

The Museum of Modern Art

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To commemorate the 30th anniversary of Picasso's famous mural Guernica, The Museum of Modern Art has put on view 38 preliminary studies and 16 "postscript" studies in the gallery where the mural is installed. The enormous painting, the studies for it, and the postscripts have been on extended loan from the artist since 1939. The exhibition, which will remain throughout the summer, was installed by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections, and Grace B. Stevens, Curatorial Assistant.

Guernica, the ancient capital of the Basque people in northwestern Spain, was largely destroyed on April 27th, 1937 by German bombers flying for General Franco during the Spanish Civil War. It was the first "saturation" bombing of a city in military history.

Some months earlier Picasso had been commissioned to paint a mural in the Spanish Republic building at the Paris World's Fair. He had done nothing about it until the news of the Guernica catastrophe aroused him to a fury of action. On May 1st he made the first sketches; on May 10th he began to paint; in June the mural was installed. On July 12 the Spanish Pavilion opened to the public. Joan Miró and Alexander Calder had also contributed major works of art to the Pavilion. (Four photographs taken by Dora Maar of the mural in progress are also shown in the gallery.)

There have been many, and often contradictory, interpretations of the Guernica. Picasso himself has denied it any explicit political significance stating simply that the mural expresses his abhorrence of war and brutality.

The preliminary studies in the present exhibition date from May 1 to June 4. The final postscript is dated October 17. Most of the studies are pencil drawings, sometimes with monochrome wash; several are in color crayon, and the largest and most striking is the oil painting Horse's Head, dated May 2, which anticipated the black and white of the mural. The last two drawings actually used as studies for

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the mural are a hand and a head dated June 4.

Such was Picasso's passionate involvement in the Guernica that he returned again and again after the mural was finished to the subject of a woman, sometimes holding a dead child in her arms; as in the mural, she is weeping or screaming, her tears turned into nails. This postscripted series began shortly before the Guernica was finished, reached a high point in the great etching of July 2nd, and came to a vigorous conclusion towards the end of 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 included in the exhibition "Picasso: Forty Years of His Art," directed by Mr. Barr, which opened at The Museum of Modern Art in November 1939 and thereafter went on tour to nine U. S. museums. For the duration of World War II, and subsequently, the mural and studies have remained with the Museum as a loan from the artist. During this time Guernica and a selection of the studies have been continuously on view, either at The Museum of Modern Art, at other museums in this country, or in important exhibitions abroad. In 1953, at the artist's request, the mural was sent to Milan and São 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 largely by constant travel and the concomitant rolling, unrolling and restretching of the huge canvas. Picasso accepted the advice of the Museum authorities and agreed to leave the Guernica undisturbed in The Museum of Modern Art until he should decide on its ultimate destination.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. CIRCLE 5-8900.