

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## GUERNICA TO GO TO MADRID'S MUSEO DEL PRADO

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Picasso's mural Guernica, which has been on extended loan to The Museum of Modern Art since 1939, has been sent to the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain, for permanent installation, it was announced today by Richard E. Oldenburg, Director of the Museum. The delicate task of dismantling, rolling and packing the large mural has been completed, and the work has been sent to Madrid where it will be installed in the Prado in time for the centennial celebration of Picasso's birth on October 25. Also sent with the mural were 62 preliminary studies and "postscripts" in a variety of media, all lent by the artist.

It is estimated that 25 to 30 million visitors saw the Guernica during the 41 years it was in the custody of the Museum. From 1939 to the present, the mural and a selection of the studies were continuously on view, either at The Museum of Modern Art, at other museums in this country, or in important exhibitions abroad.

At various times during the Museum's custodianship of the mural, Picasso had advised Museum authorities that his native country, Spain, would be the ultimate and permanent recipient of the work. However, he directed the Museum to hold the painting until he or his designated attorney determined that certain conditions in Spain had changed. In August, 1981,

the Museum received a notification from Maitre Roland Dumas, Picasso's designated attorney, that the conditions had been satisfied and that the work should now be turned over to the Spanish government. Museum authorities and specially retained legal counsel thereupon worked closely with Spanish representatives to implement the Museum's obligation to transfer the work.

The painting derives its name from the town of Guernica, the ancient capital of the Basque people in northwestern Spain, which was 80% destroyed in three and a quarter hours on April 26, 1937, by German bombers flying for General Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Two thousand people were killed. The bombing of defenseless Guernica with incendiary projectiles was the first "saturation bombing" of a city in military history. Guernica was used as an arms testing ground by the Nazis.

Some months before the attack, Picasso had been commissioned to paint a mural for the Spanish Republic Building at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. He had not yet begun work on the project when the news of the Guernica catastrophe came through. On May 1 he made the first sketches, and on May 10 he began to paint; the mural was installed in June, and on July 12, the Spanish Pavilion opened to the public.

There have been, and continue to be, many interpretations of the Guernica. Picasso himself denied it specific political significance, stating simply that the mural expressed his hatred of war and brutality.

The preliminary studies for the mural date from May 1 to June 4, 1937. The final postscript is dated October 17. Most of the studies are pencil drawings, sometimes with monochrome wash; several are in color crayon, and there are seven oils on canvas. The most striking of these is

the oil painting Horse's Head, dated May 2, which anticipated the funereal blacks, greys and neutral tones of the mural. The last two drawings actually used as studies are a hand and a head dated June 4.

Such was Picasso's involvement in the Guernica that he returned again and again after the mural was finished to the subject of a weeping woman shown holding a dead child in her arms. This series of postscripts began shortly before the Guernica was finished and ended in October.

In 1938 and 1939, Guernica and the studies were exhibited in London, New York and Los Angeles for the benefit of the Spanish Refugee Relief Committee. They were then included in the exhibition PICASSO: FORTY YEARS OF HIS ART, directed by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., at that time Director of the Museum. The retrospective opened at the Museum in November, 1939, and thereafter went on tour to nine U.S. museums. Since World War II had broken out in Europe at that time, the mural and studies remained at the artist's suggestion on extended loan to the Museum. In 1953, at Picasso's request, the mural was sent to Milan and Sao Paulo; in 1955 to Paris, Munich and Cologne; in 1956 to Brussels, Amsterdam and Stockholm.

Shortly after its return to New York in 1956, the Guernica was examined carefully by the Museum's conservators who found serious deterioration caused by repeated rolling, unrolling and restretching of the 25'8" x 11'6" canvas. Picasso accepted the advice of the Museum authorities and agreed to leave the Guernica in place at The Museum of Modern Art until an eventual transfer to the Spanish State. Yesterday, at the Museum, Spain's Minister of Culture, Inigo Cavero, the head of the Spanish museum system, Javier Tusell Gomez, and the Counsel General of Spain, Maximo Cajal, formally accepted possession and responsibility for the work.