

Case 3 (2012-13): A painting by Pablo Picasso, *Child with a Dove*

Expert adviser's statement

Reviewing Committee Secretary's note: Please note that any illustrations referred to have not been reproduced on the Arts Council England Website

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Brief Description of item(s)

- What is it?
- What is it made of?
- What are its measurements?
- Who is the artist/maker and what are their dates?
- What date is the item?
- What condition is it in?

Pablo Picasso 1881-1937

Girl with a Dove, 1901

Oil on canvas, 73 x 54cm

Signed centre left: - Picasso -

The condition appears to be very good.

2. Context

- Provenance
- Key literary and exhibition references

Provenance

Paul Rosenberg, Paris

Alexander Reid Gallery, Glasgow, 1924

Purchased from the above by Mrs R. A. Workman, 1924

Purchased from the above, by Samuel Courtauld, 1928

Bequeathed by the above to Lady Aberconway, 1947

By descent; on loan to the National Gallery, London, from 1974

Key Exhibitions

Alex Reid Gallery, Glasgow *French Painters of Today*, October 1924, no.24, repr.

Reid and Lefèvre, London, *French Painters of Today*, November 1924, no.24, repr.

Tate Gallery, London, *Opening Exhibition, Modern Foreign Gallery*, June 1926

Tate Britain, London, *Picasso and Modern British Art* (February – July 2012), cat.50, repr.

Key Literature

Cahiers d'art 1928, p.214

Christian Zervos, *Pablo Picasso, Oeuvres, vol.i*, 1932, no.83, repr.

Douglas Cooper, *The Courtauld Collection: A Catalogue* (London 1954), no.46, repr. plate 67

Pierre Daix et. al., *Picasso 1900-1906: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Lausanne 1966; new edition 1988), VI.14, repr.

3. Waverley criteria

- Which of the Waverley criteria does the item meet? (If it is of 'outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art learning or history' which area of art learning or history).
- Very briefly why?

It meets all three of the Waverley criteria; 1) It is closely associated with our history and national life in that it has been in the UK since 1924, making it one of the earliest works by Picasso to be acquired by a UK collector. Furthermore it has been on display at the National Gallery in London since 1974. It is probably the most important work by Picasso in private hands in Britain. 2) Picasso is widely acknowledged as the greatest artist of the twentieth century. This is one of his most celebrated early works. It is the most important early work by him in any UK collection, public or private. 3) Since Picasso is such a major figure in modern cultural terms, and since this is such an important and famous early work, it constitutes an important object in the study of the birth of modernism, and the reception of modernism in the UK.

DETAILED CASE

Pablo Picasso 1881-1937

Girl with a Dove, 1901

Oil on canvas, 73 x 54cm

Signed centre left: - Picasso -

Provenance

The artist

With Paul Rosenberg, Paris

With Alexander Reid Gallery, Glasgow, 1924

Purchased from the above by Mrs R. A. Workman, 1924

Purchased from the above, through Reid and Lefèvre, by Samuel Courtauld (1876-1947), 1928

Bequeathed by the above to his friend Lady Aberconway (1890-1974), 1947

By descent placed on anonymous loan to the National Gallery, London, 1974

: loan transferred from National Gallery to The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, early 2011

Selected Exhibitions

Alex Reid Gallery, Glasgow *French Painters of Today*, October 1924, no.24, repr.

Reid and Lefèvre, London, *French Painters of Today*, November 1924, no.24, repr.

Tate Gallery, London, *Opening Exhibition, Modern Foreign Gallery*, June 1926

Tate Gallery, London, Samuel Courtauld memorial Exhibition, May-June 1948, no.50

Tate Gallery, London, *Picasso* (1960), cat.14, repr.

National Gallery, London, on permanent loan, 1974-2011

Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective* (1980), p.42, repr. Courtauld Gallery, London, on loan, 2011-12

Tate Britain, London, *Picasso and Modern British Art* (February – July 2012), cat.50, repr.

Selected Literature

Cahiers d'art 1928, p.214

André Level, *Picasso* (Paris 1928) plate 2

Christian Zervos, *Pablo Picasso, Oeuvres, vol.i*, 1932, no.83, repr.

Paul Jamot and Percy Moore Turner, *Collection de Tableaux Français, fait à Londres, 20 Portman Square, par Samuel et Elizabeth Courtauld 1914-31* (London 1932,) no.50

R.H. Wilenski, *Modern French Painters* (London 1940), pl.45b

Douglas Cooper, *The Courtauld Collection: A Catalogue* (London 1954), no.46, repr. plate 67

Jean Cassou, *Picasso* (Paris 1959), repr. cover and p. 14

Helen Kay, *Picasso's World of Children* (New York 1965), repr. cover and p.29

Pierre Daix et. al., *Picasso 1900-1906: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (Lausanne 1966; new edition 1988), VI.14, repr.

Picasso's *Girl with a Dove* was first exhibited at the Alexander Reid Gallery in Glasgow in October 1924. The exhibition then travelled to the firm's London gallery,

Reid and Lefèvre, where it was bought that year by Mrs R. A. Workman, who was a keen collector of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings. It therefore counts as one of the earliest and most important works by Picasso to enter a British collection. Mrs Workman lent the painting to the opening display of the newly built 'Modern Foreign Galleries' at the Tate Gallery, London, in 1926. The display of *Girl with a Dove* therefore constitutes the earliest official 'national' recognition of the Spanish artist's importance (the first painting by Picasso to enter a public collection in the UK was the unusually traditional *Flowers*, 1901, which was acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1933).

In 1928 Mrs Workman sold the painting, via Reid and Lefèvre, to Samuel Courtauld, the most important British collector of modern French art of the period. He acquired an outstanding collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art, mainly in the 1920s, and in 1932 co-founded the Courtauld Institute of Art, the first British institute devoted to the study of the History of Art. *Girl with a Dove* (also sometimes known as *Girl with a Pigeon* and *Child with a Dove*) remained the only oil painting by Picasso in Courtauld's collection. He gave works from his collection to the Courtauld Institute during the 1930s, and bequeathed most of the remainder of the collection to the Institute on his death in 1947. However, a few works were reserved for close friends and family, and the Picasso was bequeathed to Lady Aberconway (née Christabel McNaughten, wife of Henry McLaren, 2nd Baron Aberconway), in 1947. The painting was placed on long-term loan to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square in 1974

Girl with a Dove remained on permanent display at the National Gallery until 2010. It was normally shown in Room 45, alongside masterpieces such as Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Cézanne's late *Bathers*. It has thus been at the centre of Britain's national collection for almost forty years, in one of the finest and most concentrated displays of art of the 1880-1900 period to be seen anywhere in the world. It has been much-loved by visitors.

Girl with a Dove marks the start of the artist's celebrated 'Blue Period', which dates from the early Autumn of 1901. Pierre Daix, Picasso's biographer and author of the standard work on the artist's early work, locates the work in a section entitled '*Vers la période bleue, Paris 1901*', highlighting its significance as a work of transition, as the young Picasso moved away from his impressionistic depictions of city scenes and sought to develop his own distinctive style. In terms of works in UK public collections, *Girl with a Dove* thus fills an important gap between Picasso's more derivative impressionistic works (represented by paintings in Tate, the Ashmolean Oxford and Glasgow Art Gallery) and the two slightly later Blue Period works in the national collections (*Mother and Child* 1902 in Edinburgh; *Girl in a Chemise* c.1905 in Tate).

Girl with a Dove is probably the only major early Picasso painting in a British private collection (Andrew Lloyd Webber acquired the *Portrait of Angel Fernandez de Soto* 1903, in 1995, but sold it fifteen years later). Its long, uninterrupted history in a British collection makes it of enormous interest to the study of British collecting in the twentieth century. It is a work that enjoys great public affection, providing an engaging mixture of radical brushwork, bold stylisation and charmingly sentimental subject matter.

Aesthetic importance

Girl with a Dove is arguably the earliest painting in Picasso's 'Blue Period' style. It thus marks the beginning of what is still, for many people, Picasso's most popular artistic phase. In it, Picasso moved away from the Impressionistic style he was employing around the turn of the century, simplified the composition, flattened perspective and used colour to symbolic ends. The simplified design and coarse brushwork derive from the work of Van Gogh and Gauguin. Pierre Daix, in the standard monograph on Picasso's early work, states:

Cette toile célèbre témoigne des préoccupations de Picasso qui cherche une nouvelle voie, en cette fin d'été 1901. D'une part, il se détourne du spectacle de la vie parisienne pour traiter des sujets plus intimes: la mort de son ami Casagemas, les mères et leurs enfants; d'autre part, il laisse paraître une sympathie, un attendrissement inhabituels pour ceux qu'il peint, come si l'abandon de la touché impressioniste et le cerne des contours, dont il pouvait trouver exemple chez Manet, comme chez Gauguin ou Maurice Denis, se traduisaient chez lui par le besoin d'un langage plastique différent pour exprimer son changement d'attitude. (Daix, p. 197)

Not only is the painting a key work in the development of Picasso's art, it is also accessible and hugely popular: National Gallery records show that it has consistently been one its ten top-selling postcards. Few works in UK collections attract media interest when export licenses are sought. However, when the news of the potential export of this painting was broken in February 2012, *Girl with a Dove* even featured on Radio 4's *Today* programme: it is a mark of its fame, popularity and iconic status, that it could be the subject of a radio news broadcast.

Outstanding significance

The son of an artist, Picasso was born in Málaga, Spain, in 1881. He studied at art school in Barcelona. He first visited Paris from October to December 1900 and returned again in May 1901 taking a studio on the Boulevard de Clichy in the Montmartre area of the city. In June 1901 Picasso had his first exhibition, at the Galeries Vollard on rue Laffite: despite reports to the contrary, the show was successful, with fifteen works selling. From this moment on, Picasso's fame spread.

He began to paint in a predominantly blue palette from about September 1901: these 'Blue Period' works seem to be Picasso's response to the suicide of his close friend, Carles Casagemas. Picasso abandoned his vivacious paintings of Bohemian Paris (which had been inspired by Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec) for more introspective, melancholy works.

Girl with a Dove dates from Autumn 1901, at the very start of the Blue Period. The tender portrait shows a girl clutching a dove or pigeon. The painting has been known by various titles: *Child with a Pigeon*, *Girl with a Pigeon* and *Child with a Dove*. There is in fact no certainty that it is a girl rather than a boy. In Spanish the word 'paloma' means both pigeon and dove. The dove is a symbol of purity and freedom, but pigeons also held significance for Picasso: his father specialized in paintings of

pigeons and doves and bred pigeons. Picasso drew them from an early age and even named his daughter Paloma.

Summary of related items in public/private ownership in the UK

The majority of major works from Picasso's early years are in institutional collections, particularly in America, France and Spain. As the exhibition *Picasso and Modern British Art* (Tate Britain, February – July 2012) makes clear, British museums, galleries and collectors were slow to show interest in Picasso's work. A subtext of the exhibition is one of institutional inertia, ignorance, hostility and missed opportunities: most of the great works which were in UK collections are now abroad. In the 1930s there were a few enlightened British supporters of Picasso, such as Douglas Cooper, Roland Penrose and Hugh Willoughby, but most of the key works from their collections were subsequently sold abroad. There are just five early oil-paintings by Picasso in British public collections:

Blue Roofs, Paris, 1901

Oil on board, 39 x 57.7cm

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Bequeathed by Frank Hindley Smith 1939)

The Flower Seller 1901

Oil on board, 33.7 x 52.1cm

Glasgow Art Gallery (Bequeathed by William McInnes 1944)

Flowers, 1901

Oil on canvas, 65.1 x 48.9cm

Tate, London (bought with help from the Contemporary Art Society in 1933)

Mother and Child, 1902

Oil on canvas, 40.7 x 33cm

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (donated by Sir Alexander Maitland 1960)

Girl in a Chemise, c.1905

Oil on canvas, 72.7 x 60cm

Tate, London (Bequeathed by Frank Stoop 1933)

It can easily be seen that *Girl with a Dove* is a more important work than any of the five early Picasso paintings in UK public collections, and that it acts as a bridge between the three early works, and the slightly later, more typically sombre Blue Period pictures.

Works on paper

There are, additionally, six drawings / watercolours dating from this period up to 1906 in public collections in the UK. It is a surprisingly poor and patchy representation of work by arguably the greatest draughtsman of the twentieth century:

Going to the Fair, c.1899

Pastel and watercolour, 21 x 33cm

University of Edinburgh Fine Art Collections (Hope Scott bequest 1990)

Poverty (Les Misérables), 1903 Barcelona

Ink and blue watercolour, 37.5 x 26.7cm

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (donated by A. E. Anderson, 1928)

Circus Artist and Child, 1905

Ink and watercolour on paper, 16.8 x 10.5cm

Tate, London (Bequeathed by Mrs A. F. Kessler, 1983)

Horse with a Youth in Blue, 1905-6

Watercolour and gouache on paper, 49.8 x 32.1cm

Tate, London (Bequeathed by Frank Stoop 1933)

Pigs, c.1906

Charcoal on paper, 21.3 x 27.3cm

The Courtauld Gallery, London (Princes Gate Bequest 1978)

Nude Girl, c.1905

Pen and ink, 32 x 21cm

British Museum, London (Gifted by Campbell Dodgson through the CAS 1926)

Summary

- This is a key work in Picasso's oeuvre, marking the start of the Blue Period in 1901 – Picasso's first independent, mature style.
- Alongside Tate's *Weeping Woman*, 1937, it is probably the most famous work by Picasso in a UK collection.
- Picasso's early work is poorly represented in public collections in the UK.
- It has been in Britain since 1924 and thus represents a very early acquisition of Picasso's work by a British private collector. In this sense, it is important for the history of collecting in the UK.
- It has featured in all of the great Picasso shows held in Britain, from the opening of the foreign galleries at Tate Gallery in 1926, to the current *Picasso and Modern British Art* at Tate Britain, which travels to Edinburgh in August 2012.
- It has been on permanent display in London for nearly forty years: from 1974-2011 at the National Gallery in London, and subsequently at the Courtauld Institute. It is a very well-known and well-loved picture.