anguish was overwhelming.79

The German army arrived in Royan on June 23.

Between May and July of 1940 human skulls proliferated in Picasso’s sketchbooks. He concurrently drew images of a female figure, likely Maar, and the depictions of woman and skull intersect in a series of more than a dozen drawings created between June 11 and July 1 (for example, fig. 26). The skull impinges upon the woman’s face in many studies, before becoming the sole object of Picasso’s focus (for example, fig. 27).80 This subtle shift, from reportage of butchered sheep skulls to images of human remains, signals the war’s arrival onto the artist’s doorstep. Picasso did not yet venture to transpose these human skulls from the pages of his sketchbook to the surface of his canvases—that would come later.

On August 23, 1940, when travel was allowed again (and despite various offers of refuge in other countries), Picasso left Royan definitively and returned to Paris for the duration of the


war. At first, he resumed his habit of living in his apartment on rue la Boétie on the Right Bank and working in his studio on rue des Grands Augustins on the Left Bank. Picasso’s friend Roland Penrose later explained that this arrangement became unsustainable: “The difficulty of finding any means of transport between the rue la Boétie and the rue des Grands Augustins . . . soon induced Picasso to shut up the apartment and install himself as best he could in the rooms adjoining his studio. He remained living and working in these surroundings [the studio on rue des Grands Augustins], noble in proportions, but lacking in comfort, for the duration of the war.” He did find comfort, however, in his studio’s proximity (within walking distance) to the apartment of Marie-Thérèse Walter and Maya, and that of Maar.

While both Braque and Picasso returned to Occupied Paris by the end of the summer of 1940, neither resumed the subject matter of a skull for at least another six months, until sometime in 1941. In fact, neither artist produced much work at all during the initial months of the Occupation: Braque completed just a handful of canvases before the end of 1940, and Picasso stopped painting altogether from September 1940 until the spring of 1941. A new set of daily challenges confronted all who remained in the occupied capital. Signs of the war—the replacement of the French flag with the swastika, for instance—were impossible to ignore. Indeed, Picasso reportedly commented to Brassaï, “Paris would almost be a charming town if

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82 Roland Penrose, Picasso: His Life and Work (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 332. While Penrose cites the fall of 1940 as the date of Picasso’s move to his studio on the Left Bank, Michèle Cone’s assertion that Picasso abandoned the Right Bank apartment in 1942 seems more likely. See Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 139.
signs pasted all over the walls with [German] commands, lists of hostages and names of those executed did not bring one back to reality."\(^{83}\)

Beyond these sobering indications of the Occupation, more immediate concerns also confronted Parisians. In addition to enforced food rationing (discussed in the following chapter), Parisians likewise faced rationing of other resources as well, including coal and gasoline. Although Nazi officers offered Braque and Picasso extra coal or heating fuel, both artists refused, and thus endured the especially frigid temperatures during the winters of 1940–41 and 1941–42 alongside their fellow Parisians.\(^{84}\) Additionally, with gasoline supplies limited, the Nazis issued only 7000 permits for private cars in Paris. Cars, including both Braque’s and Picasso’s beloved vehicles, disappeared from the streets and citizens turned to bicycles or the metro as their common forms of transportation.\(^{85}\) Venturing far from home in the evening had to be carefully planned due to the curfew—initially set at 10 p.m., then 11 p.m., then eventually extended to midnight.\(^{86}\) The fear of repercussions curtailed social life, as anyone caught in the streets after curfew was subject to arrest, or worse. As the historian Milton Dank described it, “a watch that was slow, a rendezvous at which one lingered too long, or a missed subway connection could


\(^{84}\) An average Parisian winter included approximately thirty-nine days of below-freezing temperatures, but during the 1940–1941 and 1941–1942 seasons, citizens endured forty-eight days and fifty-one days, respectively, of such temperatures. See Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 220. Regarding Braque and Picasso’s refusal of extra supplies, see Danchev, *Georges Braque: A Life*, 221; and Cone, *Artists Under Vichy*, 137.

\(^{85}\) Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 220.

bring one to the execution stake.”\textsuperscript{87} If stopped in the street by the police, whether after curfew or not, citizens needed to show their up-to-date identity papers. As a French native, Braque would have little to worry about, but there was greater risk for Picasso, a foreigner who could have been arrested if a police roundup found his papers out of order.\textsuperscript{88}

Under these restrictive and oppressive regulations, Braque and Picasso faced a new reality, in which civil liberties no longer existed and hope became increasingly difficult to find. When each artist independently returned to the skull motif, their painted compositions showed subtle shifts. The earlier elements of rhyming shapes, layered patterns, and brightly toned palettes disappeared, replaced by confined spaces and a novel use of black that underscored the bleak, even threatening environment. The very fact they chose to paint such powerful symbols of their present circumstances, versus moving into non-committal or veiled abstraction, or innocuous, escapist scenes, shows how determined the two artists were to continue their work as they had before the war, even in the face of the Occupation.

Braque, back in his studio on rue du Douanier, resumed painting in September 1940, after almost a year’s abstinence, although he completed a mere eight paintings in total by the end of the year. He had, in fact, begun at least half of these works—a series of still lifes featuring musical instruments—prior to the start of war but, distracted by the political tensions, temporarily abandoned them. The additional paintings from late 1940 depict sparse still lifes of food, a subject of depravation that gained currency in the next few years. Only in 1941 did the skull reappear in Braque’s paintings as his artistic production returned to its regular pace. Between 1941 and 1943, he completed a total of four still lifes with skulls. While their origins

\textsuperscript{87} Dank, \textit{The French Against the French}, 164.

\textsuperscript{88} Cone, \textit{Artists Under Vichy}, 116, 131.
clearly lay in the vanitas paintings from two and three years prior, significant changes are evident, an indication of the war’s effect on the artist.

The rosary, previously combined with the cross in earlier vanitas paintings, disappeared in favor of the juxtaposition of the skull with a vase or pitcher (figs. 28-30). While the rosary had symbolized faith in the face of crises, the combination of a simple pitcher (a vessel that holds and dispenses water and thus life) and skull suggests, with profundity, the stark reality under the Occupation. A darkened and moody palette replaced the vibrant color and brightness of tone of the previous skull still lifes of 1938 and 1939. While the purple and yellow in *Vanitas* (fig. 28) and the white highlights in *Pitcher and Skull* (fig. 30) provide contrasts of hue, these are otherwise dreary and oppressive environments: indeed, in this context, the colors appear harsh, even lugubrious. Braque’s new employment of black, which pervades his palette and casts dim shadows throughout the space of these still lifes, represents the darkness cast over Paris by the Occupation.

Braque’s pictorial death fugue culminates in *The Skull (Death’s Head)* (fig. 31). The most simplified and thus the most haunting depiction of the remains of human life, the painting’s subject appears less as an allegorical memento mori than an augur of imminent demise. The skull commands almost the entirety of the composition, with an unrelenting focus, as Braque collapsed the spatial difference between foreground and background, forcing a direct confrontation with its gaping orifices. He accentuated its powerful, tactile presence by adding thickly applied impasto to its bony surface.

When Picasso returned to an Occupied Paris in August 1940 he also ceased painting for several months. Records reveal a gap in production between September 1940 and May 1941, although the artist did write a wartime play, *Le Désir attrapé par la queue*. When he resumed
his artistic practice in 1941, one of the first works he created was the sculpture of a *Death’s Head* (fig. 32), pointedly, a human one. Picasso likely first modeled *Death’s Head* in plaster in 1941, and then succeeded in having the sculpture cast in bronze in 1943.\(^89\) Aptly described by Boggs as “not a skull but a head seemingly made of some apparently indestructible material like granite, which has nevertheless, over a great time, somewhat decomposed,” Picasso’s sculpture measures slightly larger than life-size.\(^90\) It represents a bold return to the skull motif, which, as with Braque’s depictions from 1941 to 1943, eliminates other objects and the context of a tabletop still life that might otherwise detract from its symbolic power.

With the exception of two compositions from April 1942, in which Picasso depicted a steer’s skull to commemorate the death of his friend and fellow Spaniard Julio González (1876–1942; figs. 33-34), Picasso depicted only human skulls in more than a dozen paintings between 1943 and 1946.\(^91\) These works include three compositions of a skull and pitcher from August of 1943 (figs. 35-37), which may owe to the death of Chaim Soutine on August 9, and whose funeral Picasso attended. The artist traded his earlier palette, defined by brilliant hues, for one dominated by black. Soutine’s demise, resulting from a stomach ulcer not properly treated while in hiding (Soutine was a Jew), reveals the drastic circumstances of the period. Yet Picasso’s reprisal of the skull motif in his work at this time also signified an overall response to the duress of the Occupation. The drastically reduced, unadorned compositions within this series mirror

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\(^89\) Elizabeth Cowling indicates that the original plaster model for *Death’s Head* likely dates to 1941, based on a description in an August 1941 article in the journal *Comoedia*. Pierre Malo wrote of “a mocking death’s head in the place of the sponge-bowl” in Picasso’s studio. Cowling notes, “The only other plaster skulls Picasso made at this time are so tiny and so abstracted that Malo cannot have been alluding to them.” See Elizabeth Cowling, “Picasso’s Imagery of Death: Sculpture as *Memento Mori*,” *Apollo: The International Magazine of Arts*, vol. 114, no. 417 (November 1996): 15n5.

\(^90\) Boggs, *Picasso and Things*, 281.

those by Braque from the same period in which the stark contrast between life and death is all that remains.

In the ensuing years, Picasso rendered skulls in a similar vein to those from 1943. He painted nine of these still lifes within the course of a week in the spring of 1945 (for example, figs. 38-40), nearly a year after the Allied Liberation of Paris. The first in this series reprised the skull and pitcher composition, though now with reinvigorated color, including a joyous red and yellow backdrop. Picasso then added a bunch of leeks, placed either beneath or just in front of the skull (figs. 39-40). As Françoise Gilot observed, “from the point of view of form, the leeks replaced the crossbones that traditionally accompany a skull, their onion-like ends corresponding to the joints of the bones.” Clearly, the realities of the war continued to impress themselves upon the painter’s consciousness. Foodstuffs continued to be scarce, and French prisoners of war slowly made their return to Paris from the German camps. This immediate postwar presence of the skull may represent the artist’s manner of mourning “the many who had been brought down in this recent ‘dance of death,’” as Boggs has argued.

The skull—be it a memento mori to check human pretensions; a butchered, carnal reality; or the death’s head of starvation, combat, or execution—exerted its fascination on Braque and Picasso when their own lives were disrupted or in the balance. Although both artists followed in a long tradition of painting skulls to comment on the transience of life, each did so in a manner that spoke to twentieth-century concerns of war and human suffering. Constrained by the watchful eye of the Nazis, neither Braque nor Picasso felt free to make overt visual commentary

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94 Boggs, Picasso and Things, 294.
against the occupiers; nevertheless, the presence of the motif makes a point, be it of foreboding, fear, deprivation, or defiance. These still lifes represent some of the last representations of the skull in twentieth-century art. Others did not dare to render such pessimistic images during the Occupation, and subsequently, after experiencing the atrocities of war, many artists found it impossible to engage with traditional symbols in a figurative style, as witnessed in the rise of artistic movements such as Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism. Whether or not they saw each others’ work in the studio or knew of their shared direction through mutual friends has still not been determined, yet the similarities are remarkable. Braque’s and Picasso’s skull still lifes from 1938 to 1945 argue for a camaraderie necessitated and renewed after their legendary partnership from three decades prior had ended.
Chapter 3: Food on the Table

The portrayal of food within still-life paintings traditionally connotes abundance, but Braque and Picasso employed edible items and kitchenware within their wartime paintings to an entirely different effect. Their respective depictions of food—or the lack thereof—on the table served to memorialize the struggles of daily life under the Occupation. Faced with the uncertainties that came with their decision to stay in Paris, both men encountered the inconveniences and hardships brought about by the general lack of resources within the French capital. As Picasso explained at the end of the war, “there was nothing to do but work and struggle for food, see one’s friends quietly, and look forward to the day of freedom.”95 While they painted different types of food, both artists emphasized the link between sustenance and survival, material and spiritual nourishment. Braque and Picasso shared the themes of hunger and the scarcity, monotony, and humble quality of the available food options. The artists documented the hardship and anxieties of the period not only through the meager offerings they depicted, but also in the severity of their compositions, the evocative treatment of space, and the somber color schemes. Only in the months surrounding the Liberation of Paris do elements of hope emerge in these canvases.

Unlike the skull motif discussed in the previous chapter, foodstuffs had already appeared in both Braque’s and Picasso’s images. During the early Cubist period, for example, the artists frequently created still-life paintings influenced by café life. These compositions included glasses, bottles, and fruit, along with newspapers, pipes, and musical instruments (for example, figs. 41-42). By linking together food and objects of leisure, Braque and Picasso worked within

95 As quoted by Lee Miller in Vogue, October 15, 1944; republished in Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 141.
the rich tradition of still-life painting, in which the portrayal of food often celebrated worldly pleasures, privilege, and wealth. Both artists continued this practice into the 1920s and 1930s. Even though the style of each artist changed over time, their paintings remained consistent in general composition (for example, figs. 43-44). They consist of a complex spatial layering of patterns, textures, and things, which in turn created a sense of abundance—and delight for the senses. Indeed, the surfaces of the tables are barely visible, if at all, as the plentitude upon them rises upwards and outwards, sometimes to the point of nearly extending beyond the frame of the canvas.

Life under the Occupation did not stimulate a sense of privilege and wealth, and Braque’s and Picasso’s compositions unequivocally reflect this change of circumstances. First and foremost, the artists now depicted food as an isolated motif, accentuating its fraught identity as a thing both desired and unappetizing. Musical instruments or other objects of leisure no longer found a place within these scenes (although there existed a few rare instances in which musical instruments appeared separately in paintings during the war). The foodstuffs and kitchenware appeared in a highly simplified manner, with fewer instances of compositional layering and stacking, affording each item its own space and forlorn presence. The space became shallow and cropped with much of the surrounding environment and background eliminated, adding to the almost obsessive focus on the centrality of the food. Each artist imbued his palette with purposeful hues, which carried their own meaning: Braque frequently employed intense tones of black to depict fish, for example, while Picasso chose subdued, somber hues “not meant to tempt one’s appetite,” as Mary-Margaret Goggin asserts.\(^{96}\) These still lifes thus indicated an altogether different mood and message from the playful cornucopias of the previous decades, reflecting the dire realities the artists endured.

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\(^{96}\) Goggin, *Picasso and his Art During the German Occupation*, 87.
In all European countries, food became a critical commodity during the war, but especially so in France under Nazi rule. German requisitions, along with a significantly decreased agricultural yield owing to a severely diminished labor force, made shortages of food an unavoidable part of daily life. Estimates indicate that the harvest of potatoes, wheat, and oats decreased by half from 1939 to 1941; by 1944, production sank to only a quarter of prewar numbers.97 The Nazis’ seizure of the majority of French agricultural production (between half and three-quarters) for themselves only exacerbated the problem.98 As a result, rationing began in September 1940, and food, whether purchased at stores or in restaurants, could only be obtained through the presentation of ration stamps.99 A person’s age and occupation, broken down into eight categories, determined his or her daily food allowances.100 Braque and Picasso fell into category A—adults between the ages of twenty-one to seventy—and therefore received a “standard” ration. In 1940, an adult residing in Paris was allowed approximately 12 ounces of bread per day; 12 ounces of meat, 9 ounces of pasta, and 1.5 ounces of cheese per week; and 17.5 ounces of sugar and 10.5 ounces of coffee per month.101 These amounts represented approximately half of the consumption level prior to the war’s start and resulted in a diet with an estimated caloric intake significantly lower than that deemed necessary. Rations were further


101 The metric units, as originally given for these rations, are 350 grams of bread per day; 350 grams of meat, 250 grams of pasta, and 50 grams of cheese per week; and 500 grams of sugar and 300 grams of coffee per month. Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France*, 5n12; and Pryce-Jones, *Paris in the Third Reich*, 94.
reduced in July of 1942, and by the end of the war an adult’s average daily intake dropped to a mere 900 calories. It is no wonder that French writer Alfred Fabre-Luce (1899–1983) deemed the “growling stomach” as the true voice of Occupied France.102

In a state of desperation driven by hunger, Parisians sought additional means by which to supplement their daily rations. Many city-dwellers began raising rabbits or chickens in their apartments, and planted window boxes or rooftop gardens for vegetables. Among them was Picasso, who took to growing tomatoes. Those that could afford it, including both artists under discussion here, turned to the black market and oftentimes procured food through certain restaurants. Picasso, for example, frequented Le Catalan on the rue des Grands Augustins, not far from his studio. During the Occupation, Le Catalan continued to offer “juicy chateaubriand steaks that were grilled to perfection,” a type of food that the owner could only have obtained through unofficial and unregulated channels.103 Braque sometimes joined Picasso and his group of close friends, which included Paul and Nusch Éluard, Robert Desnos, Michel and Louise Leiris, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, among others.104 And the group experienced the consequences of partaking in this type of illicit behavior: in November of 1943 Brassaï noted that during an unexpected visit to the restaurant by ration inspectors, “Picasso and several other regular customers were caught in flagrante delicto: they were eating chateaubriands on one of the three meatless days of the week. The restaurant was closed for a month, and even Picasso had to pay a fine.”105

103 Pryce-Jones, Paris in the Third Reich, 30. See also, Spotts, The Shameful Peace, 21–22.
104 Pryce-Jones, Paris in the Third Reich, 30.
These conditions, precarious and at times humbling, compelled the two artists to focus on food as a subject matter, but in doing so, they revealed their tenacity and also their determination to record—albeit in a nuanced manner—the cruelties experienced under the Occupation. Food is always linked to wellbeing—mental and physical—and hence carries deep emotional resonance. The life of the table is also commonly associated with sociability: family, friends, networking, flirtation. As I argue here, the artists did not set out to portray the food itself, but rather the underlying emotions endured by those who suffered the loss of their civil freedoms at the hands of the Nazis, or even feared betrayal by collaborators. Sociability in the one realm where private and public life overlapped—around the domestic table—was not only interrupted but also at stake. Braque’s and Picasso’s paintings of food were both a record and form of resistance and suggest the will to endure, even as they emanate anxiety and desperation.

More than any other type of foodstuff, Braque depicted fish during this period, sometimes accompanied by a lemon or two apples. Between 1941 and 1943 he completed at least two-dozen paintings of this subject, attesting to the importance of this modest meal within his daily routine.\textsuperscript{106} Unlike the sudden inclusion of a skull within his compositions, Braque had occasionally painted fish on the table, even as early as the Cubist period (fig. 45).\textsuperscript{107} Yet during the war he displayed a singular focus on a paltry display of mullet (or perhaps sometimes herring), indicating not only his own deprivations but also those of his fellow Parisians who suffered alongside him. In 1977, French poet Francis Ponge retrospectively recalled his reaction


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{107} There are at least two such Cubist still lifes depicting fish currently known: the present example, from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as a second at the Tate Museum in London (\textit{Bottle and Fishes}, c. 1910–12).}
when he first laid eyes on one of these pictures late in the war: “I was seized by an irrepressible sob... a sort of spasm between the pharynx and the esophagus. No doubt a certain nervous disorder had something to do with it: we were all still rather under-nourished at that time. But painting has hardly ever affected me like that.”

One of the earliest works in the series is the 1940–41 *The Two Mullets* (fig. 46). It shows a significant reduction of compositional elements from the prior decades, although Braque’s play of color—the red-orange fish, the verdant green tablecloth, and the yellow lemon—enlivens the space and mood. In this canvas, as well as a second one from 1941, *Still Life with Fish* (fig. 47), Braque paired the catch with a black pitcher emblazoned with a blue letter “M” on its front. The initial may represent the presence of Marcelle, Braque’s wife, and thus alludes to the comfort of companionship, despite the little there is of the meal to share. In a third work from the same series, *Scale and Fish* (fig. 48), a large kitchen scale takes the place of the pitcher (on what is also a sparsely set table) and likely alludes to the carefully allotted portions of food rations. These first wartime paintings of food included a decorative play of color and pattern, such as the geometric wallpaper and the checkered design of the tablecloth, which animate the compositions with an ample sense of space, warmth, and fullness. While not as compositionally intricate as his still-life paintings from the previous decades, these works show some continuity, implying a degree of normalcy or at least the semblance of it, by incorporating the reassuring familiarity and aesthetic pleasures of the domestic sphere.

In 1942, some of Braque’s compositions retained a similar play of color and pattern, while others began to show signs of subdued constraint with a telling economy of pictorial

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means. Black (and sometimes brown) fish often appear instead of the colorful mullets (figs. 49-51) and a black or neutral-toned tablecloth replaces the green one featured the year before. Instead of decorative wallpaper, a simple wainscoting fills the background, closing off the space more severely. The shape of the fish—now frequently reduced to a basic elliptical form—echoes both the oval plate that holds them and the curves of the table. The circular forms of the nearby apples or the cylindrical shape of the glass, offset by the linear design of the background wainscoting enhances this play of form; indeed, the carefully constructed geometry of these compositions appears as important as the fish themselves, an indication that every detail—and every bite consumed—had significance. Although it can be argued that Braque continued his habit of layering space and objects, he simplified the layering to its most elemental state, in tandem with the forcibly diminished fare on the table. Indeed, the pictorial differences between the works of 1941 and 1942 parallel the further reductions in food rations that occurred in July of 1942. By 1943, the repast was reduced even further, from two fish to a single, paltry one (figs. 52-53).

Lest these appear as wholly straightforward depictions of a wartime meal, “for those with the right eyes, they were invested with meaning,” notably in the motifs of the black pitcher with the letter “M” and the kitchen scale, as Alex Danchev has argued.\footnote{Danchev, \textit{Georges Braque: A Life}, 212.} Additionally, Danchev notes that “on one of [the fishes’] earliest appearances they were accompanied by a nondescript vegetable that might have been a spring onion or a leek [fig. 51]. In French slang, ‘a leek’ is someone, in particular someone official, who keeps an eye on things (or people). Perhaps the fish were under surveillance.”\footnote{Ibid.} Danchev continues: “In spirit, however, they were free,” implying, perhaps, that the fish here stand in for Braque and Marcelle, or all Parisians, who lived
under the watchful eye of the Nazis. Indeed, Braque himself must have felt under surveillance, especially with Germans quartered in the house across the street. These coded references, oblivious to all except those in the know, provoked Braque’s close friend, French writer Jean Paulhan, to comment: “The fish prompts me to ponder your personal blend of extreme violence and serenity.”

Picasso rendered a greater variety of foodstuffs during the war period than did Braque, though he shared his increasingly scaled-down compositions and anemic color schemes. The first examples of the Spaniard’s food still lifes, which took on newly allegorical meanings during this period, date from the spring of 1940 during the drôle de guerre. As noted earlier, while he resided in the seaside town of Royan (from September 1939 to August 1940), Picasso made several trips to Paris. During an extended stay in the French capital, from March until May of 1940, the artist wrote to his friend and secretary Jaime Sabartés to tell him that three recently completed paintings revealed that he was “homesick for Royan’s marketplace.”

These canvases—two dated March 19 and one March 27—depict an array of seafood found in coastal waters. The Soles (fig. 54) and Crab, Eels, and Fish (fig. 55) show the items heaped upon and overwhelming a small table, accompanied by a kitchen scale. The background and surfaces are rendered in shades of grey. Both compositions evoke the sense of threat in the animals’ razor-sharp teeth and opened claws. Though far from water, the creatures appear to be at each other’s throats. Indeed, in Crab, Eels, and Fish, the crab’s claw reaches directly toward the central blue fish, whose toothy mouth opens in retaliation. Their beady eyes recall those of the minotaur and

112 Ibid.


bull heads from the November 1938 paintings, giving the appearance, as Jean Sutherland Boggs
notes, that they are “improbably alive.”115 These images contrast with Fish and Frying Pan (fig. 56) from 1938. The earlier canvas features the same blue fish, but with its jaw firmly shut; the fish passively await their fate, indicated by the adjacent frying pan. There is nothing of the ferocious, precarious state between life and death that infuses the battling seafood of the drôle de guerre.

By May of 1941, when the next example was painted, Picasso had returned to Paris and resumed his artistic activities following his eight-month hiatus at the start of the Occupation. Still Life with Blood Sausage (fig. 57), depicting a meal enjoyed at La Savoyard restaurant, provided a trenchant visual commentary on the new circumstances.116 Goggin notes that this was not only the first still life to be painted by Picasso since his return to Occupied Paris the previous August, but also his first oil on canvas.117 Additionally, it was also “the only still life of the approximately 150 he painted or drew during that period in which he depicted what could be called a complete meal.”118 During the Cubist period, Picasso had seemingly relished depicting decadent meals. The Restaurant (fig. 58), for example, portrayed a roasted chicken, and Boggs writes that “there is no question of its succulence; it is covered with flat disks of black truffles under its skin.”119 Yet Still Life with Blood Sausage does nothing of the sort. The modest meal—two artichokes, coiled sausage links, a wedge of cheese wrapped in newspaper, and a bottle of wine—sits matter-of-factly on the table. Picasso carefully distributed the foodstuffs

115 Boggs, Picasso and Things, 266.

116 Janis, Picasso: The Recent Years, pl. 60.

117 Goggin, Picasso and his Art During the German Occupation, 86.

118 Ibid, 87.

119 Boggs, Picasso and Things, 140.
across the entire surface of the side table, largely avoiding any significant overlap of the items and endowing each with pregnant meaning.

At the front edge of the table, Picasso placed a knife, its blade fiercely pointed upward toward the sausage. The triangular form of the blade finds an echo in the shape of light that hits the bottom portion of the wine bottle, heightening its sharp-edged effect. Indeed, these two areas, some of the lightest within the grisaille palette of browns and grays, pop against the darker surrounding tones; together they help to delineate the beam of light emanating from the lamp overhead. The single source of light within the composition, the lamp illuminates the glaring tensions within the scene, and, along with the grisaille palette, harkens back to Guernica. At the front of the table, an open drawer reveals a jumble of forks and knives haphazardly overflowing the space. According to Harriet and Sidney Janis, Picasso himself described these particular utensils “like souls out of Purgatory,” revelatory of the painting’s underlying sense of disquiet.120

Picasso’s next compositions to take direct inspiration from a restaurant appeared two years later and indicate the continued effect of the war on Parisian morale. In Buffet at the Catalan (fig. 59) and Sideboard at Le Catalan (fig. 60), both painted on May 30, 1943, the furniture, not the food, seems to have attracted the artist’s interest. Boggs suggests that “the buffet probably contradictorily had appealed to him because it was so unnecessarily ornate.”121 Picasso’s depiction of the sideboard’s carved elements—with attention given to the scrolled design that adorns its back and side—supports this claim. On the sideboard are a stack of plates and three glasses, which appear as if huddled together on the shelf. The only foodstuffs present are some cherries in a small white compote, likely an allusion to his having recently met Françoise Gilot at Le Catalan in May of 1943 (when he approached her table with a bowl of

120 Janis, Picasso: The Recent Years, pl. 60.

121 Boggs, Picasso and Things, 277.
cherrys). Despite the fruit, the Janises describe the sideboard as "depleted" and "poignant with the feeling of hunger," an impression underscored by the barren color scheme. Perhaps it was the very obvious scarcity of food that allowed Picasso to admire, by contrast, the ornate flourishes of the sideboard in the first place.

As with Braque, Picasso injected his humble repasts with a sense of enveloping anxiety, nowhere more palpable than in Still Life with Blood Sausage (see fig. 57). The large, sharply pointed, triangular knife strikes a purposeful juxtaposition to the curving comestibles laid out on the table, and its presence is reinforced by the smaller knives and forks that overflow the drawer below and reach upward toward it. Picasso’s daughter Maya later explained that the Germans often confiscated this type of cutlery, an indication that these knives were particularly treasured during the war years. Maya also recalled that Picasso carefully sharpened her mother’s (that is, his lover, Marie-Thérèse) knife whenever he visited their apartment during the Occupation. The prominence of the kitchen utensil cum weapon evokes the Nazi’s murderous regime, but also serves as a symbol of defiance or defense.

Braque similarly featured these same oversized, menacing, triangular-bladed knives in some of his wartime compositions, often accompanied by a loaf of bread, a wedge of cheese, and fruit. In Pitcher, Fruit, Cheese and Knife (fig. 61) and The Loaf of Bread (fig. 62), he laid out the foodstuffs and utensils on a table covered in a stark, white cloth. The dark knives seem all the more threatening against this light background (the reverse effect of that found within Picasso’s Still Life with Blood Sausage, in which the bright blade threateningly gleams against its dark surroundings). Also similar to Picasso, Braque eschewed the ambiguity of the late Cubist

122 Gilot and Lake, Life with Picasso, 13–14.
123 Janis, Picasso: The Recent Years, 35.
style, avoiding interpenetrating objects and space. He took care to distribute each item across the surface, heightening its symbolic weight as well as the scarcity of the meal. A third example, *Fruit Dish with Three Apples* (fig. 63), while compositionally more intricate, nonetheless features the same pointed knife, placed front and center so as not to be overlooked, and menacingly positioned with its blade pointed upward.

In *The Loaf of Bread*, the undulating curves of the edges of the tablecloth mirror the shape of the bread and the two apples, and even the rim of the glass is echoed in the dip of the linen at that particular area. The sharp lines of the angular knife conflict with the otherwise rounded forms. Just as Picasso emphasized the blade of the knife in *Still Life with Blood Sausage* by juxtaposing it with a similar shape of light, so too did Braque engage in formal play to draw attention to the exacting and aggressive instrument of cooking and criminality. As the scholar John Golding has commented, “the lower edge of the bread projects downwards in a triangular wedge, as if acknowledging the shape of the knife that has cut it.”

These literally and figuratively pointed juxtapositions were successful, in part, because of the space afforded to each object; thus it would seem both Braque and Picasso may have foregone their previous habit of layering and stacking objects in order to more effectively imbue their compositions with the tense emotions evocative of the war years.

A sense of optimism clearly presented itself within Braque’s and Picasso’s works in 1944, as the end of the war became increasingly a reality. The Liberation of Paris on August 25 meant an end to the enforced previous four years of deprivation. It was during the period just weeks before the Liberation that the still lifes of both artists showed signs of change in color, mood, and symbolism. From July 19 until August 1, Picasso painted at least eighteen compositions of a

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pitcher and a glass, and often included a piece of fruit. According to Goggin, these works, along with his series of paintings featuring a tomato plant, were the only two still-life types conceived by the artist for the remainder of the Occupation.126 Placed on an otherwise bare surface within a nondescript and shallow setting, the compositions of the pitcher and glass (figs. 64-66) resemble the paintings of skulls and pitchers from the previous August. Using the same simplified format, Picasso nonetheless altered the mood with just a few changes: he transformed the pitcher’s previously angular form to a voluptuously rounded shape; he replaced the skull with a translucent drinking glass; and he chose a ripe lemon to bridge the space between the two. Additionally, a renewed sense of light appears with the brightened palette of translucent yellows and blues, and in some depictions, lively brushstrokes radiate outward (fig. 66), signifying newfound energy.

Energy also emanates in the theme of vegetal growth captured by Picasso in his paintings of a tomato plant, staked and grown in his home on the windowsill, and likely used by the artist as a supplemental source of food during wartime rationing. Boggs opined, “the tomato plants are an earthy and decorative metaphor for the human need to survive and flourish even within the constraints of war.”127 Picasso memorialized the ripening plant in paint for the first time in August 1944, and within nine days, from August 3 to August 12, he painted at least nine iterations of the subject. Although similar in composition to the previous series of a pitcher and glass, the tomato plant series is distinguished by the inclusion of a window and a view to the outside world, a view that does not appear in his other wartime still lifes of food. In the earliest canvas from August 3 (fig. 67), the faceted planes of the window and windowsill compare to the radiating brushwork found in the immediately preceding pitcher and glass series (see fig. 66).

126 Goggin, *Picasso and his Art During the German Occupation*, 366.

While maintaining focus on the plant itself, Picasso nonetheless played with the space he created around it; when the casement window is clearly shut, it closes off the background space, though the outside light prevents any sense of claustrophobia (fig. 68). In other instances (fig. 69), Picasso opted for ambiguity between inside and outside, while allowing for a sense of depth that extended infinitely into the vibrant blue sky beyond. The open window symbolizes the new status of the domestic space—no longer a prison, but one that opens onto the outside world at will.

For his part, Braque painted several floral subjects towards the war’s end, between 1944 and 1946 (figs. 70-72). Like Picasso’s paintings of tomato plants, Braque’s also focused on a living plant, though not one that rendered food. While in these works the space remains shallow and no window is present, they nevertheless convey a sense of light otherwise missing from his wartime paintings. As the art historian Herschel Chipp noted, “although most of them are small or medium in size and simple and informal in style, it seems likely that they are Braque’s joyful response to the ability once more freely to leave the studio.” Whether completed in the days preceding the Liberation of Paris or, more likely, after the artist returned to his country home on the coast of Normandy in September, Braque’s still lifes of flowers represent the same desire to celebrate life and, above all else, a renewed sense of freedom.

When the conditions of the Occupation infringed on their livelihood and security, Braque and Picasso responded in kind in their painting. Taking food and the laden table as their subject, the two artists upended a still-life genre typically employed to portray prosperity, sensuality, and abundance. Neither artist shied away from the realities they faced, and instead confronted their new harsh existence—consumed by hunger and inconvenience—in a manner at once straightforward yet carefully veiled. At their most fundamental, Braque’s and Picasso’s still lifes

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128 Chipp, Georges Braque: The Late Paintings, 19.
spoke to the grumbling stomachs of their fellow Parisians. In the years that followed, each artist significantly reduced his portrayal of food, likely a result of eased rationing and an overall sense of relief as the worst of the deprivation was behind them. Subsequent paintings by the artists affirm their desire to move past the dark years, when basic necessities were deficient, and to focus on leisure and repose instead.

Braque immediately embarked on a series of billiard tables, from 1944 to 1949, an unanticipated theme that made a swift departure from his wartime works. These in turn led to his Atelier series (1949–1956), in which the artist revisited a theme he first explored in the years leading up to World War II. Although the canvases largely maintain the darkened palette undertaken by the artist during the war, these compositions nevertheless reveal the spatial layering and profusion of patterning that prevailed in the prewar works. Picasso, meanwhile, waivered between the “exhilaration about new love, impending fatherhood, and regained freedom after years of war and occupation” and “terrible attacks of despair about the physical and moral decay of postwar humanity,” as Gertje Utley describes.129 For instance, paintings that he completed in Antibes, where the artist spent the summer of 1946 with his new lover Gilot, drew inspiration from the coastal environment, including sea urchins among the daily catch. When Picasso returned to Paris after his summer sojourn, however, even though the sea urchins remained in his paintings, they appeared in a grisaille palette and accompanied by a skull (whose presence continued to haunt several postwar compositions as well). Picasso’s continued political engagement after the war—due to his decision to join the French Communist party immediately following the Liberation—may have, in part, affected his ability to move fully past the years of the Occupation, which will be discussed further in the following chapter. Whereas Braque’s

129 Utley, Picasso: The Communist Years, 85, 90.
postwar paintings indicate the artist left the dark years of the war behind as quickly as possible, Picasso’s oeuvre shows the artist struggling to move past the atrocities of the Occupation.
Chapter 4: The Politics of Public Reception

Braque and Picasso had few opportunities to exhibit their images of duress and stoicism during the years in which they were painted. Among other reasons, both artists largely steered clear of participating in the official culture of Occupied Paris, which, by contrast to Nazi policies within Germany, was deliberately orchestrated to allow for the semblance of normalcy. Venerable figures of the École de France (the older pre-World War I avant-garde), for example, and even younger practitioners of abstract art showed in commercial and state-sanctioned venues, and some did so with the belief that the veiled patriotic content of their work trumped collusion.\(^\text{130}\) By contrast, as a result of their refusal to give cultural capital to the Nazis, Braque’s and Picasso’s dignity remained intact. To be sure, Picasso’s potential choices for participation were more limited than Braque’s: as a foreign-born artist, he was the target of xenophobic Nazi sympathizers; and given the history of his painting *Guernica*, he had an international reputation as an anti-Fascist. Braque refrained from any and all politics—a position that nonetheless had ideological resonance. Given that they did not or could not show their recent endeavors, to what extent could their still lifes have had an effect beyond the studio? Aside from the loss of income and the sustenance of feedback, what did it mean to strive for inspiration day after day, not knowing if one’s labors, let alone one’s self, would survive the war?

These questions were answered, in part, when each artist first exhibited his wartime work: Braque in 1943 under the Occupation, and Picasso in 1944 immediately following the Liberation. In one noteworthy exception to his refusal to exhibit in Occupied Paris, Braque’s

work appeared in the Salon d’Automne of 1943, an exhibition organized while the Nazis still held Parisian culture under their oppressive watch. A year later, Picasso was the subject of a large one-man exhibition under the auspices of the Salon de la Libération, an exhibition that occurred after the liberation of Paris and at the very moment that he joined the French Communist Party (PCF). On the one hand, their stature as artists of international renown created certain expectations from the public; on the other, their art was read according to partisan positions, which were themselves loaded, given the reality of self-censorship and outright collaboration among certain French intellectuals, and the punitive reaction against the latter in the immediate postwar years. This chapter, building on previous scholarship, analyzes the charged reception of their work during and in the immediate aftermath of war. It also reveals that, although the still lifes of Braque and Picasso show remarkable similarity, as has been argued thus far, the critical reception diverged, due to the two artists’ respective national identities and political profiles. Regardless of how they intended their work to be read (and both artists were notably silent on this front), it became a lightning rod for French collaborators, resisters, and those who merely survived.

Throughout their careers, Braque and Picasso had benefited from exhibiting their work in select private galleries, a practice that dated back to their pre-World War I period at the request of their dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who shrewdly marketed Cubism abroad through his network. While under contract with Kahnweiler, neither artist exhibited his work in any of the public salons, a practice largely maintained even after World War I, although in 1920 Braque participated in both the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d’Automne, and in 1922 he was honored with a special room at the Salon d’Automne, where he exhibited eighteen works.131

131 Hope, Georges Braque, 163; and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 278–79.
With the absence of their current dealer, Paul Rosenberg, who fled France to save his life and life’s work, Braque and Picasso lost a key channel through which to sell and show their ongoing production. Although an intimation of each artist’s changing style was evidenced in the last exhibitions of their recent paintings at Rosenberg’s Paris gallery—Picasso in January 1939, Braque in April 1939—the works made within the wartime climate remained otherwise completely unknown. Yet as Picasso expressed, “to be left in peace, that is all I ask”—an indication that the impulse to publically exhibit his work was secondary to his desire to create.\footnote{Spotts, \textit{The Shameful Peace}, 146.}

Presumably, that is what both artists had hoped for when each made the decision to return to Paris after the signing of the armistice in 1940. The “peace” they found, however, meant a secluded existence lived mostly out of the public eye: while each man continued his daily artistic practice largely undisturbed, neither found it advantageous to seek opportunities to exhibit this new work. To do so risked censorship, even retaliation, especially given the themes of their still lifes, which, if not critical of the Occupiers, spoke to the dire circumstances of daily life in unfavorable terms. Furthermore, each artist pointedly declined or avoided invitations extended by Nazi officials (for practical offers of heating fuel or more collaborative requests for favors). They likewise evaded association with key German cultural ambassadors in Paris, most notably the diplomat Otto Abetz and the sculptor Arno Breker, who ingratiated themselves with Parisian society and artistic circles.

While Braque and Picasso imbued their paintings with signs of the suffering endured and their inner resistance (as discussed in the previous chapters), these acts largely went unseen for much, if not all, of the Occupation. Interestingly, each artist’s return to the public sphere occurred at the annual Salon d’Automne, a venue at which neither artist had a strong history of participation (as previously mentioned, Braque had last exhibited at the Salon d’Automne in
1922, while Picasso had never participated in the annual exhibition). In 1943, the influential members of the salon, including newly appointed vice president Pierre Paul Montagnac (1883–1961), a French artist and Resistance member, began initiating subtle changes to the annual exhibition, carefully integrating a new generation of artists whose work frequently provoked disdain from conservative critics in the Occupied capital. These efforts were fully unfurled in 1944 with the Salon de la Libération. Thus, when Braque exhibited at the 1943 Salon d’Automne there was an underlying impetus for change, but the exhibition remained mostly conservative as a result of the Occupation and ongoing censorship. It was not until the 1944 salon, when Picasso was honored, that a new condition of freedom was fully expressed. Despite the similarities in iconography and mood, the critical reception of the two artists’ work toward the end of the Occupation differed tremendously, in large part a result of the expectations placed on each: Braque, the apolitical Frenchman, and Picasso, the newly-proclaimed Communist foreigner.

Even before the start of World War II, the art of Braque and Picasso fell victim to Nazi cultural policy. With Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor of Germany in January of 1933 and the establishment of the Third Reich, new cultural initiatives swept across the country. Within the first year, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels established the Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture), an organization meant to regulate the arts: membership was required for all arts professionals and as Lynn Nicholas explains, “those who did not belong could not hold jobs, sell or exhibit their works, or even produce them. Among those not accepted [into the organization] were Jews, Communists, and eventually . . . those whose styles did not conform to the Nazi ideal.”

The Nazis next focused their crusade on a campaign to cleanse national institutions of so-called “degenerate”—or modernist—art, which included works by both Braque

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and Picasso. In the summer of 1937, German cultural officials coordinated a widespread confiscation of modern art by German and foreign artists from their museums. Goebbels oversaw the purging of more than 16,000 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper deemed unacceptable; approximately 650 of these were included in the Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) exhibition that opened in Munich on July 19, 1937.\textsuperscript{134} As Stephanie Barron explains, the Nazis organized this event to clarify “for the German public by defamation and derision exactly what type of modern art was unacceptable to the Reich.”\textsuperscript{135} It attracted over two million visitors in Munich before traveling to twelve other cities throughout Germany and Austria over the course of the next three years.\textsuperscript{136} Thousands of works that had been confiscated but not included in the Entartete Kunst exhibition were burned in Berlin in March of 1939; others, including examples by Braque and Picasso, were sold abroad through middlemen dealers to put money in National Socialist coffers.\textsuperscript{137} Moreover, the Galerie Fischer Auction, which took place on June 30, 1939 in Lucerne, Switzerland, included 125 works by thirty-nine artists—both German and non-German—taken from the collections of German museums. Among the group were a 1924 still-life painting by Braque and four figurative paintings by Picasso (three from the Blue and Rose Periods, 1902–1905, and one from 1922).\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{134} Stephanie Barron, “1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany” in ed. Stephanie Barron, “Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany, 9, 19.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, 9.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{137} Lynn Nicholas states that “on March 20, 1939, 1004 paintings and sculptures and 3825 drawings, watercolors, and graphics were burned as a practice exercise in the courtyard of the Berlin Fire Department’s headquarters.” Nicholas, The Rape of Europa, 25.

Although the Nazis established a more lenient cultural policy in Occupied Paris than they imposed in Germany, their single-minded persecution of Jews carried over into France, to devastating effect. Jewish artists, or the so named École de Paris (primarily comprised of the émigré artists who resided in Montparnasse, versus the French-born École de France) had to hide or flee. Braque’s close friend and champion, the German Jewish writer Carl Einstein, killed himself in despair. As noted earlier, both artists lost the support of their principal dealer, Rosenberg, who was forced into exile. Picasso had exhibited his recent work at Rosenberg’s gallery on the rue la Boétie in January 1939. Three months later, Braque’s April exhibition at the same venue marked his last in the French capital of recent work until he was featured in the 1943 Salon d’Automne.\(^{139}\) (An exhibition of Picasso’s gouaches and watercolors at Yvonne Zervos’s Galerie Mai, from April 19 to May 18, 1940, marked the artist’s last individual Parisian exhibition until he was celebrated in the 1944 Salon d’Automne.)\(^{140}\) Rosenberg closed his business in September of 1939 at the start of the drôle de guerre and left Paris to go south, like so many others.\(^{141}\) After safeguarding part of his collection in the vaults of the National Bank for Commerce and Industry in Libourne, Rosenberg and his family crossed the Atlantic to the United States, arriving in New York on September 20, 1940. In New York he established the Paul Rosenberg & Company gallery; yet cut off from the artists, he could only promote them with the stock he managed to evacuate from France.

\(^{139}\) Butler, “Georges Braque and the Cubist Still Life,” 16. See also, Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 52.

\(^{140}\) Goggin, Picasso and his Art During the German Occupation, 49; and Nash, “Chronology” in Picasso and the War Years, 213.

Not only did Braque and Picasso lose their dealer; the Nazis confiscated a significant number of their works—their livelihood—held in Rosenberg’s collection. Shortly after Rosenberg’s departure from France, a German ordinance called for the sequestration of Jewish property: officials commandeered the contents of his Parisian gallery on July 4, 1940. In addition to the works of art (mainly sculptures too large or heavy to relocate), the authorities removed “a library of over twelve hundred books, all the furnishings (from the antique furniture to the kitchen utensils), several hundred photographic prints, and the whole of the gallery archives dating back to 1906.”¹⁴² A year later, on September 5, 1941, the Germans discovered both the Rosenberg house in Floirac and the vault in Libourne; they confiscated approximately 100 works from the former and another 162 from the latter—including fourteen paintings by Braque and thirty-three by Picasso.¹⁴³ The Nazis took the looted treasure to the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris, where they inventoried all the confiscated goods.

Of course, the Nazis also discovered Braque’s vault in Libourne. Initially taken under the control of the Devisenschutzkommando (Currency Control Unit), his collection did not meet the same fate as Rosenberg’s, due solely to the artist’s designation as Aryan. Before releasing Braque’s collection, however, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring’s personal assistant, Walter Andreas Hofer, attempted to negotiate with the artist. Although Braque’s own works did not interest the Germans, a painting within his collection by Luis Cranach the Elder, Portrait of a Girl, caught their attention. Hofer offered the early release of Braque’s collection if the artist

¹⁴² Sinclair, My Grandfather’s Gallery, 194.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 46, 195. In addition to the works by Braque and Picasso, Rosenberg’s Libourne vault included 5 Degas, 5 Monets, 7 Bonnards, 21 Matisses, as well as inventory by Corot, Ingres, van Gogh, Cézanne, Renoir, and Gauguin. See Nicholas, The Rape of Europa, 91.
would sell his Cranach to Göring (who had a particular penchant for the sixteenth-century artist’s works), a proposal that Braque does not seem to have accepted.\footnote{While Nicholas states that the painting was indeed sold by Braque to the Germans, both Danchev and Lauriane Manneville indicate that there is no evidence of the Cranach within Göring’s collection. See Danchev, \textit{Georges Braque: A Life}, 215–16; Manneville, “Chronologie” in \textit{Georges Braque: 1882–1963}, 285, 304n58; and Nicholas, \textit{The Rape of Europa}, 129–30.}

That the Nazis classified Braque and Picasso as “degenerate” artists contributed to the starkly diminished visibility of their work in France under the Occupation, but it was not the only reason for their arrested presence. To begin with, Nazi cultural policies in France allowed for a margin of creative freedom to foster French collaboration and did not automatically prohibit modernist, non-Jewish artists from exhibiting. Instead, Braque and Picasso, like a few other artists, kept their distance from any compromising opportunities that the Germans offered and, moreover, were not considered potential collaborators because of their personal reputations and politics. As Laurence Bertrand Dorléac explains, Nazi “censorship [in France] did not deal with formal matters but responded primarily to infringements of the exclusion laws or to anti-German symbols. Picasso and Fernand Léger were censored more for their political opinions than for their manners of painting.”\footnote{Dorléac, \textit{Art of the Defeat}, 50.} (Léger eventually left for safe haven in the United States.) Picasso’s exclusion from the public sphere during the Occupation thus arose from his previous denunciations against Fascism and General Francisco Franco’s regime. Braque’s curtailed participation stemmed, not from political views (which the artist largely kept to himself), but from a purposeful position of non-engagement with the Occupying forces.

One such infamous example of collaboration occurred in October 1941, when a group of French artists traveled on a diplomatic visit—sponsored by the German forces and organized by Abetz and Breker—to Berlin, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Munich, Nuremburg, and Vienna. The
French luminaries were toured through art schools and exhibition halls in order to produce a favorable impression that would then be transmitted upon their return. They included the painters André Derain, Kees van Dongen, André Dunoyer de Segonzac, Othon Friesz, Raymond-Jean Legueult, Louis Lejeune, Roland Oudot, and Maurice de Vlaminck, and the sculptors Paul Belmondo, Henri Louis Bouchard, Charles Despiau, and Paul Landowski. Many later claimed they accepted the invitation in the hope that it would result in the release of French prisoners of war. Neither Braque nor Picasso joined the trip. Picasso would not have been among those artists invited given his foreign citizenship, but as a leading French artist Braque certainly would have been eligible and desirable. Yet it seems that Braque did not receive an invitation to participate on the 1941 trip. As Alex Danchev explains, “the rejectionist stance of no commissions and no concessions cannot have gone unnoticed. Georges Braque’s presence on the [1941] artists’ tour of the Fatherland would have been a major propaganda coup for the Germans. It was not his painting that deterred them . . . it was his disposition.”

Braque likewise declined a commission to design an emblem for the Vichy government.

Another opportunity to fraternize with the Occupying forces arose in the spring of 1942 when an exhibition of sculptures by Breker stimulated considerable attention within the French capital. Breker, having established his contacts in Paris long before when he studied there from

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147 Scholarship remains ambiguous as to whether Braque was invited on the 1941 artist trip to Germany. Danchev unequivocally states that Braque was not invited, but both Nicholas and Spotts contend that Braque declined an invitation to tour Germany. Spotts, however, cites that the invitation to tour Germany was from the German Institute in January 1942; it seems possible the artist received an invitation separate from the larger tour of artists that occurred in October of 1941. See Danchev, *Georges Braque: A Life*, 217; Spotts, *The Shameful Peace*, 160; and Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 182.

1927 to 1933, counted many French artists among his friends. He was also Hitler’s favorite artist, receiving prime commissions for the 1936 Berlin Olympic games and for the Reichskanzlei (Reich Chancellery), along with huge wealth, property, and slave labor to man his enormous studio. Breker served as the consummate cultural ambassador artist to France. The exhibition of Breker’s sculptures, which opened at the Musée de l’Orangerie in May of 1942, received widespread publicity, all positive, given the German-run press and also because, as Dorléac writes “everyone who went spoke his piece without letting slip a hint of . . . disdain,” making it “the most important event of the cultural collaboration.”

Despite the large number of prominent attendees, including several of the artists who had joined the German-sponsored trip the prior year—Despiau, Dunoyer de Segonzac, Landowski, and Vlaminck, who were named members of the Arno Breker honorary committee—as well as Aristide Maillol and Jean Cocteau, a Breker sycophant, neither Braque nor Picasso participated in any of the weeklong opening festivities.

While Breker’s neoclassical sculptures represented the Aryan Nazi ideal, modern French art—even abstract art—nevertheless retained a presence in the Occupied capital. In particular, early Fauvist painting (part of the École de Paris), heralded as the last modern art movement representative of the pure French tradition, gained notable attention as it experienced a revival of sorts. Many modern artists received recognition with prominent exhibitions. The Galerie Louis Carré hosted various individual exhibitions for French modern artists: Cocteau (May 1941), Henri Matisse (November 1941), Georges Rouault (1942), and Raoul Dufy (June 1943).

Additionally, Galerie Paul Pétridès exhibited Pierre Bonnard (1941, 1943), Maurice Utrillo

149 Dorléac, Art of the Defeat, 90, 103.
150 Spotts, The Shameful Peace, 44; and Dorléac, Art of the Defeat, 103.
151 Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 12.
(1942), and Friesz (1943). Others, including Derain and Maurice de Vlaminck, could be found represented within group exhibitions at the Galerie Charpentier. While Galerie de France held an exhibition of Braque’s works in May of 1943, it comprised only early works by the artist, presumably from its stock: twelve Cubist paintings from 1907–1911 as well as six from 1913–1918.

Additionally, a new group of younger modern painters emerged during the Occupation years. First shown together in May 1941 in the exhibition *Jeunes peintres de tradition française* at the Galerie Braun, they did not form a cohesive group, but were loosely united for the experimentalist styles and bold colors of their works. Taking leaders of the École de Paris (such as Braque, Picasso, and Matisse) as their example, the artists found ways, as Sarah Wilson describes, of “adapting to the régime without subscribing to it” by creating works that “were patriotic, Catholic, and politically ‘open’ to various readings if the forms concealed in a hermetic abstraction based on a red-blue post-cubist armature were discerned.”

Many of the same artists likewise participated in *Douze peintres d’aujourd’hui*, which took place in February 1943 at the Galerie de France. While the paintings on view appeared “more innovative than in 1941,” according to Dorléac, they nonetheless did not attract censorship from the Occupying forces. And while conservative, collaborationist critics reviewed the works negatively, Michèle Cone

\[\underline{152} \text{Ibid.}\]
\[\underline{153} \text{Ibid.}\]
\[\underline{154} \text{Butler, “Georges Braque and the Cubist Still Life,” 24n40.}\]
\[\underline{155} \text{The artists included in the 1941 exhibition at Galerie Braun included Jean Bazaine, André Beaudin, Paul Berçot, Jean Bertholle, Francisco Borès, Lucien Coutaud, François Desnoyer, Léon Gischia, Charles Lapicque, Jean Lasne, Lucien Lautrec, Raymond Legueult, Jean Le Moal, Alfred Manessier, Jean Marchand, Édouard Pignon, Suzanne Roger, Gustave Singier, Pierre Tal-Coat, Charles Walch.}\]
\[\underline{156} \text{Wilson, “Collaboration in the Fine Arts,” 116.}\]
\[\underline{157} \text{Dorléac, } \textit{Art of the Defeat, 242.}\]
contends that overall, the Tricolor painters, as they were called, were largely accepted within the nationalistic discourse, in part because “by uniting under the banner of their shared Aryan Frenchness, Catholic traditions, and roots in French modernisms and French primitivism, the Tricolor painters censored themselves as well.”

When Braque and Picasso first exhibited their wartime production, politics, not the art itself, influenced the reception they received. Braque’s apolitical nature, along with his adherence to the French tradition, allowed critics the ability to interpret his still lifes more freely, according to their own agendas. Collaborators ignored the harsh realities of the subject matter and focused their attention on formal qualities of color and composition—all in line with the traditional École de France, modernist tradition. Conversely, resistors saw an expression of the alienation brought about by wartime conditions and openly, if subtly, articulated this content. By contrast, Picasso’s alignment with the Communist party in 1944 dictated much of the immediate rhetoric surrounding his wartime oeuvre; his works were judged more for the artist’s reputation itself than the actual content.

The Salon d’Automne, founded in 1903 to provide a venue for younger, more progressive painters, shocked audiences by hosting the works of the Fauves, and later the Cubist painters, in the years before World War I, and continued to show more conservative variants of those styles as they developed between the wars. Even though much of the art promoted within this venue was anathema to Nazi taste, the Occupiers allowed the exhibition (and the other annual Salons) to proceed, affirming their desire to present a façade of normalcy within France. As Dørléac recounts, upon hearing from his chief architect Albert Speer that the Salon d’Automne was full of “degenerate” art, Hitler responded that “the intellectual soundness of the French people” was

158 Cone, “‘Abstract’ Art as a Veil,” 199.
of no importance to Germans and that it was in Germany’s interest to let France ‘degenerate.’”\textsuperscript{159} The Nazis did, however, require that any artist participating in the Salon sign a register stating they were of French nationality, and not Jewish.\textsuperscript{160} Although their prevailing attitude seemingly allowed for an atmosphere in which French artists were free to proceed as before, Dorléac explains that the Nazi presence “fostered a system of widespread self-censorship, and works that were openly subversive in their subject or form were mostly relegated, voluntarily, to the intimate [commercial] galleries of the avant-garde. The traditional Salons maintained an innocuous ambience that suggested nothing of the extraordinary circumstances.”\textsuperscript{161} Furthermore, the situation allowed for French conservatives and collaborators to continue “feigning ignorance of how France had been constituted and forgetting that its fragile identity resulted from a clever mix of nationalities.”\textsuperscript{162} The exclusion of all foreigners resulted in the exaltation of early modern painters such as Bonnard, Matisse, and Braque as the embodiment of the French tradition.\textsuperscript{163} Yet regardless of the use of Braque’s prestigious name by others during the wartime rhetoric, his current work was notably absent from public exhibition until his participation in the 1943 Salon d’Automne. While the motivation behind his decision to return to the Salon at that particular and fraught moment is not known, the timing is nonetheless significant.

Indeed, the 1943 Salon d’Automne represented a shift, however slight, from the preceding three years. According to Cone, French artist Montagnac, a newly appointed vice president and \textit{organisateur general} of the 1943 Salon, was involved in the Resistance and his

\textsuperscript{159} Dorléac, \textit{Art of the Defeat}, 11.

\textsuperscript{160} Cone, \textit{Artists Under Vichy}, 13.

\textsuperscript{161} Dorléac, \textit{Art of the Defeat}, 295.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid, 234.

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
political attitudes may have affected which artists were included and excluded.\textsuperscript{164} Besides Braque’s noteworthy presence, the Tricolor painters gained unprecedented berth at the 1943 salon, while several of the usual artists were notably absent. More to the point, those older Fauve artists who had compromised themselves by traveling to Germany two years earlier—Derain, Van Dongen, Friesz, De Segonzac, and Vlaminck—were not included. The preface to the catalogue explained that the Salon jury had “undertaken an effort that will span several of its annual exhibitions, and of which 1943 is the first manifestation.”\textsuperscript{165} This endeavor involved establishing “through confrontations the links that unite the young painters with their elders and, for the first time, a whole room was devoted for this purpose to the exhibition of the works of one of the masters of contemporary art.”\textsuperscript{166} Organizers purposefully chose Braque, the “master of contemporary art,” as the forebear to this emerging group of painters, giving form to the underlying curatorial vision—still relatively conservative—of “continuity and renewal” within the works on view.\textsuperscript{167} Not by chance, they chose an artist untainted by collaboration, yet also traditionally removed from ideological posturing, and thus it was shrewdly not polemical.

This strategy, particularly the prevalent inclusion of the young Tricolor painters, who represented subtle evocations of resistance via their patriotic color schemes and veiled allusions, did not go unnoticed. The extreme anti-Semitic critic Lucien Rebatet, writing in the right-wing journal \textit{Je suis partout}, noted the “all-too-generous space given over to the decadent . . . typical

\textsuperscript{164} Cone, \textit{Artists Under Vichy}, 45.


\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
of the old Judaic anarchy in all of its contortions.”168 Conservative critic Jean Marc Campagne, writing for the collaborationist journal Les Nouveaux Temps, lamented, “where are masters such as Derain, Pierre Roy, where are Humblot, Rohner, Jannot, Venard, Chapelain Midy, Pierre Devaux, Courmes, Robert Grange, Claude Marquis? Nowhere in these rooms.”169 Campagne continued, “this year, the champions of pure color, ever-reviving Cubism and decorative imagery are presented, so much so that the public is justified in believing that the only living tendencies of the young painting are resolved in decorative tests where most of the time the notion of the human is strangely absent.”170 Yet while the younger artists received unfavorable reviews, Braque’s established reputation as a former avant-garde artist who played a role in shaping the French tradition helped ensure his resoundingly positive reception from both sides of the political divide.

Unlike the Tricolor painters, whose works had been seen in Paris exhibitions since 1941, Braque’s inclusion in the 1943 Salon d’Automne represented the first opportunity under the Occupation for the Parisian public to absorb a cohesive display of the artist’s recent oeuvre. The exhibition, which during the Nazi siege was held in a wing of the Palais de Tokyo, extended from September 25 until October 31. In the special room honoring him, Braque exhibited twenty-six paintings (all dating from 1941 to 1943), and nine sculptures.171 The paintings, nearly all still lifes, included typical examples of tabletops upon which rest artist’s tools, musical

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168 Lucien Rebatet, “Révolutionnaires d’arrière garde,” Je suis partout (October 29, 1943), quoted in Cone, Artists Under Vichy, 45.


170 Ibid, 207n35.

171 Karen Butler notes that the catalogue raisonné identifies all but three of the twenty-six paintings exhibited in the Salon d’Automne; it is possible that the three unidentified paintings are earlier examples of Braque’s work, but unlikely. Butler, “Georges Braque and the Cubist Still Life,” 24n39.
instruments, personal toiletries, and housewares, although the new themes such as black fish and vanitas were included as well. As Karen Butler explains, “the ambiguity of Braque’s paintings and the fact that he could not be associated with direct political critique (unlike Picasso) must have contributed to his being selected as a featured artist.”172 The presence of the Frenchman’s works, as Danchev describes, was a resounding success: “In Occupied Paris the contents of the Braque room caused a suppressed sensation. For French citizens, Braque embodied what French painting could be. For French painters, Braque embodied what painting could be.”173

Resistors and collaborators alike found merit in Braque’s wartime oeuvre, even though the reception remained relatively measured—a clear indication of the environment in which the Salon took place. Braque’s works found ready support from his colleagues and fellow artists. Giving an early preview to the Salon, French artist Jean Bazaine, the primary exponent of the Tricolor painters, asserted that Braque “give[s] us the true measure of French art.”174 Butler notes that in this same review, from June 1943, Bazaine “observed that the work of this mature master had reached a state of grace and tranquility that came only after many years of artistic struggle. ‘From this,’ he said, ‘came the abundance, the richness of aspiration, the interior quality of his recent work.’”175 The “interior quality” of the works seized upon by Bazaine was similarly noted in many of the reviews: depending on the writer—either cultural resistor or collaborator—they perceived, respectively, the effects of the war, or the purely formal concerns of the works. An example of the former, French librarian Jean Babelon, writing for the


September 1943 issue of *Beaux-arts*, connected the “formalist autonomy of Braque’s still lifes to an existential condition of inner withdrawal.” Babelon stated: “Braque’s virtue is found in the control he has over his violence, in restricting his wandering thoughts to gravely contemplate this ghostly matter which, raw or manufactured, haunts or attracts us, closes up on itself, lends itself to us but denies friendship.” As Butler explains, “it was not just the objects themselves that conveyed a feeling of estrangement [for Babelon] but the way in which Braque made his paintings. Both the ‘matter’ of the paintings and their process of manufacture evoked the psychological experience of isolation, if not that of war.”

Other, more clearly anti-Nazi Parisians, went even further. The French writer and active Resistance member, Jean Paulhan, found Braque’s paintings “at once acute and nourishing,” a description that Danchev notes is “loaded with meaning for a public starved of everything from sausages to self-respect.” (Paulhan continued as one of the artist’s most prominent champions well after the war, but was not equally enamored of Picasso’s work.) And the clandestine (although widely circulated) periodical *L’Art Français* commended the “faithfulness to the spirit of honest research and audacity” within the exhibited work, seeing it as an expression of resistance. Mary-Margaret Goggin notes that the *L’Art Français* article also “praises the artists in the Salon for what it considers endeavors to communicate with the masses, although


specific examples or names are not given, presumably in order to protect the individuals involved.”\textsuperscript{181}

Yet, as Danchev notes, “the adulation was not confined to the \textit{resistant}. Collaborationist critics fell over themselves to praise his work.”\textsuperscript{182} Surprisingly, although Rebatet had vehemently denounced the inclusion of the Tricolor painters at the Salon, Goggin asserts that within the same article he admitted to liking the canvases of Braque, “the inventor of French Cubism, who knew how to create, alongside Picasso, a personal place, thanks above all to his gifts as a colorist.”\textsuperscript{183} In an apparent rebuke to the clandestine review in \textit{L’Art Français}, however, Rebatet claimed that “to brandish the name of Braque as the flag of audacity, it is necessary to belong to a truly retarded ‘rear-guard.’”\textsuperscript{184} This comment, rather than a criticism of Braque, was instead meant as a denunciation of resistors who he felt used Braque to assert their cause. In his opinion, it would seem, Braque’s work represented an authentic example of the French nationalist tradition commonly espoused among conservative, right-wing critics.

Other collaborationist critics continued the refrain of praise for Braque, but in reference to the artist’s way with color, composition, and spatial play, neutralizing the potential reading of the dour subject matter. In a review for \textit{Pariser Zeitung}, a German newspaper published in Paris, the German painter Paul Strecker noted: “On these canvases, one sees the same subjects eternally return, like the airs of music in certain composers; but their value and their distribution are constantly modified in imperceptible ways, so that each painting brings the surprise of a new

\textsuperscript{181} Goggin, \textit{Picasso and His Art During the German Occupation}, 41n17.

\textsuperscript{182} Danchev, \textit{Georges Braque: A Life}, 219.


\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
aspect and creates new emotions.” And other critics, in their admiration for Braque’s paintings, teetered on the edge without fully admitting they sensed the presence of the war. As Goggin notes, collaborationist French writer André Fraigneau “was ‘enraptured’ by the almost funerary colours of the recent still lifes; Braque, he wrote, was ‘the Chardin of the ashes.’” The reference, while placing Braque squarely within the tradition of French still-life painting, nevertheless evokes the trauma of the war years through evocations of death that were hauntingly relevant to the horrors simultaneously occurring in concentration camps. Overall, the critical reception of Braque’s Salon exhibition remained conservative yet positive, with both resistors and collaborators finding their respective ideals represented in the artist’s works.

The Salon d’Automne that took place the following year, from October 6 to November 5, 1944, and known as the Salon de la Libération, exposed the altogether different environment within post-Occupation Paris. As Dorléac describes, “after four years of restrictions on thought, the influential members of the Salon d’Automne wanted to break taboos by presenting works that were more radical than usual, as witnesses to recovered freedom.” A one-page declaration at the front of the catalogue, printed as if handwritten to add to the sense of urgency, set the tone, simply and concisely stating: “Prepared during enemy occupation, organized during the battle, and inaugurated in full independence. Our thoughts go to our still absent comrades and to those who have died to re-conquer our freedom. Vive la France.” Montagnac, who had first shown his desire to revitalize the Salon the year prior, continued in his efforts, in part evidenced by the

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186 Goggin, *Picasso and His Art During the German Occupation*, 22.


strong presence of the Tricolor painters—who Cone terms “the stars” at the Salon—for a second year. Dorléac explains that Picasso was persuaded to participate by his “young admirers”—artists exhibiting in the Salon, including Montagnac and André Fougeron, a young Communist painter. According to Françoise Gilot, “the first revenge to take on the Germans was to mount a big Picasso retrospective as a token of the change in policy.”

Picasso’s participation in the Salon evoked politicized reactions from the start, as it represented one of the few times a non-French artist received the honor of special recognition at the venue. In addition to Picasso’s unprecedented inclusion, those artists who had joined the 1941 propaganda trip to Germany were once again absent from the Salon, having been “immediately forbidden to exhibit at the Salon d’Automne of October 1944” at the war’s end. Furthermore, on the Salon’s opening, these artists, dubbed “ceux du voyage” were “publicly denounced in the press.”

Adding to the already tense circumstances, Picasso officially joined the French Communist Party on October 4, with the announcement appearing on the front page of L’Humanité newspaper one day prior to the Salon’s opening. As Gertje Utley argues, Picasso’s commitment to the Communist party represented “the logical conclusion of his life’s experience,” though it may have been aided in part by the artist’s close circle of friends, including Paul Éluard.

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193 Ibid.
and Louis Aragon, in the 1930s and 1940s. Danchev reveals that Picasso approached Braque, trying to persuade the Frenchman to make a joint declaration of commitment, an indication that “plighting his troth to the Party may have worried him more than he allowed.” Indeed, the announcement dominated the critical reception he received at the time.

For his first ever inclusion at the Salon d’Automne, Picasso exhibited seventy-four paintings and five sculptures, all completed during the war years. While the artist’s biographer Pierre Daix (himself a member of the Resistance fighters) described the artist’s retrospective as “dominated by his larger paintings”—for instance _L’Aubade, Woman with an Artichoke, and Chair with Gladiolus_—there were also numerous portraits of women inspired by Dora Maar, as well as several still lifes. Indeed, between one-third and one-half of the exhibited paintings were still lifes, including at least one composition of the sheep skull, several compositions from the skull and pitcher series, and _The Buffet at the Catalan_. Picasso reportedly made the selection himself. Yet it seems no one focused on the art itself. Instead, the critical discourse surrounding Picasso’s exhibition discussed everything the artist was believed to stand for, and demonstrations broke out, resulting in “le scandale du Salon d’Automne.”

Immediately following the exhibition’s opening, the Picasso rooms were descended upon by a group of protestors, mostly conservative young students who had come of age in wartime Paris under Nazi censorship. The protestors successfully removed several paintings from the

194 Utley, _Picasso: The Communist Years_, 11.
197 Boggs indicates at least 26 of the paintings were still lifes. Boggs, “Chronology” in _Picasso and Things_, 358.
walls and threatened further destruction. French Cubist painter André Lhote witnessed the event, and described it as an attack by “young scatterbrains with the look of Doriotists, who had better things to do than to enlist in the FFI [Forces françaises de l’intérieur], and of self-righteous middle-aged gentlemen.”

The Front National des Arts, of which Picasso had been made president upon his commitment to the Communist party, responded to the attacks in the literary publication Les lettres françaises on October 21, proclaiming, “this unprecedented act in France perpetuates the exhibition ban made on an artist by the invaders, renews the processes of physical brutality and of intimidation that are Hitler’s against culture.”

Dorléac reveals the complexities of the situation, questioning, “was it a revolt against Picasso the militant, Picasso the modern painter, or Picasso the foreigner? The motives were as always mixed, each person privileging his own version of an incident. . . . In reality, the various versions of this event invite caution and do not rule out other interpretations. The reaction of students from the still very conservative École des beaux-arts cannot be dismissed, nor can that of particular political groups.”

As a result of the uproar caused by Picasso’s works, policemen were installed in the Salon rooms for the remainder of the exhibition, and a group including Communists Éluard and Aragon, and non-Communist French writers Jean-Paul Sartre, François Mauriac, and Paul Valéry, added their names to a published statement voicing their support of the artist.

Any review of Picasso’s work itself was thus inextricably caught up in the contentious atmosphere. As Steven Nash explains, “truly objective discussion of the pros and cons of

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202 Ibid, 315.
Picasso’s wartime production had little chance . . . and critical debate tended to polarize around two opposite positions: fawning acceptance by political sympathizers and vehement rejection by aesthetic conservatives.”\textsuperscript{203} When more objective, tempered reviews appeared, however, they did acknowledge the war’s presence. Nicholas explains that John Rothenstein, director of the Tate in London, “saw convincing evidence of the rigors of the occupation in the ‘lassitude and frustration’ expressed in many works [at the 1944 Salon d’Automne]. To him it even showed in many of the paintings by Picasso.”\textsuperscript{204}

In the immediately ensuing years, the dialogue surrounding each artist’s wartime paintings became more nuanced, better addressing the works themselves instead of touting resistance or collaborationist ideals. Yet these reviews were extremely limited given the lack of opportunities for the public to view the recent oeuvre of the two artists after their respective Salon exhibitions. Although both Braque and Picasso eagerly returned to their pre-war routines, leaving the French capital to find artistic inspiration on the coast, the continued absence of their dealer Rosenberg, who remained in New York until his death in 1959, hindered their immediate ability to continue exhibiting as before. Picasso’s first one-man exhibition after the Salon de la Libération took place at Galerie Louise Carré in June 1945. \textit{Peintures récentes} included twenty-one works from the wartime period and as Michael Fitzgerald notes, once “critics became more familiar with [the paintings], they began to identify elements of style and subject matter that seemed to reflect the experience of the war.”\textsuperscript{205} Yet the opportunity to become familiar with the paintings did not last long: by the following summer when Picasso had his second postwar exhibition in Paris, hosted again by Galerie Louise Carré, the works on view represented the

\textsuperscript{203} Nash, “Introduction: Picasso, War, and Art,” 29.

\textsuperscript{204} Nicholas, \textit{The Rape of Europa}, 307.

\textsuperscript{205} Michael Fitzgerald, “Reports from the Home Fronts,” 120.
artist’s “pastoral work” from the spring of 1946. By 1947, Picasso returned to Kahnweiler, but the dealer did not host an exhibition of the artist’s work until 1953. Thus after his showing at the Salon de la Libération, there was only one additional chance for the Parisian public to see Picasso’s wartime works.

The wartime oeuvre of Braque met a similar fate. The artist did not receive another solo exhibition of his wartime oeuvre until June 1947, once he had signed with a new dealer, Aimé Maeght. Only then did his works from the Occupation years reappear in an exhibition titled Le noir est une couleur (Black is a Color) at Galerie Maeght. The artist’s still lifes with black fish were among those paintings featured, and Danchev asserts they “stole the show.” Afterwards Braque presented them to Jean Cassou, director of the Musée national d’art moderne and “courageous résistant,” as a gift to the nation. Braque’s next Parisian exhibition did not occur until January 1949, but by this date the Galerie Maeght showed the artist’s new series of Ateliers.

Although Nazi policy in Occupied Paris allowed for the exhibition of Braque’s work, his stance of “active passivity” led him to largely avoid such opportunities. His purposeful absence from public activity, until his inclusion in the 1943 Salon d’Automne, thus reveals the artist’s united stand with colleagues, such as Picasso, who largely could not participate even if they wanted to do so. Braque instead chose to focus his energies on the creation of paintings that quietly, yet pointedly, disclosed his attitude toward the Occupying forces and the hardships endured under the Nazi regime; these paintings were in turn aligned—in the repetition of certain motifs and the subtle shifts in palette and compositional structure—with many of the still lifes

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206 Ibid, 121.

207 Ibid.

208 Danchev, Georges Braque: A Life, 213.

209 Ibid.
created by Picasso in the same moment. Yet because of his nationality, Braque gained acclaim for representing the artistic ideals of his country; as a result, his wartime reputation remained inherently free of the damaging discourse launched against his foreign and Jewish colleagues. I assert that Braque’s success at the 1943 Salon d’Automne was due, in part, to the politicized motives surrounding the promotion of French tradition by collaborators and resistors alike. Conversely, the upset caused by Picasso’s exhibition at the 1944 Salon d’Automne finds explanation in the desires of the public to see him as a scapegoat for the purported degeneration of French art. Despite the varied reception each artist’s wartime oeuvre received, I have shown that, just as Daix proposed, the late Cubist work of Braque and Picasso did indeed remain firmly intact—and even momentarily united them again—in the means and meaning of their still lifes.
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Fig. 1
Pablo Picasso
*Guernica*, 1937 (May 1–June 4)
Oil on canvas
137 ½ x 305 ¾ in.
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Fig. 2
Pablo Picasso
*Weeping Woman*, 1937
Oil on canvas
24 x 19 5/8 in.
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Fig. 3
Georges Braque
*Studio with Black Vase*, 1938
Oil and sand on canvas
38 ¼ x 51 in.
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Fig. 4
Georges Braque
*The Easel*, 1938
Oil and sand on canvas
36 1/8 x 36 ¾ in.
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Fig. 5
Georges Braque
*Studio with Skull*, 1938
Oil on canvas
36 ¼ x 36 ¼ in.
Location unknown

Fig. 6
Georges Braque
*Baluster and Skull*, 1938
Oil on canvas
17 ¾ x 21 ¾ in.
Location unknown
(sold at Christie’s New York, 2002)
Fig. 7
Georges Braque  
*Vanitas I*, 1938  
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21 3/8 x 25 ¾ in.  
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Georges Braque  
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Georges Braque  
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*Palette, Candlestick, and Head of a Minotaur*, November 4, 1938
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*Still Life with Candle, Palette, and Red Minotaur Head*, November 27, 1938
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*Skull of a Bull and Pitcher*, January 15, 1939
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Untitled page in Royan sketchbook, July 1, 1940
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Location unknown

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*Still Life with Skull and Pitcher*, August 15, 1943
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Georges Braque
*Scale and Fish*, 1941
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**Fig. 49**
Georges Braque
*Black Pitcher and Fish*, 1942
Oil on canvas
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Location unknown
(sold at Sotheby’s London, 1987)

**Fig. 50**
Georges Braque
*Black Fish*, 1942
Oil on canvas
13 x 21 ¾ in.
Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

**Fig. 51**
Georges Braque
*Carafe and Fish*, 1942
Oil on canvas
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Fig. 52
Georges Braque
*Pot and Fish*, 1943
Oil on canvas
18 5/8 x 29 in.
Location unknown
(sold at Sotheby’s New York, 2001)

Fig. 53
Georges Braque
*Still Life with Fish and Lemons*, 1943
Oil and sand on canvas
12 ¼ x 25 5/8 in.
Location unknown
(offered at Sotheby’s New York, 2017)
**Fig. 54**
Pablo Picasso
*The Soles*, March 19, 1940
Oil on canvas
23 5/8 x 36 ¼ in.
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

**Fig. 55**
Pablo Picasso
*Crab, Eels, and Fish*, March 27, 1940
Oil on canvas
28 ¾ x 36 ¼ in.
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

**Fig. 56**
Pablo Picasso
*Fish and Frying Pan*, December 8, 1938
Oil on canvas
19 5/8 x 24 in.
Private collection
Fig. 57
Pablo Picasso
Still Life with Blood Sausage, May 10, 1941
Oil on canvas
36 ½ x 25 7/8 in.
Collection of Gail and Tony Ganz, Los Angeles

Fig. 58
Pablo Picasso
The Restaurant, c. 1914
Oil on canvas
13 3/8 x 16 ½ in.
Private collection
**Fig. 59**
Pablo Picasso  
*Buffet at the Catalan, May 30, 1943*  
Oil on canvas  
31 7/8 x 39 3/8 in.  
Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

**Fig. 60**
Pablo Picasso  
*Sideboard at Le Catalan, May 30, 1943*  
Oil on canvas  
31 7/8 x 39 3/8 in.  
Musée des Beaux Arts, Lyon
Fig. 61
Georges Braque
*Pitcher, Fruit, Cheese and Knife*, 1940
Oil and sand on canvas
16 ½ x 36 ¼ in.
Location unknown (sold at Sotheby’s London, 2010)

Fig. 62
Georges Braque
*The Loaf of Bread*, 1941
Oil and sand on canvas
16 1/8 x 47 ¼ in.
Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Fig. 63
Georges Braque
*Fruit Dish with Three Apples*, 1941
Oil and sand on canvas
14 ½ x 47 ¼ in.
Location unknown (sold at Sotheby’s New York, 2000)
Fig. 64
Pablo Picasso
*Glass and Pitcher*, July 21, 1944
Oil on canvas
15 x 21 5/8 in.
Location unknown
(sold at Christie’s New York, 2007)

Fig. 65
Pablo Picasso
*Glass and Pitcher*, July 23, 1944
Oil on canvas
13 x 16 1/8 in.
Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand

Fig. 66
Pablo Picasso
*Glass and Pitcher*, July 24, 1944
(black and white reproduction)
Oil on canvas
13 x 16 1/8 in.
Location unknown
Fig. 67
Pablo Picasso
*Tomato Plant*, August 3, 1944
Oil on canvas
29 x 36 ¼ in.
Location unknown
(sold at Sotheby’s London, 2004)

Fig. 68
Pablo Picasso
*Tomato Plant*, August 9, 1944
Oil on canvas
36 ¼ x 28 ¾ in.
Location unknown
(sold at Sotheby’s London, 2017)

Fig. 69
Pablo Picasso
*Tomato Plant*, August 12, 1944
Oil on canvas
28 ¾ x 36 in.
Location unknown
(sold at Christie’s New York, 1999)
Fig. 70
Georges Braque
*Ivy*, 1944
Oil on canvas
21 ¾ x 13 in.
Location unknown
(sold at Sotheby’s London, 1997)

Fig. 71
Georges Braque
*The daisies I*, 1944
Oil and sand on canvas
21 ¾ x 13 ¼ in.
Location unknown
(sold at Sotheby’s New York, 1997)

Fig. 72
Georges Braque
*The daisies II*, 1944
Oil on canvas
13 x 7 ½ in.
Location unknown
(sold at Christie’s London, 2014)
Bibliography

Braque


**Picasso**


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**World War II**


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