The Grand Trompe L'oeil of Georges Braque

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The following text was prepared to be delivered as a lecture for the public at Cornell College.

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Let me begin today with a story from Greek mythology about Zeuxis, a master painter of Ancient Greece:

"The contemporary rival of Zeuxis was Parrhasius. This last, it is said, entered into a pictorial contest with Zeuxis. For his contest entry, Zeuxis painted a bowl of fruit, which held some grapes. It was painted so naturally that the birds flew towards the spot where the picture was exhibited and pecked at the grapes. Zeuxis, elated with the judgment which had been passed upon his work by the birds, haughtily demanded that Parrhasius's curtain should be drawn aside to let his picture be seen and judged. But Parrhasius had painted a picture *of a curtain* with such singular truthfulness, that it appeared real to the audience. Upon finding his mistake, with a great degree of genuine candor Zeuxis admitted that he had been surpassed, for that whereas he himself had only deceived the birds, Parrhasius had deceived Zeuxis, a human and fellow artist" (Bostwick ch.35.36).

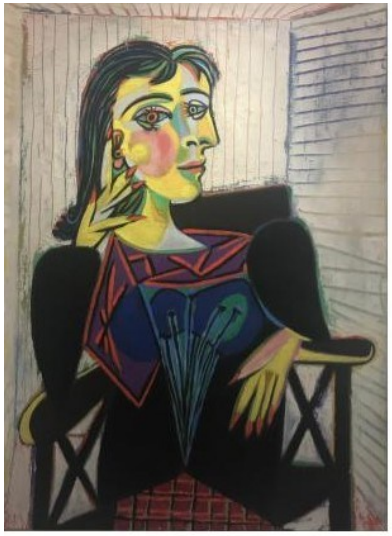

Fig. 1, Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Dora Maar,* 1937. Oil on canvas. Musée National Picasso-Paris.

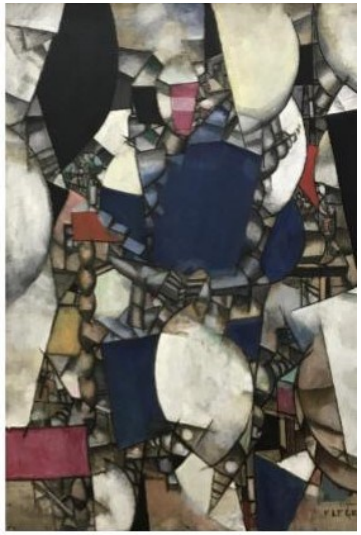

Fig. 2, Férnand Leger, *Women in Blue*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Kunstsammlung, Basel.

This emphasis on illusionism in visual art continues in the western world and I'll address a specific manifestation of it in my talk today.

I think that many of you can recognize Figures 1 and 2 as examples of cubism, one of the most identifiable and important European visual art movements of the 20th century. Today I will talk about cubism in its early days, specifically the period 1911-1914.

The term cubism was coined by art critic Louis Vauxcelles when reviewing a painting exhibition at Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's gallery in 1908. Henri Matisse had previously talked with Vauxcelles about what he might see at the gallery and warned him that he would see pictures that were made from many little cubes (Rubin p.47). This was a derogatory comment and is noteworthy

coming from Matisse who at that time, was the leading avant-garde painter in Paris.

Matisses' work was extremely controversial in the first decade of the 20th century because he used heavy outlines, unblended saturated colors, inconsistent perspective, and exaggerated, expressive proportions. (Figs. 5) These earned Matisse and his followers the designation "Les Fauves" or in English, "The Wild Beasts." Their methods were intended to free the artist from optical mimesis and instead encouraged self-expression, especially emotional responses to the subject matter. The Fauve group, led by Matisse included: Maurice de Vlaminck (Fig.6), Andre Derain, Raoul Dufy, and Georges Braque (Fig.7) among others.

Concurrent with the Fauves' ascendency, young Pablo Picasso had recently arrived in Paris from Barcelona, and was making a name for himself as a passionate and expressive painter (Fig. 8). He was twelve years younger than Matisse, spoke poor French, ran with an alcoholic crowd, and lived a very bohemian life in contrast to the gentleman painter Matisse. Picasso's paintings in the first six years of the new century were depictions of "types" or characters, such as harlequins, circus performers, musicians, and mother and child pairings (Figs. 9 and 10).

Fig. 5, Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude,* 1907. Oil on canvas. Baltimore Museum of Art.

Fig. 6, Maurice de Vlaminck, *Houses at Chatou,* 1905. Oil on canvas. Art Institute of Chicago.

Fig. 7, Georges Braque, *Landscape at L' Estaque,* 1906. Oil on canvas. Musée D'Orsay.

Fig. 8, Pablo Picasso, Self Portrait, 1908.
Gelatin silver print.
Musée National Picasso-Paris.

The color in these paintings, over a five-year period, changed from somber blue to delicate rose (Figs. 9 and 10). In comparison with his rival Matisse, Picasso's art was, at this time, more conventional in terms of color, lighting, space, and paint application. But this all changed in 1907 when Picasso made a radical departure with a large painting known as *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Fig. 11).

I won't go into the issues surrounding this painting, but I present it to you to convey its radical nature and the sudden and deep impact that it had on Picasso's own development and upon those few people who saw the painting in Picasso's studio. One of these was the young Fauve, George Braque. Braque said about Picasso, "It was as if he had drank kerosene so he could spit fire..." (Sichel, 127).

In 1907, Braque was 28 years old (Fig. 12). He had gone through traditional art school training but also had grown up in a family whose business was sign painting and home decoration. He was well versed in producing graphic lettering and illusionistic surfaces such as fake marbling and wood grain effects. Georges Braque was smart, analytical, energetic, athletic, musical, and deeply devoted

Fig. 9, Pablo Picasso, *La Vie*, 1903. Oil on canvas.
Cleveland Museum of Art.

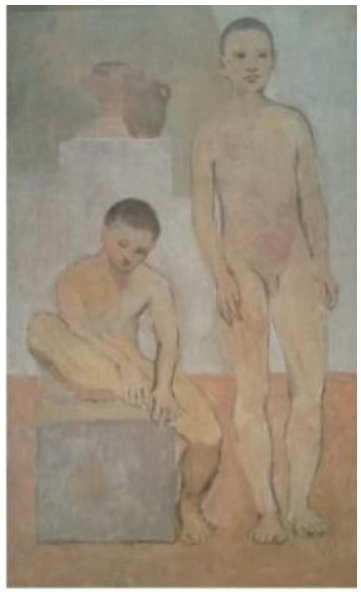

Fig. 10, Pablo Picasso, *Two Youths*, 1906. Oil on canvas
National Gallery of Art, D.C.

Fig. 11, Pablo Picasso, Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907. Oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Art, NYC.

to becoming a modern painter, whatever that required. He was initially one of Matisse's most ardent Fauve allies but after seeing Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, he changed his allegiance fully.

Braque and Picasso quickly formed an extremely close friendship and working relationship. They visited one another's studios in the Montmartre area of Paris on a daily basis. Their work became closely aligned and virtual indistinguishable (Figs. 14 and 15). They were fascinated with modern mass production: graphic advertising, bicycles, automobiles, and the new inventions of cinema and phonographs. They practiced photography with the newly available, affordable, and easy to use cameras. They especially liked the American airplane and playfully referred to one another as Orville and Wilbur of the Wright brothers. Braque said,

Fig. 12, Anonymous, *Portrait of Georges Braque on Terrace, 1913. Archives Laurens.*

"...we were like two mountain-climbers roped together" (Rubin p. 47)

They dressed in one another's clothes and staged humorous photographs (Figs. 16 and 17).

Braque said that during this period, "Picasso and I said things to one another that will never be said again...that no one will ever be able to understand...things that would be incomprehensible, but that gave us great joy" (Rubin 48).

Their interest in all things modern included their artistic goal of "inventing" a new, and especially modern, approach to painting. They were not interested at this time in being emotionally expressive in their work but

Fig. 14, Georges Braque, *Houses at L' Estaque,* 1908. Oil on canvas. Kunstmuseum in Bern.

Fig. 15, Pablo Picasso, *House in the Garden,* 1908. Oil on canvas. Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

Fig. 16, Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Georges Braque*, 1911. Gelatin silver print. Musée National Picasso-Paris.

Fig. 17, Georges Braque, *Portrait of Picasso,* 1911. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.

instead were devoted to establishing a *new kind of painting*; one with a new and modern approach. Their art practice became, in a sense, a kind of philosophical and practical inquiry into how to reference a three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface. They questioned some of the basic assumptions of Western world painting, limited their research to specific aspects, yet retained elements of the achievements of previous and recent innovators.

One of these was Paul Cezanne (Fig.18). In September of 1907, there was a major Cezanne exhibition in Paris which had a profound impact on Braque and Picasso and other aspiring modern painters. Braque and Picasso admired Cezanne's devotion to mundane subject matter, restrained color, firm compositional structure, and his use of small directional brushstrokes which serve to weave the depicted objects into a unified painterly surface. Cezanne also eschewed a strict fixed-viewpoint perspective and rejected the consistent use of lighting effects, such as cast shadows and chiaroscuro (Figs. 19).

Fig. 18, Paul Cezanne, *The Maison Maria with a View of Chateau Noir,* 1895. Oil on canvas. Kimbell Art Museum

Inspired by Cezanne, and a quest for a new way of painting appropriate for the modern world, Braque and Picasso, beginning in 1910, embarked upon a narrowly focused partnership. Picasso later said, "Almost every evening either I went to Braque's studio or Braque came to mine. Each of us had to see what the other had done during the day" (Gilot p.76). Their work became increasingly similar.

Fig. 19, Paul Cezanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cast,* 1894. Oil on canvas. Courtauld Institute.

They restricted their subject matter to the most ordinary things: portraits of friends and musicians, and still lives of everyday objects: such as newspapers, fruit, tableware, wine glasses, bottles of beer. They challenged the distinction between negative and positive space, they opened up otherwise closed forms, and dispensed with distinct contours. Shadows and lighting effects were deemed fleeting and unreliable and therefore to be avoided. Single viewpoint perspective was completely abandoned. The compositional structure was primarily built upon the X and Y axes, with only the shortest Z axis (Figs. 21 and 22). This emphasized the integrity of the surface and produced a shallow oscillation of push and pull; a modern 2-dimensional grid-based alternative to the receding deep space of prior European picture making. In an interview in *Cahiers d'art* in October 1954, Braque described his interest in making paintings of objects that are "coming forward, not receding..." (Braque p.16).

Their pictures took on a fragmentary effect directly opposed to the totalizing vision of traditional European art. In short, everything that one was accustomed to seeing in painting was diminished if not altogether eliminated, including beauty. I sometimes say that their project produced some of the most important, difficult to appreciate, and perhaps ugliest (!) paintings in western art history (Figs. 23 and 24).

Fig. 21, Georges Braque, *Still Life with Metronome,* 1909. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 22, Pablo Picasso, *Fan, Salt Box, Melon,* 1909. Oil on canvas. Cleveland Museum of Art.

But, as I often remind my painting students, challenging the expectations and presumptions of an art genre may lead to a personal and even an art-historical achievement, which is is a lofty and admirable goal. But if the experimentation is too radical a departure, the results will not even be recognizable as continuous with the given genre. In other words, while pushing the boundaries, one still must maintain *some* established elements to enable the new work to even be considered as operating within the field.

So, for Braque and Picasso, as their paintings became increasingly esoteric and their inquiries became more insular, they began to insert small but distinct, sometimes humorous, representational fragments into their paintings. These shorthand images are limited to a handful of specific objects which appear again and again, such as a drinking glass, a mustache, a tobacco pipe, a violin scroll, a bottle of wine. As time went on, these few objects began to function as a vocabulary of symbols, in the Charles Peirce (Peirce 51) sense, such that a fragment, a cursory depiction, would still conjure in the mind of the viewer the larger entity.

Fig. 23, Georges Braque, *Piano and Mandola,* 1909. Oil on canvas. Guggenheim Museum NYC.

Fig. 24, Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Kahnweiler,* 1910. Oil on canvas. Art Institute of Chicago.

Notice the violin scroll, the F holes, in Braque (Fig. 25) and the pipe here in Picasso (Fig. 26). These shorthand images served to amuse one another, communicate content to an initiated audience, but also to provide an anchor of representational specificity in the face of an increasing level of abstraction.

Braque also discovered another way to provide some representational elements, create a visually complex and unified painting while acknowledging the actual 2-dimensionality of the canvas. The first example of this occurs in 1909 (Fig.27) when surprisingly, incongruously, a depicted nail appears at the top of the canvas, appearing to extend outward, toward us, and even casting it's own dra-

Fig. 25, Georges Braque, *Le Guéridon,*1911. Oil on canvas. Centre Pompidou.

Fig. 26, Pablo Picasso, *Man with a Pipe,* 1911. Oil on canvas. Kimbell Museum of Art.

matic shadow seemingly upon the literal surface of the painting (recall that Braque was adept at the sign painter's trade and could easily create such effects). This nail has no valid pictorial justification except perhaps as a joke and as a disruptive device to draw our attention to the 2-dimensional painted surface. It also serves to demonstrate that the artist, Braque, is capable of painting in a more conventional illusionistic style and is working in the cubist manner out of choice, not limitation.

I want to pause for a moment here and introduce a phrase from the French language: "trompe l'oeil" which we use to describe art or portions of artworks that are so convincingly rendered that they may actually fool the viewer into thinking that a two-dimensional depiction is 3 -dimensional. Remember my opening story of Parrhasius and Zeuxis.

The nail, this small but effective move by Braque, (Fig.28) is one in a series of innovations that he devised which still participate in conventional picture making while simultaneously calling those conventions into question. His nail protrudes off the picture plane and lurches forward. There seems to be a solid, impenetrable wall at the rear of the pictorial space into which this "real" nail has been driven. The entire painting seems to advance , almost tumble toward us, not recede. Braque is upending the European fine art model of painting as a window into a spatially deep and receding 3-dimensional world.

Fig. 27, Georges Braque, *Violin and Jug,*1909. Oil on canvas. The Kunstsammlung, Basel

Fig. 28 detail of Fig. 27. Georges Braque, *Violin and Jug,*1909. Oil on canvas. The Kunstsammlung, Basel

A related innovation by Braque occurs in the spring of 1911 (Fig. 29). The lettering at the top is ambiguous in its literary reading, what does it say? Perhaps it is the D of "grand" with Bal, advertising a dance event, a "Grand Ball" but that is only a guess. And like the fake nail, it is of an uncertain location within the space of the painting. Is it in the space of the depicted world or is it on top of the depiction, the way an artist's signature resides on top? Now certainly there have been prior paintings in the Western art world that have used lettering, but Braque's use here seems to be of a new kind. It contributes almost nothing to the iconography, it does not have a clear narrative purpose, and its presence seems conceptually wrong. Yet visually, as an element in the composition, it fits. It looks integrated, it doesn't jump out at us, quite the opposite, it seems locked into the painting.

Fig. 29, Georges Braque, *The Portugais,* 1911. Oil on canvas. Kunstsammlung, Basel.

It's uncertain, but maybe the letters indicate printed words on the glass window of a café. Or are they reminiscent of a poster or advertisement one might see in an urban environment? Either way, this is Braque bringing fragmentary elements of his modern visual world into his pictures.

Soon Picasso adopted Braque's lettering idea (Fig.30) and created a series of paintings that included the words, "Ma Jolie" (my pretty girl) which was the title of a popular song at the time and served as Picasso's coded reference for his new girlfriend. Picasso's use of lettering is somewhat different from Braque's in the previous example. Here, "Ma Jolie" seems to reside on the surface more than Braque's and functions almost as a title or label. But as in the previous Braque, there seems to be a solid surface at the rear of the painting. The objects or fragments of objects advance toward us, with "Ma Jolie" perhaps as the front most layer.

Fig. 30, Pablo Picasso, *The Architect's Table,* 1912. Oil on canvas. MOMA, NYC.

This has now become a fully established structure for the space within their paintings (Figs. 31 and 32). No longer are the pictures indicative of an upright viewer looking forward to a vast world, now it seems as if we the viewers are looking downward at a tabletop cluttered with familiar items from a cafe, including the lettering from the menu, bottle labels, and wood table tops. Notice that Braque has taught Picasso how to simulate the grain pattern of wood with oil paint.

A premier example of this occurs in May of 1912 when Picasso creates the well-known "Still Life With Chair Caning" (Fig. 33). This is a most extraordinary piece for a number of reasons: its oval is framed by a thick rope of all things, it's especially dreary in color, and areas are smeared with gray unblended paint. But most noteworthy, it includes a large swatch of fake, commercially printed chair caning.

Picasso is showing us a still life scene of a round cafe table seen at an oblique angle, as an oval with glass covering the interwoven caning. Upon the table is drinking glass, a lemon, a pipe, and an issue of the newspaper of the day, "Le Journal." This is Picasso now being the innovator by using the "wrong" materials for the first time and thus opening the door for an intense two-year period of collage and papier collés for both himself and Braque.

Fig. 31, Georges Braque, *Violin and Clarinet on a Table,*1912. Oil on canvas. National Gallery, Prague.

Fig. 32, Pablo Picasso, *Souvenir du Havre,* 1912. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Fig. 33, Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912. Oil on canvas with oil cloth and rope. Musée National Picasso-Paris.

A moment now for some terminology; collage refers to the use of diverse, non-traditional art materials in a juxtaposed and often discordant relationship. These inclusions can be of any imaginable material. Papier collés, or pasted paper, on the other hand, refers to art that uses just that, pasted paper, either alone or in conjunction with drawn and painted portions.

In the summer of 1912 while Braque and Picasso were on vacation together in near Avignon, Braque noticed in a shop window some wallpaper printed to look like oak wood grain. The French call it "faux bois" meaning fake wood. Braque, with his background in illusionistic surfaces was quick to imagine the creative possibilities with this mass produced item. But he decided to surprise Picasso with his discovery so he waited until Picasso left from Avignon for a brief trip back to Paris, and while Picasso was away, Braque made "Fruit Dish and Glass" (Fig.34) (Greenberg pp.76-77).

This is a most amazing piece. For one thing, it's not a painting at all: it's charcoal and pasted paper and thus is often considered the first papier collés from these two artists. Notice that it fully embraces the lettering as a compositional element and as a narrative element too. "Bar" and "Ale" tell us clearly that this is a depiction of a cafe scene. We can see "grapes" within a compote of some sort as well as a stemmed drinking glass in the lower right. Look at

Fig. 34, Georges Braque, *Glass and Fruit Dish*, 1912. Charcoal and imitation wood pasted paper on paper. Private collection.

the rich play of light and dark that modulates the shallow surface and occasionally, selectively brings volume to some areas.

And the wood grain! Look how it peeks from behind or jumps to the front as it is intercepted or overlaps the drawn elements. It's a masterful play of pictorial space, presence and absence, diverse materials, drawing, lighting effect, written words, representation and abstraction, all achieved in this first attempt at a new type of creation.

Picasso responded in the fall of 1912 (Fig. 35) although it is difficult to assign a precise date, it is widely believed that Picasso's first papier collés is this one. The headline at the bottom of the page reads, "The Battle is Engaged" which refers to the conflicts in eastern Europe that would ultimately blossom into World War I, but we think that Picasso has chosen this headline as a warning to Braque that the friendly competition between them has heated up. Notice that he has included again the J-O-U which previously he used to indicate the *Journal* newspaper in the *Still Life with Chair Caning*, but here it can be read as "le jou" or French for "the game."

Fig. 35, Pablo Picasso, *Guitar and Wine Glass*,1912. Collage and charcoal on board. The McNay Art Museum, San Antonio.

The newspaper, wallpaper, and sheet music are all representing themselves. They are what they are in reality and in their pictorial function. But notice the wood grain indicating the shape and material of the guitar. It is not actual wood grain, nor faux bois, as Braque had used, instead it is a shaped

piece of paper painted by Picasso to look like such. It is, in a sense, fake-fake wood grain. This is a new level of illusionism and semiotic play that will continue and grow for the next two years.

Earlier I described these Cubist pictures as operating within a shallow pictorial space with a strong devotion to the vertical and horizontal X and Y axes. Still there is a pictorial space, albeit a very shallow one. As Braque and Picasso continued to develop the papier collés, they showed an increased attention to the richness that could be achieved within this shallow space. Because they were now using pasted paper, literally a two -dimensional element, they began to see the value in the layering of paper upon paper.

So, in contrast to *Guitar and Wineglass* (Fig. 35) which uses eight actual pieces of paper resulting in perhaps five or six visual layers, look at the visual richness in *Bottle of Suz*e (Fig. 36) that is achieved simply through the layering of paper upon paper. Can you even count the layers, actual and visual?

The real bottle label, wallpaper, and the newspaper, are the genuine items, each *representing and being itself.* In contrast to the authenticity of these items, we also see the appearance of depicted shadows on the top right hand newspaper, which are actually charcoal marks but very effectively produce two additional visual layers.

Fig. 36, Pablo Picasso, *The Bottle of Suze,* Pasted papers, gouache, and charcoal. The Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis.

This technique of combining fictive and literal layers of paper in a piece proved to be a source of endless creativity. We sometimes erroneously think that collage and papier collés simply bring the "real world" into the fictive world of picture making. But for Braque and Picasso it became more significantly more complex than that. For the viewer it becomes exceedingly difficult to determine where the real ends and artifice begins as we confront the magic of artistically depicted space directly adjacent to, and overlapped by, actual paper layers. These are some of the most illusionistic pictures every made. I have stood nose to nose with some of these in museums and

Fig. 37. Georges Braque, *Still Life,* Watercolor, pencil, chalk, imitation wood paper, newspaper, and cigarette pack on Bristol board. Kunst Museum, Hanover.

Fig. 39, detail of Fig.37. Georges Braque, *Still Life,* Watercolor, pencil, chalk, imitation wood paper, newspaper, and cigarette pack on Bristol board. Kunst Museum, Hanover.

have been unable to determine with certainty whether I'm looking at a cut and pasted element or a drawn and painted element. (Fig. 37)

One of their favorite tricks is to make a pasted piece of paper appear to be on a plane behind a drawn element. Notice how the triangular beige corner seems to be overlapped by the white rectangle (Fig. 38).

Due the presence of actual layered pasted paper we are susceptible to being fooled into thinking that a single flat piece of paper is instead multiple layers of pasted paper. The shading and cast shadow effects are disarmingly casual yet thoroughly effective. For instance, the bowl of the white pipe is created by cutting away a shape from the beige piece and then further articulated with a simple charcoal mark cast shadow (Fig. 39).

Fig. 38, detail of Fig. 37. Georges Braque, *Still Life,* Watercolor, pencil, chalk, imitation wood paper, newspaper, and cigarette pack on Bristol board. Kunst Museum, Hanover.

Almost as a gesture of generosity, Braque and Picasso often used surprisingly clumsy marks in these otherwise carefully constructed pieces. With just a little bit of close looking we can see that the cut papers don't align, and some overlaps come up a tad short. There's an off-

handedness, or glib ease to these pieces that belie the virtuosity behind them. For me, these passages elevate the mood, they seem lighthearted and only mildly labored.

To complicate matters, after these trompe l'oeil effects were fully developed into a readily deployable arsenal, they occasionally stopped making papier collés and instead made paintings that *look to be* papier collés. These two by Braque (Figs. 40 and 41) are 100% paint and charcoal; there is no pasted paper here at all. This is almost cruel. The illusion of pasted paper is extremely effective. These are drawings/paintings of *imagined* papier collés. Clement Greenberg, the important 20th century critic described these as "...cubism's forms (are) converted into the illusion of a picture within a picture..." (Greenberg p.72).

Speaking of pictures of pictures, that's exactly what we have here (Fig.42) in an additional sense. These are perhaps pictures-of-pictures-of-pictures.

In 1997 Anne Baldassari, curator of photography at the Picasso Museum in Paris, wrote a book titled, "Picasso and Photography" in which were reproduced many photographic images taken by Picasso himself. Some of these, of course, are images of his friends (Figs. 43 and 44) or his studio generally, but others are photographs of his paintings, drawings, or papier collés. These are the ones that interest me (pp.110-115) because they reveal a way that Picasso observed his own work. Why did he photo-

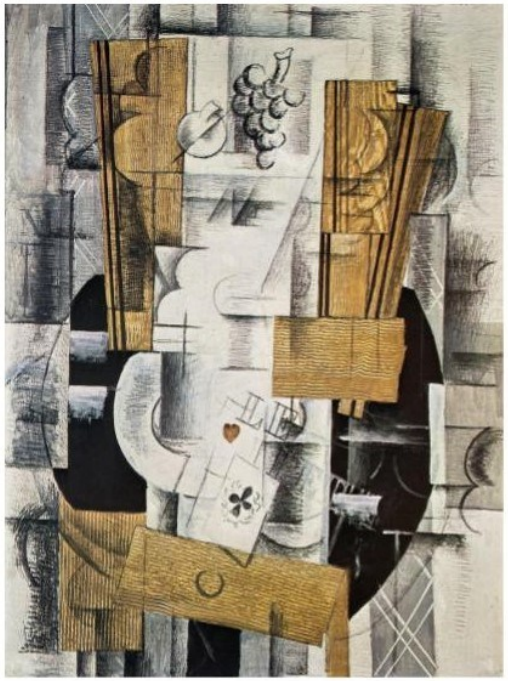

Fig. 40, Georges Braque, *The Ace of Clubs,*1912-1913. Oil, gouache, and charcoal on canvas. The Centre Pompidou.

Fig. 41, Georges Braque, *Glass, Violin, and Sheet of Music,* 1912. Oil and charcoal on canvas. Ludwig Museum, Cologne.

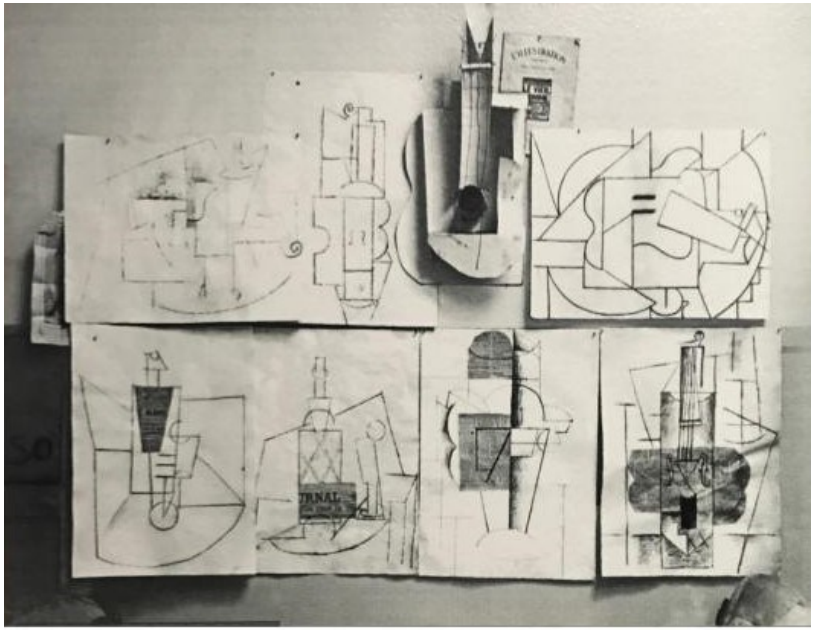

Fig. 42 Pablo Picasso, *Wall Arrangement of Papier Collés*, 1912. Gelatin silver print. Private collection.

Fig.43, Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Braque,* 1910-1911. Gelatin silver print. Photo Archives Laurens

Fig. 44, Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire,* 1910. Gelatin silver print. Musée National Picasso-Paris.

graph his pictures and what did he see in these photographs? Was he just documenting his production for record keeping? Or did these photographs offer some other value to him? If so, what could that be?

Picasso wrote a lot of postal letters and many of these have been preserved. In a letter to his dealer in Paris, dated March 21, 1913, Picasso expresses thanks to the recipient David-Henry Kahnweiler for photographing the inventory of his art and continues by saying, "...send me photographs of my pictures so I can see them differently from how they are..." (Rubin p.415). Or as 20th century photographer, Garry Winogrand stated many years later, "I make photographs to find out what something will look like photographed." (Papageorge p.6).

For as we all know, a photograph and the thing photographed are different, especially in black and white photographs. What is changed in black and white photographs? In black and white photographs there is an increased emphasis on shadows and generally all lighting effects. The camera, in a crude sense, is merely a machine for recording differences in light. But since these are black and white photographs, the light differences of "color" are subtracted or transformed into a difference only of gray scale. And so the shadows emerge as a prominent feature. This also tends to aid in producing a visual unity since the potentially clashing effects of color are fully eliminated.

I suspect that Picasso liked to see these black and white photographs of his papier collés because they emphasized the power of shadows to produce the visual experience of three-dimensionality. Notice how some of the paper is not tacked flat to the wall but rolls up here and there (Fig. 42) to reveal its materiality. This "rolled up" edge or corner becomes one of the repeated devices that Braque and Picasso use in the papier collés to create their most effective trompe l'oeil effects. It was only after 1912, when these photos were taken, that Braque and Picasso began to accentuate the shadow effects in their papier collés and paintings. My point is that it was perhaps these photos by Picasso that inspired them to increase the shadows and the trompe l'oeil effects in their paintings and papier collés.

Fig. 45. Georges Braque, *(untitled)*, 1914. Photograph. Photo Archives Laurens. *Picasso and Braque, Pioneering Cubism*. By William Rubin. MOMA NYC, 1989.

Of the two artists, Picasso was the primary photographer, and as far as I know, Braque only made one art related photograph that has come to light (Fig. 45).

Based on the newspaper page below the wine glass, it is easy enough to date the piece with certainty to sometime *after* February 18th, 1914. We also know that it was made *before* August of 1914 because that is when Braque was shipped off to fight in WWI for the French army and had his life forever changed. So this piece was made sometime in those final six months before Braque went to war and yet the photograph was only discovered 68 years later in 1982, which is 19 years after Braque passed away.

The academic community of cubism scholars was quite excited with the 1982 appearance and publication of this photo. It immediately became a "must" for every general text on the history of cub-

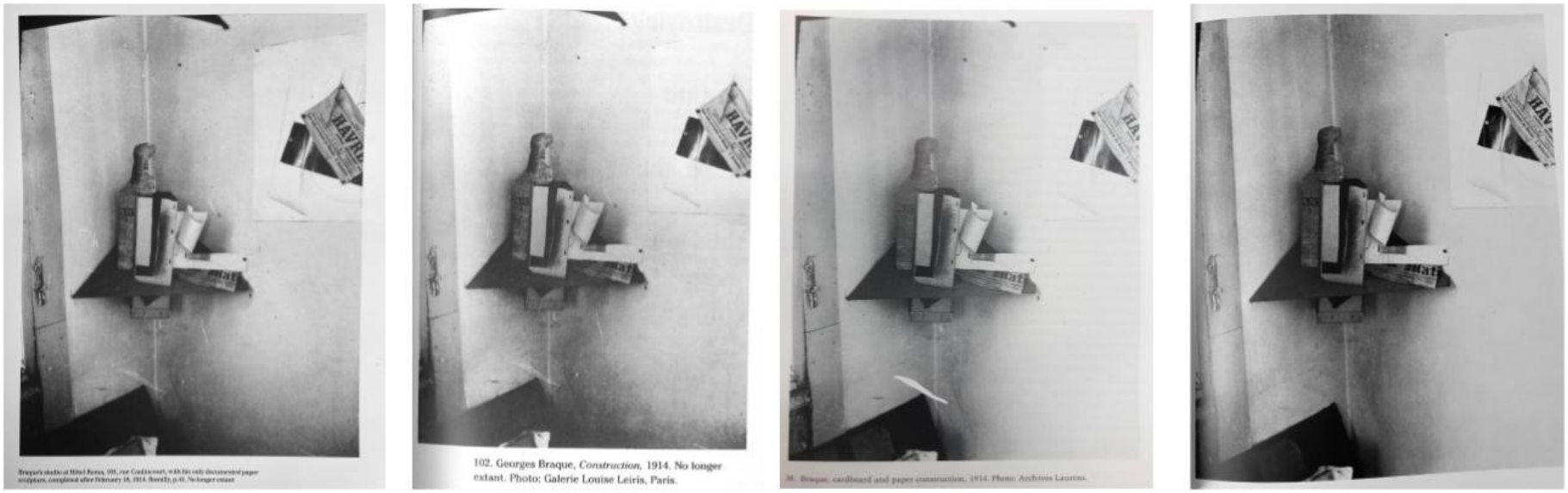

Fig. 46, Georges Braque, *(untitled)*, 1914. Photograph. Photo Archives Laurens
A - (Rubin p.315) B - (Poggi p.63) C - (Monod-Fontaine p.55) D- (Romilly/Laude p.41).

ism. Here are some reproductions from prominent texts By the way, notice the different cropping and retouching in these. (Fig. 46)

Upon release of the photograph, there was a three-part patterned response from many cubism scholars. Part one of the response goes something like this: *Finally we have documented proof that Braque made three-dimensional cubist constructions.*

It is well known that Picasso was making 3-dimensional pieces during this period (Fig. 47). But Braque's efforts in 3 -dimensional cubism are only known through some somewhat vague references in letters written by Braque to Kahnweiler in the summer of 1912 (Rubin p.32) before the first papier collés were even made. But none of Braque's 3-D paper constructions have survived and we have always wondered what they may have looked like.

Fig. 47, Pablo Picasso, *Mandolin and Clarinet*, 1913. Painted wood with pencil marks. Musée National Picasso-Paris.

So that was response number one: *finally we have photographic evidence of Braque's three-dimensional cubist constructions.*

The second part of the response goes something like this: *Oh my! What a shame that this piece of such visual interest and art historical significance was not preserved!* It is widely referenced as one of the great lost works of art, as you can see here (Fig. 48) in this 2013 book by Jennifer Mundy and published by the Tate Gallery in London (pp. 21-25).

Part three of the common response says,"He installed his sculpture *across a corner of the room* (emphasis mine) thus incorporating the real space of the surrounding studio into his work" (Arnason pp.196-197). In addition to Arnason, similar responses to the photograph can be found in writing by Yves-Alain Bois (p.91), Pepe Karmel (p.25), Ann Umland (p.36 n.13), and William Rubin (p.34). I just listed some of the most respected, Picasso/Braque/cubism specialists in the world.) They all mention the *corner of the room.*

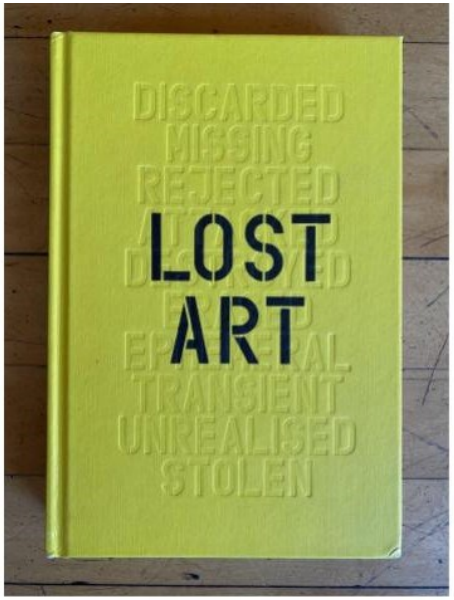

Fig. 48, (Mundy cover)

(Mundy p.21).

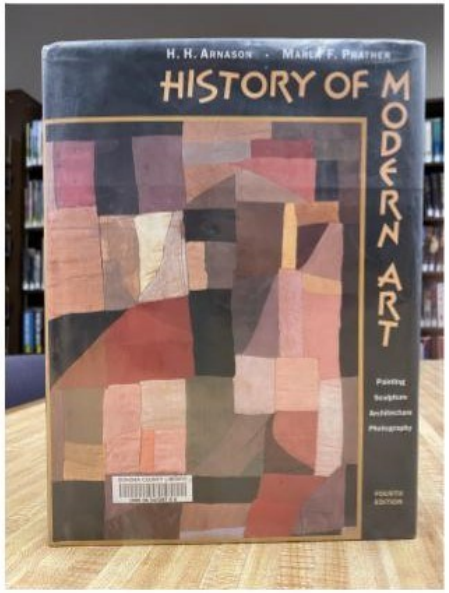

Fig. 49 (Arnason cover)

(Arnason p.197).

And so here's where I have my fun; I disagree with all of them in regard to their understanding of the photograph. *I do agree* that the photograph shows something that Braque made in that spring or summer of 1914 before he went to war. Fine. But I disagree with part-one of the response: I don't think Braque's photograph gives us any indication of the form of the earlier sculptural Braque pieces that were mentioned in the Picasso and Kahnweiler letters. This piece is very sophisticated in its use of the cubist devices, devices that emerged one by one over the three-year period: the layering, the trompe l'oeil, the charcoal in combination with paper, the newspaper. I think this is a *one-off*, made in those final weeks before Braque went to war. War was brewing, and he knew it. He was in the reserves and was certain to be called to arms. I think that we should see this as a culminating work from his papier collés phase. In it he employs everything he has learned in the previous three years from making papier collés, painting, and looking at Picasso's black and white photographs. So if he did make paper sculptures in 1911 or 1912 they would have looked nothing like this. He didn't have the knowledge and experience. So I disagree with the first part of the response.

Then, there is response part-two, that is, *"it's so sad that it was lost or destroyed."* But I think that Braque made this arrangement of papery things and charcoal and affixed it to the wall for the sole purpose of making *the photograph*. I propose that it was never meant to survive any more than any photographed still-life arrangement is meant to survive. For instance, no one says, "Gee, it's too bad that Irving Penn's arrangement no longer exists" (Fig. 50).

I hold that Braque's piece is an arrangement that was made solely *to-be-photographed.*

Look how carefully the photograph is composed. Everything seems purposeful. This is not a studio snapshot with unintended elements appearing in the frame. This is a very deliberate, staged photograph.

Fig. 50, Irving Penn, *Still Life,* 1948. Silver Gelatin Print. *Still Life: Irving Penn Photographs, 1938-2000.* By Irving Penn. Bulfinch Press, 2001.

Braque's studio at Hôtel Roma, 101, rue Caulincourt, with his only documented paper sculpture, completed after February 18, 1914. Rubin, p.41. No longer extant

Fig. 45. Georges Braque, *(untitled)*, 1914. Photograph. Photo Archives Laurens. *Picasso and Braque, Pioneering Cubism.* By William Rubin. MOMA NYC, 1989.

Recall the third part of the response to this photograph: *it uses the actual corner of the room as part of it's space.* Regarding this, the third part of the response, and here's the big one: *I don't think it is even in the corner of the room.* I believe that it has been staged and photographed to produce a convincing *illusion of a corner* in a room. I think that it is a papier collés affixed to a flat wall. I do not accept the unexamined assumption that it is fitted into the 90 degree corner of a room.

I know that this initially seems a bit far-fetched. But let's reverse the question and ask ourselves why, what exactly, leads us to believe that it is a three-dimensional construction built into an architectural corner? (Fig. 45)

Is it the bright, almost white, vertical line? Do room corners actually look like this? Maybe, sort of, sometimes, a bit. But if so why is the line so distinct, uniform, and unchanged as it plunges from the top and reemerges below, unaffected by the "overhanging" shelf? I think that the dark on either side of the bright center line is actually smudged charcoal and the bright vertical is merely an unmarked or erased line.

Or is it the dark, black triangular shape at the bottom of the image? Is this the floor? Is this what leads us into thinking that there is an actual corner here? But look, it's not the floor, it's clearly a piece of cardboard or paper. Notice how this triangle doesn't even align with the angle of the "two walls." This tactic of imprecise alignment is something we already

Fig. 51 (detail of Fig. 45). Georges Braque, *(untitled)*, 1914. Photograph. Photo Archives Laurens. *Picasso and Braque, Pioneering Cubism.* By William Rubin. MOMA NYC, 1989.

Fig. 37. Georges Braque, *Still Life,* Watercolor, pencil, chalk, imitation wood paper, newspaper, and cigarette pack on Bristol board. Kunst Museum, Hanover.

saw Braque doing in the previous years. It's his giveaway, he's revealing the artifice of his construction. Do you see what it says on the bottle? ART, (Fig.51).

Once we start to question the corner itself, other aspects of the photograph begin to reveal themselves as participants in this fiction.

Look at the paper pinned to the wall on our right, with it's trompe l'oeil wrinkle (Fig. 52). This is a prop, masquerading as a unique papier collés, seemingly pinned to the wall and unintentionally included in the photograph. Yet this "Havre" papier collés never appears in Braque's oeuvre. I propose that it was made for the sole purpose of participating in this staged charade! For if the gray area on the wall is shadow, and not charcoal as I claim, why does it stop just as it meets the edge of this paper? Is there even a piece of paper here or is it defined solely by the charcoal smudged around it as Braque did here to produce the effect of an oval? (Fig. 37)

Fig. 52 (detail of Fig. 45). Georges Braque, *(untitled)*, 1914. Photo Archives Laurens. *Picasso and Braque, Pioneering Cubism.* By William Rubin. MOMA NYC, 1989.

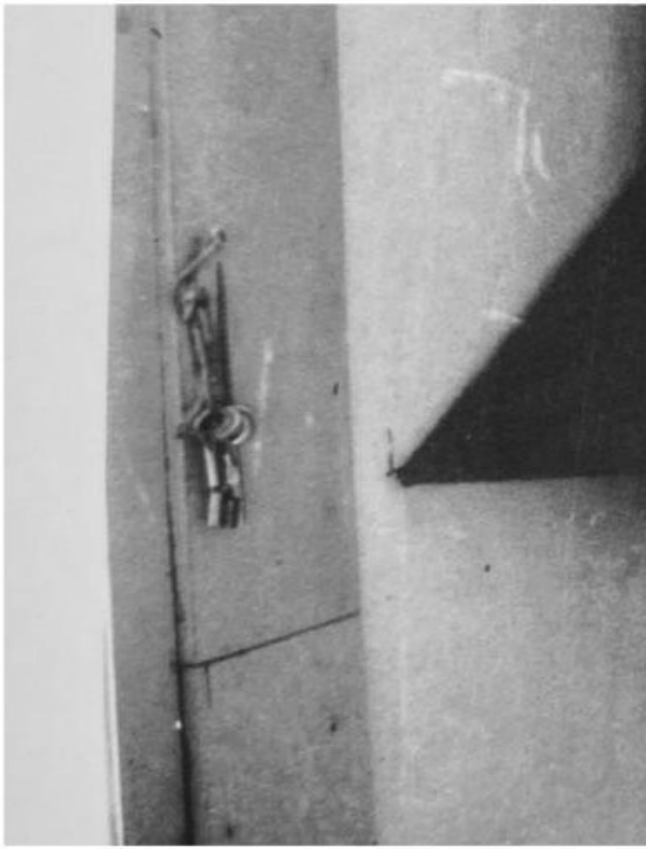

Fig.53 (detail of Fig.45). Georges Braque, *(untitled)*, 1914. Photograph. Photo Archives Laurens. *Picasso and Braque, Pioneering Cubism*. By William Rubin. MOMA NYC, 1989.

And these keys? (Fig. 53) Are they real? Or is this another example of Braque's virtuoso trompe l'oeil techniques, like the protruding nails of earlier pieces?

And now the relevance of my opening Greek myth presents itself. Just as Parrhasius with his trompe l'oeil curtain was able to fool the humans, including the master artist Zeuxis, Braque has been able to fool the community of art experts.

Fig. 54, Henry Laurens, *George Braque with bandage*, 1915. Photograph. Photo Archives Laurens. *Picasso and Braque, Pioneering Cubism*. By William Rubin. MOMA NYC, 1989

And this is where my story ends. Neither Braque nor Picasso continued to seriously pursue papier collés after 1914. As I mentioned, Braque went to war a few weeks later and promptly suffered a head wound that left him unable to make art for a full year (Fig.54).

Picasso on the other hand, as a Spaniard, was not conscripted into the French army and remained in Paris with his art production largely uninterrupted. When Braque went to war, Picasso was there at the station to send him off. Years later when asked about this, Picasso said, "I never saw that man again" (Kahnweiler p.46).Though Braque was able to make a full recovery and had a long and successful career as a painter, his relationship with Picasso had been disrupted. Their friendship would never be what it had been during those early years of the 20th century.

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