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MINISTERIO DE CULTURA Y DEPORTE

THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA
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Exhibition organised with the support of the National Commission for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso and with the exceptional support of Musée national Picasso–Paris

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA

PICASSO
MuséePicassoParis

Picasso Celebration 1973–2023: 50 exhibitions and events to celebrate Picasso

Picasso Celebration — 1973.2023

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Spanish Minister for Culture and Sport

Pablo Picasso is a twentieth-century hero, a symbol of creative freedom, tireless work, and commitment to art and his time. The artist, who had just turned nineteen at the start of the 1900s, left a cultural mark on his era with an output that was as coherent as it was radically different in each of its periods.

In 2023, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his death on 8 April 1973, the Spanish and French governments have joined forces to celebrate his oeuvre and his artistic legacy with an international programme of events in his native and adoptive countries designed to show the relevance of his work today. The promoters of this initiative, the Musée national Picasso–Paris in France and the National Commission for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso in Spain, are pleased to present this Picasso Celebration 1973–2023 with the support of a binational commission that bears privileged witness to the friendship between our two countries.

This Picasso Year will pay tribute to the artist who produced works as decisive as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and *Guernica*, not only by examining his extensive output but also by studying the Barcelona and Paris art scenes as key elements in shaping his artistic personality. The binational commemorations are designed to celebrate Picasso's legacy as well as to reexplore it from a twenty-first-century approach, affirm its validity, and discuss the new paths of creation and criticism in light of the oeuvre he handed down to us.

The commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Pablo Picasso's death – the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023 – encompasses more than thirty exhibitions and two academic symposiums as well as plays, publications, and audiovisual projects that outline a historiographical approach to Picasso's oeuvre. Official celebrations in France and Spain and a packed programme of dissemination activities geared to the general public complete the agenda, providing an opportunity to update the reception of, and research into, the artist's work and gain a deeper understanding of it.

In Spain, the Ministry for Culture and Sport has been entrusted with organising the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023 through the National Commission for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. The commission draws its members from the highest state institutions and brings together the central, regional, and local administrations most closely related to the artist's life, as well as leading museums and other public and private institutions, and a selection of specialists on Picasso's oeuvre. The memory of its first president José Guirao, who passed away on 11 July 2022, will be powerfully present in these celebrations. He was responsible for designing the commemoration, of which Carlos Alberdi is now in charge.

• • •

The exhibition on view at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza takes a look at the relationship between Pablo Picasso and Gabrielle Chanel, two of the great twentieth-century creators, and is the first of those organised by the Ministry for Culture and Sport to open. *Picasso / Chanel* presents a selection of sixty-five works by Picasso from national and international museums and private collections. They are displayed alongside some fifty pieces of clothing and accessories designed by Chanel from Patrimoine de Chanel, European museums, and major private collections, with the added attraction that some have never been publicly shown.

I would like to thank all the institutions and people involved in such a significant exhibition, without whom it would have been impossible to stage this show, which allows us to explore the connections, ties, and dialogues between two unforgettable twentieth-century creators and demonstrate how the arts influence each other and grow hand in hand.

Telefónica
Partner company of the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023 in Spain

Telefónica, one of the world's leading telecom companies in the provision of technological, digital, and communication services and solutions, will be involved in all the events staged to celebrate the oeuvre of Spanish artist Pablo Picasso on the 50th anniversary of his death.

As a member of the National Commission for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, it has entered into an agreement with Acción Cultural Española to collaborate on all the events and exhibitions scheduled to take place in Spain as part of the international programme of the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023 that will run until 2024.

With this initiative, Telefónica wishes to join in the efforts to disseminate the work of the great Málaga-born artist hailed as one of the most prolific painters of all times by making his art more accessible to all audiences.

Among other actions, this participation involves developing a website that will provide a meeting point for everyone wishing to take part in the events revolving around the life and work of the Cubist genius par excellence.

In addition to providing the necessary means for enabling citizens to take part in the country's artistic expressions and cultural life, Telefónica implements other initiatives and projects to improve people's lives and help make the world more human through culture and connectivity.

Fostering a society's development through technology and innovation and guaranteeing connections that encourage dialogue between a country's cultural expressions and its citizens is one of the company's goals.

On this occasion, Telefónica is joining in a celebration that reflects the universality of culture and art and aims to help connect anyone interested in doing so with the figure of Pablo Picasso – one of the most important twentieth-century artists – and his long artistic career spanning more than seventy years.

Bruno Pavlovsky
President of CHANEL Fashion
and President of CHANEL SAS

André Malraux, French writer and first Minister for Cultural Affairs, predicted that when looking back on twentieth century France, three names would stand out: De Gaulle, Picasso, and Chanel.

Mademoiselle Chanel was a revolutionary, asserting her aesthetic intuitions and convictions. Bold and free of all prejudice, she embraced her era and its avant-garde. The upheavals of the twentieth century were the substance of her ideas and creations: 'One world was ending, another was about to be born. I was in the right place; a chance beckoned; I took it. I had grown up with this new century: I was therefore the one to be consulted about its sartorial style. It needed simplicity, comfort, neatness. I offered it all that'.[1]

Her taste for radical simplicity and formal starkness owed nothing to chance, but to a new artistic aspiration to free up lines and structures, which began with Pablo Picasso and Cubism in 1907. Gabrielle Chanel's first creations in the 1910s were contemporary with this aesthetic revolution.

They first met a few years later in Paris, at the premiere of the ballet *Parade* staged by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1917, which Chanel attended with José María Sert and Misia Godebska, and the couturiere even dressed Picasso's young wife, Olga Khokhlova, a dancer with the Ballets Russes, with her creations. However, it was Jean Cocteau who brought them together in a professional capacity on two occasions: The first time, in 1922, to design the costumes and sets of his play *Antigone*; the second, in 1924, for the ballet *Le Train Bleu*, for which Picasso painted the stage curtain – two women running on the beach, whose freedom of movement, unhindered by clothing, recalled the flexibility characteristic of CHANEL creations – and Chanel created costumes in jersey, one of her favourite materials.

Today, CHANEL is pleased to support the exhibition *Picasso / Chanel* which will be on show at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid from 11 October 2022 to 15 January 2023, a few months before the fiftieth anniversary of Pablo Picasso's passing.

The exhibition highlights the relationship of mutual admiration and respect between these two major figures of modernity, as well as the resonance between their aesthetic worlds. It brings together some fifty CHANEL creations, sixty-five works by Picasso, as well as paintings by Georges Braque and Juan Gris, thanks to the efforts of Paula Luengo, Head of Exhibitions at the Museum and curator of the *Picasso / Chanel* exhibition, to whom we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation.

In *The Allure of Chanel*, Paul Morand quotes Gabrielle Chanel as saying: 'I saw the Modiglianis and Juan Grises come and go, and Picasso remain'.[2] By imposing a style that continues to this day, Chanel has also become a part of history.

1 Morand 1996, p. 50.
2 Ibid., p. 114.

Isabel Díaz Ayuso
President, Autonomous Community of Madrid

The museums in the Madrid region are a leading national and international attraction and one of our main tourist and cultural assets.

It has been four years since we began collaborating with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and these efforts are proving to be highly beneficial to the people of Madrid and to all our visitors. Throughout this time the Museum has not only demonstrated its commitment to the region's cultural scene – as attested by its policy of temporary exhibitions – but has also become a first-rate tourist, economic, and social asset for the Autonomous Community of Madrid.

The show presented here reveals the degree of excellence attained by the region's cultural offering. It establishes a dialogue between two of the most brilliant and groundbreaking personalities of the twentieth century: Pablo Picasso and Gabrielle Chanel, two geniuses who aroused the interest and curiosity of broad swathes of the society of their time. The fascinating reflections inspired by the work of these two figures make us feel particularly proud to be part of this project.

While we support general-interest activities owing to their broad scope, we also back more specific initiatives designed to attract groups of people who traditionally have less of an affinity with the art world – for example, the younger generation, whose interest in art nonetheless becomes more than obvious when they are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and express their concerns. This has happened with *Versiona Thyssen*, an initiative also supported by the Autonomous Community of Madrid that has drawn a response from a huge number of talented youngsters by speaking in their language and using their media.

The quality of shows like *Picasso / Chanel* and activities such as *Versiona Thyssen* once again confirms that Madrid is the greatest cultural destination in the world.

Guillermo Solana
Artistic Director, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

The bold decision to bring together the names of Picasso and Chanel in the title of an exhibition can easily be justified by the claim that no-one in the twentieth century escaped the influence of the great Málaga-born painter. And that is how our show begins, by examining how the Chanel style, with its geometrical lines, simplicity of colour, and lowly materials, was indebted to Picasso's Cubism. But the French couturiere also provided the Spanish artist with essential inspiration. Picasso's first picture of bathers, painted in Biarritz during the last summer of World War I, is a tribute to Chanel and her radical body-hugging bathing suits without sleeves or little skirts. Picasso and Chanel again coincided at social gatherings and on the theatre scene with the aid of two go-betweens, Olga Khokhlova and Jean Cocteau, who are powerfully present in our exhibition. Thanks to Olga's wardrobe, Chanel's designs, and Cocteau's masks, Picasso's dominant masculinity is subjected to a certain amount of gender-bending. That is the kind of Picasso we need today, beyond gender stereotypes.

I would like to express my thanks to the public and private collections that have contributed to this show with their loans, especially Patrimoine de Chanel, the Musée national Picasso–Paris, and Almine and Bernard Ruiz-Picasso. My congratulations to Paula Luengo, the author of the project and curator of the exhibition, for her outstanding work, and to technical curator Leticia de Cos and the whole team at the Museum. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of our sponsors: first and foremost the Maison Chanel; secondly Telefónica, as sponsor of the Picasso Celebration 1973–2023; and lastly the Autonomous Community of Madrid, which has once again renewed its trust in our projects.

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PICASSO AND CHANEL

Paula Luengo

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Gabrielle Chanel (1883–1971), two of the greatest twentieth-century creators, coincided for a time in the most provocative and avant-garde circle in Paris. If we analyse the artistic and social context of the period, we might conclude that being in the right place at the right time enabled them both to produce a significant but above all innovative and revolutionary output.

Fascinated by Picasso and Chanel, whom he got to know well after collaborating closely with them, Jean Cocteau admiringly claimed that Chanel 'was to couture what Picasso was to painting'.[1] Taking up this comparison, art historian Jean Leymarie specified that they had each reigned supreme in their respective worlds and had both attained the authority needed to create a myth around themselves that still lingers on today.[2]

It was Misia Godebska,[3] a pianist and patron of the arts well acquainted with the *Tout-Paris*, who introduced Chanel to the artistic circles where Picasso was a leading figure.[4] Gabrielle described how she met Misia around 1916 at a gathering in the apartment of theatre actress Cécile Sorel. She had gone with her grand amour, the English industrialist Boy Capel.[5] In contrast, several of the couturiere's biographers date this first meeting with Misia to the following year, at a soirée hosted by Sorel on 28 May 1917 to celebrate the premiere performance of *Parade*. Whatever the case, following their introduction the successful newcomer immediately struck up a close lifelong friendship with Misia and Cocteau.

fig. 1

Pablo Picasso
Still Life with Advertisements, 1913
Oil and newspaper on cardboard, 24 × 36 cm
Museum Ludwig, Cologne,
Gift of the Ludwig Collection 2001
Inv. ML/Z 2001/046

1 Cited in Madsen 1990a, p. 108.
2 Leymarie 2010, pp. 6–7.
3 For further information about Misia Godebska, see Clara Marcellán, *Anatomy of the Muse: In Misia's Footsteps*, in *Open Windows* 5, April 2014, pp. 8–12, available at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza web.
4 Misia had a special knack for recognising talent. As Picasso would say: 'It's funny how Misia's destiny always brought her into contact with the best people in different periods'; in Lebrun 2016, p. 88.
5 Morand 1996, p. 119.

fig. 2

Michel Georges-Michel
The Opening of Parade, 1917
Oil on cardboard, 45.8 × 35.7 cm
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,
Theater and Dance Collection,
Gift of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels
Inv. T&D1962.13

When Chanel met Picasso in the spring of 1917, he had just returned from Rome with Erik Satie and Cocteau for the Paris premiere of *Parade*,[6] a production by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and Picasso's first foray into the performing arts. The artist's bohemian and transgressive circle had been very surprised that he should have collaborated with Cocteau on *Parade*: 'A dictatorship weighed on Montmartre and Montparnasse. They were passing through the austere phase of cubism. […] To paint a decor, above all at the Ballets Russes … was a crime.'[7] But Picasso must have been seduced by that world, previously unknown to the artist, which enabled him to indulge in a high degree of experimentation. Naturally it was a more light-hearted and frivolous environment but it was stimulating and required working closely in a team – as opposed to in isolation in his atelier, as up until then – with artists from different backgrounds with the aim of seducing and provoking a very large and varied audience. The theatre was a major turning point for Picasso: it allowed him flexibility, enabled him to use costumes and masks, and provided him with stylistic versatility.

Cocteau, who had written the libretto for *Parade* on Diaghilev's command 'astonish me' *(étonne-moi)*, managed to convince Picasso to design the sets and costumes, Satie to compose the music, and Léonide Massine to create the choreography. This project undoubtedly marked a before and after in the history of the Ballets Russes. The result, with an aesthetic appearance that was a mixture of Cubism and Neoclassicism, a modern music score with overtones of jazz and music hall, and a realistic script set in a popular fair in Paris, was an absolute novelty, though it had many detractors.[8]

John Richardson maintains that Chanel was invited to Misia's box for the premiere performance on 18 May 1917 at the Théâtre du Châtelet, whereas an oil painting of the event by Michel Georges-Michel shows only the hostess, Paul Rosenberg, Marie Laurencin, Diaghilev, Satie, Picasso, Cocteau, and Michel [fig. 2]. Actually, on that day Laurencin was in Spain and Picasso had his own box, though he spent much of the performance behind the scenes close to his girlfriend Olga Khokhlova, who danced in *Les Sylphides* (The Sylphs), the famous ballet to music by Chopin orchestrated by Glazunov, a more conservative dance piece that was also part of that night's programme.[9]

By then Picasso and Chanel, both in their thirties, were already famous in their respective fields. Picasso had left behind the days of hardship in Montmartre and was starting to become one of the most sought-after painters in Paris thanks to the connections of his Chilean patron Eugenia Errázuriz, who had introduced him to his new dealer Paul Rosenberg. Chanel, too, had enjoyed great success [fig. 3]: having started out as a milliner, she had established Chanel Modes in Paris in 1910 and had opened the Maison Chanel in Deauville in 1912 and her fashion

6 Morand 1996, p. 113.
7 Krauss 1998, p. 95.
8 Poet Guillaume Apollinaire, in his critique of the work published in *L'Excelsior,* used two new terms to describe it: 'l'esprit nouveau' and 'sur-réalisme'. See Davis 2006, p. 128.
9 Richardson 2007, p. 39.

fig. 3

Studio Taponier
Gabrielle Chanel, ca. 1908

house in Biarritz in 1915.[10] But the designer's true fame came after the outbreak of World War I when women joined the labour force – until then exclusively a male preserve – and their apparel needed to be more practical, regardless of their social class. Chanel opted for loosely fitting garments and shortened dresses to facilitate freedom of movement during the women's working day. She also added large, functional pockets they could keep objects in and slip their hands inside. Gabrielle was a pioneer in adopting these changes in her designs without forsaking elegance in the slightest. She often drew inspiration from male clothing, and even set a trend for short boyish haircuts *à la garçonne*.

Chanel and Picasso were close contemporaries and both were extremely hard working – or, rather, they were driven by an urge to create until the end of their days, often going against the established canons. Chanel stated of Picasso that he 'destroyed, but then he constructed. He arrived in Paris in 1900, when I was a child, already able to draw like Ingres, whatever Sert said. I am almost old and Picasso is still working; he has become the radioactive principle of painting. Our meeting could only have happened in Paris'.[11]

Despite her humble country origins, Gabrielle made the most of the basic education she had received at the Aubazine convent orphanage run by the nuns of the congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary, where Albert Chanel, a travelling salesman, had left his daughters after their mother Jeanne Devolle died in 1895. Two decades later, by which time she was living in the capital, her natural intuition and insatiable appetite for learning led her to surround herself with musicians, writers, and painters, attracted by their artistic creations. She became a patron, sponsoring Diaghilev's relaunch of *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring) in 1920,[12] and even lent financial support to musician Igor Stravinsky, poet Pierre Reverdy, and Cocteau on various occasions.

Chanel frequented the company of Picasso and his wife, especially while the artist was collaborating actively with the Ballets Russes in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Proof of their friendship is an anecdote about the costume ball hosted by Étienne de Beaumont in 1920, which Misia, Sert, and Picasso decided not to attend because Chanel had not been invited, despite her involvement in making the costumes. However, all four went with the chauffeurs to the entrance to Beaumont's residence to watch the guests arrive and enjoy the spectacle. On another occasion, New Year's Eve in 1920, Chanel threw a party at her couture house on 31, Rue Cambon, to which Picasso naturally went, as did many of the city's bohemians: Serge Lifar, Satie, Jacques Lipchitz, Georges Braque, Cocteau, Raymond Radiguet, Misia and Sert, Caryathis, Blaise Cendrars, and the group of young composers known as Les Six.[13]

10 In 1915 Chanel employed about 60 people, and in 1916 around 300. By the end of the 1920s she had a staff of approximately 2,500. See Holt 1997, p. 50.
11 Morand 2013, p. 111.
12 By contributing around 300,000 francs of the period, according to Chanel herself, in Morand 1996, p. 104 and Garafola 1998, p. 221.
13 Chaney 2011, p. 187.

fig. 4

Pablo Picasso
Guitar, 1926
Cloth, wood, string, nails, and screws on painted panel, 130 × 97 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. MP86

fig. 5

Gabrielle Chanel's invitation (and envelope) addressed to the Picassos, ca. 1918
Ink on paper, 10.5 × 7 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. 51/5 AP/C/24/19/1

Her following home, the private mansion at 29, Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré also became a meeting point for the avant-garde. In the summer of 1921, Pablo, who had moved for the season to Fontainebleau with Olga and their son Paulo, returned to Paris to work and stayed in a room in Gabrielle's place because he could not bear the loneliness of his apartment.[14] In June, they both watched the premiere performance of Cocteau's ballet *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* (The Wedding Party on the Eiffel Tower) from Misia's box. From that year onward they often coincided at Le Bœuf sur le Toit, the fashionable nightclub. The archives of the Musée Picasso in Paris hold an invitation from Chanel to the Picassos for dinner at her home [fig. 5] and a photograph the artist kept of Gabrielle, both dating from that period. In turn, Picasso gave Chanel a signed copy of the 1920 book with thirty-two reproductions of his designs for the costumes and sets of Manuel de Falla's ballet *Le Tricorne* (The Three-Cornered Hat), of 1919.

Years later, Paul Morand recalled some of the impressions Chanel had conveyed of Picasso during his conversations with the designer in 1946: 'I liked the man. In reality it was his painting that I liked, even though I didn't understand anything about it. I was convinced and I enjoy being so. Picasso, for me, is like a logarithms table. […] I was later involved with the revolutions that periodically shook the rue La Boétie. I witnessed the success of his designs and the public acclaim, one after the other, of *The Three-Cornered Hat* and *Pulcinella*. I would often climb up to his alchemist's den'.[15]

14 Charles-Roux 1974, pp. 364–65; Chaney 2011, p. 224; Gidel 2018, p. 179.
15 Morand 2013, pp. 110–11.

Picasso and Chanel not only resembled each other physically – they were both attractive, of short stature, and had penetrating black eyes – but admired each other and may even have had some sort of fling around 1920 or 1921, though as Richardson suggests he would have found her 'too much of a celebrity – and not submissive enough'[16] for it to last. They were both determined, headstrong, controlling, and domineering, perhaps too alike. For Chanel at least their relationship was a firm friendship that she considered to be mutual.[17]

CUBISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CHANEL'S DESIGNS

The 1920s saw the emergence of 'a "Picasso spirit" that strongly shook up all the arts'.[18] The influence of Cubism on the fashion of the second decade of the twentieth century and, in particular, on Chanel's creations, can be broken down into several aspects.

The first, the geometrised formal language of straight, angular lines characteristic of Cubist paintings and sculptures is reflected in Chanel's early, innovative designs, which were an immediate success with the most liberated and modern women.

Chanel too espoused the tendency to downplay colour practiced by Braque and Picasso, especially during their period of Analytical Cubism from 1908 to 1911. *Mademoiselle* embraced monochrome and showed a fondness for white, black, and beige: black and white lent everything structure. According to her they had 'an absolute beauty' and 'perfect harmony';[19] beige was a natural colour that did not need to be dyed. These basic, plain hues were fully in keeping with the practical and sober mood of those years.

Thirdly but no less importantly, beginning in 1912 Cubist collages brought to art an assortment of materials and objects (which Picasso generally found in flea markets and was fond of collecting), some with coarse, rough, or austere textures, such as burlap. The artist incorporated newspapers and wallpaper with varied designs and patterns of plant motifs [fig. 1]. Other unexpected materials he employed included commercial Ripolin enamel, which he mixed with oil paint or sand. Later on, in 1926, he experimented with fabrics in his relief pictures entitled *Guitar*, which featured materials or objects ranging from a dirty shirt to rags, wood, rope, nails, and newspaper [fig. 4].

In line with these new artistic techniques, Chanel chose simple, lowly fabrics like cotton and wool jersey – used to make sailors' sweaters, men's underclothing, and sportswear – partly as a result of the textile shortage during the war and consequent price hike. A stock of knit fabric purchased from Rodier in 1916 marked the start of her working relationship with this brand. The following year Rodier brought out *Chanella*, a jersey designed specifically for Chanel. Her name immediately became synonymous with jersey woven fabrics and her masterful handling of a fabric notoriously difficult to work with was acknowledged.[20] Gabrielle also began using rabbit, beaver, and squirrel pelts, which were much less luxurious than the furs habitually used by couturiers. But even so her designs were very pricey, 'as much as 7,000 francs for a dress in 1915 […] far more than most couturiers of her time charged'.[21] According to Maurice Sachs, Chanel's genius lay in having invented the 'costly-cheap, rich rags, charming poverty'[22] – what her rival Paul Poiret termed 'luxurious poverty'.[23]

In short, she eluded excessive ornament, tended towards architectural lines, and favoured two- as opposed to three-dimensional silhouettes, characteristics fully in keeping with the most avant-garde art. As philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky has aptly pointed out, 'This sublimation of fashion finds parallels in contemporaneous visual art: the simplification and purification characteristic of Chanel designs mirror Cubism'.[24]

One of Gabrielle's creations that best embody all these features is without a doubt her first perfume: CHANEL N°5 [cat. 47]. She launched this radically different fragrance in 1921 with an essence that was unlike any other perfume of the day. It contained an unprecedented amount of aldehydes (synthetic aroma molecules) and was a masterful combination of eighty components, including floral aromas such as May rose and Grasse jasmine. The name of the perfume was neither poetic nor evocative, consisting simply of her surname and the number 5 (because it was the fifth sample of the twenty presented to Chanel). Unlike other fragrances of the period, encased in fancy, richly adorned containers, its bottle shunned decoration. It was sober, linear, and cubic, and the rectangular label could not be more minimalistic: white with three lines of black type. Everything about it was modern and functional. As Henry Gidel pointed out, it allowed the liquid inside to be clearly seen and therefore drew attention to the contents rather than the container.[25] The small original perfume bottle of 1921 displays parallels with the bottles depicted in two of Picasso's collages belonging to a series of still lifes executed in 1912, where the artist pared down objects to a minimum and used fragments of newspaper for the first time [cat. 48, 49].[26]

16 Richardson 2007, p. 190.
17 Morand 2013, p. 110.
18 Paul Fierens, 'Influence de Picasso sur la décoration moderne', in *Art et Décoration*, September 1932, pp. 269–76, here p. 275.
19 Morand 2013, p. 180.
20 See Holt 1997, p. 69.
21 In Steele 1992.
22 Garelick 2015, p. 92.
23 Sachs 1971, n.p.
24 Lipovetsky 2002, p. 65; Davis 2006, p. 161.
25 Henry Gidel emphasises the practical spirit and common sense of country people, which Chanel never lost. Gidel 2018, pp. 173–74.
26 For interpretations of Picasso's early collages, see Krauss 1998, pp. 25–85.

fig. 6

Olga Picasso at Villa La Mimoseraie, Biarritz, August or September 1918
Gelatin silver negative on cellulose nitrate support, 12.2 × 6.9 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, Madrid

Olga Khokhlova, Picasso's first wife, was a loyal Chanel customer. Cocteau, who acted as the groom's witness at their civil wedding, attended the religious ceremony that took place on 12 July 1918 at the Orthodox cathedral of Saint Alexandre-Nevsky in Paris. According to him, the bridal gown was designed by Chanel, who also appears to have attended the ceremony and ensuing lunch. Cocteau wrote to his mother after the event: 'I had to hold a crown of gold over Olga's head; it made us all look as if we were performing in *Boris Godunov*. The ceremony was beautiful, a proper wedding with mysterious rituals and chanting. Luncheon afterwards at the Meurice, Misia in sky blue, Olga in white satin, tricot, and tulle – very Biarritz'.[27] It is difficult to ascertain who actually attended, because there are no photographs of the wedding or guest lists. The only picture of Olga probably dressed in her wedding gown dates from August or September 1918 and was taken in La Mimoseraie, the villa that Eugenia Errázuriz had rented first, and then bought, in Biarritz for the couple to spend their honeymoon [fig. 6].

Born in Nischyn in 1891, Olga was raised in St Petersburg, where she studied dance at the private school of Evgenia Pavlovna Sokolova.[28] Diaghilev hired the young, inexpert ballerina in 1911 for his newly established company that was to travel around Europe and America. After a short visit to her country of birth in 1915, Olga never set foot again on Russian soil. She became an expatriate, like Picasso.

The dancer was barely twenty-six when she met the artist in Rome in early 1917 during a rehearsal, while Picasso was working on *Parade* [cat. 81]. They married a year and a half later and she abandoned her by then well-established career as a ballerina. As befitted a respectable and well-bred woman from a military family (her father was a colonel of the tsar's army), their courtship was traditional – something to which Picasso, at last ready to settle down, was not accustomed. Diaghilev and set and costume designer Léon Bakst, compatriots of Olga, had warned the artist that marriage was the only option with a Russian woman: *'Une russe on l'épouse'*.[29] But the Russian connection goes even further as it was Misia, also a native from Russia, who organised the wedding and acted as a witness, and was likewise godmother to their only son Paulo, born in February 1921.

After their Paris wedding the couple arrived in Biarritz in early August. Olga was still convalescing from an operation on her right leg and needed to rest. Picasso stayed with her and concentrated on his work, evolving towards a more decorative Cubism. He also painted portraits of his wife, which were faithful likenesses.

27 Richardson 2007, p. 86.
28 Fitzgerald 1996, p. 303.
29 Richardson 2007, p. 5.

fig. 7

Pablo and Olga in front of a poster for the ballet *Parade*, London, 1919
Olga's entire outfit and accessories are by Maison Chanel

This quiet life contrasted with the bustling atmosphere of the small coastal town that summer, even though the country was at war. Its elegant residents hung out at the casino, threw parties to raise money, held concerts in memory of soldiers and war orphans, and visited art exhibitions. It was the fashionable place to be, where the astute Gabrielle had spent 300,000 francs on the purchase of Villa Larralde, built in 1867 on Rue Gardères, opposite the casino, to set up her couture firm. Apart from the many foreigners and Parisians who resided in the French Basque resort, her clientele included the cream of Madrid, San Sebastián, and Bilbao society.[30] The elegant Eugenia Errázuriz, who also dressed in Chanel, lived only a quarter of an hour's walk away.

Gabrielle soon became one of Olga's favourite designers, who, as Stravinsky reported, owned many Chanel robes.[31] The ballerina appears to have already been a devotee of Chanel's creations even before her marriage to Picasso and bought more as her husband's economy improved. The painter did not hesitate to indulge his wife's passion for avant-garde fashion, especially Chanel's designs.[32] In a photograph of Olga and Pablo taken in the studios of Covent Garden, London, in 1919 [cat. 79], and another showing them in front of the poster announcing the London staging of *Parade* in 1919 [fig. 7], the clothes and accessories she wears come from the Maison Chanel. Other personal photos and even home-shot family films likewise bear witness to Olga's fondness for these designs.

Olga must have felt free and at ease in the clothing designed by Gabrielle. Both women were active, tireless workers who took good care of their petite, lithe bodies. Already in 1911, the designer attended the modern dance classes taught in Montmartre by Elise Toulemont, known as Caryathis (who, interestingly, had been an apprentice dressmaker before becoming a famed dancer).[33] With a background in classical ballet, she practised eurythmics, an improvisational, natural approach to movement invented by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. And although Gabrielle was not particularly good at it, she continued to attend the classes, aware of the importance of keeping fit. Eurythmics 'may have benefited Coco more than she realized. Her fresh modern fashion designs actually displayed some Dalcrozian qualities. In their striking ease, simplicity, and heightened sense of bodily awareness and harmony, Chanel clothes suggest, even now, a sartorial translation of some of the guiding principles of early modern dance'.[34] It was precisely Caryathis who invited her to accompany her lover, actor and director Charles Dullin, to the premiere of *Le Sacre du Printemps* at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in 1913.[35]

30 Larralde 2018, pp. 78–80.
31 Richardson 2007, p. 39.
32 Chaney 2011, p. 177.
33 Garafola 1998, p. 296.
34 Garelick 2015, p. 67.
35 Charles-Roux 1974, p. 397; Madsen 1990a, pp. 61 and 108; Chaney 2011, p. 233.

fig. 8

Pablo Picasso
The Artist's Sitting Room, Rue La Boétie: Jean Cocteau, Olga Picasso, Erik Satie, and Clive Bell, Paris, 1919
Pencil on paper, 49 × 61 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. MP869

Chanel's chic style is clearly visible in many classical portraits Picasso painted or drew of Olga during the happy early years of their marriage. Olga poses melancholily, looking somewhat distant and devoid of sensuality.[36] The best-known portrait from this period is *Olga in an Armchair*, where the sitter wears an elegant flower-patterned black silk gauze dress that now belongs to the collections of the Musée national Picasso–Paris.

Art critic Clive Bell gave an enthusiastic description of Olga following a dinner with the Picassos at Lapérouse in early December 1919: 'vastly improved – gay and ladylike, two qualities, as you know, that please me. She is extremely pretty and dresses charmingly. She is also small and slim and fond of pleasure and likes partridges and Grand Marnier' [fig. 8].[37]

Picasso often portrayed his young wife in the privacy of their home, showing her in a pensive attitude, reading, writing, or sewing, possibly clad in the Chanel outfits of which she was so fond from the couturiere's initial period [fig. 9]. Only a few examples of these designs are preserved in institutions and collections around the world. Their scarcity is due to the fact that their owners gave them away when they became worn or had gone out of fashion, or to the fragility of the fabrics, which made them short-lived. In addition, many disappeared during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, or were reused due to shortages of materials and resources at the time.[38] Those that are still existant are museum pieces which, despite being more than a hundred years old, have not lost any of their modernity or freshness.

The simple, linear, and flattering cut of Chanel's garments can be identified in Picasso's naturalistic depictions where Olga is fully recognisable, with well-defined contours and a purity of line inspired by Ingres's portraits [fig. 10].

36 Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 277.
37 Richardson 2007, pp. 147–48.
38 It is important to stress that the Maison Chanel presented between three hundred and four hundred designs per collection, which were not photographed, and since Gabrielle did not work with sketches it is very difficult to identify them. Only a few were reproduced in the fashion press, chiefly the British and French editions of *Vogue*. See Holt 1997, pp. 13–29.

fig. 9

Pablo Picasso
Olga Sewing, 1920
Pencil on paper, 34.7 × 23.9 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. MP899

fig. 10

Gabrielle Chanel
Cardigan and day dress, 1922–28
Jersey and silk
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1922-1988.1

fig. 11

Jean Cocteau
Instructions for the staging of the play *Antigone*, 1922
Ink on paper, 21 × 27 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.1.3

fig. 12

Programme of *Antigone* and *La Volupté de l'Honneur* at the Théâtre de l'Atelier in Montmartre, Paris, 1922
Bibliothèque nationale de France

COLLABORATIONS

ANTIGONE

Antigone, the abridged version of the tragedy by Sophocles that Jean Cocteau wrote in the summer of 1922 while in the South of France [fig. 11], was the first of the two professional projects on which Picasso and Chanel both collaborated. The author chose this classical play with the idea of modernising it 'under the sway of what has since been called the "myth of the Mediterranean" – the sense of proximity to antiquity that similarly prompted Matisse, Bonnard, Picasso and Picabia to explore classical themes while they spent time on the Riviera'.[39] Cocteau had seen the play at the Comédie-Française and had found it 'incredibly boring',[40] but he was interested in the plot: the conflict between the authority and laws of the state, enforced by King Creon, and the unwritten laws of the family ties and obligations defended by his niece Antigone. The intention was 'putting new dress on old Greek tragedy',[41] albeit retaining the main characteristics of Sophocles's drama.

The play was first performed on 20 December 1922 at the Théâtre de l'Atelier in Montmartre [fig. 12], directed by its recently appointed director Charles Dullin. The mise en scène was extremely experimental, and the cast of actors outstanding. Dullin also played the role of the tyrannical Creon, and Genica Athanasiou, a Romanian actress with a heavy accent who had recently arrived in Paris, was the princess of Thebes. White face makeup and black eyeliner and a very short hairstyle set off her expressive features, as can be seen in the surviving photographs [cat. 85, 88]. Genica's partner, poet and playwright Antonin Artaud, played an irate Tiresias, who yelled like a madman much to the audience's bewilderment.[42] Swiss composer Arthur Honegger produced a piece only for the harp and oboe that Cocteau found 'harsh and modest'.[43]

39 See Davis 2006, p. 194.
40 Commented on in a letter from Jean Cocteau to his philosopher friend Jacques Maritain, cited in Davis 2006, p. 194.
41 Richardson 2007, p. 220.
42 Charles-Roux 1974, p. 397.
43 Jean Cocteau, 'À propos d'Antigone', in *Gazette des Sept Arts* 3, 10 February 1923, p. 10.

fig. 13

Pablo Picasso
Bust of Woman with Blue Veil (Portrait of Olga), 1924
Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 50 cm
Private collection

Picasso was entrusted with the décor and although by then he was probably tired of Cocteau and of working on theatre projects in such close succession – *Parade* in 1917, *Le Tricorne* in 1919, *Pulcinella* in 1920, and *Cuadro Flamenco* in 1921 – he accepted the job because it meant working with Charles Dullin. The men had met at Au Lapin Agile, the cabaret they used to frequent during their Montmartre period, where the young actor recited poetry in exchange for tips.[44]

Picasso painted a set with an ultramarine blue sky and Doric columns on a cloth that was larger than the stage and was hung from all sides and draped on the floor. He used violets, blues, and ochres for a surprising but effective backdrop. Attached to that large backcloth were the masks worn by the members of the choir – formed by women, elderly people, and children – also executed by Picasso, as well as the soldiers' shields decorated with motifs inspired by ancient Greek vases.

The décor was a testing ground for the artist. This was his first chance to create a set for a more private space, as until then his experience had been focused on the grand stages of the theatres where the Ballets Russes performed. In contrast, in *Antigone* he had to limit himself to the restricted space and paltry theatrical effects.[45] Although it has been stated that he did the design overnight,[46] there are nineteen preparatory drawings in a sketchbook in the Musée Picasso in Paris,[47] a group of studies made for the set of *Antigone* [cat. 89], and a pastel on paper [cat. 92].

This project coincided with the phase of the return to order – or 'call to order' as Cocteau put it – in which Picasso painted an important group of works depicting monumental women shrouded in white tunics, semi- or fully naked [cat. 104–107]. These timeless figures display sturdy forms and sculptural modelling reminiscent both of classicism and the female figures of Renoir's late period. Their hairstyles, facial features, tunics, and draperies are references to classical antiquity. Picasso deliberately played at distorting the figures, stylising them or exaggerating the size of, for example, their hands and feet. The artist often used Olga as his model for these depictions [fig. 13].

During this period, which is commonly called classical or Ingresque, the painter reinterpreted classicism in a manner that was less conservative than it might seem.

As a boy Picasso had received a traditional artistic training from his father, José Ruiz Blasco, and subsequently at various academies in La Coruña, Barcelona, and Madrid. While living in Paris, during his frequent visits to the Louvre he studied the classical ceramics in the Campana collection. These holdings, acquired by the museum in 1861, were the largest existing private collection of ceramics and included about 6,000 objects of high quality.

44 Richardson 2007, p. 219.
45 Picasso and Cocteau 2018, p. 148.
46 See the essay by Dominique Marny in this catalogue, pp. 128–51.
47 Richardson 2007, p. 220.

fig. 14

George William Bissill
Study of Anton Dolin
in Le Train Bleu, 1924
Pen, ink, and watercolour
on millboard, 38.2 × 68 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum,
London, Given by Mr. C. J. Gridley
Inv. S.36-1976

Picasso never travelled to Greece, but in the spring of 1917, during his first stay in Italy, he immersed himself in the sources of Hellenistic culture and discovered the Roman frescoes of Pompeii and the Museo Archeologico in Naples. During his first trip to London from May to July 1919, he explored the British Museum, where his attention was particularly drawn to the galleries of classical art and Roman bas-reliefs. This museum houses the Lucanian or Nestoride vase dating from 390–80 BC with the only existing image of Antigone [cat. 86].

Picasso's contact with Mediterranean culture continued over successive summers: in 1919 he sojourned in Saint-Raphaël and a year later in Juan-les-Pins. In 1923 he spent the holiday season in Antibes, the former city of Antipolis in ancient Greece. There he began working on the *Three Graces* [cat. 108], one of four large panels commissioned by the Count of Beaumont to decorate his music room, for which the painter chose classical themes painted in grisaille.[48] It is worth noting that, once again, the central figure is Olga, whom he had probably also depicted in *Posing Woman*, a drawing executed in 1922 [cat. 103].

Returning to *Antigone*, the costumes were entrusted to Chanel, who was delighted to accept the commission when she found out that Picasso would be taking part in the production. It was her first chance to work surrounded by friends whom she admired: Picasso, Dullin, and Cocteau. As Cocteau told the press: 'I requested costumes from Mademoiselle Chanel because she is the greatest dressmaker of our age and I do not imagine Oedipus's daughters as being poorly dressed'.[49]

The designer drew inspiration from ancient Greece to create costumes in thick Scottish wool in shades of brown, off-white, and a little maroon that matched the décor and other props and was fully in keeping with the reduced palette of colours chosen by Picasso.[50] The main character was dressed in a draped white robe with a superb coat, according to Cocteau [see fig. 41], while Ismene, a minor character, was clad in everyday clothing.[51] Creon and Haemon were attired in togas in neutral colours and leather sandals. On their heads they wore specially designed metal headband-like crowns, considered to be the first costume jewellery made by Chanel [cat. 88]. Gabrielle's fondness for classical art is evident from her subsequent acquisition of pieces to decorate her residences: for example, a male torso purchased for the sitting-room of her apartment on 29, Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and a headless marble Venus from the Graeco-Roman period, now on show in what were once the designer's living quarters at 31, Rue Cambon.

48 Richardson 2007, p. 227.
49 Jean Cocteau, 'À propos d'Antigone', *Gazette des Sept Arts* 3, 10 February 1923, p. 10.
50 Charles-Roux 1974, p. 396.
51 Leymarie 2010, p. 100.

A great success,[52] *Antigone* was performed about a hundred times. The audience, generally unfamiliar with the original work, praised its modernity, attributing parts of the text by Sophocles to Cocteau. But the most important praise went to Chanel. Her designs were applauded by the specialised press, which gave them extensive coverage: 'Chanel goes Greek while Remaining Chanel' was the headline of an article published in *Vogue* magazine in February 1923, which stated that the dresses looked like ancient robes found after centuries and concluded that 'it is a beautiful recreation of something archaic that has been intelligently illuminated'.[53] The spread was accompanied by a drawing made by Georges Lepape, an illustrator for the *Gazette du Bon Ton*, together with the photographs Vladimir Rehbinder took of the characters [cat. 85]. Apart from the above illustrations, Pierre-Georges Jeanniot made sketches [cat. 93–98], and Cocteau produced drawings of Antigone and Tiresias [cat. 90, 91] now in the Patrimoine de Chanel collections. Cocteau described Chanel's designs as 'masterly' and 'instinctively right'.[54]

However, it appears that Gabrielle became angry during one of the final rehearsals because her contribution was not being properly appreciated. Spotting a small flaw in Antigone's hand-knitted coat, she grabbed a strand of pure wool and pulled it completely undone. The heroine had to wear one of Chanel's own coats because there was no time to re-knit it.[55]

Unfortunately, none of the original pieces from 1922 survive. They were used for the performances of the opera *Antigone* that was subsequently written by Honegger and premiered in December 1927 at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, with sets by Picasso, where a further eight performances were given between January and March 1928.[56]

All in all, Chanel's 'collaboration with Cocteau and Picasso enhanced her social and artistic status as well as her professional profile, differentiating her from contemporary rivals and positioning her to take on larger and more visible artistic projects. The opportunity came within two years with *Le Train Bleu.*[57]

LE TRAIN BLEU

The second and last project on which Chanel and Picasso worked together was *Le Train Bleu* (The Blue Train), a one-act ballet or danced operetta with a libretto by Cocteau. Produced by Diaghilev in 1924, it premiered on 20 June at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris. The idea for the ballet, which was mixed with pantomime, acrobatic acts, music, and satire, came to Cocteau when he saw British dancer Patrick Healey-Kay, better known as Anton Dolin, performing all kinds of acrobatics [fig. 14]. He also drew inspiration from the fashionable activities of the early 1920s: sunbathing and sport.

The plot was based around four friends – two sporty, frivolous couples dressed in the latest fashions – and their flirtations on the Côte d'Azur. The muscular Dolin was perfect in the role of the handsome young man Beau Gosse [see fig. 45] and Lydia Sokolova (née Hilda Munnings) played his beautiful girlfriend Perlouse, clad in a risqué bathing suit. Bronislava Nijinska, the sister of the leading dancer of the Ballets Russes Vaslav Nijinsky, was cast as the tennis player, a character inspired by famous French champion Suzanne Lenglen, an Olympic medallist and six-times winner at Wimbledon. Her golfer boyfriend, modelled on the elegant Prince of Wales, was played by Polish dancer Léon Woizikovsky. These main characters were accompanied by a group of young gigolos and flappers.

Surprisingly, what was commonly known as the *Train Bleu*, or Blue Train, the luxury night express that connected Paris with the Côte d'Azur,[58] did not actually appear in the ballet. But Diaghilev explained in the programme that there was no train in the show because it had already reached its destination and disembarked its passengers.[59] The Prince of Wales, Charlie Chaplin, Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda, Cole Porter and his wife Linda, Winston Churchill and of course Diaghilev, Picasso, and Chanel were undoubtedly the type of cosmopolitans who used this means of transport.

Diaghilev commissioned Darius Milhaud to compose light-hearted and hedonistic music. Drawing inspiration from popular operetta, he completed the task in just twenty days. The sets were entrusted to Cubist sculptor Henri Laurens, a follower of Braque and Picasso. This was the first time he had taken on work of this kind, with the added difficulty that he had never seen the sea. The result is a cheerful beach scenery in lifelike colours, with angular bathing cabanas and semibent sunshades [cat. 117]. The choreography, by Nijinska [see fig. 44], was a source of constant problems and even quarrels with Cocteau during the rehearsals. Whereas he stressed the importance of pantomime and acrobatics in the piece, she defended the role of classical ballet with modernist overtones. Their clashes caused a strained atmosphere as the dancers were unsure whom to listen to.

52 The favourable reviews included the following, among others: 'Antigone takes a brilliant lesson of youth', in Marcel Raval, 'Antigone', *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 30 December 1922, p. 3; 'Thanks to Cocteau the drama of Sophocles, divested of everything with which it had been coated throughout pages, appears in all its youth and in its original purity', in François Mauriac, 'Le théâtre: L'Antigone de Jean Cocteau', *La Revue Hebdomadaire*, 6 January 1923, pp. 107–8, here p. 107; and 'Cocteau's heroic attempt with the Antigone', in Ezra Pound, 'Paris Letter', *The Dial* 74(3), March 1923, pp. 273–80.

53 *Vogue Paris*, 1 February 1923, pp. 28–29 [see cat. 85].

54 Chaney 2011, p. 234.

55 Ibid.

56 At Cocteau's request, Chanel redesigned the costumes in January 1943 for the revival of *Antigone* at the Paris Opera during the German occupation. See Madsen 1990a, p. 244, and Gidel 2018, p. 303.

57 Davis 2006, pp. 196–97.

58 'On 9 December 1922, the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits (CIWL) launched the first Mediterranean-bound luxury train that connected England with continental Europe. It was the Calais-Mediterranean Express, which came to be known almost immediately by the name of "Train Bleu" or Blue Train, after the navy-blue colour it was painted. The Rothschild family were brought into the project by Lord Dalziel and René Nagelmackers, representatives of the company, and are considered to be the actual economic promoters and de facto owners of this train with luxurious sleeping cars'. See Rocío Robles Tardio, 'Le Train Bleu: la couleur et le mouvement d'un voyage', *Revue d'Histoire des Chemins de Fer* 35, 2006.

59 Gay Morris, 'Dance; "Le Train Bleu" Makes a Brief Stopover', *The New York Times*, 4 March 1990, section 2, p. 10.

fig. 15

Pablo Picasso and Alexander Schervachidze
Stage cloth for *Le Train Bleu*, 1924
Gouache on canvas, 10.3 × 11.7 m
Victoria and Albert Museum, London,
Given by the Friends of the Museum
of the Performing Arts
inv. S.316-1978

A month before the premiere, Diaghilev came across a small gouache titled *Two Women Running on the Beach (The Race)* [cat. 111] in Picasso's studio and begged him to let him use the image for the drop curtain. The artist was initially hesitant, but when he saw the adaptation made by Diaghilev's Russian collaborator, Prince Alexander Schervachidze, he was delighted and signed and dedicated the cloth to the impresario, who used it not only for *Le Train Bleu* but for the dance company's following tours too [fig. 15]. Painted in the summer of 1922 in Dinard (Bretagne), the *The Race* shows two colossal bare-breasted women holding hands above their heads and running along the beach. The corpulence of the figures contrasts with the dynamism of their movements.

Picasso also agreed to illustrate the brochure for the Ballets Russes 1924 season. He designed the cover [cat. 116] and made a number of studies of ballerinas for the inner pages [fig. 16]: a naked dancer in her dressing room donning her tights, another putting on her makeup, a third having her hair done before the performance, and a fourth about to come on stage. Boris Kochno, Diaghilev's secretary, had a hard time getting Picasso to give him the sketches; the artist claimed to have mislaid them in the indescribable disorder of his studio. The printer of the programme threatened to pull out and the editor demanded they forget about Picasso's designs as they were not going to be ready in time.[60]

Once again, the commission for the costumes was given to Chanel. As Cocteau did not want them to be at all theatrical but pure elegance, and was aiming for a ballet in the latest fashion,[61] Chanel drew inspiration from her sophisticated collection of sportswear for that season. Sokolova wore a pink knitted swimsuit and tight bathing cap that became all the rage, and a similar maillot was designed for the athletic Dolin. For Woizikovsky she chose tweed plus-fours, a white shirt and tie, and a stripy sweater with matching socks, while Nijinska was clad in a white tennis dress very similar to the one from the 1927 collection [cat. 120, 121].

At the end of May, during the theatre rehearsals that even Picasso attended, the dancers were shivering with cold in their scanty bathing attire, which became unravelled as soon as they started dancing. Chanel mended them and gave instructions for her workshop to make a copy of all the costumes. Apparently, she had not realised that her designs needed to be adapted to ensure that the dancers had freedom of movement on the stage. Serge Lifar, a young dancer just starting out who played the role of gigolo and whom Gabrielle took

60 Charles-Roux 1974, pp. 409–10.
61 Manifeste de Mode 2020, p. 62.

fig. 16

Pablo Picasso
Studies of Dancers for the printed programme of *Le Train Bleu*, 1924

fig. 17

Gabrielle Chanel
Bathing costumes of Perlouse and a gigolo, 1924
Knitted wool, silk tapes, and crêpe de chine, 158 × 60 × 45 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
inv. S.836-1980 and S.837-1980

under her wing, complained that 'they were not costumes conceived for dancing'.[62] In addition, the pearl earrings Sokolova wore – which became one of the fashion accessories of the decade – were too heavy and she could hardly hear the music.[63] The only two original pieces that are still preserved, the bathing costumes worn by Perlouse and a gigolo, belong to the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London [fig. 17]. The exhibition features a few reproductions of Chanel's designs made by the Paris Opera for the 1992 performance of the ballet [cat. 119]. They are directly linked to Picasso's small masterpiece titled *The Bathers*, executed in the summer of 1918 in Biarritz, which the artist always kept and which passed to the collections of the Musée Picasso in Paris when he died [cat. 118]. The three young women (or three Graces) posing on the beach in their modern swimsuits in orange, purple, and blue-and-white stripes wear the same design that Chanel used six years later for the costumes of *Le Train Bleu.* This work recalls Ingres in the rather odd anatomies,[64] but also Pierre Puvis de Chavannes's painting *Young Girls by the Seashore*, of 1880, while the colouring and the static appearance and arrangement of the figures are reminiscent of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is furthermore quite possible that Picasso repeated, with slight variations, the maenad from *The Bathers* in one of the women depicted in *The Race*.

The premiere of *Le Train Bleu* was a major social event and Gabrielle attended it with Misia and José María Sert. Everyone who was anyone in Paris at the time was among the audience and they all went to Misia's house after the performance. When Gabrielle was asked who had been there she only remembered the artists: 'Like after Picasso's marriage; more or less the same people, the painters. And the musicians, Milhaud, Poulenc, Auric'.[65] And she modestly claimed that she was only there because of the costumes.[66]

Cocteau stated years later: 'She has, by a kind of miracle, worked in fashion according to rules that would seem to have value only for painters, musicians, poets. In a way that is uniquely her own she imposes the invisible. In the midst of the social uproar, the nobility of a *silence*'.[67]

62 Charles-Roux 1974, p. 409.
63 Chaney 2011, p. 249.
64 According to Robert Rosenblum: 'Each of his three Graces, rendered contemporary by their bathing suits that were seen on all the fashionable French beaches, is in fact a grotesque pastiche of Ingres's already bizarre anatomies'; in Rosenblum 2004, p. 63.
65 Madsen 1990b, p. 146.
66 Charles-Roux 1974, p. 407.
67 Jean Cocteau, 'Le retour de Mademoiselle Chanel', *Le Nouveau Femina* 1, March 1954, p. 18.

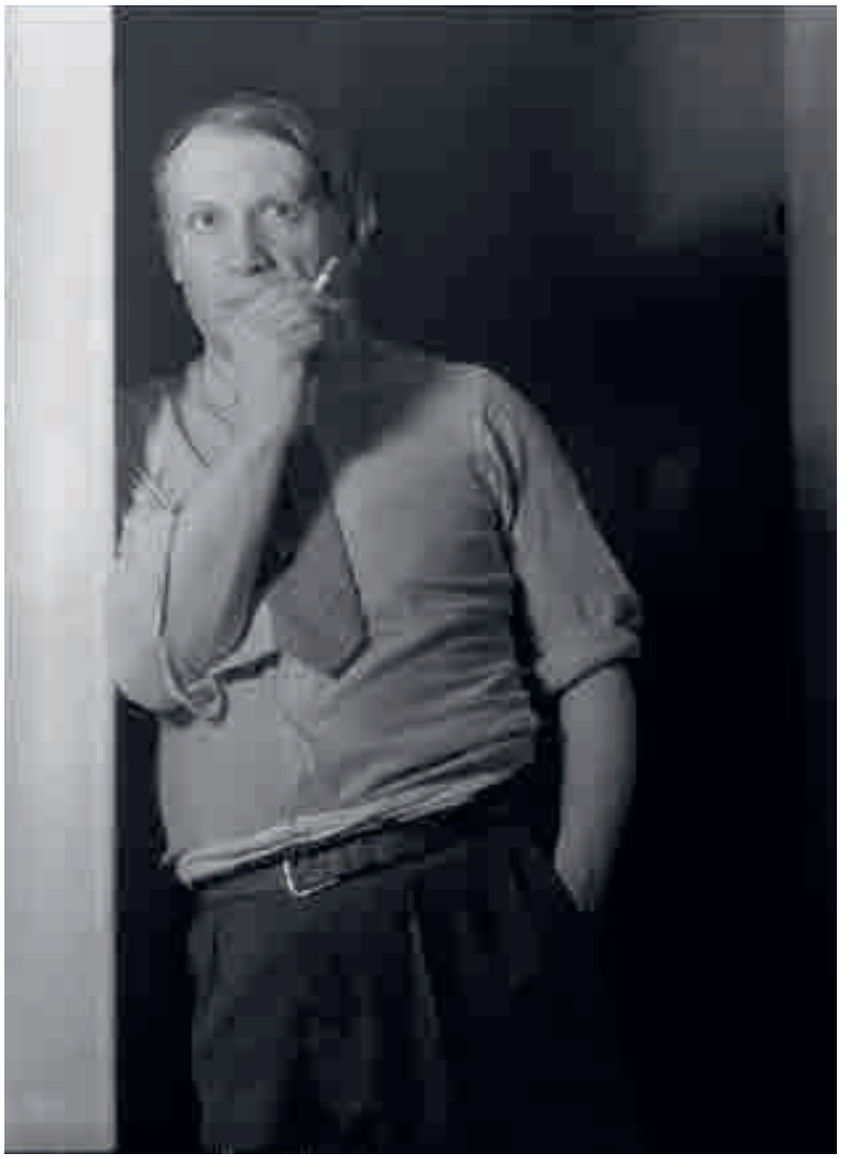


fig. 18

Dora Maar
Portrait of Pablo Picasso in his studio at 29, Rue d'Astorg, Paris (standing smoking, leaning against a wall), winter 1935–36
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/
Centre de création industrielle, Purchased in 2004
Inv. AM2004-0163 (1619)

AN EYE FOR AN EYE, SCISSORS FOR BRUSHES

Marika Genty

The work of Gabrielle Chanel, like that of Pablo Picasso, is based on the paradoxical definition formulated by Baudelaire in 1863: 'Modernity is the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal, the immutable'.[1] Acutely sensitive to what passes, to what is transitory and doomed to disappear, they gathered its spirit and translated it into their art. Diverting, lightening, subtracting, removing, recomposing, broadening the scope of its experience, multiplying versions and variations – everything is possible when your name is Chanel or Picasso. 'Dare' would be their motto, that of two characters for whom freedom was the only compass and work the only requirement. Were they even aware that they were inventing a new language, that of modernity, whose manifestations would become universal?

To appreciate the importance of the revolution they spearheaded, let us immerse ourselves in the personalities of these two extraordinary beings, who rivalled each other in their capacity for work and their vision. Let us delve into the mysteries of their artistic processes and meditate on the insight and foresight with which they forged their legend.

1 Baudelaire 1986, p. 128.

fig. 19

Boris Lipnitzki
Portrait of Gabrielle Chanel at 31, Rue Cambon, Paris, 1937
Boris Lipnitzki / Roger-Viollet

WORK AS FULFILMENT

'Nothing relaxes me so much as work, and nothing tires me so much as doing nothing. The more I work, the more I want to work'.[2] A moral foundation for both Chanel and Picasso, work was the essential step to give shape to their intuitions. 'I only believe in work. There is no art without work, material work as well as cerebral work',[3] explained Picasso. The celebrated French music hall dancer and journalist Colette, who observed Chanel at work and drew up a magnificent portrait of the couturiere, made a similar observation: 'It is in the secret of her work that we should look at this figure of a thoughtful conqueror'.[4]

Reflection, distinct from the work of the hand, anticipates and accompanies it; starting from an idea, the hand acts and the eye follows behind. The hand advances blindly, source of the gaze, instrument of perdition or revelation. It is this quest, in which one is never certain of reaching the culmination of one's efforts or achieving expectations, that made Picasso state: 'I don't seek, I find',[5] and Chanel: 'you don't leave a collection, it leaves you'.[6] Two maxims that illustrate, in both cases, their creative process.

Slaves to their art, they sacrificed everything to it. 'Painting is stronger than me, it makes me do its bidding', wrote Picasso in one of his sketchbooks on 27 March 1963. In the case of Chanel, the statement takes on more nuances, depending on the period she was living: 'Fashion is a queen and sometimes a slave', she confided to a journalist from *Le Progrès du Golfe* on 4 November 1938, whereas towards the end of her life, when her strength was running out, she announced: 'Ah, this will be the death of me!'[7]

Would this commitment to the mission they set themselves and intended to carry out have been as effective and intense without the freedom and power of their vision?

2 Morand 2013, p. 85.
3 Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Propos sur Picasso', in Michaël 2014, p. 66.
4 'Chanel par Colette', *Bravo* 16, April 1930, p. 36.
5 Bernadac and Michaël 1998.
6 Delay 1983, p. 78.
7 *Elle* (France), 25 January 1971.

VISION AND FREEDOM IN THE SERVICE OF CREATION

This gift of knowing how to observe the world around them, coupled with its immediate exploration through their inner world, was the source of their singularity.

It was Chanel's vision of her times that decided her future. 'All that I had seen bored me, I needed to cleanse my memory, to clear from my mind everything that I remembered. And I also needed to improve on what I had done and improve on what others were producing. I have been Fate's tool in a necessary cleansing process'.[8]

Insatiably curious, her selective eye took in the smallest detail. Maurice Sachs compared Chanel to 'a kind of strange goddess with scissors and pins, whose seven pairs of eyes could look in all directions at once, and whose seven hands could tailor a hundred divine models every season'.[9] This intelligent gaze, which in time became a *fait accompli* for both artists, is at the origins of their executive prowess, of their ability to turn a painting or an outfit upside down and disrupt its proportions.

In Picasso, the eye was multiple. He himself emphasised the central role played by the gaze, which inspired him since childhood, in his drawings. It gave them their material form. He took pleasure in isolating it, like a fragment to study for its own sake. The special attention paid to the eyes in the metamorphoses undergone by the faces in his paintings reveals the implicit importance that he attributed to them. In short, as with the couturiere, the eye is revealed as an instrument at the service of both Picasso's and Chanel's creations. The black, magnetic gaze which Pablo captured on his canvases impressed Gabrielle: 'He fascinated me: he watched you like a hawk ready to swoop down on its prey. He scared me. When he came into a room and I didn't see him yet, I knew he was there and that he was watching me'.[10]

The strength of Chanel's and Picasso's gaze emanated from the inner freedom that governed their beings and their actions. This boldness offered them the possibility of constantly pushing back their limits. Just like poetry, whose Greek root, *poiein*, means 'to create' and 'to produce'.

POETRY, A QUEST FOR MEANING

Poets are seers. Through their words they express feelings, emotions, and sensations, delve into human nature and denounce or celebrate the beauty of the world. They reveal what exists and is imperceptible to our eyes, decipher symbols and translate them. What they do, in short, is to invent a new language that transforms the ugliness of the universe into beauty.

For two aesthetes like Chanel and Picasso, forever in search of meaning and formal beauty, poetry abolished any framework and offered a lyrical methodology from which the creative impulse flowed.

Like his poet friends (Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Éluard, André Breton, Pierre Reverdy, and Iliazd), Picasso explored the potential of writing. Words and letters entered his Cubist compositions as an 'optical texture' that enhanced their plural meaning. Picasso incited viewers to consider forms in an active way. The syllabic fragment 'jou' in the painting *Still Life with Chair Caning*, painted in 1912,[11] opens up the imagination. These three letters are an invitation to connect the visible and the invisible: 'JOU' as in *jour* (day), *journal* (newspaper), *jouer* (play): visual emotion becomes a generator of meaning.

Writing turns into a plastic material in its own right: the drawing *Snowing in the Sun* (10 January 1934)[12] emerges from variations on the same phrase made on sheets of Arches paper on which the writing unfolds and is transformed into a figure.

In Picasso's work, images and words respond to each other: 'You can write a picture in words just as you can paint sensations in a poem',[13] Picasso told Roland Penrose. This approach led him to illustrate numerous collections of poems by poet friends or publishers, such as Reverdy and Iliazd.

In her library, Chanel kept several manuscripts or numbered copies of these precious works, with books such as *Calligrammes* (1918) and *Le Poète assassiné* (1916; *The Poet Assassinated*, 1923), dedicated by Apollinaire to his friend Reverdy, on her shelves. A distinctive binding, designed by Germaine Schroeder, clad the volumes by her favourite poets: aesthetics at the service of the senses and the spirit.

What beguiled Chanel about poetry was not only the line of conduct, the experience of style, and the promise of beauty it offered, but the poet's invitation to project ourselves into an eternal present. 'The poet writes to realise himself, to know himself, to form himself, to create himself. […] What he loves, what he hates, what touches him and moves him, produce in him a catalytic effect and, from all the deposits that accumulate, a whole is reformed at a given moment, which will be the poem'.[14]

Chanel appropriated this creative process described by her friend Reverdy. Her creations were the reflection and interpretation of her personal and artistic choices and commitments. In her designs Chanel never ceased to capture the story of her life, recognisable at a glance by her style.

It was logical that, enlightened by Reverdy and steeped in the writings of the contemporary poets whose works populated the shelves of her library, Chanel affirmed her affiliation with the avant-garde artistic intelligentsia of her day. To Reverdy's proclamation that 'the poet is a prophet',[15] Chanel's answer would be, 'I want to be part of what happens',[16] and Picasso's, 'I see for others'.[17]

8 Morand 2013, p. 175.
9 Sachs 1971, p. 31.
10 Madsen 1990a.
11 Oil on canvas, 29 × 37 cm, Musée national Picasso-Paris, inv. MP36.
12 India ink on laid paper, 26.8 × 32.8 cm, Musée national Picasso-Paris, inv. MP1123.
13 Penrose 1962, p. 366.
14 Pierre [-Louis] Flouquet, 'En "brûlant" avec Reverdy', *Le Journal des Poètes* 10, 30 January 1932, pp. 1–2.
15 Ibid.
16 Morand 2013, p. 200.
17 Dor de La Souchère 1960, p. 56.

Completely immersed in a present that they invented, their projection into the future was a quest to build a body of work and make their mark on history. 'What counts is what you do, not what you intend to do',[18] asserted Picasso; and Chanel, 'Everything I do, I always do it with passion. There is nothing I undertake without repeating to myself that my whole life depends on that one thing'.[19]

Giving shape to an autonomous universe, by arranging codes of different kinds in an original way, while preserving their mystery and poetry, is precisely what Chanel and Picasso were able to achieve. The CHANEL N°5 perfume is emblematic in this respect. Its name, reduced to Gabrielle's surname and a number; the radical lines of the bottle [cat. 47], presented in a white cardboard case with black edges; and its scent, which does not reproduce any aroma existing in nature, all dialogue with abstraction. Where is the link with perceived reality? The power of this creation lies in the mystery that envelops it, a mystery whose fragrance, minimalist aesthetics, and meaning echo Gabrielle herself. Transposing the idea of abstraction into an everyday object reveals Chanel's intelligence and pragmatism and explains the words of Jean Leymarie: 'Picasso appreciated Chanel for her earthly qualities and for having, he said, more common sense than any other woman'.[20]

Thanks to this spirit of perseverance, and to the fact that they both had the talent to always belong to their time, to question themselves relentlessly, and to turn the page when one experiment had come to an end and embark on new adventures, Picasso and Chanel helped to shape the imaginary with the strength of their inventions. In their respective fields, they revolutionised the ways of thinking and understanding our relationship with the world.

ART AS A GAME

If their relationship to the world was reactive, the spirit of their creations was playful: 'I wonder why I embarked upon this profession, and why I'm thought of as a revolutionary figure? It was not in order to create what I liked, but rather so as to make what I disliked unfashionable. I have used my talent like an explosive. I have an eminently critical mind, and eye too'.[21]

Chanel and Picasso conceived their 'art' as a game, a stance they expressed by freeing themselves of constraints, breaking the rules, dismantling prejudices, giving objects a use for which they were not intended, and inventing new forms in keeping with their fantasies and desires. 'A painter's studio should be a laboratory. It is not a place to copy, but to invent. Painting is a game of the spirit'.[22]

In both Picasso and Chanel, experimentation was permanent. They let themselves be surprised by their surroundings, they took advantage of chance and indulged in a game of combinations, inventing and modifying the balance of things over and over again.

fig. 21 →

Nick de Morgoli
The hands of Pablo Picasso over his amethyst, 1947
Gelatin silver print, 23.4 × 18 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. APPH15525

fig. 20 ↓

André Kertész
The hands of Coco Chanel, 1938
Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, Charenton-le-Pont, Gift of André Kertész
Inv. 72L002784

18 Bernadac and Michaël 1998, p. 17.
19 Yves Salgues, 'Chanel, la perfection du génie', *Jours de France* 380, 24 February 1962, p. 41.
20 Leymarie 2010, p. 70.
21 Morand 2013, p. 175.
22 André Warnod, '"En peinture tout n'est que signe", nous dit Picasso', *Arts* 22, 29 June 1945, pp. 1–4.

Chanel's use of jersey is exemplary in this respect. By diverting jersey from its primary function, in hosiery, Chanel transformed the way people looked at it. She turned a poor and flabby fabric, to which very few virtues were attributed, into her greatest asset. Thanks to its sobriety and suppleness, in her hands knitwear acquired a noble status and conquered the world. Chanel used it to invent a sporty, practical, and functional fashion which she immediately adopted for herself. Ornamentation disappeared in favour of line, comfort, and freedom of movement, once enjoyed only by men's clothing, becoming the hallmark of CHANEL models.

Picasso's collages and assemblages began with the same intention. His first collage, *Still Life with a Caned Chair*, produced in May 1912, renewed painting and the way people look at it. By incorporating a piece of oilcloth with a cane pattern, which once adhered to the canvas acts as a trompe l'oeil, Picasso challenged the classical concept of pictorial skill. Doing without both perspective and shadow, he demonstrated that it was possible to introduce unusual raw materials that enrich and broaden the spectrum of pictorial composition. The innovation was noted by the poet Apollinaire as early as 1913: 'The real or trompe-l'oeil object is doubtless destined to play an increasingly important role'.[23]

Removed from their original use and assembled with a screw, a leather bicycle saddle and metal handlebars were transformed into a *Bull's Head* (1942).[24] Picasso also played on the reversibility of the created object: metamorphosed into a hunting trophy by the artist's free will, these everyday objects regained their original function. Picasso called into question the object's original purpose and gave it another. In so doing, he invites us to look at the world with new eyes and renounce the conventions dictated by society. This assemblage also reveals his humour and his penchant for playfulness.

And there is provocation, too: 'How often have I found that wanting to use blue, I didn't have it so I used a red instead of the blue'.[25] This statement by Picasso may come as a surprise, but it is illustrative of the diversity of means and the freedom with which he ingeniously used colours, materials, and techniques. As Apollinaire pointed out: 'You can paint with whatever you like, with pipes, postage stamps, postcards, playing-cards, candelabras, pieces of oilcloth, shirt-collars, wallpaper or newspaper'.[26]

We find the same spirit in the idea of the *petite robe noire*, the 'little black dress' which was born from a mischievous quip uttered by Gabrielle during an evening at the opera: 'These colours are impossible. These women, I'm bloody well going to dress them in black'.[27] With her monochrome treatment of black and play on contrasts, textures, materials, and sheens, Chanel married black with elegance and through this radical choice she renewed the use of black, previously limited to mourning or the domestic sphere, to emphasise line and proportions. 'Suddenly, ornamentation gave way to line, and a garment appeared whose only origin was the logic of a designer faced with the needs of an era'.[28] As in painting, its use demanded great precision, and Chanel knew it: 'Women think of every colour, except the absence of colours. I have said that black had everything. White too. They have an absolute beauty. It is perfect harmony. Dress women in white or black at a ball: they are the only ones you see'.[29] Monochrome participates in the construction of space, as in Picasso's work. Chanel perceived its inexhaustible possibilities of invention, and throughout her life, she ceaselessly demonstrated its breadth and depth.

As with Picasso, these multiple experiments, evolving over time, were part of a serial practice and led indirectly to the creation of a syntax specific to each artist, helping to define part of their style.

23 Apollinaire 2004, p. 36.
24 Musée national Picasso-Paris, inv. MP330.
25 Efstratios Tériade, 'En causant avec Picasso', *L'Intransigeant*, 15 June 1932, p. 1.
26 Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Picasso et les papiers collés', *Montjoie*, 14 March 1913 ; reproduced in *Cahiers d'Art* 3-5, year 7, 1932, p. 117.
27 Morand 2013, p. 53.
28 Charles-Roux 1974, p. 239.
29 Morand 2013, p. 180.

fig. 22

Picasso in front of his work *Man Leaning on a Table* in his studio at 5bis, Rue Victor Schoelcher, Paris, 1916
Gelatin silver print, 14.9 × 8.6 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. FPPH10

fig. 23

Gabrielle Chanel on the beach in Étretat, Normandy, ca. 1913
Private collection

WOMEN, THEIR FAVOURITE SUBJECT

The eternal feminine was at the heart of their experiments. Whether muses or companions, imagined, dreamed, or desired, women always left their mark in Picasso's artistic production. With his gaze, he embraced and absorbed his models: 'I paint this way because here is the result of my thoughts'.[30] His portraits capture his vision of each of these women and reveal how he reinvented himself by exploiting new facets of his talent and experimenting with them at different stages. These portraits also offer us a glimpse of the painter's private life.

Chanel built an empire for women from an idealised image of herself. As a woman who had known all social strata, she, better than anyone else, was able to understand their expectations and desires, because they were her own. What's more, her vision of women was embodied by her own self, and her creations respond to her personal demands as much as to those of her time. 'I dress for me, if I don't wear it, I don't do it'.[31]

Two visions that revolve around a body in motion.

30 Jérôme Seckler, 'Picasso Explains', *New Masses* 54(11), 13 March 1945, pp. 4–7. Manuscript preserved in the library of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

31 Interview with Jacques Chazot for the French, trendy fashion television programme *DIM DAM DOM*, filmed by Guy Job and aired on the official state TV channel, ORTF, 1969.

THE BODY AND MOVEMENT: TWO KEY CONCERNS

To observe a body, to apprehend it as a whole or in its details, immobile or in movement, was the challenge that Picasso and Chanel never ceased to take up throughout their lives, adopting different approaches. By playing with the fragmentation of viewpoints, the simplification of volumes, and depersonalisation, Picasso freed himself from the representation of reality and revealed the body as a presence. Letting the body express itself to manifest the demeanor of the woman wearing a CHANEL model has its origin in the same intention. Simplifying lines and silhouettes, favouring suppleness, comfort, and naturalness were some of the solutions devised by Chanel to achieve this. Identifiable both in her fashion and in her perfumes, Chanel's minimalism was, in its time, a true aesthetic transgression.

It was this audacity and the modernity of their vision that Serge Diaghilev and Jean Cocteau sought to renew theatre and dance.

THE STAGE, A CREATIVE SPRINGBOARD

The meeting with Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets Russes, and, through him, with Cocteau, had a decisive impact on the lives and creations of both Picasso and Chanel. Picasso met the ballerina Olga Khokhlova, who became his wife, and the composer Igor Stravinsky, who opened up new perspectives on the avant-garde. Chanel designed the dancer's street clothes and in 1920 made her debut as a patron of the arts by financing the revival of *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring). She also hosted Stravinsky and his family for a year at Bel Respiro, her villa in Garches. An indestructible friendship was formed between all these artists.

Independently of these commitments, the experience of the stage enabled Chanel and Picasso to discover the interaction between the sets and the movements of the costumes on the performers. Cocteau recalled on *Antigone*: 'Under the masks [painted by Picasso] there was a white panel. The idea was to create on this surface the impression of an improvised set […] evoking a hot day. Picasso paced back and forth. He began by rubbing a stick of red chalk on the board which, because of the unevenness of the wood, became marble. Then he took a bottle of ink and traced a series of motifs to masterful effect. Suddenly he blackened out a few gaps and three columns appeared'.[32]

Vogue Paris reacted with the headline: 'Chanel goes Greek while Remaining Chanel'.[33] 'Chanel's costumes, in woven wool, are magnificent. They are both primitive and elegant, an unlikely but true match'.[34] 'It is a beautiful recreation of something archaic that has been intelligently illuminated'.[35]

It was this ability to transpose the power of reality and to stylise it into a set or costumes that Cocteau was hoping to find by hiring Chanel and Picasso.

'While Picasso was working on all these shows, he was constantly present, both in the theatre, attending rehearsals or performances, and in the rooms where the dancers did their exercises'.[36] Chanel got into the same habit. During the rehearsals of the ballet *Le Train Bleu* (The Blue Train), for which she made the costumes and Picasso the stage curtain, both were drawn to Serge Lifar, who later became the star dancer of the Ballets Russes. In the words of Lifar, Picasso and Chanel were his 'godfather and godmother in the arts'.[37]

The passage from the other to the self was immediate and spontaneous.

STAGING THE SELF, FASHIONING A LEGEND

'Gabrielle Chanel is to fashion what Pablo Picasso is to the art world: a figure whose ideas brought about the emergence of new frameworks of thought and considerably modified our ways of being in the world'. Such is the penetrating insight of art historian J. B. in a lecture on the Chanel myth. The scope of her work, like that of Picasso's, far exceeds the boundaries of fashion, as his transcends the limits of painting; it opens up to visual imagery, media exposure, and transmission. Here again, Picasso and Chanel were forerunners; they understood the importance of representation and what it implicitly entailed for posterity. By lending themselves to the multiplicity of photographers' gazes, and to interviews – rare in the case of Chanel, but more than compensated by the number of articles written about her and the need to put into words the story of her life – Chanel and Picasso each invented a persona and laid the foundations of their legend. One created a style that would outlive her, the other produced an accomplished set of works covering every period, subject, and medium. Their creative endeavours were different, but their goal was the same: to endure and leave their mark on history.

The awareness of having accomplished their work, of having built a coherent universe, enabled Picasso to say: 'I paint as others write their autobiographies. […] The future will choose the pages it prefers',[38] and Chanel: 'May my legend gain ground, I wish it a long and happy life!'[39]

32 Jean Cocteau, 'Les contemporains: La jeunesse et le scandale', lecture given at the Université des Annales on 27 February 1925 and published in *Conférencia: Journal de l'Université des Annales* 18, 1 September 1926, pp. 272–85.
33 *Vogue Paris*, 1 February 1923, p. 29.
34 Gabriel Boissy, 'L'exemple d'Antigone', *Comœdia*, 27 December 1922.
35 *Vogue Paris*, 1 February 1923, p. 29.
36 Cooper 1967, p. 65.
37 Serge Lifar, 'Misia', *La Nouvelle Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 1975, p. 620, and Pierre Galante, *Les années Chanel*, Paris, Mercure de France–Paris-Match, 1972, p. 117.
38 Bernadac and Michaël 1998, p. 116.
39 Morand 2013, p. 20.

THE CANON OF MODERN LIFE: CHANEL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PICASSO

Juan Gutiérrez

Part of the chain that 'links geniuses to one another over the centuries', 'a radioactive principle', 'alchemist', 'demon', and 'logarithms table' – these are just some of the expressions Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel uses to describe Pablo Picasso in Paul Morand's book.[1] They denote admiration and respect, and reveal that the artist was an example for the designer. It is known that the persona portrayed by Morand, like the one that comes across in the many biographies of the couturiere, draws from a mixture of history and literature,[2] distorted by a legend she herself helped craft. Therefore, although there is proof that the two were friends, their relationship may well have been exaggerated as a further ingredient of the elaborate myth that lingers on today as both brand and style. Chanel and Picasso shared a remarkable talent for self-promotion that fashion has been progressively improving since the days of Charles Worth. Jacques Doucet polished the modern clothes designer's self-enhancement techniques and visibly engaged in the consumption of art as a sign of his aesthetic discernment.[3] He advised Paul Poiret to spare no expense when appearing in public. By the time Chanel joined the elite group of French couturiers, the practice of cultivating a public image associated with the art world extended even to 'the more sombre Vionnet',[4] who also accepted as a sign of the times that fashion could not be modern unless it established links with other avant-garde expressions.

fig. 24

Curtis Moffat
Staircase of Maison Chanel at 31, Rue Cambon, Paris, 1920s
Gelatin silver print, 6.4 × 5.8 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Inv. E.838-2007

1 Morand 2013, pp. 110–12.
2 As Lourdes Font attempted to show by comparing other literary figures portrayed by Morand with the picture he paints in *The Allure of Chanel* (Morand 2013). See Lourdes M. Font, 'L'Allure de Chanel: The Couturière as Literary Character', *Fashion Theory* 8(3), 2004, pp. 301–14.
3 Indeed, around 1920 he became the first owner of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907).
4 Martin 1998, p. 110.

This is a tactic to which contemporary fashion has already accustomed us, a commercial technique that gives rise to fortunate encounters, though it usually creates more confusion than it does shed light on the nature of the relationship between fashion and art, a subject that has found its way into museum spaces in the past decades. In his essential catalogue of the exhibition *Cubism and Fashion*,[5] Richard Harrison Martin warns of the perils of examining this relationship from a superficial approach that merely draws a few formal parallels and fails to pay attention to the underlying conditions that make it possible.[6]

Exploration of the boundaries between art and fashion continues to spark debate in the creative field, in museum spaces, and in academic research. Fashion has been described as the 'other' in relation to art,[7] a definition that ties in with one of Chanel's best-known maxims: that fashion is what goes out of fashion.[8] Conversely, a category in its own right has been emerging in recent years: conceptual fashion,[9] which lies somewhere between design product and art object.[10] The appearance of conceptual fashion in the last quarter of the twentieth century coincides with the material shift that focuses attention on issues such as body, gender, and identity. This is, as I will go on to argue, a turn of the screw in the realignment advocated by Chanel, which proposes a new web of relationships between the forms, concepts, and mechanics of cultural production.

As the possibility of recontextualising fashion in the field of creation is still taking shape, discourses focusing on the artistic values of garment design remain forced to borrow from the conceptual apparatus of art, which has itself expanded to the extent of blurring the boundaries between disciplines and the very definition of art. If the language of artistic criticism is partly valid for analysing fashion design, it is thanks to the changes both disciplines have undergone in their relationship with society, changes that have compelled them to grow steadily closer. Theodor Adorno noted that art had become increasingly dependent on the medium of fashion ever since the avant-garde movements, when 'the aesthetic subject began to take a polemical stand against society and its objective spirit'.[11] In order to be effective, this involvement has continued to be silenced.

At any rate, whether or not fashion can be art or art can be subject to fashions are secondary issues. Direct comparison between Chanel's designs and Picasso's oeuvre, proof of their formal similarities, and the suspicion that there are deep ties that bind the work of both invite us to momentarily cast aside categories and consider each object, each garment, and each painting to be an expression of a common language stemming from shared aspirations and influences. The features that, either formally or conceptually, make it possible to relate Chanel's designs to Cubism are outlined in the following pages. The approach is simple and by no means original: it consists in demonstrating the validity of the theoretical language that describes the aesthetic of the revolutionary movement by briefly surveying the fashion designer's contributions. If there was indeed a Cubist fashion, as Martin suggests, Chanel was the designer who succeeded most effectively in summing up its essence and, like Picasso in the field of artistic representation, in projecting it on a large scale to convert its language into one of the most widely disseminated twentieth-century style codes.

CHANEL THE CUBIST: FORMAL SIMILARITIES

Harold Koda points out in the introduction to the catalogue of the Chanel retrospective held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2005 that today it would seem out of place to imagine a woman clad in Poiret's fashions of around 1907 viewing Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. 'The disjunction felt in the juxtaposition', Koda states, evaporates if we picture her dressed in Chanel.[12] The image would be somewhat anachronistic, as Chanel opened her first boutique in 1910 in Deauville, but it may be inferred from the disapproval received by Picasso's seminal work, which was incomprehensible even to Georges Braque and ignored by collectors until the 1920s, that the painter's genius was several years ahead of the change in taste to which fashion would adjust through the medium (returning to Adorno's idea) of figures like Chanel.

It is telling that the first owner of *Les Demoiselles* should have been Doucet. The attention fashion designers lavished on cultural change, and the emergence of new practices and aesthetics, secured them a position at the forefront of the artistic and social avant-gardes. This explains why the major changes witnessed in fashion at the beginning of the twentieth century were aligned with Cubism 'long before Cubism had become the Establishment'.[13] Indeed, Martin makes an interesting point in his analysis: that Cubist fashion – which preceded Chanel, as it can be sensed around 1910 in the designs of Callot Soeurs and Lucile – was proof of the viability of the aesthetic shaped by Braque and Picasso.[14]

As for Chanel, it is commonly accepted that she was part of the 'Cubist generation' on the grounds of her age and the severity of her style.[15] Beginning in 1917, the year Misia Godebska introduced her to the *Tout-Paris*, Chanel played an active part on the avant-garde scene. Her close relationship with Igor Stravinsky, Jean Cocteau, and Pierre Reverdy, which extended to admiration for their works and various forms of collaboration, attests to her fondness for transgression in art. Her wish to break moulds is credited

5 Show held in 1999 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, with the sponsorship of the Prada group.
6 Martin 1998, pp. 153–55.
7 Robert Radford, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Art, Fashion and Individualism', *Fashion Theory* 2(2), 1998, pp. 151–63.
8 'Chanel, above all else, is a style. Fashion, you see, goes out of fashion. Style never'; see Charles-Roux 2005, p. 323.
9 Swale 2017.
10 Simon Swale actually establishes a more complex framework based on the theories on which Rosalind Krauss underpinned the postmodern artistic discourse, especially following her article 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979).
11 Adorno 1984, p. 436, cited in Catherine D. Driscoll, 'Chanel: The Order of Things', *Fashion Theory* 14(2), 2010, pp. 135–58, here pp. 141–42.
12 Koda and Bolton 2005, p. 11.
13 Martin 1998, p. 12. Mary Davis notes how during the 1920s, when Cubism as an artistic movement was on the wane, the fashion press stressed 'haute couture's continuing attraction to this brand of modernism', which alluded at once to American technical progress and to French classicism, a combination that Chanel's 'chic' style had helped shape as much as Cubism itself (Davis 2006, pp. 208–9).
14 Martin 1998, p. 17.
15 Urrea 1997, p. 116; Leymarie 2010, p. 7.

by her biographers to her own temperament and to how she coped with the experiences of her youth. The world she created was based on her intuition and met her needs; it was driven by a tenacious observation of modernity that, as Edmonde Charles-Roux argues,[16] possibly stemmed from repudiation of her past and the aim of crafting a persona tailored to her personality, her body, and her time.[17]

Drawing on her own intuition and observation of life, Chanel perfectly captured the *Zeitgeist* of the period. Amid Adolf Loos's proclamations against ornament and Mies van der Rohe's famous apothegm 'less is more', we also find 'the simpler it was, the better', with which *Vogue* summed up Chanel's style.[18] 'Simple', 'pure', and 'precise' are terms widely used in the language of the fashion press to describe the avant-garde style in clothing as well as in the visual and performing arts, music, and architecture. Further similarities can be drawn if we take the liberty of analysing in greater detail the formal discourse of fashion from the viewpoint of artistic criticism. Martin's aforementioned text lists three fundamental reasons for the existence of a Cubist fashion: recourse to the plane (and its derivative, the cylinder); denial of perspective and representation of volume; and the indeterminacy of forms, integrated into the whole picture plane/outfit. Martin clearly stresses that these similarities are made possible by the 'magnanimity of art'.[19] Taking this as a pretext, we will now examine each of the formal concepts and techniques that define Cubism, applying them to the designer's work.

LINE AND PLANE

Like Cubism, Chanel explored straight lines and composition by planes, shunning voluminous masses in favour of two-dimensionality. From her very first designs, in accordance with her personal style, she proposed a silhouette that tended toward verticality and the suppression of the wavy lines characteristic of the Belle Époque. The reduction of ornament and gradual elimination of the waist and bust led to a synthetic interpretation of the body, and front and back could be treated as two-dimensional surfaces on which she worked by superimposing new planes. This is how we can interpret the patch pockets and pleated skirts, such as those featured in the first design published by *Vogue* in 1916, or the straight-cut jackets open at the front to reveal the garment beneath them. In the 1910s, clothing evolved toward cylindrical shapes and layered compositions, but Chanel heightened the importance of the plane, not only as an aesthetic form but considering its influence on the functional aspect. She did so by paying attention to the back, the part that articulated men's suits. Like Balenciaga, she considered that 'all the articulation of the body is in the back; all movements stem from the back'.[20] This principle is possibly based on observation of the gestures of the male body in action, but instead of concentrating on tailored fitting, she took as her reference the simple planes from which work garments and sports clothing were constructed. This is how Chanel succeeded in concealing the age of women when viewed from behind, an achievement of which she was proud.

MONOCHROME AND CONTRASTS

The unified perception of the plane, in painting or clothing, increases when colour contrasts are eliminated. Neutral tones, for their part, make it possible to unclutter the composition and avoid lapsing into decorative detail. In Chanel, the vast range of vivid Belle Époque colours resulting from the discovery of chemical dyes in the mid-nineteenth century are reduced to an austere palette in line with the experimentation of Analytical Cubism. Her jersey fabric designs of 1916 in beige (a shade also in vogue in interior decoration) and carefully balanced blues and whites advocate discretion in colour. In the 1920s, the designer exploited the pairing of black and white, now one of her hallmarks. Photography and film, the Ford T, and jazz culture made this combination a symbol of modernity. Since 1919, fashion had been spreading the use of black other than for mourning,[21] and in 1925, a year before Chanel's famous black dress was published in *Vogue*, the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes had hailed it as the fashionable colour. Despite these precedents, model 817, in black crêpe de chine – later dubbed the *petite robe noire* or 'little black dress' – has attained the same historical importance as Kazimir Malevich's *White on White* (1918) in painting. Considered in its own right, it is one of the finest expressions of abstraction in design, its elements reduced to a subtle interplay of textures. But Chanel was not aiming in the same direction as Suprematism. The dress is a plane on which the accessories are arranged: long pearl necklaces, bracelets and other pieces of costume jewellery, and patterned scarves,[22] which added striking colour contrasts. The plastic value of those elements is heightened, in the same way that motifs again stand out against the ground in Synthetic Cubism.

MATERIALS

Chanel's choice of knit fabrics, a kind not characteristic of elegant attire, earned the firm the name 'The House of Jersey' in 1917.[23] The previous year she had acquired unsold stocks of this fabric produced by Jean Rodier, an experimental batch that was intended for sportswear but had been rejected as it was considered too coarse. 'It reeked of train driver, of labourer, of working clothes', wrote Charles-Roux.[24] The choice of this particular batch

16 Charles-Roux 1975.
17 The tenacity and creative orthodoxy that guided her have even led her to be compared to the mystics, an image far removed from the worldly cliché associated with her (Fiemeyer 2016, p. 63).
18 *Vogue* (USA), 1 November 1924, p. 100, cited in Davis 2006, p. 166.
19 Martin 1998, p. 155.
20 Morand 2013, p. 56.
21 Haase 2013, p. 184. Before that time, however, as early as the 1910s Chanel had already started to create dresses with simple, clean lines and tailored from black fabric.
22 A notable contribution in this field was made by the Futurist Iliazd (Ilia Zdanevich), who had collaborated with Sonia Delaunay and was at the helm of Tissus Chanel from 1928 to 1933.
23 Haye and Tobin 2003, p. 24.
24 Charles-Roux 2009, p. 233.

makes it possible to establish a direct link with the Cubist poetics of poor materials and everyday objects in close contact with reality. Chanel made fashionable a fabric, jersey, that was associated with intimate apparel or underclothing, and likewise gained acceptance for the feel of Scotch tweed, wools that were less processed than usual and thus kept their softness and suppleness, and more modest furs like beaver and rabbit. And like Cubism when it shunned traditional sculptural materials, she changed the concept of costume jewellery, which, like her clothing, came to be appreciated for its creative or decorative value and for the prestige of its maker, irrespective of its material worth.

COMPOSITION / STRUCTURE

The poverty or simplicity of materials, both in Cubism and in Chanel, stems from the explicit intention to avoid distractions. Just as early Cubism turned its attention to simple, readily accessible themes that made it possible to concentrate on their analytical decomposition, for Chanel jersey was a means of simplifying the composition, working with planes, and revealing the structure of the dress. Or, to put it another way, it was the material that forced her to progressively simplify forms, as it is as difficult to decorate it with embroidery and prints as it is to handle it using traditional dressmaking techniques. When making a dress out of jersey material, everything is easier to control if the skirt is shorter, with no fullness or artifice, if detail is allowed to lose significance and the composition to emerge. The composition turns out to be not so much architectural as plastic, and not so much sculptural as pictorial. By shunning volume and working with planes, she causes the body (the dress) to act as a canvas on which the syntax of elements is developed and where tactile values take priority over visual values.

TACTILE VALUES, SIMULTANEITY, AND INDETERMINACY

The theories of Bernard Berenson and William James, to which Picasso was introduced by Gertrude Stein, guided the Cubists in their attempt 'to capture more real aspects of forms, rather than their accidental, perspectival displacement'.[25] The notion of 'tactile values' developed by Berenson lays at the origin of this exploration, which is also applicable to Chanel's discoveries. Touch keeps all relationships and distances objective; it allows things to be captured as they are and not through the rules of optics. The groundbreaking endeavour to represent reality through non-visual values is comparable to the change Chanel introduced in the way of dressing. On this level, the style she promoted not only influenced women's clothing but also brought about a change of register in the codes of representation of clothing. Until she came along, body and outfit were two separate entities, each subject to the other. The formality of apparel, like the laws of perspective, remained unaltered by manipulation. Elegance was to be beheld, not touched.

In Martin's opinion, the origin of Chanel's suits did not lie as much in menswear tailoring as in the cardigan, a garment that is practically amorphous and functions in two dimensions until it is donned and envelops the wearer's body. Martin calls Chanel's attitude to design 'deliberate insubstantiation'.[26] To dispense with substance, she denies garment its solidness, allowing it to be invaded by what lies beneath it, shattering the boundaries between soft and solid, between inner and outer. To put it another way, clothing enters into dialogue with gesture, with the movement of the body and of other garments; it ceases to be static. It expands when the wearer puts her hands in the pockets, is open and gathered to show what is beneath, is transformed with each activity, and takes on a fluid, indeterminate nature. To represent the different perspectives of an object simultaneously, the Cubist painter undergoes a mental process that involves positioning himself in all the possible relationships with the object, viewing it from all angles at once. The style of clothing advocated by Chanel also entails a phenomenological approach to dressing that is coherent with 'ever-changing interactions of people'.[27]

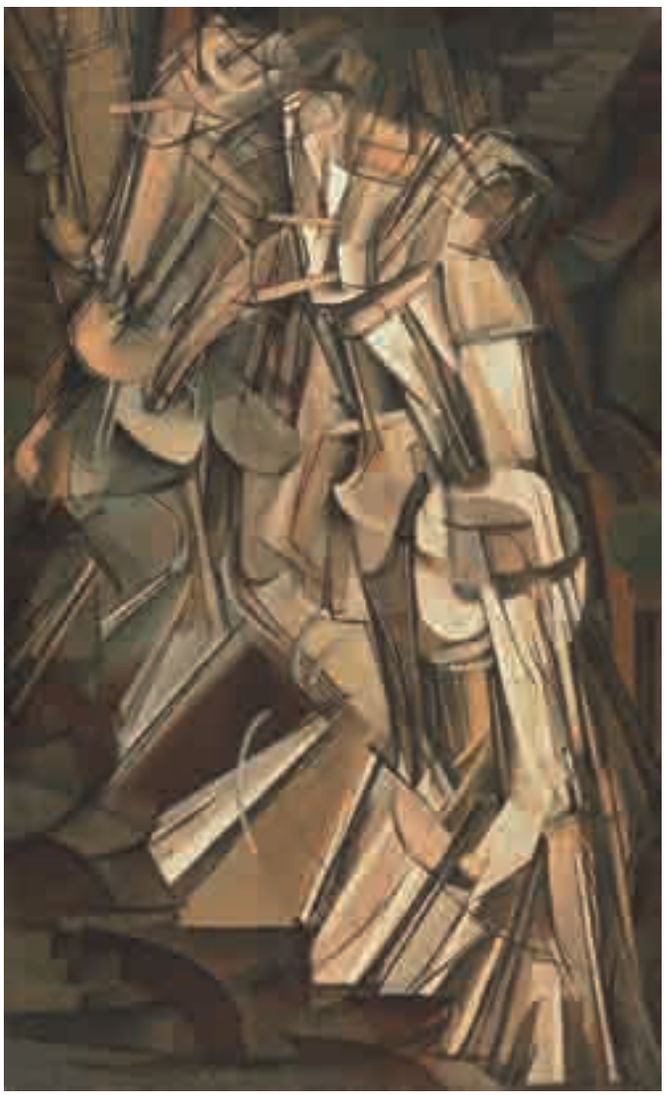
COLLAGE, ASSEMBLAGE, AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

An initial interpretation of the collage technique employed by Cubism can be linked to the unusual combinations of fabrics Chanel employed, mixing jersey with muslins or furs. But aside from the dialogue between different kinds of materials, it is worth considering that collage and assemblage introduce a 'primitive' composition method[28] based on the addition of elements borrowed from reality and adapted to the art object in all their literality. In early twentieth-century fashion, which was receptive to cultural borrowing, we find many examples of such incorporations based on contact with regional costume, Japonisme, and the Ballets Russes. This translocation was possibly the most significant of all the strategies that guided Chanel's conception of design. Her work is marked by the constant reappropriation of types and forms that fell outside the boundaries of elegance. The garments worn by the fishermen of Deauville and Biarritz, stable hands, jockeys, butlers, concierges, mechanics, and quarry workers were all part of the stylistic assemblage performed by the designer. Nor did traditional sewing techniques, women's dressmaking, and men's tailoring completely satisfy the needs of Chanel, who flitted effortlessly between these disciplines. The mental picture, which she generally expressed in words to her head seamstress, laid at the origin of her designs, and in this realm of ideas she overstepped the established boundaries. Possibly to her regret – true success is lethal[29] – Chanel paved the way for less dependence on classical sewing techniques, a shift that was decisive in the development of serial production in fashion.

25 Ian Verstegen, 'The Tactility of Early Cubism', *Journal of Art History* 83(4), 2014, pp. 290–302.
26 Martin 1998, p. 30.
27 Madsen 1990b, p. 125.
28 Martin 1998, p. 91.
29 Morand 2013, p. 48.

fig. 25

Marcel Duchamp
Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2, 1912
Oil on canvas, 147 × 89.2 cm
The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia,
The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950
Inv. 1950-134-59

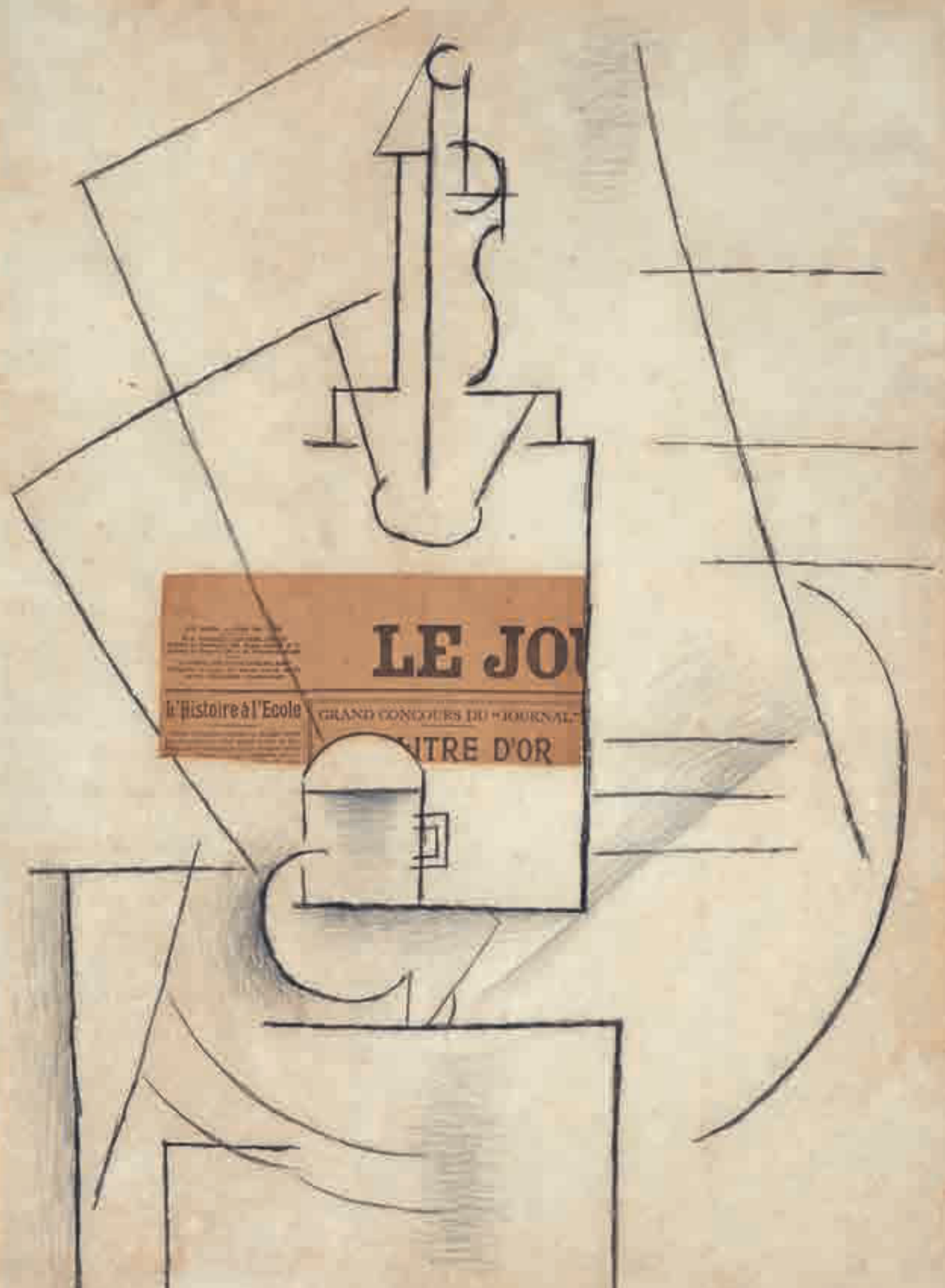


DOUBLE C: ABSTRACTION, RHYTHM, AND REPETITION

When considering Chanel's possible link with Cubism, the mirrors with which she lined the walls of the famous staircase of 31, Rue Cambon during the 1920s immediately spring to mind [fig. 24]. From there, she watched her designs being modelled, hidden from the public but reflected in a fractal image that inevitably recalls Marcel Duchamp's famous *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) [fig. 25]. Her most famous creation, the perfume CHANEL N°5 (1921) [cat. 47], which was distinguished by the abstract nature of its aroma and the powerful geometry of its bottle, also has Cubist overtones. No less significant is its name, which broke away from the tendency towards lyricism by using that of her own firm and simply a number, like those accompanying the title of artists' variations on the same motif or those depicted in Braque's canvas *The Portuguese* (1911) which ushered in the Synthetic Period in Cubism.

Abstraction, repetition, and movement run through Chanel's designs in the same way that they are central motifs in the work of most of the avant-garde movements. Everything – her insistent recourse to her favourite themes, the obsessive repetition of forms to the point of establishing a standard, even the double C, a rhythmic monogram like the alliteration of her pet name, Coco, an onomatopoeic abstraction of the language that was recurrent in the poetics of the avant-gardes (Dada) and the lyrics of jazz, the sound Cocteau described as 'music on which one walks'[30] – seemed to stem from a mechanisation effort aimed at introducing a uniform for the dynamic twentieth-century woman. Chanel made repetition appealing, in the same way that Picasso succeeded in establishing a new canon of plastic beauty that became a style. If the designer regarded him as her 'logarithms table' it was because she believed that the painter had found the keys to a new brand of classicism: a language that, although still synonymous with modernity, would not go out of fashion.[31] They are both responsible for the shake-up in their respective fields that we have set out to examine here as part of the same phenomenon, the shaping of the modern paradigm.

30 Davis 2006, p. 154.
31 Roland Barthes described Chanel as the new 'classical author' capable of rewriting a new style code by negating fashion itself through variations on the same model, like the composer who produces variations on the same musical theme. Cited in Urrea 1997, pp. 78–79.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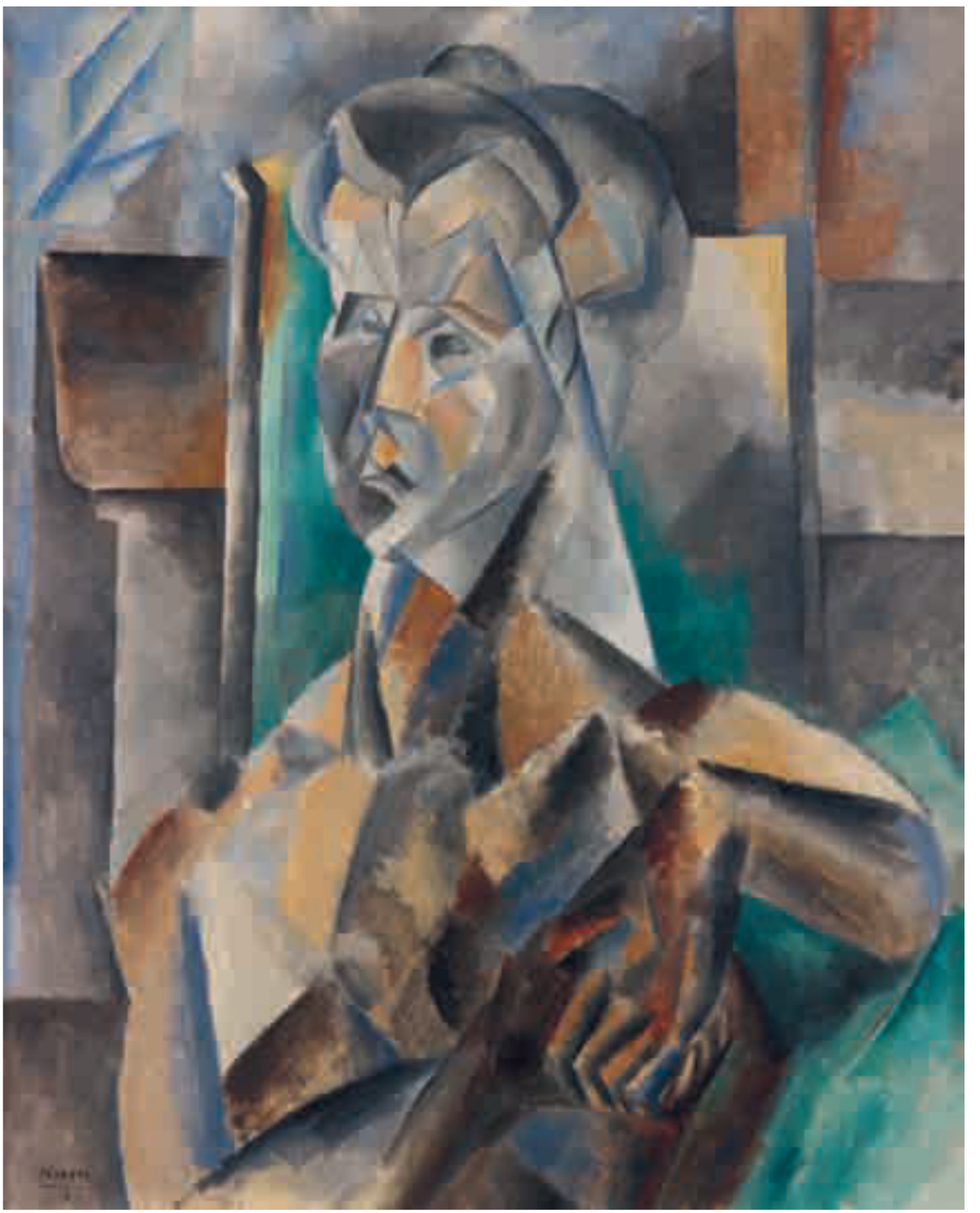
l'Histoire à l'Ecole
GRAND CONCOURS DU "JOURNAL"
NTRE D'OR

CUBISM AND THE STYLE OF CHANEL

Pablo Picasso, *Bottle, Cup and Newspaper*, 1912–13 [cat. 49]

1 Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Fernande Olivier, 1909
Oil on canvas, 65 × 54.5 cm
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main,
Property of the Städelscher Museums-Verein e.V.
Inv. 2110

2 Pablo Picasso
Woman in Green, 1909
Oil on canvas, 100.3 × 81.3 cm
Collection Van Abbemuseum,
Eindhoven
Inv. 385

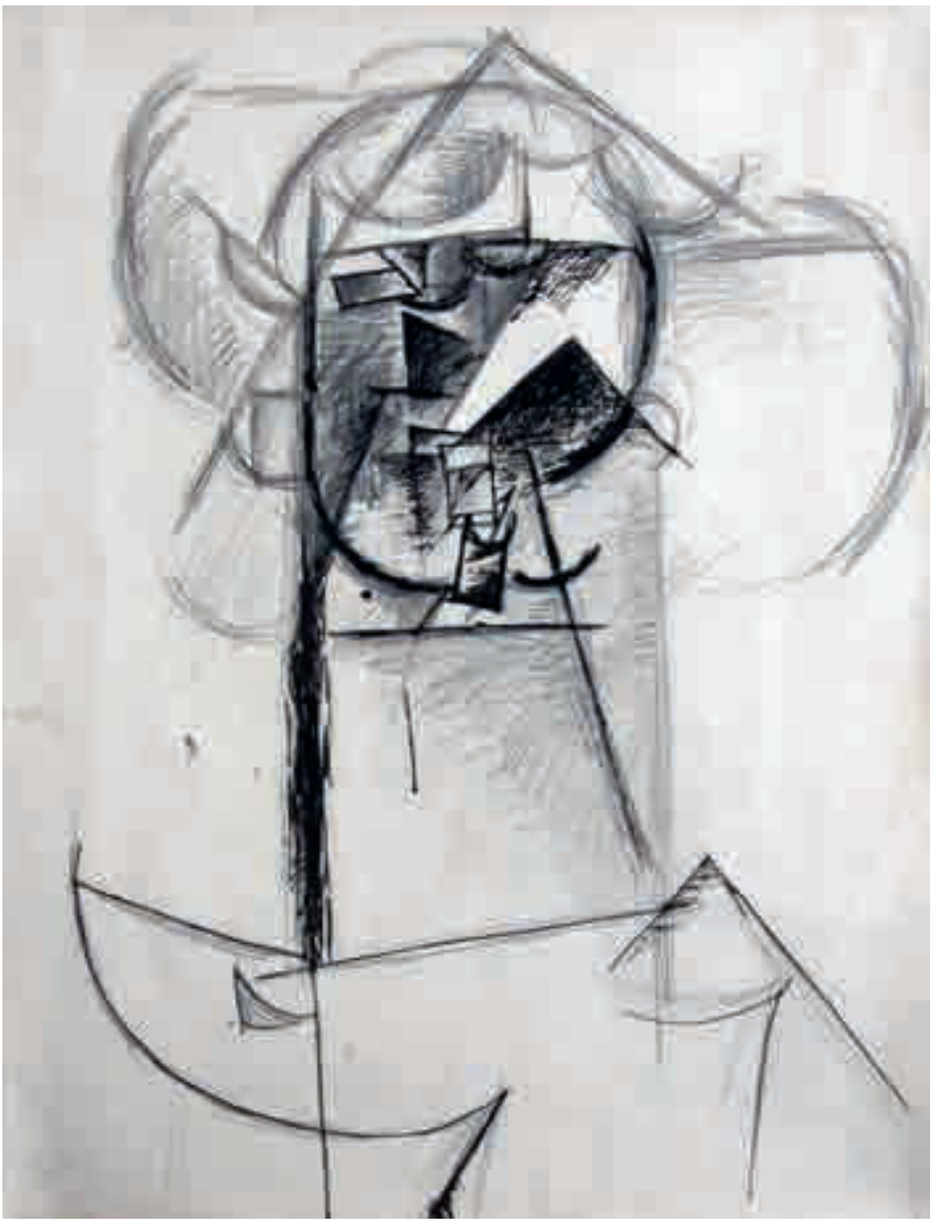


3 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, 1919–20
Wool and fur
Collection Tirelli Trappetti
Inv. CHA1

4 Pablo Picasso
Woman's Head (Fernande), 1909–10
Oil on canvas, 61 × 50 cm
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
Inv. AD01811

5 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, ca. 1926
Crepe satin
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Kunstgewerbemuseum
Inv. 2003, KR 515 a,b

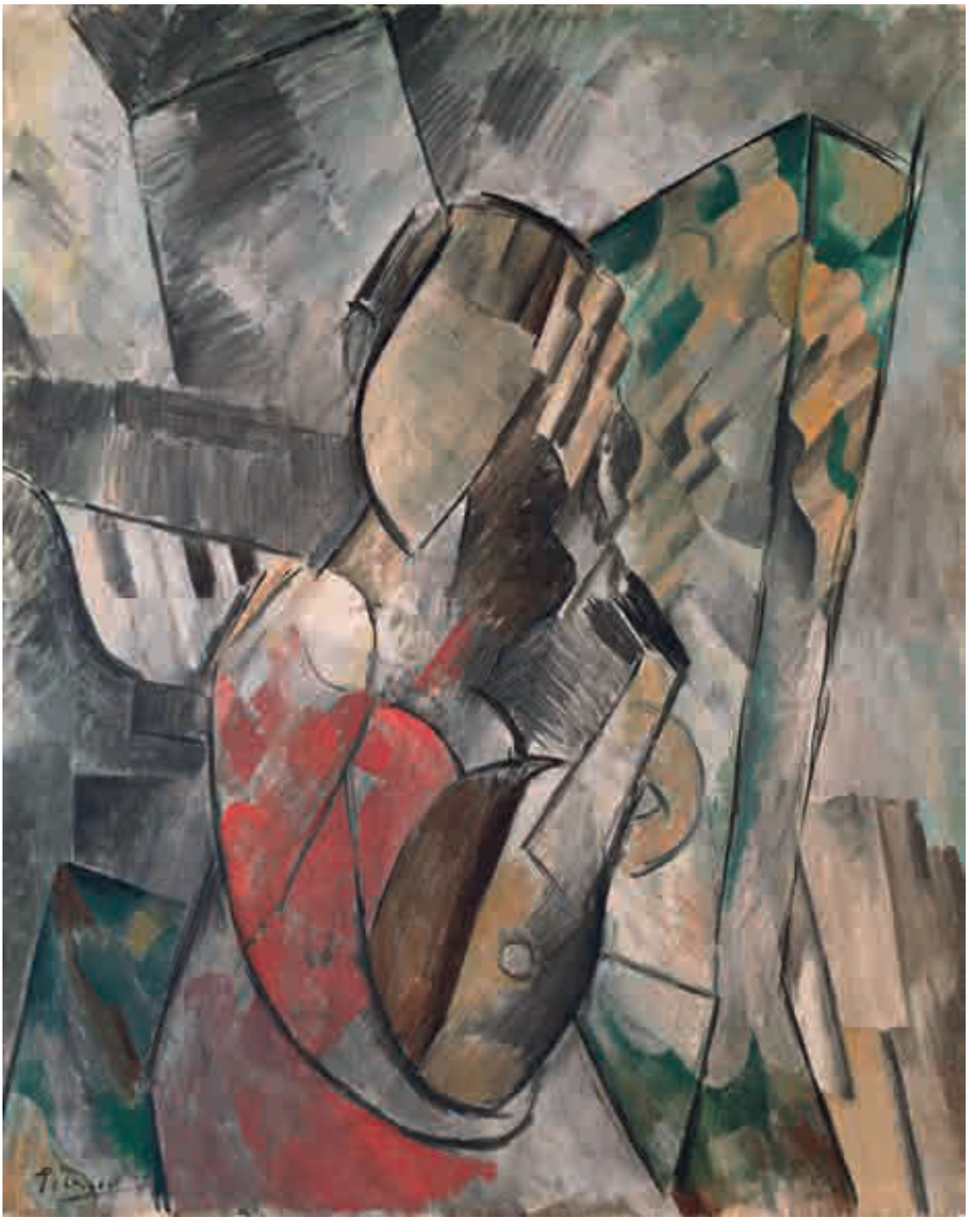
6 Pablo Picasso
Woman Sitting in an Armchair, 1910
Oil on canvas, 73.2 × 60.2 cm
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel,
Collection Beyeler
Inv. 99.3



7 Pablo Picasso
Mademoiselle Léonie (study), 1910
Crayon and Indian ink on paper,
64.3 × 49.5 cm
Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

8 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, 1929–30
Cotton velvet
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AH.1929.3

9 Pablo Picasso
Woman with a Mandolin, 1908
Oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen,
Dusseldorf
Inv. 0215



10 Pablo Picasso
Woman with Guitar, 1913–14
Graphite on paper, 63 × 47.5 cm
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Inv. 57.1488

11 Pablo Picasso
Woman with a Guitar, 1911–14
Oil on canvas, 130.2 × 90.1 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Gift of Dr h. c. Raoul La Roche, 1952
Inv. 2307

12 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, 1918–19
Silk satin and fur
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AH.1918.1

13 Pablo Picasso
Head of a Man, 1913
Oil on canvas, 65 × 46 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
Inv. 707 (1977.31)

14 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, 1926
Velvet and silk
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.PE.1926.5

15 Pablo Picasso
Head of a Man, 1912
Oil on canvas, 61 × 38 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris,
Bequest of Dr Maurice Girardin, 1953
Inv. AMVP 1124

16 Gabrielle Chanel
Evening dress, 1925–26
Chiffon
Collection Martin Kamer, Switzerland

17 Georges Braque
Woman with a Mandolin, 1910
Oil on canvas, 80.5 × 54 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
Inv. 478 (1976.24)

18 Pablo Picasso
Man with Clarinet, 1911–12
Oil on canvas, 106 × 69 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
Inv. 710 (1982.35)

19 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1924–25
Silk chiffon, silk crepe, and jet beads
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AH.1924.1

20 Gabrielle Chanel
Day outfit, 1928–30
Silk, leather, metal, and glass
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1928-1930.5

21 Pablo Picasso
Study for the Head of Nude with Drapery, 1907
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 31 × 24.5 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
Inv. 705 (1974.45)

22 Gabrielle Chanel
Evening dress, 1925
Silk crepe, lace, glass beads, and spangles
Kunstmuseum Den Haag, The Hague
Inv. KOS-1991-005

23 Pablo Picasso
Still Life with Violin (Ma Jolie), 1912
Oil on canvas, 99.5 × 80.5 cm
Colección Abelló

24 Gabrielle Chanel
Clutch, 1928
Silk crepe and chrome steel
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. ACC.HC.INC.1928.2

25 Pablo Picasso
Woman in a Corset Reading a Book, 1914–17
Oil on canvas, 91.5 × 69.8 cm
Triton Collection Foundation

26 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, ca. 1920
Silk
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1920.1

27 Juan Gris
Seated Woman, 1917
Oil on panel, 116 × 73 cm
Colección Carmen Thyssen
Inv. CTB.1986.23

28 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1928–30
Silk crepe
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1928-1930.4

29 Pablo Picasso
Woman in an Armchair, 1917
Oil on canvas, 92 × 64 cm
Museu Picasso, Barcelona, Gift of the artist, 1970
Inv. MPB 110.007

30 Gabrielle Chanel
Evening dress, 1927–28
Velvet
Collection Martin Kamer, Switzerland

31 Pablo Picasso
Musical Instruments on a Pedestal Table, 1914
Oil and sand on canvas, 128.5 × 88 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
Inv. PB-YSL. PE.0003

32 Gabrielle Chanel
Floral dress, 1922–24
Chiffon and rhinestones
Collection Tirelli Trappetti
Inv. CHA4

33 Pablo Picasso
Still Life in a Landscape, 1915
Oil on canvas, 62.2 × 75.6 cm
Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas,
Algur H. Meadows Collection
Inv. MM.69.26

34 Pablo Picasso
Violin and Newspaper on a Green Tapestry, 1921
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92 cm
Collection David et Ezra Nahmad


JOUR

35 Gabrielle Chanel
Day dress, 1920
Crêpe de chine
Modemuseum Hasselt
Inv. 2011.0047

36 Pablo Picasso
Still Life with Pigeon, 1919
Oil on canvas, 46.3 × 55.2 cm
Colección Pérez Simón,
Mexico

37 Madame D'Ora
Portrait of Gabrielle Chanel
Print, 14.1 × 9 cm
Musée national Picasso-Paris, Gift of the Succession Picasso, 1992
Inv. APPH15162

38 Pablo Picasso
Guitar on a Red Tapestry, 1922
Oil on canvas, 81 × 116 cm
Collection David et Ezra Nahmad

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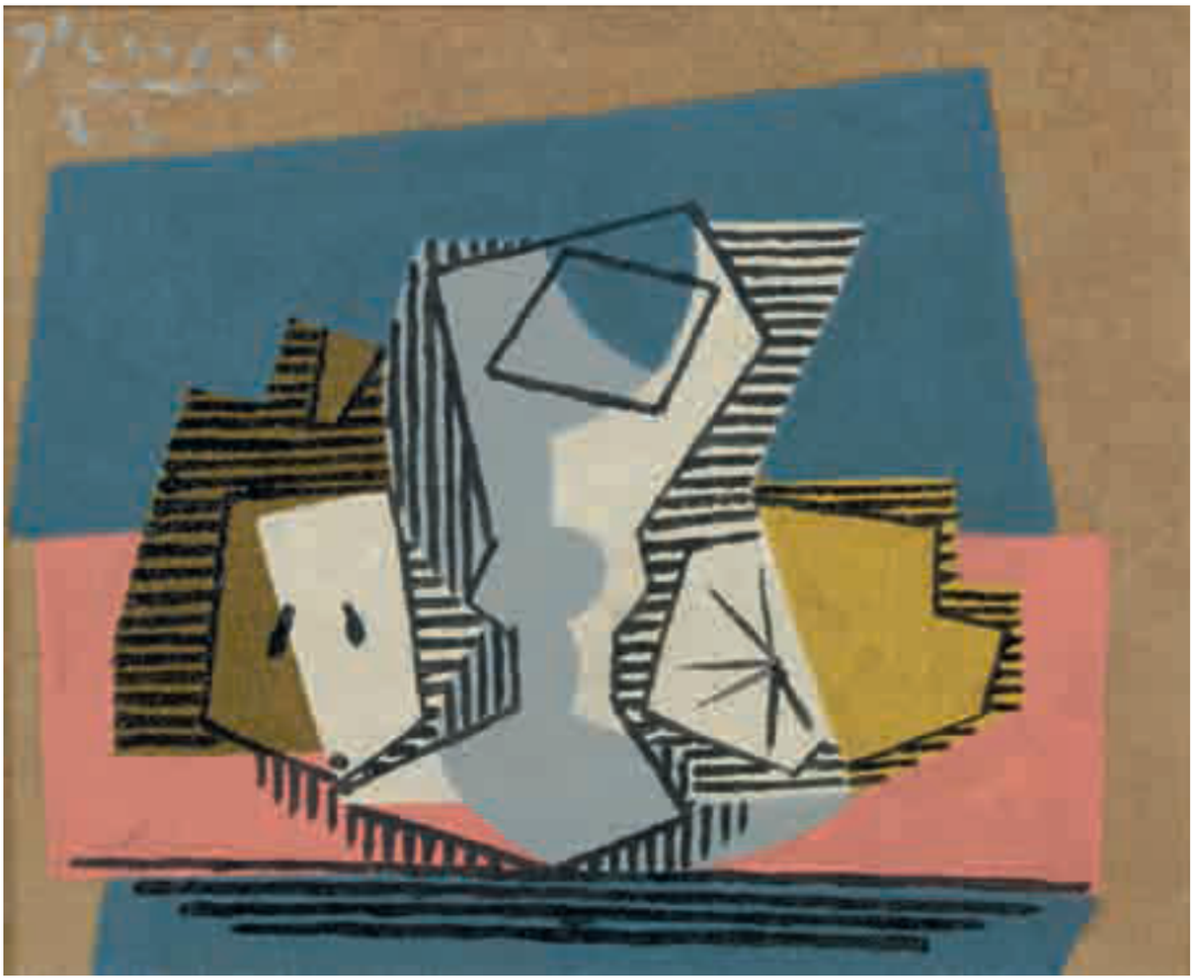
39 Gabrielle Chanel
Evening dress, 1928
Silk satin and rhinestone mesh
Collection Tirelli Trappetti
Inv. CHA11

Page 93

40 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1927–28
Silk crepe, silk muslin, and glass beads
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AH.1927.1

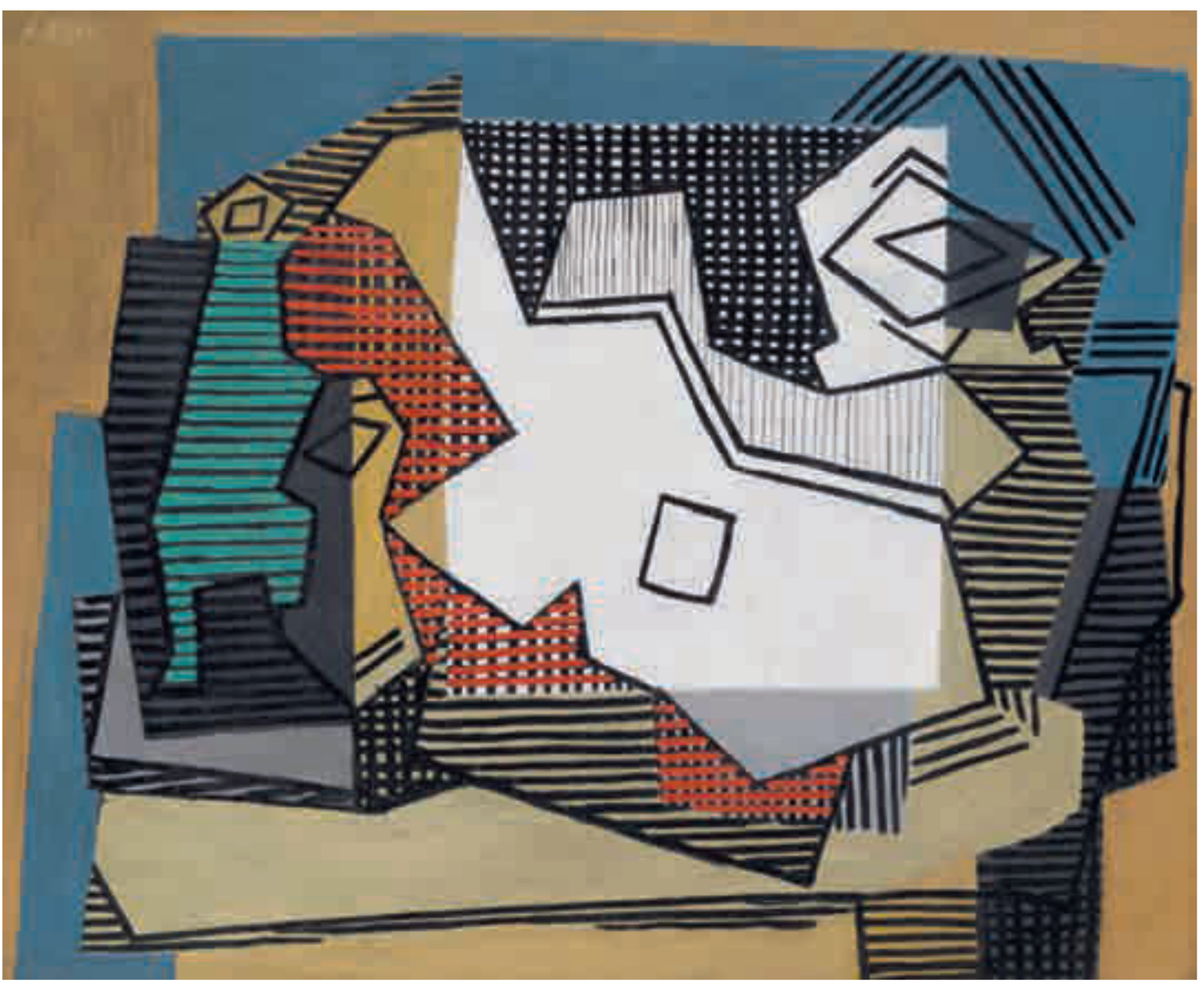
41 Gabrielle Chanel
Evening dress, ca. 1925
Chiffon and beading
Collection Martin Kamer, Switzerland

42 Pablo Picasso
Guitar, Compote Dish and Grapes, 1924
Oil on canvas, 98.5 × 132 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, former loan from P. A. Regnault
Inv. A 6437



43 Pablo Picasso
Pear, Cup and Lemon, 1922
Oil on canvas, 22 × 28 cm
Colección de Arte Fundación
María José Jove

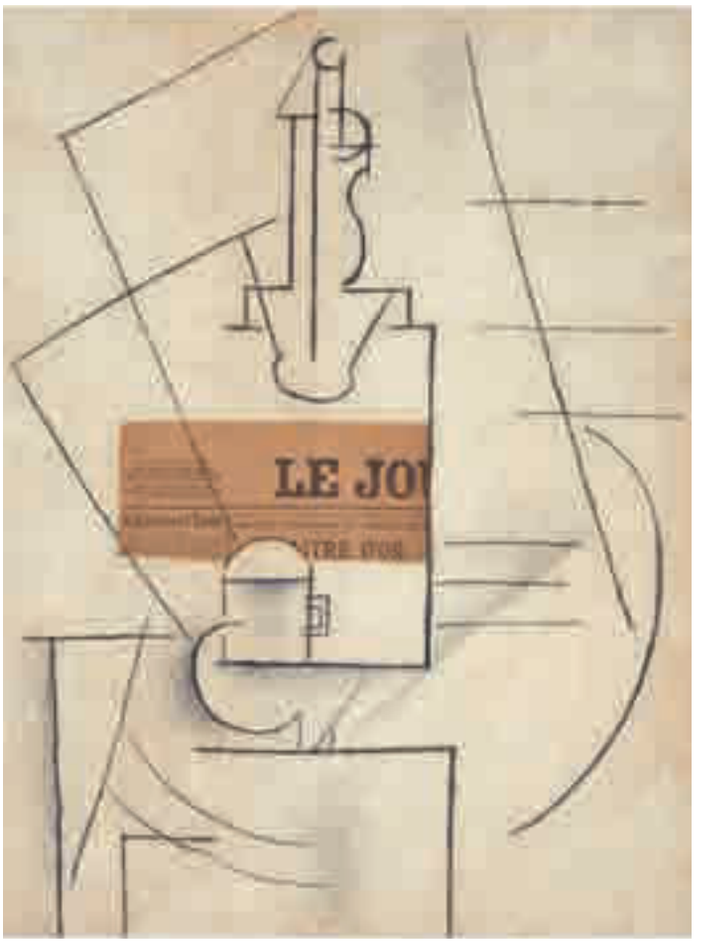
44 Pablo Picasso
Still Life, 1922
Oil on canvas, 81.6 × 100.3 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago,
Ada Turnbull Hertle Endowment
Inv. 1953.28



45 Pablo Picasso
Packet of Tobacco and Cup, 1922
Oil on canvas, 33.5 × 41.5 cm
Colección Abanca

46 Pablo Picasso
Still Life, 1922
Oil on canvas, 73 × 92 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Gift of M. Raoul La Roche, 1953
Inv. AM 3166 P

47 Gabrielle Chanel
CHANEL N°5 perfume bottle, 1921
Glass, printed paper, and wax, 6.6 × 4.7 × 1.5 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. C.1.642



48 Pablo Picasso
Bottle on a Table, 1912
Charcoal and newspaper on paper, 62 × 47.5 cm
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Beyeler Collection
Inv. 73.4

49 Pablo Picasso
Bottle, Cup and Newspaper, 1912–13
Charcoal, pencil, and newspaper on paper, 63 × 47 cm
Museum Folkwang, Essen
Inv. C 3/61

TRÈS CHANEL: OLGA PICASSO AND HER FASHIONABLE WARDROBE

Birgit Haase and Maria Spitz

Two elegantly dressed couples stand in the bright sunlight at an intersection in Paris's first *arrondissement*, not far from the Théâtre du Châtelet [fig. 27] where the fairly controversial *Parade* – an avant-garde production by the famous Ballets Russes – premiered on 18 May 1917.[1] The four stylish people captured on plate by an unknown photographer, very probably on the day of that first performance, had only met recently in Rome during preparations for the ballet. Jean Cocteau, who wrote the libretto, had persuaded Pablo Picasso to design the set, costumes, and stage curtains. In February, the two men had travelled together to the Italian capital, where Serge Diaghilev's company had set up its winter residence in the Hotel de Russie. There the conductor, Ernest Ansermet, witnessed Picasso fall 'in love with one of our ballerinas, who was staying at the same hotel as me and, doubtless used to more biddable women, found himself – I suspect for the first time – up against stiff resistance, which only yielded once it became clear that he was indeed truly in love and that his love would lead to marriage'.[2] In mid-March, Picasso sent his friend the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, who was in Paris at the time, 'the verses the ballet dancers have written for me', which included the words 'we are waiting for Picasso / to propose to Khokhlova'.[3] This was practically official confirmation of the beginning of his liaison with the dancer Olga Khokhlova, who was ten years his junior.[4]

fig. 26

Olga Picasso in Chanel dress at Villa Les Sables, Juan-les-Pins, 1920
Gelatin silver print, 11.9 × 7.6 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris
Inv. APPH6477

1 Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel was also one of the guests at the premiere; see Madsen 1990b, p. 90.
2 Cited in Palau i Fabre 1999, p. 486.
3 Cited in Mössinger, Ritter and Drechsel 2002, p. 135.
4 Olga Stepanovna Khokhlova was born on 17 June 1891 in Nischyn (now Ukraine) and died on 11 February 1955 in Cannes.

fig. 27

Olga Khokhlova, Pablo Picasso, Maria Chabelska and Jean Cocteau on the day of the premiere of *Parade*, Paris, 18 May 1917
Gelatin silver negative on cellulose nitrate support, 11.5 × 6.9 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, Madrid

The daughter of Lydia Khokhlova (née Vinchenko) and Stepan Khokhlov, colonel in the Russian Imperial Army, Olga had grown up with three brothers and a sister in St Petersburg, where she had received a traditional upper-bourgeois education and instruction in a wide range of subjects including classical dance.[5] In 1911, at the age of twenty-one, she had passed the difficult audition for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and had been touring Europe and the United States with the company ever since, although this did not meet with the wholehearted approval of her conservative family. In 1917, at the peak of her career as a ballet dancer, Olga met Pablo, who was probably as drawn to her upbringing as he was to her attractive appearance.[6] She was a beautiful, elegant young woman with regular features, long auburn hair, green eyes, and the lithe and graceful figure of a dancer.[7] Her fashion sense is apparent from the earliest photographs, including the one shown here: like her fellow ballet dancer Maria Chabelska, who appears standing next to an elegant Jean Cocteau, Olga, beside a well-dressed Picasso, is decked out in the fashion of the day. Her dark-coloured outfit of softly falling fabric consists of a thigh-length bodice with a light-toned sailor collar and wide belt, and a skirt reaching slightly above the ankle, apparently with side pockets. The ensemble and accompanying accessories – a wide-brimmed hat and bow-trimmed high heels – conjure up the illustration of an early Chanel outfit featured in the July 1916 issue of the fashion magazine *Les Élégances Parisiennes* [fig. 28].

5 For more on the origins and education of Olga, see, among others, Richardson 2007; Godefroy 2010; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017.
6 See Gilot and Lake 1989, p. 148; Larralde and Casenave 1995, p. 47; Marina Picasso 2001, p. 53; Mössinger, Ritter and Drechsel 2002, p. 136.
7 See among others, Baldassari 1998; Richardson 2007, p. 6; Richardson 2014, p. 84.

fig. 28

Jersey fabric outfit models by Gabrielle Chanel, published in *Les Élégances Parisiennes*, July 1916
Plate XI

At that point, Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel was running successful fashion houses in Paris, Deauville, and Biarritz, where she sold exquisite modern and casual creations of an apparent simplicity in keeping with her much-cited phrase, 'luxury is not the opposite of poverty, it is the opposite of vulgarity'.[8] The soft, stretch knit and jersey fabrics for which she had a particular penchant offered a practicality, versatility, and comfort that matched the demands of the 'new woman' setting post-World War I trends, which the couturiere had herself come to embody years earlier.[9]

It is no longer possible to ascertain whether Olga's outfit in the 1917 photograph was designed by Chanel; but it is most certainly in line with the designer's style, and there is evidence that, by 1920 at the latest, Picasso's wife had become a regular customer of the couturiere [fig. 26].[10] Many years later, the composer Igor Stravinsky recalled Olga, whom he met in Rome in 1917, as follows: 'she had many new robes from Chanel to show, besides Picasso, and suddenly the great painter was to be seen at every cocktail party, theater, and dinner'.[11] His words appear to chime with the reproach, often repeated by some of Picasso's later biographers in particular, that the painter's relationship with Olga had led him away from the bohemian art world towards an increasingly sophisticated lifestyle. Be that as it may, there is no question that, even before he met Olga, Pablo liked to dress elegantly of his own accord,[12] and already had access to high-society circles through the agency of his patron, Eugenia Errázuriz. He was proud of his conquest of the beautiful, well-bred Olga,[13] whom he introduced to his mother in Barcelona in July 1917. This was where he bought his bride the black muslin dress with embroidered flowers of different coloured silk and metal threads that she wears in the famous portrait *Olga in an Armchair*, painted a little later in Paris.[14] Olga is said to have embroidered the floral cover on the upholstered armchair from a design by Picasso,[15] further proof that she had been brought up as the daughter of a respectable household, whose varied

8 'Le luxe, ce n'est pas le contraire de la pauvreté', cited here from '10 citations mythiques de Coco Chanel', *Vogue Paris*, 19 August 2021; https://www.vogue.fr/mode/inspirations/diaporama/citation-mode-coco-chanel-gabrielle-mode-icone/44259 (last accessed 21 March 2022). See Garnier 1987, p. 27.

9 See illustrations like those in Charles-Roux 1979, p. 106; Morand 2009, p. 40; Fashion Manifesto 2020, p. 22. For more on Chanel as the personification of a unique, contemporary style, see also Madsen 1990b, p. 115; Mackrell 1992, p. 9; Koda and Bolton 2005, pp. 11, 20, 23ff; Chaney 2011, pp. 234ff; Haye 2011, p. 26; Fashion Manifesto 2020, pp. 7 and 108.

10 This can be verified from the receipts held by the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, a list of which was supplied to the authors. Whether Olga had already bought from Chanel previously or perhaps received gifts from the successful designer – who is known to have occasionally dressed women she admired for free – remains hypothetical. See also Richardson 2007, p. 112; Chaney 2011, fig. 21; Haye 2013, p. 25. Patrimoine de Chanel holds a rare early Chanel loose blouse with sailor collar made from silk jersey which bears a striking resemblance to the design referred to here (see Fashion Manifesto 2020, p. 29, no. 1).

11 Stravinsky and Craft 1959, p. 117.

12 See Larralde and Casenave 1995, p. 48; Widmaier Picasso 2004, p. 23; Richardson 2007, p. 51; Pierotti 2018, p. 56.

13 See Richardson 2007, pp. 59 and 133; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 278.

14 See Fitzgerald 1996; Richardson 2007, p. 59; Godefroy 2016, p. 44. Today the dress can be found in the Musée national Picasso-Paris (inv. MP1985-1); we are thankful to Émilia Philippot for this information.

15 See Richardson 2007, p. 76; illustrated in Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 286.

fig. 29

Pablo and Olga Picasso at
Villa La Mimoseraie, 1918
Gelatin silver print, 11.7 × 6.8 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard
Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, Madrid

accomplishments would have included needlework as well as playing musical instruments and housekeeping. Some of her moral and material standards can also be traced to her origins: she is depicted as a ladylike young woman with exquisite, expensive tastes on the one hand, and as bourgeois, upright, reserved, and prosaic on the other.[16] These character traits are evoked in Diaghilev's famous warning to Picasso in Rome in 1917: 'a respectable Russian woman would not sacrifice her virginity unless assured of marriage. *"Une russe on l'épouse"*'.[17] This failed to scare off the painter, who had in any case resolved to form a family with Olga. The marriage to the admired artist must have seemed equally appealing to the ballerina after she had been rendered homeless and stateless by Russia's October Revolution, and was suffering from an ongoing leg injury that had (provisionally) brought her dancing career to an end in April 1918.[18]

On 12 July 1918, Picasso and Olga got married in Paris, initially in a civil ceremony and subsequently, at the bride's request, in an orthodox marriage service at the Russian cathedral of Saint Alexandre-Nevsky. Cocteau, who was one of Picasso's witnesses, reported briefly on the religious event in a letter to his mother written that same day: 'I had to hold a crown of gold over Olga's head; it made us all look as if we were performing in *Boris Godunov*. The ceremony was beautiful, a proper wedding with mysterious rituals and chanting. Luncheon afterwards at the Meurice, Misia in sky blue, Olga in white satin, tricot, and tulle – very Biarritz'.[19] It has been suggested in various publications that Chanel – who had met Picasso, Cocteau, and Misia Godebska at a dinner in the home of actress Cécile Sorel in Paris in May 1917 – also attended Picasso's wedding ceremony.[20] There is no direct proof that the

16 See, among others, Daix 1993, pp. 182 and 184; Marina Picasso 2001, p. 54; Mössinger, Ritter and Drechsel 2002, p. 136; Richardson 2007, pp. 690, 188, 235; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 15. Olga emerges as multifaceted and elusive in Picasso's works. This can partly be attributed to the artist's perceptive and visual skills in depicting different layers of personality; it also evokes the former ballerina's ability to slip into different roles (see Palau i Fabre 1999, pp. 197 and 217; Richardson 2007, p. 6).

17 Cited, among others, in Widmaier Picasso 2004, p. 45; Richardson 2007, p. 5; Richardson 2014, p. 84; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 275.

18 That Olga married Picasso out of love rather than as a calculated decision is confirmed by a letter she wrote on 25 March 1918 in which she expresses both her love for him and her fears about their union. (Picasso's mother had already warned the young Russian about her son's egocentric character in Barcelona in the summer of 1917.) See Richardson 2007, p. 52; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 277.

19 Cited in Charles-Roux 1979, p. 176; see Richardson 2007, p. 86; Godefroy 2016, p. 47.

20 This is suggested (without further evidence) in Charles-Roux 1990, p. 278, and Chaney 2011, p. 224. Neither Pablo's nor Olga's families were present at this wartime wedding.

fig. 30

Pablo Picasso
Olga in an Armchair, 1918
Pencil on paper, 36 × 26 cm
Private collection

bride's dress was designed by her, but Cocteau's description and a series of later photographs of Olga in her wedding gown,[21] which closely resembles the Chanel style, would seem to suggest this [fig. 29]. The pictures were taken at Eugenia Errázuriz's exclusive Villa Mimoseraie in Biarritz, where the newly-weds went for their honeymoon two weeks after their marriage, at the invitation of Picasso's mother figure.[22] They show Olga, still using a cane because of her leg injury, in a light calf-length dress of soft, flowing material, which might be silk jersey. It has a square neckline, extra-long sleeves buttoned at the wrist, marked waist, and decorative trim on the bodice and skirt. A white silk toque and veil, white shoes and stockings, and a long necklace often seen in other pictures of Olga complete the outfit. It appears to be the same dress and necklace featured in a pencil drawing by Picasso from about the same time that has been said to portray the wife of art dealer Paul Rosenberg [fig. 30],[23] a questionable attribution precisely because of these clothes. It seems unlikely that Marguerite Rosenberg would have borrowed Olga Picasso's bridal dress for a portrait by the artist whom her husband would then represent. Even if Madame Rosenberg had the same gown, she would hardly have combined it with a necklace like Olga's, thereby – except for the headdress – imitating her wedding attire. It seems much more likely that the drawing in question is actually a portrait of Olga, as the facial features and the typical pinned-up hairstyle, parted in the middle, would indeed seem to attest.

It was in Biarritz that the Picassos and the Rosenbergs first met and laid the foundations for their future business relations. Thanks to the art dealer's intervention, on their return to Paris, Olga and Pablo

21 See the photographs mentioned in Richardson 2007, pp. 84 and 87; Godefroy 2016, p. 47; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 95.

22 In Biarritz, Chanel had been running a highly successful *maison de couture* since 1915. Her designs, both of a more opulent and a more casual kind of elegance were the perfect fit for the glamorous Basque coastal resort and found a discerning cosmopolitan clientele during the war, comprising wealthy French people, exiled White Russians, and customers who came across the nearby border with neutral Spain, including the Spanish Queen Victoria Eugenia.

23 Palau i Fabre 1999, p. 106, no. 291.

fig. 31

Olga Picasso at Villa La Mimoseraie with studies from the series *Woman in an Armchair*, 1918
Gelatin silver print, 11.1 × 6.8 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, Madrid

moved into a spacious apartment at 23, Rue La Boétie, in the chic eighth *arrondissement* near Rosenberg's gallery and within walking distance from Chanel's *maison de couture* at 31, Rue Cambon. The artist set up his workshop in the front part of the flat, while the rear was mainly given over to the couple's private and social life. Olga threw herself into her new role as the lady of the house: she paid careful attention to Picasso's business matters and the hiring of staff; she welcomed and entertained visitors at the apartment, which was primarily furnished to her taste. A few years later in 1932, photographers Cecil Beaton and Brassaï visited Picasso in Rue La Boétie. Both described the couple's home as bourgeois and conventionally decorated at first sight, but agreed that it also contained certain less orthodox elements.[24] Pictures of Olga in her domestic environment – where she is always elegantly dressed – would appear to support this impression. Her taste for fur, repeatedly confirmed by her contemporaries, is also evident [cat. 71, 72]. In a letter of 2 November 1919, the British art historian Clive Bell, who knew the Picassos, wrote that 'Olga loved furs and took advantage of the cold to run hither and thither in her fine new furs'.[25] In this respect, further close parallels are apparent with Chanel's fashion designs: in the winter of 1917–18, the couturiere's fur-trimmed jersey outfits proved a huge hit,[26] and fur trim was added time and again to her later collections [cat. 73]. It is very likely that Olga owned Chanel designs of this kind.

Bell also accompanied Picasso on a shopping tour in London, where he rigged the artist out, in his own words, as a perfect gentleman.[27] The reason for the Picassos' visit to London between May and July 1919, where together they took an active part in the city's social life, was Pablo's work for the set and costumes of *Le Tricorne* (The Three-Cornered Hat), the latest production by Diaghilev's Ballets

24 See Beaton 1961, pp. 335ff, who also refers to his first meeting with Picasso: 'It somewhat surprised me to see him in the most conventional blue suits, with a white shirt'; see Brassaï 2002, p. 6. In September 1925, Picasso rented the floor above the couple's apartment, to which he moved his workshop.
25 Cited in Richardson 2007, p. 76, n. 44, developed on p. 517. See further pictures of Olga wearing fur-trimmed clothes in Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, pp. 23, 27, 43, 56, 63, 116ff.
26 See Madsen 1990b, p. 90; see also Haye 2011, p. 27.
27 '[I] rigged him out as a perfect English gentleman, so far, at any rate, that an English gentleman is a matter of shoes, hats and ties'; in a letter from Clive Bell, 4 August 1919, cited here as in Richardson 2007, p. 132, n. 103.

fig. 32

Vogue (USA), February 1917, p. 34
Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, Modebild Collection

Russes. Errázuriz, who was then living in London, had sent the artist a tailor-made suit and check paletot before leaving Paris.[28] It has been said that this is the coat Olga is wearing in a photograph depicting the couple in Pablo's London workshop in the summer of 1919 [cat. 79].[29] But the black-and-white check ensemble must in fact have been a creation by Chanel, which had already been in Olga's possession for at least a year.[30] Proof of this is a photo taken during their honeymoon in Biarritz, where Madame Picasso is wearing a pleated check skirt with a white blouse and the familiar long necklace [fig. 31]. Authenticated by Patrimoine de Chanel, the skirt's origin is confirmed by a photographic report in the American edition of *Vogue* of February 1917 [fig. 32], which described the suit as 'smart and trim', going on to say: 'Checked with black, white, and grey, this Chanel jersey cloth suit hangs in almost straight lines, though the skirt is kilted and flares prettily with the wearer's movements. The coat with patch pockets and an easy waistband is also of grey [jersey]'.[31] Since it was not unusual that variations be introduced into individual garments made from *haute couture* designs, Olga may well be wearing one of these versions: an outfit with the skirt and jacket made from the same material.

In London, Olga met up with former fellow dancers from the Ballets Russes, which for her had provided a kind of substitute family, especially after the enforced separation from her parents and siblings as a result of the political situation. She also resumed her dancing classes with Diaghilev ballet master Enrico Cecchetti. Although, to her regret, she later gave up dancing, she nevertheless remained a ballerina at heart all her life, continued to pose as a ballet dancer in private photos, and never travelled anywhere without a tutu in her luggage.[32]

Back in Paris, the Picassos plunged headlong into the glittering and sophisticated social scene of the legendary Roaring Twenties: it was the start of what an old friend of Picasso's, the painter and poet Max Jacob, described as his 'Duchess period', which lasted for years, when the painter enjoyed attending wild parties where avant-garde artists mixed with high society.[33] His elegant wife Olga was always by his side. In a photograph from 1920, she poses in a tulle evening dress with silver embroidery and thin shoulder straps; tulle cascades from both sides of the low belt at the hip, flowing over the calf-length skirt [fig. 33]. The April 1920 edition of *Harper's Bazaar* features an illustration of the same dress from

28 See Richardson 2007, p. 117.
29 See Pierotti 2018, p. 112, n. 115.
30 Olga appears to have worn her Chanel outfits for a long time, suggesting how much she treasured them.
31 *Vogue* (USA), February 1917. In its archives, Patrimoine de Chanel has other documents showing Olga in the same clothes and a coloured illustration of the same outfit with a separate skirt.
32 See Richardson 2007, pp. 117 and 163; Godefroy 2010; Richardson 2014, pp. 87 and 129ff; Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 276.
33 See, among others, Gilot and Lake 1989, pp. 148–49; Widmaier Picasso 2003, p. 52; Pierotti 2018, p. 54.

fig. 33

Olga Picasso in Chanel dress
at Villa Les Sables, Juan-les-Pins,
summer 1920
Gelatin silver print, 12 × 7.9 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard
Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, Madrid

the import collection of New York retailer Henri W. Bendel, which is described as follows: 'Paris is always delighted with tulle for the adornment of evening frocks, and this season we find it more often than ever in the form of drapery. Chanel uses it in pale gray to make paniers for a gown which she has fashioned of silver-embroidered gray net over gray charmeuse' [fig. 34].[34] It is highly likely that an evening dress in the Kyoto Costume Institute – with thin double straps and a sash-style tulle belt – is also part of this same collection [fig. 35]: made from brown silk tulle with floral embroidery over charmeuse of the same colour, it bears striking similarities in material, trim, and silhouette to Olga's dress.[35]

When the photograph was taken, Olga was already pregnant, and after their son Paulo was born in February 1921 she focused on her new maternal role and domestic family life. Picasso, on the other hand, continued to live the high life surrounded by the Parisian *beau monde*. The Le Bœuf sur le Toit bar, which opened in late 1921, swiftly became the favourite haunt of so-called 'café society', where 'men were expected to wear dinner jackets, [and] women to dress up in Chanel, Lanvin, or Vionnet'.[36] In the Golden Twenties, apart from Picasso, its regulars included Chanel, who was friends with Cocteau and Misia. The well-known artist and the successful couturiere had already struck up a close friendship in the summer of 1921, when he was working on Diaghilev's Spanish-inspired ballet *Cuadro Flamenco, Suite de Danses Andalouses*. The friendship was close indeed, to the extent that he repeatedly stayed at her luxurious flat in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré while his wife and son spent the summer at Fontainebleau.[37]

In 1932, Brassaï was still reporting on the bourgeois lifestyle Picasso had been leading since the 1920s: 'As an artist who had "arrived", he had all the attributes, all the external signs: a Hispano-Suiza driven by a chauffeur in livery, suits made by the finest tailors, pedigreed dogs, an upper-middle-class double apartment, a little château in Normandy […], a safe, and a beautiful girlfriend. He wanted for nothing. As lord of the manor, Picasso entertained Count Etienne de Beaumont, Missia [sic] Sert [Godebska], Erik Satie, Manuel de Falla, Arthur Rubinstein, Jean Cocteau – the celebrities of the day, the cream of Parisian culture. He went out a great deal, attended theater and ballet premieres, receptions and exclusive parties, always in the company of his beautiful and elegant wife. He was at the height of his "high society" period'.[38] Not only their friends' descriptions, but also multiple photographs bear witness to the high standard of living enjoyed by the Picassos, who were always dressed to the appropriate level of sophistication required by the different social occasions of which they were part.

34 'Lavish Frocks that Bestow a Conscious Grace. Models from Henri W. Bendel', in *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1920, p. 98.
35 A receipt dated 7 May 1920 held at the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte shows that Olga bought a 'Robe du soir argent' (a silver evening dress) from Chanel. Similar dresses can be found in Patrimoine de Chanel and the Kunstmuseum Den Haag.
36 Richardson 2007, p. 208.
37 See Delay 1983, p. 120; Charles-Roux 1990, pp. 247ff; Zilkowski 1999, p. 143; Richardson 2007, p. 190; Chaney 2011, p. 224.
38 Brassaï 2002, p. 4.

fig. 34

Chanel evening gown (left) in silver embroidered tulle on light grey silk charmeuse, illustration in Harper's Bazaar, April 1920, p. 98

fig. 35

Gabrielle Chanel
Evening dress, ca. 1920
Silk tulle embroidered on silk charmeuse
The Kyoto Costume Institute
Inv. AC3645 80-30-1

Their upper-class family lifestyle is also documented in photographs and private film footage. Unlike in her husband's pictures – where she often comes across as serious, melancholic, and introspective, and later even aggressive and menacing – here Olga appears as a smiling, extroverted, and very photogenic woman, who knew how to face the camera with confidence. She consciously kept up the immaculate appearances of a respectable and respected wife with a harmonious family life – even when this was long since not the case, and Picasso had tired of both her and the *beau monde*.[39] Right into the 1930s, Olga and Pablo continue to appear in the family films as *maîtresse de la maison* and *père de famille* respectively, usually immaculately dressed in the style of the upper bourgeoisie. The recordings clearly indicate that for Olga in particular it was important to appear fashionably and elegantly turned out whatever the occasion, and she often seems to have chosen Chanel's designs for that purpose. Concrete evidence to that effect is available in at least one case: a 9.5mm film probably shot by Picasso in Honfleur in April 1927 shows little Paulo riding on a donkey accompanied by his attentive mother [fig. 36]. Olga is wearing an open, loosely falling coat in soft fabric of a neutral shade, with a lighter front part and a wide shawl collar. The pictorial equivalent can be found in a fashion illustration featuring several designs by Chanel which appeared in the American edition of *Vogue* on 1 November 1926 [fig. 37]. Under the caption 'Tweed is an essential of the smart new wardrobe – Town and country modes both lay claim to tweeds', it has the following to say about the coat in question: 'The white ermine front is the radically new note of this tweed coat for town'. A receipt from the Chanel fashion house held in the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte archive shows that Olga bought a beige tweed and fur coat there in December 1926, which is almost certainly the design she is wearing in the film. Two photo booth strips of Olga with Paulo from around 1928 suggest that years later she still liked wearing the coat.[40]

At the time when these pictures were taken, the Picassos' marriage was increasingly becoming a façade that both partners found they were only able to keep up intermittently, and the former ballerina may well have had to resort to her acting skills to keep up appearances. Finally, in June 1935 Pablo and Olga separated. An acrimonious War of the Roses then ensued and with it a growing and systematic denigration of Picasso's first wife by biographers who were part of the artist's inner circle.[41] The basis for this was provided, in part, by the memoirs of Françoise Gilot, later Picasso's partner, who first met Olga in 1946 and described her as a small, middle-aged red-head with thin lips. 'Her face was freckled and crinkly and her bright, brownish-green eyes darted everywhere as she spoke but never looked at you directly'. Picasso's young lover saw her as 'extremely neurotic', and 'an unhappy creature, incapable of dealing with the situation in which she found herself', adding, 'I have never seen a lonelier person than her'.[42] However, later photographs of Olga continue to show her ladylike demeanour and elegant dress.[43] This impression coincides with Marina Picasso's memories

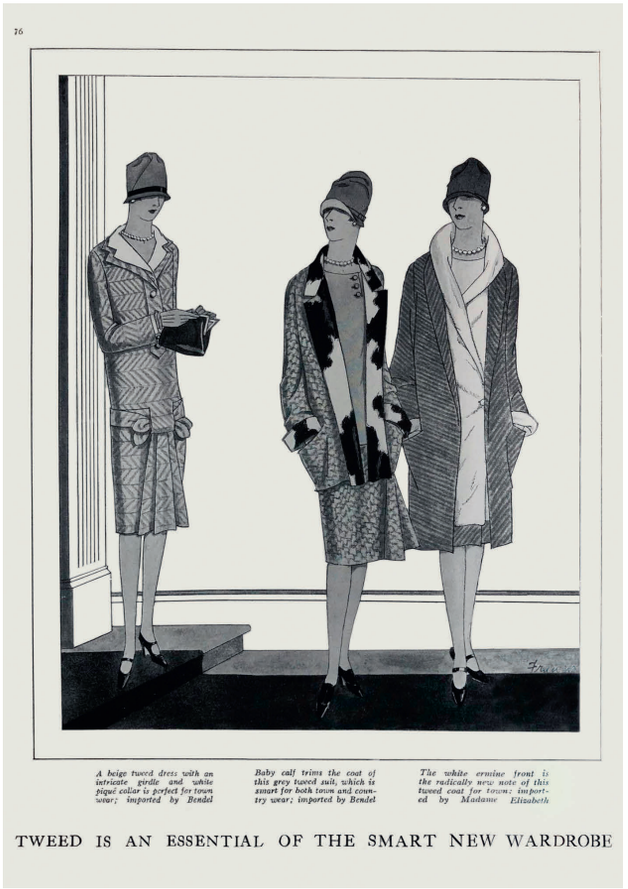
fig. 36

Still from an original film with Olga and Paulo Picasso, Saint-Siméon Farm, Honfleur, April 1927
Black and white film, 9.5 mm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, Madrid

39 See Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, pp. 186–201.
40 Reproduced in Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, pp. 167 and 177.
41 On this, see Fitzgerald 2017.
42 Gilot and Lake 1989, pp. 207ff.
43 See Philippot, Pissarro and Ruiz-Picasso 2017, p. 282. Alice Derain adopts a similar tone when remembering Olga: 'The first time I met her, I mistook her for the maid; she was a very ordinary woman with a face covered in freckles'; cited here from Mössinger, Ritter and Drechsel 2002, p. 132. There is a similar reference in Daix 1993, p. 158.

fig. 37

'Tweed is an essential of the smart wardrobe...' illustration by 'Francis' in *Vogue* (USA), with Chanel coat at right, 1 November 1926, p. 76
Kunstbibliothek Berlin, Modebild Collection



of her stylish grandmother as a truly refined woman with an innate dignity, balanced nature, and sense of elegance,[44] and with the analysis of Olivier Widmaier Picasso, who defines the older Olga as a strong-willed 'honourable woman' and notes that 'she attached no importance to property and retained her status to the outside world as a respectable married woman'.[45] The grandson of Marie-Thérèse Walter, the lover who 'replaced' Picasso's first wife, concludes that 'Olga is a mystery: for herself as a person, but also for what she represents'.[46] A closer examination of the woman who stood by Picasso's side between 1917 and 1935 leaves many enigmas and contradictions unresolved – both with regard to her personality and her image in Picasso's work. A striking constant throughout, however, is her fashionable elegance, and this is closely linked to the designs of Chanel.

44 See Marina Picasso 2001, pp. 50–54.
45 Widmaier Picasso 2003, p. 64.
46 Ibid., p. 47.

OLGA PICASSO

Pablo Picasso, *Olga with Garland of Flowers*, 1920 [cat. 62]

50 Pablo Picasso
Self-Portrait, ca. 1918–20
Pencil on paper, 32.4 × 22 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

51 Pablo Picasso
Head of a Woman (Olga), 1917
Oil on canvas, 22 × 16 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

52 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1922–24
Silk, lace, wire, and silk brocade
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1922-1924.2

53 Pablo Picasso
Olga Picasso, Seated, 1918
Pencil on paper, 36.5 × 27.5 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

54 Pablo Picasso
Olga Seated, 1920
Pencil and charcoal on paper, 50.6 × 36.7 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

55 Pablo Picasso
Pensive Olga, 1920
Pencil and charcoal on paper,
62 × 48.1 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

56 Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Olga, 1920
Pencil and charcoal on paper,
30.9 × 24.3 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

57 Pablo Picasso
Screen, recto, ca. 1922
Oil on canvas, 151 × 70 cm each panel
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

58 Olga Picasso in the living room of the apartment
at 23, Rue La Boétie, Paris, ca. 1923–24
Behind her, s*creen* (recto) painted by Picasso, ca. 1922
Gelatin silver negative on cellulose nitrate support, 6.9 × 12.1 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

59 Pablo Picasso
Screen, verso, ca. 1915–16
Oil on canvas, 151 × 70 cm each panel
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

60 Olga Picasso reading in the living room
at 23, Rue La Boétie, Paris, 1920
Behind her, *screen* (verso)
painted by Picasso, ca. 1915–16
Gelatin silver print, 12.3 × 7.5 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

61 Gabrielle Chanel
Day dress, ca. 1925–26
Silk crepe
Stiftung August Ohm, Hamburg

62 Pablo Picasso
Olga with Garland of Flowers, 1920
Charcoal on paper, 61 × 49 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris, Gift of Jacqueline Picasso
Inv. MP1990-68

63 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1918–20
Silk crepe and jet beads
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1918-1920.1

64 Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Olga Khokhlova, 1917
Oil on canvas, 120 × 75 cm
Fondation Marie Anne
Poniatowski Krugier

65 Pablo Picasso
Woman with Hat Seated in an Armchair, 1920
Wax crayon on paper, 42.5 × 27 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

66 Pablo Picasso
Woman in a White Hat, 1921
Oil on canvas, 118 × 91 cm
Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris
Inv. 1963-72

67 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, 1920–25
Wool and silk
Collection Tirelli Trappetti

68 Pablo Picasso
Woman Reading, 1920
Oil on canvas, 100 × 81.2 cm
Musée de Grenoble, Gift of the artist, 1921
Inv. MG. 2132

69 Gabrielle Chanel
Cape, 1926
Silk and feathers
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.PE.1926.1

70 Pablo Picasso
Olga Picasso, 1918
Pencil and charcoal on paper, 27 × 19.5 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

71 Pablo Picasso
Olga Seated, 1923
Bistre and oil on canvas, 27 × 22 cm
Museo Picasso Málaga,
Gift of Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
Inv. MPM2.135

72 Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Olga with Fur Collar, 1922–23
Oil on canvas, 73 × 60 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

73 Gabrielle Chanel
Day dress, ca. 1922
Silk, crêpe de chine, and ermine fur
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Kunstgewerbemuseum
Inv. W-1976,52 a,b

74 Pablo Picasso
Harlequin with a Mirror, 1923
Oil on canvas, 100 × 81 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,
Madrid
Inv. 709 (1979.87)

75 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1917–19
Silk crepe, silk tulle,
and jet beads
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1917-1919.1

76 Pablo Picasso
Harlequin (Léonide Massine), 1917
Oil on canvas, 117 × 90 cm
Museu Picasso, Barcelona,
Gift of the artist, 1919
Inv. MPB 10.941

77 Gabrielle Chanel
Coat, 1922–24
Leather
Collection Tirelli Trappetti
Inv. CHA2

78 Pablo Picasso
Untitled / Harlequin and Pulcinella, 1924
Tempera on paper, 23.7 × 29.5 cm
Colecciones Fundación MAPFRE

79 Pablo and Olga in the Covent Garden studios, 1919
Gelatin silver print, 7.4 × 9.8 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris, Gift of the Succession Picasso, 1992, Pablo Picasso personal archive
Inv. APPH4776

80 Gabrielle Chanel
Ensemble, 1926–28
Crêpe de chine
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.PE.1926-1928.1


à Eginia
Jean Cocteau
1918

JEAN COCTEAU'S *ANTIGONE*

Dominique Marny

'I WAS BORN TO SHARE LOVE, NOT HATE'

When Jean Cocteau decided to produce 'his own' Antigone *at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, he knew exactly whom to turn to: Picasso for the set and Chanel for the costumes.*

> 'Maybe my experience is a means of keeping the old masterpieces alive'[1]

In the spring of 1922, Jean Cocteau travelled to Le Lavandou in the department of Var with the young writer Raymond Radiguet. The two men stayed on the shores of the Mediterranean until the autumn, united by an intense literary camaraderie. Radiguet began work on his novel *Le Bal du comte d'Orgel* (Count d'Orgel's Ball) while Cocteau wrote *Le Grand Écart* (The Grand Écart) and *Thomas l'Imposteur* (Thomas the Impostor), as well as a magnificent collection of poems, *Plain-Chant*. But that was not all. The landscape and the omnipresent sea rekindled in Cocteau an appreciation of antique culture and more particularly of Sophocles – all the more so since a friend had given him a shepherd's crook he had brought back from a trip to Greece. This gift inspired him to re-read *Antigone* and – why not? – revisit this tragedy created in 441 BC in Athens. On 13 October 1922, Cocteau wrote to his mother from Pramousquier: 'It is a joy to greet Antigone again. She is a person who bears little resemblance to our elegant modern women. And yet she carries elegance to the point of death'.[2] After re-reading the original text, he embarked on a process that would last until the end of his life, that of 'toning up the skin of the myths'. In this he was an innovator, the first of his generation to take this path.

fig. 38

Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Jean Cocteau, 1917
Pencil on paper, 26.3 × 19.4 cm
Collection Orphée et Morgane Dermit

1 Cited in Fialho 2017, chap. 4.
2 Cocteau 1989, p. 209.

fig. 39

Pablo Picasso
Source, 1921
Oil on canvas, 64 × 90 cm
Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Gift of Grace and Philip Sandblom, 1970
Inv. NM 6360

fig. 40

Jean Cocteau
Coco Chanel, ca. 1930
Pencil on paper, 47.7 × 32 cm
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Gift, 2018
Inv. AM 2019-273 (R)

The war and post-war years gave rise to the Cubist, Dada, and Surrealist movements. Refusing to belong to any chapel, Cocteau championed classicism instead. That same 13 October, he asked Arthur Honegger, who was part of the group Les Six, to compose the music for his play, indicating his preference for the use of a single 'nasal instrument' that would produce a rustic, solemn music. Honegger agreed and came up with five sections, the first three scored for oboe and harp, the last two for English horn and harp. Cocteau asked him to cut out the horn. Without changing the order of the scenes and the interventions of the chorus, the poet reduced Sophocles's text by half, thereby giving the dialogue a faster and less lyrical rhythm. This contraction gave the words greater immediacy and brought out the sequential nature of the events.

When his work was finished, Cocteau thought about the theatre that could host the play. Charles Dullin had just bought the Théâtre de l'Atelier and wanted to turn it into an outstanding venue where innovative and poetic works would be presented. *Antigone* was a perfect fit. By 2 November, it would seem, the two men had reached an agreement, for that was when Cocteau wrote to his mother: 'For *Antigone*, the Dullins have written to tell me that it is agreed'.[3] The theatre was located on Place Dancourt in Montmartre. Inaugurated in 1822, under the name of Théâtre de Montmartre, it had been through numerous vicissitudes and transformations before entering this new era. For Cocteau, this was the signal to return: it was time to leave the beach and become a Parisian again, to embark on a demanding and risky adventure: 'Money was usually scarce and everyone was working hard, gluing, sewing, painting, and hammering. It is hard to imagine the amount of love, selflessness, and madness that went into these shows, of which all that remains in the memory is a vague phosphorescent glow'.[4]

'THE BLACK ARROW OF YOUR EYE'

From 10 November onwards, Cocteau concentrated on the organisation of the production. First of all, the set, which he wanted to give to Picasso. In 1917, the two artists had worked together on *Parade*, a *ballet réaliste*. Under the aegis of Diaghilev, they conceived a fairground universe for which Cocteau wrote the libretto and Picasso created the stage curtain and costumes. Erik Satie was in charge of the music. Presented at the Théâtre du Châtelet in the middle of the war, the show caused a scandal. So what! Cocteau was well aware that his rendezvous with the Spaniard was certainly one of the most important artistic encounters of his life. They met in 1915, in Montparnasse, a neighbourhood frequented by countless artists and writers (among them Amedeo Modigliani, Moïse Kisling, Chaim Soutine, Tsuguharu Foujita, Constantin Brancusi, Blaise Cendrars, and Max Jacob). The place still had a slightly rural feel, rents were cheap, and locals could chat in their favourite cafés: La Closerie des Lilas, La Rotonde, and Le Dôme. Picasso's studio was located at 5bis, Rue Victor Schoelcher. 'It must have been the moment of an inimitable encounter, "Written in the stars"! You became my guide

3 Cocteau 1989, p. 222.
4 *Masques* no. 1, February 1945.

and I could no longer commit a breach of my personal morality without fearing the black arrow of your eye',[5] recalled the poet in a letter he sent his friend on 6 July 1961. In the meantime, he drew portraits of the painter [cat. 82–84], who inspired him to write an ode and several poems. For his part, Picasso made two portraits of Cocteau. Two years after the beginning of their friendship, they coincided in Rome (February 1917), which further strengthened their ties [fig. 38]. And when, on 12 July 1918, Picasso married the dancer Olga Khokhlova in the Russian church of Saint Alexandre-Nevsky on Rue Daru, Paris, Cocteau was their best man along with Guillaume Apollinaire and Max Jacob.

During the summer of 1922, Cocteau sent several letters to Picasso when he was staying with Olga and their little boy Paulo in the seaside resort of Dinard, but received not a single reply. Sadly, that was often the case. But Cocteau continued to ask for news until he received it. By a strange coincidence, that same summer Picasso, now on Brittany's Emerald Coast, painted a series of gouaches representing women of mythological inspiration gathered around a fountain, and two giant women dressed in white running or dancing on a beach, their hair blowing in the wind [cat. 111]. The blue of the sky and of the sea (actually the English Channel; not exactly Mediterranean) suggest a land of strong sun. This image of freedom and vitality could also evoke the ancient world that fascinated Cocteau at the time [fig. 39]. Informed of the theatre project, Picasso agreed to create the set, which news was enthusiastically greeted by the troupe. By that time, the roles had been cast. A young Romanian actress who barely spoke French, Genica Athanasiou, would play Antigone and Eve Longuet, her sister Ismene. Charles Dullin would be King Creon; Antonin Artaud, Tiresias; and Jean Cocteau, the chorus. Through them, the tragic destiny of Oedipus's daughter – whose two brothers Polynices and Eteocles killed each other as rival pretenders to the throne of Thebes – would be presented to the audience. And also Antigone's revolt against her stern and intransigent uncle Creon, who refused to give Polynices proper burial because he had been judged guilty. The young girl was condemned to death for refusing to accept this sentence.

THE GREATEST DRESSMAKER OF ALL TIME

If one looks at the events that were shaking up society in the 1920s, it is easy to understand why the character of Antigone so appealed to Cocteau. Her youth, her purity of soul, her rebellion against the established order, her determination not to give in to male dictates, and her loyalty to the memory of her brothers were bound to resonate with the times. Morals had changed. During the 1914–18 war, women replaced the combatants, running farms, factories, and businesses and in so doing, acquiring an independence that they meant to keep. They studied more ambitiously, played sports, drove cars, danced to jazz tunes, and chose to marry for love rather than to abide by a contract between two families.

Cocteau responded to these upheavals. He sought out the company of creative and independent women like the fashion designer Gabrielle Chanel [fig. 40], whom he met through their mutual friend Misia Godebska, a celebrity of the *Tout-Paris* and muse to famous artists. Chanel was one of the first to modernise women in the twentieth century by freeing them from the corsets, petticoats, lace, guipures, and falbalas that had hindered them for centuries. With the help of her partner Boy Capel, she started her career designing hats before turning her attention to clothing. Appreciating simple materials, she decided to shorten dresses and skirts, chose to cut them from wool jersey and silk jersey, favoured ease over ornament, and imposed black for evening wear. In parallel to her rapid rise in the world of couture she was fascinated by the art scene and dreamed of working with artists. This she achieved through Misia, whom she met in 1917 at the home of Cécile Sorel, an actress who made and destroyed reputations and was attracted to the discreet dressmaker. Sorel introduced her to Serge Diaghilev, the impresario of the Ballets Russes, of which she herself had become the *eminence grise*. Since the troupe's first appearance on the stage of the Théâtre du Châtelet in 1909, their prowess had become proverbial. Women swooned every time their star Vaslav Nijinsky performed in shimmering sets that conjured up an imaginary Orient. Chanel soon became involved with the company. 'It was by means of visible splendour that she helped the secret splendour of the artists. It was without it ever being said and without

wanting to be talked about that she has been the companion of all our research',[6] wrote Cocteau, who admired her talent, her success, and her modernity, and added: 'Everywhere, behind the thinker and the interpreter, one finds her in the modest shadow. Her friendship for Picasso, for Dalí, for Stravinsky, for Pierre Reverdy, for myself, in a sense outweighs the extraordinary good fortune of her reign over the couture'.[7] When he imagined the costumes for *Antigone*, he thought of the woman he nicknamed 'the Black Swan'. Oedipus's daughters had to be well turned out, so he asked for the help of the greatest dressmaker of all time.

fig. 41

Man Ray
Genica Athanasiou, 1921
Gelatin silver print, 28.2 × 23.7 cm
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle, Acquisition, 1982
Inv. AM 1982-171

fig. 42 →

Telegram of congratulations from Gabrielle Chanel to Jean Cocteau on the opening night of *Antigone*, 20 December 1922
Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris
Inv. MS-FS-05-0382

'PICASSO PACED BACK AND FORTH'

Rehearsals began. Even though Cocteau had entrusted the direction to Dullin, he could not keep from giving an opinion on everything. This made for an electric atmosphere, especially as the director was not always easy-going. But as Dullin would magnanimously admit: 'People have a very false idea of Cocteau. I observed him during rehearsals for *Antigone*, as straightforward as a good Parisian worker; he spent nights with us and never complained about working with his hands […]. He is unquestionably a man of the theatre. He has a sense of magnification, of transposition'.[8] Their personal friction was compounded by the moods of a tetchy Artaud. The writer, who was just beginning his career as an actor in Dullin's troupe, fell madly in love with Athanasiou, to whom he sent numerous letters and poems. Still, despite the outbursts of their stormy passion, the work progressed. Cocteau knew what he wanted: 'The characters in *Antigone* do not explain themselves, they act. They are an example of the theatre with which it will be necessary to replace the theatre of chatter. The slightest word, the slightest gesture feeds the machine'.[9]

The premiere of the show was approaching and Picasso had yet to bring his model of the set. Was he playing cruelly with Cocteau's nerves? Asserting his power? Two days before the curtain was due to rise, the painter turned up at the theatre and took a crumpled sheet of paper from his pocket. Dullin was desperate. He needn't have been. In *Le Rappel à l'ordre* (A Call to Order), Cocteau describes what Picasso proposed: 'A cloth of a blue like that of detergent balls formed a rocky manger background. There were openings to the left and right, in the middle, in the air, a hole through which the role of the choir was recited through a megaphone. Around this hole I hung the masks of women, boys, and old men painted by Picasso, and the ones I had made from his models. Picasso paced back and forth. He began by rubbing a stick of red chalk on the board which, because of the unevenness of the wood, became marble. Then he took a bottle of ink and traced a series of motifs to masterful effect. Suddenly he blackened out a few gaps and three columns appeared. The appearance of these columns was so sudden, so surprising, that we applauded'.[10] Accustomed to large theatre stages, Picasso took up the challenge of working with limited means for a smaller, more intimate space. The idea was to convey to the audience a hot day in a country where the sun is omnipresent.

6 *Programme de la Journée de la lingerie féminine, 14/11/1955*, Hotel George V, Paris, cited in Antzenberger, Milorad and Chanel 2004, p. 118.
7 Jean Cocteau, 'Le retour de mademoiselle Chanel', *Le Nouveau Femina* 1, March 1954, p. 18. English cited here from the publication of Cocteau's article in *Harper's Bazaar* (UK), March 1954.
8 Charles Dullin, 'Les essais de rénovation théâtrale', *La Revue Hebdomadaire* 24, year 32, 16 June 1923, pp. 294–303, here p. 298.
9 Jean Cocteau, 'À propos d'Antigone', *Gazette des Sept Arts* 3, 10 February 1923, p. 10.
10 Cocteau 1926, p. 289.

‘THE DRAMA REFRESHED’

On 20 December 1922, critics and spectators alike gathered to discover the stony landscape that was the setting of a one-act tragedy that respected the unity of place, time, and action. Under intense lighting, Antigone and her sister Ismene stood on the stage, against each other. ‘Ismene, with bare arms, wearing the Dorian *chiton* poetically gathered at the waist to form the folds of the *kolpos*; Antigone, draped, entirely concealed by the large brown or greenish *himation* adorned with Greek key pattern running across it [fig. 41]. They speak without moving, facing the spectators as if on an amphora, figures that are at once austere and voluptuous, serious and piquant. The effect is extraordinarily powerful, the tragic immobility of the two sisters accentuated by long eyelashes painted in black’,[11] wrote Maurice Brillant in *Le Correspondant*. The simplicity of their clothes, cut from thick, heavy, brown wools, charmed another journalist from *Le Gaulois*. ‘All the costumes executed by Chanel are of perfect beauty of form and colour: in bat-like greys and soft, butterfly browns, they stand out against the indigo-blue background of the set with a sacred sadness’.[12] The staccato diction of the actresses underscored the contraction of Sophocles’s text. Make-up whitened their faces and arms, whereas the men’s were red. ‘Amidst all these greys the colour of the male skin bursts forth, all ochre, reddish, sienna’.[13] The poet explained this choice thus: as the Théâtre de l’Atelier did not have footlights, he needed to find a different way of highlighting the figures. The writer François Mauriac, not a notably indulgent commentator, also expressed a positive opinion: ‘Thanks to Cocteau, the drama of Sophocles, exhumed from all that had covered it over the ages, appears in all its youthfulness and original purity’.[14] Nevertheless, spectators were disconcerted by the syncopated diction that accentuated the rapid rhythm with which the text unfolded. If Cocteau seduced some, he irritated others, in particular the Surrealists, whose leader André Breton declared a merciless war on him. In their eyes, the poet was nothing but a bourgeois and a socialite. Breton was all the more furious because Artaud – whom he considered to be one of their own – had rallied to his enemy. This animosity was shared by Raymond Duncan – Isadora’s brother – and his dancers who, dressed in pepla and Spartan sandals, took to blowing bugles to sow disorder in the room. They were exasperated by Cocteau’s peculiar, monotonous voice, which was omnipresent in the role of the chorus, and by this ‘plundering’ of a mythical work. To these insults, Cocteau replied that the speed he was reproached for was to be found in Sophocles, but that this speed was not perceptible in the twentieth century and that the agitation of his contemporaries had changed their perception of time. For this reason, he had cleared away the dead matter that covered the living matter of an immortal drama. ‘In this way I have achieved a curious result. The drama, “refreshed”, shaved, cut and combed, disturbs the critics in the same way as a new play. For a masterpiece carries within itself a youth that may become covered by patina but never fades’.[15] Writing amidst this hostile uproar in *Les Feuilles Libres*, Radiguet, who was present at the genesis of the text, defended an adaptation ‘that only those who like nothing more than dust in the works of antiquity deplore’.[16] A new rebuke came on 15 January 1923 from André Gide, the director of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (*NRF*) magazine, who found the original work had been too distorted: ‘Suffered unbearably from the ultra-modern sauce in which was served up that wonderful play, which remains beautiful more in spite of Cocteau than because of him’.[17] Notwithstanding these few incidents, the show was well received. Cocteau had undoubtedly won his wager, that of modernising an ancient myth by working with others who understood his approach: Chanel [fig. 42], Picasso, Dullin - none of these precursors missed his summons to survey Greece as if from an aeroplane and give it a brand-new look. The work was performed again by Dullin in May 1927 and February 1928. As for Honegger, he not only punctuated the lines with the sounds of an oboe and a harp, but composed a musical tragedy that was programmed at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels on 27 December 1927.

Over the decades, *Antigone* has continued to be performed in different settings and costumes, which only goes to show that Cocteau’s heroine was wrong when she predicted: ‘The time I will have to please the dead is far longer than the time I have to please the living’.

11 Maurice Brillant, ‘Les œuvres et les hommes’, *Le Correspondant*, 1 January 1923, pp. 359–73, here p. 370.
12 Gérard D’Houville, ‘Mes spectacles’, *Le Gaulois*, 23 December 1922, p. 4.
13 Ibid.
14 François Mauriac, ‘Le théâtre: L’Antigone de Jean Cocteau’, *La Revue Hebdomadaire*, 6 January 1923, pp. 107–8, here p. 107.
15 Jean Cocteau, ‘À propos d’Antigone’, *Gazette des Sept Arts* 3, 10 February 1923, p. 10.
16 Raymond Radiguet, ‘Antigone de Sophocle, adaptation libre de Jean Cocteau’, *Les feuilles libres* 30, December 1922, p. 7.
17 André Gide cited in Laidlaw 1963, p. 112.

ANTIGONE

Pablo Picasso, *Three Graces*, 1923 [cat. 108]

81 Attributed to Maria Chabelska
Olga Khokhlova with Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau on the Hotel Minerva roof terrace, *Rome*, 1917
Gelatin silver print, 7 × 11.3 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris, Gift of the Succession Picasso, 1992, Pablo Picasso personal archive
Inv. APPH3627(10)

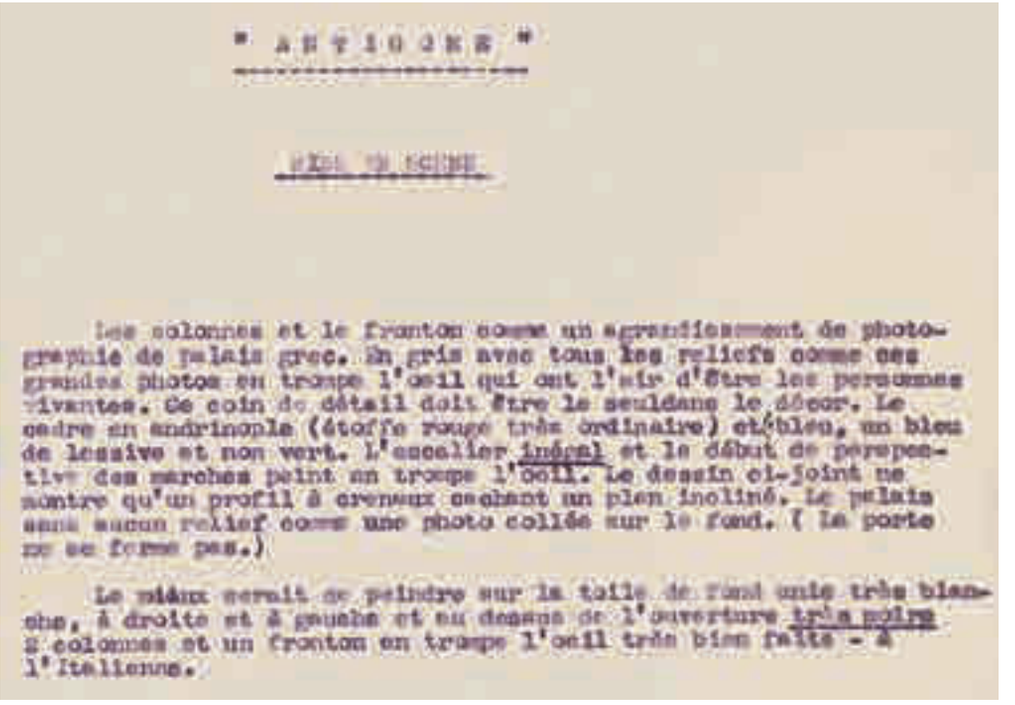
82 Jean Cocteau
Pablo Picasso, 1917
Graphite and ink on paper, 27.3 × 20.8 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Acceptance in lieu, 2018
Inv. AM 2019-212

83 Jean Cocteau
Pablo Picasso, 1917
Ink on paper, 27.5 × 20.7 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Acceptance in lieu, 2018
Inv. AM 2019-215

84 Jean Cocteau
Portrait of Pablo Picasso, 1917
Pencil, pen, and ink on paper, 20.8 × 28.2 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris, Gift of 1992, Pablo Picasso personal archive
Inv. APD31-100

85 *Antigone* report in
Vogue Paris, 1 February 1923
Colección Julen Morrás Azpiazu

86 Attributed to the Dolon Painter
Antigone Brought before Creon, 390–380 BC
Lucanian red-figured pottery nestoris,
53.7 cm high; 23.7 cm in diam.
British Museum, London
Inv. 1867,0508.1330



* ANTIGONE *

DÉCORATION

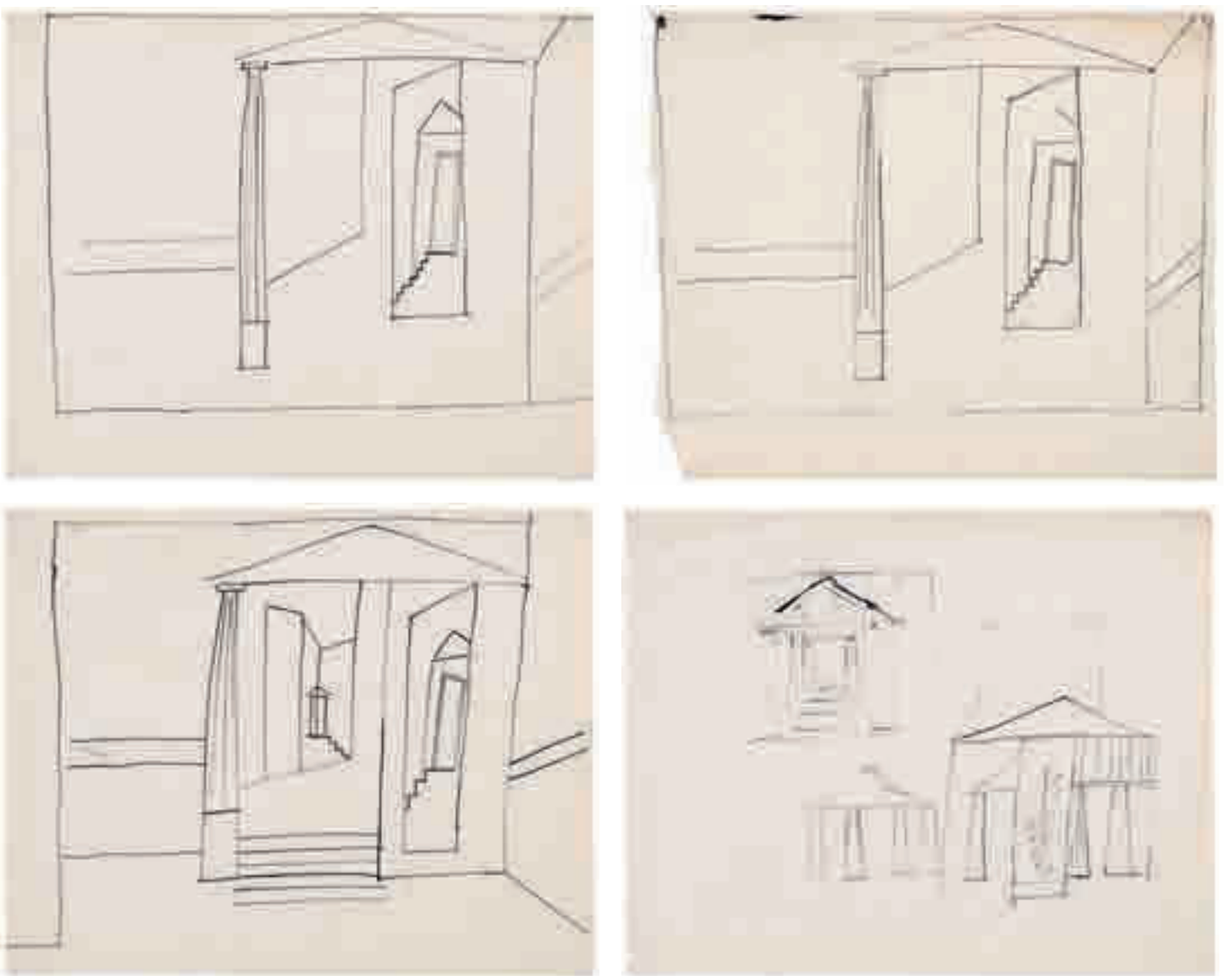
Les colonnes et le fronton comme un agrandissement de photographie de palais grec. En gris avec tous les reliefs comme ces grandes photos en trompe l'oeil qui ont l'air d'être les personnes vivantes. Ce coin de détail doit être le seul dans le décor. Le cadre en andrinople (étoffe rouge très ordinaire) et bleu, un bleu de lessive et non vert. L'escalier inégal et le début de perspective des marches peint en trompe l'oeil. Le dessin ci-joint ne montre qu'un profil à crenaux soulant un plan incliné. Le palais sans aucun relief comme une photo collée sur le fond. (la porte ne se ferme pas.)

Le mieux serait de peindre sur la toile de fond unie très blanche, à droite et à gauche et au dessus de l'ouverture très noire 2 colonnes et un fronton en trompe l'oeil très bien faite - à l'Italienne.

87 Jean Cocteau
Staging of *Antigone*, 1922
Typewritten manuscript, 22 × 27.8 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.1.2

88 *Antigone* report in *Le Théâtre et Comœdia Illustré*
Paris, January 1923
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza Archives, Madrid


A L'ATELIER
ANTIGONE



89 Pablo Picasso
Stage design studies for *Antigone*, 1921
India ink on paper, 41 × 51 cm each
Otilia Limited
Invs. 03047, 03050–03056

90 Jean Cocteau
Antigone, 1922
Ink on paper, 27 × 21 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.1.11

91 Jean Cocteau
Tiresias, 1922
Ink on paper, 27 × 21 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.1.8

92 Pablo Picasso
Set design project for *Antigone*, 1922
Pencil and pastel on paper, 20 × 22.5 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

93 Pierre-Georges Jeanniot
Portrait of Actress Genica Athanasiou in the Role of Antigone, 1922
Pencil on paper, 42 × 26.3 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.74.13

94 Pierre-Georges Jeanniot
Antigone, 1922
Pencil on paper, 21.6 × 17.2 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.74.11

95 Pierre-Georges Jeanniot
Woman with Raised Right Arm, 1922
Pencil on paper, 22.5 × 18 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.74.5

96 Pierre-Georges Jeanniot
Scene of Antigone and Creon before Two Soldiers, 1922
Pencil on paper, 19.5 × 29.3 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.74.1

97 Pierre-Georges Jeanniot
Veiled Woman with Raised Right Arm, 1922
Pencil on paper, 21.5 × 16.5 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.74.4

98 Pierre-Georges Jeanniot
Creon, 1922
Pencil and colour pencil on paper, 21.5 × 17.5 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.DES.74.9

Pages 166–67

99 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1929–30
Silk and sequins
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AC.1929.2

100 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1923–26
Silk crepe, beads, and rhinestones
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AH.1923-1926.1

101 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1922–23
Lace and wire
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.INC.1922.2

102 Gabrielle Chanel
Dress, 1928
Silk crepe and glass beads
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.AH.1927.2

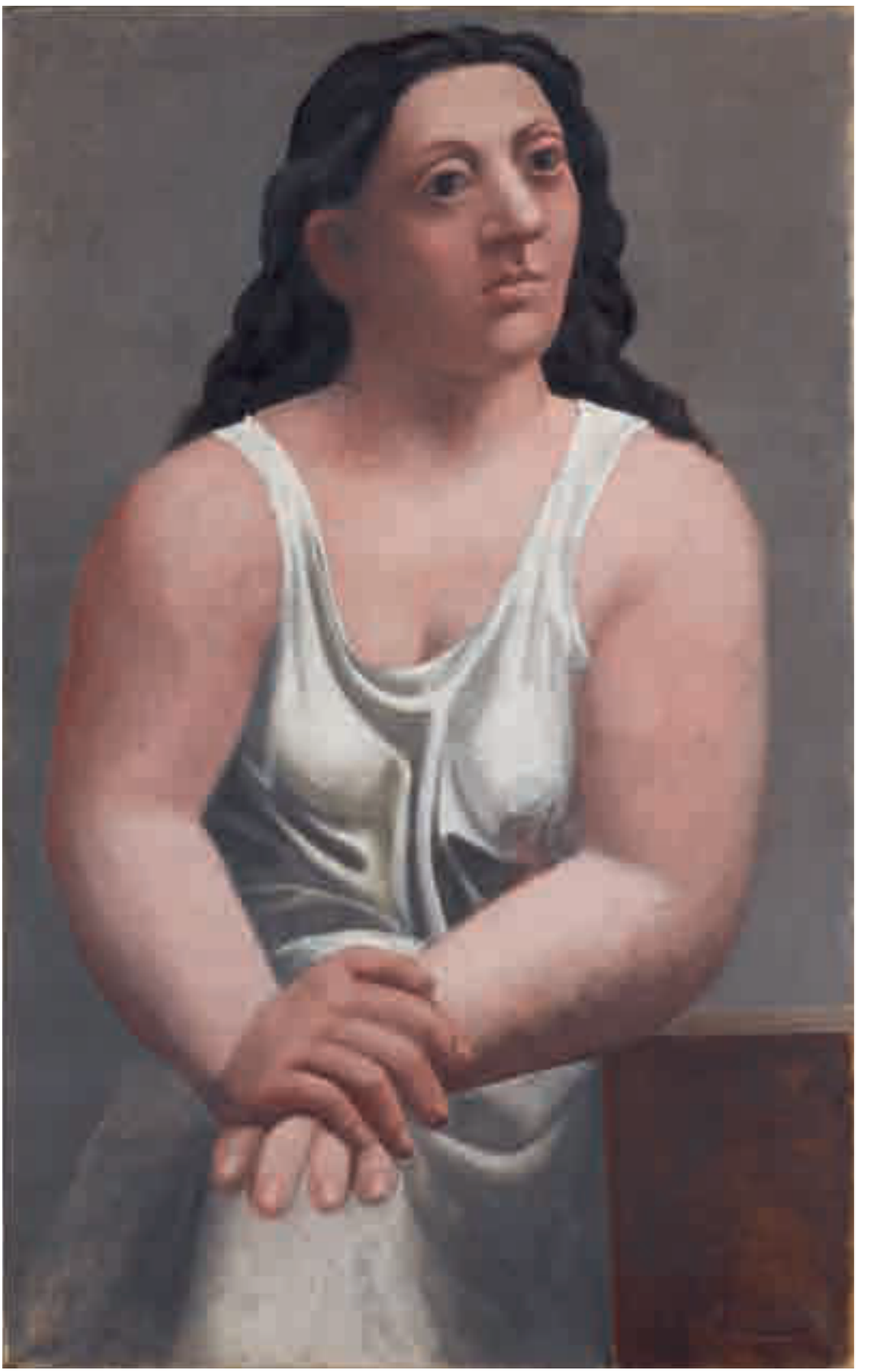
103 Pablo Picasso
Posing Woman, 1922
Pencil on paper, 34.2 × 23.5 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

104 Pablo Picasso
Three Women by a Fountain, 1921
Pastel on paper affixed to canvas, 66 × 51 cm
Private collection, courtesy Tobias Mueller
Modern Art, Zurich

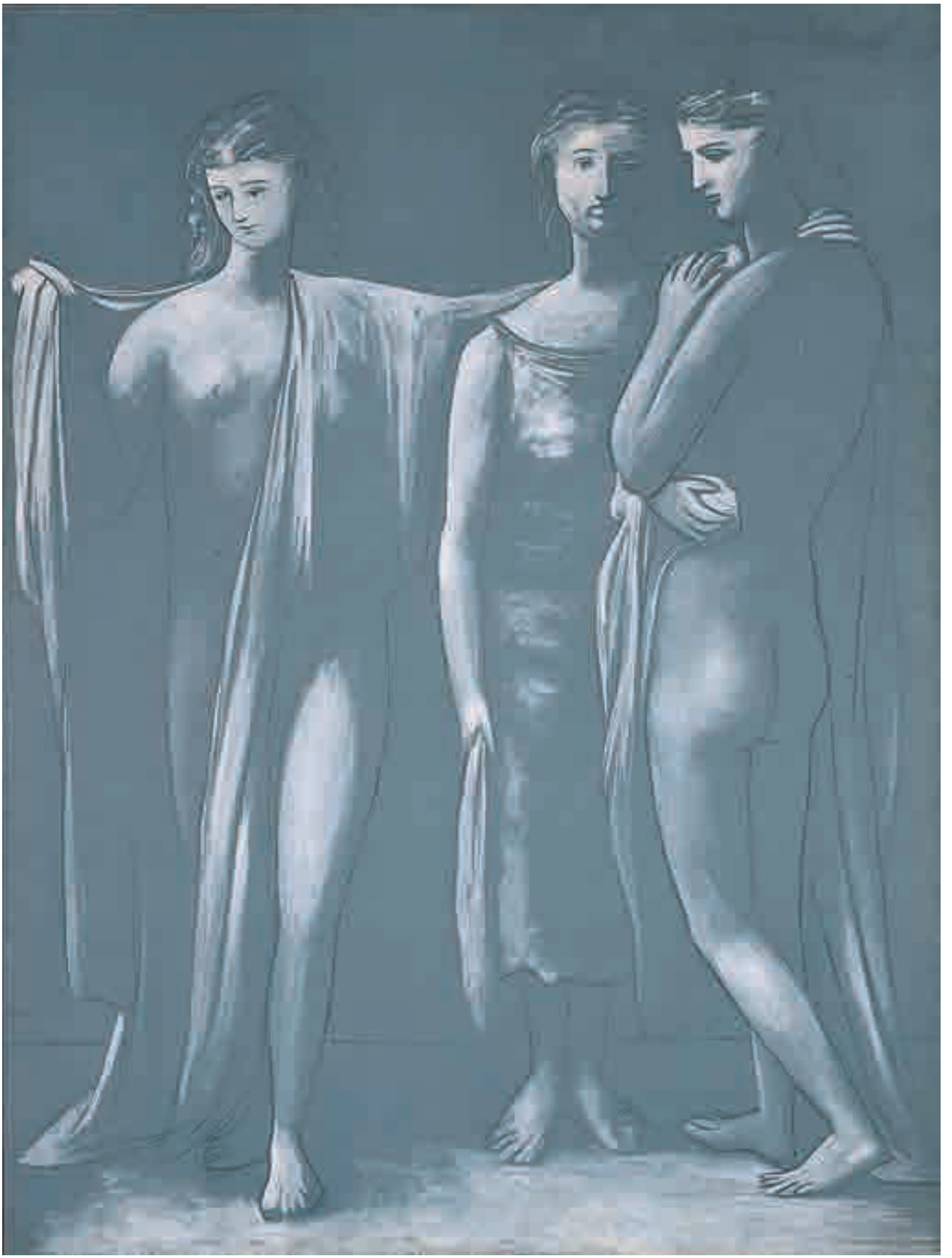
105 Pablo Picasso
Woman's Head and Hand, 1921
Oil on canvas, 65.4 × 54.9 cm
Private collection

106 Pablo Picasso
Sibyl, 1921
Oil on canvas, 61.4 × 46.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Den Haag,
The Hague
Inv. SCH-1956-0042

107 Pablo Picasso
Seated Woman (Woman in a Chemise), 1921
Oil on canvas, 116 × 73 cm
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Acquired with
Lotto-Mitteln lottery funds 1959
Inv. 2562



108 Pablo Picasso
Three Graces, 1923
Oil and charcoal on canvas, 200 × 150 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid



THE TRAUMATIC BIRTH OF *LE TRAIN BLEU*[1]

Lynn Garafola

In 1924, just as the Olympic Games got under way in Paris, Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes premiered one of its most popular ballets of the 1920s. *Le Train Bleu* (The Blue Train), named after the overnight train from Paris to the Côte d'Azur, celebrated the hedonism of the newly fashionable beach – its games, flirtations, secret liaisons, and chic. The music was by Darius Milhaud, a member of the young composers' group known as Les Six; the set's Cubist-style bathing cabanas by the sculptor Henri Laurens [cat. 117]; the libretto by Jean Cocteau, and the front curtain – a blow-up of the gouache *Two Women Running on the Beach (The Race)* [cat. 111] – by Pablo Picasso. But to a considerable extent the success of the ballet was due to two remarkable women: Bronislava Nijinska [fig. 43], who choreographed it, and Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel, who designed a collection of up-to-the-minute sportswear as costumes.

Neither woman ever acknowledged the other, and apart from a costume fitting lost to the historical record, it is unclear if they ever exchanged a word. Yet it seems only logical that they respected one another, in spite of the conflicts – almost certainly exaggerated – that Chanel's biographer Edmonde Charles-Roux attributes to the two.

fig. 43

Jean Cocteau
Portrait of Bronislava Nijinska, March 1924
Frontispiece of *Les Biches* (Paris, Editions des Quatre Chemins, 1924), which included an essay by Jean Cocteau and reproduced Marie Laurencin's designs as well as many photographs of the cast
Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Howard. D. Rothschild Collection, 1989 Bequest
Inv. pf MS Thr 414.4 (44)

1 This essay is an adaptation of *La Nijinska: Choreographer of the Modern*, a biography of Bronislava Nijinska written by the author and published by Oxford University Press in 2022.

fig. 44

Le Train Bleu rehearsals,
London, 1924
Photographs published in *The Times*
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.,
Bronislava Nijinska Collection

In February 1924 Diaghilev took Anton Dolin to Chanel's celebrated salon at 31, Rue Cambon to be fitted in what he called 'a kind of vest-pants creation in a wool jersey material, with no sleeves and open at the front'.[2] Nijinska must have followed at some point, and like Dolin, was likely overwhelmed by the bustle of 'mannequins changing costumes and jewellery' as Chanel stood 'giving orders and being obeyed like a general in command of a small army' while she 'snipped away with her scissors'.[3]

However Nijinska viewed Chanel's many liaisons (including her relationship with Igor Stravinsky), she must have respected her drive, professionalism, and hard work. In her atelier Chanel was like the choreographer in her studio, an artist and an artisan, wrestling day in and day out with the materials that would coax her vision to life. Fabric was to Chanel what movement was to Nijinska, the fundamental material of an art realised through the human body. Both, too, were perfectionists. In her biography of Chanel, Charles-Roux speaks of the 'maniacal concentration [...] [and] sometimes infuriating pernicketiness [Chanel] brought to her work [...] measuring the freedom of movement of a sleeve, gauging the length of a skirt, vigorously denouncing this or that fault which she then proceeded to assail with great snips of the scissors'.[4] Nijinska drove her dancers equally as hard, insisting that steps, gestures, and phrases be repeated over and over until they passed muster both artistically and technically [fig. 44]. Like Chanel, Nijinska had a sharp tongue, and she often let fly at dancers, behaviour that would come back to haunt her, especially in her later years.

Neither Nijinska nor Chanel were present at the gestation of *Le Train Bleu*. It was Cocteau, inspired by the 'acrobatic tricks' that Diaghilev's rising star Dolin would practice during rehearsal breaks, who came up with the idea for the ballet. Set on a beach in 1924 – as the programme note read – *Le Train Bleu* was about the sports people played at newly fashionable resorts like Juan-les-Pins and Antibes, where Picasso and other artists had begun to summer after World War I. Cocteau's 'Bright Young Things', whom he called *poules* (chicks) and *gigolos*, with their knitted Chanel swimwear, bare legs, rubber bathing caps, and sandals, might have stepped from the stylish pages of *Femina*. There were four main characters: a tennis champion in white with a *bandeau* à la Suzanne Lenglen (Nijinska); a golf player in plus fours with a pipe inspired by the Prince of Wales (Léon Woizikovsky); a bathing-beauty in hot pink named Perlouse (Lydia Sokolova); and Beau Gosse (Dolin), a pleasure-bent youth whose acrobatics created a sensation. They all belonged to the world depicted in the magazine *Femina*, with its young fashionistas who played tennis in perfectly pleated skirts, competed on country club golf links for the *Femina* Cup, took the wheel of sleek automobiles, exercised to keep fit, and danced the night away.

2 Dolin 1985, p. 61.
3 Ibid.
4 Charles-Roux 1975, p. 343.

By profession, social background, and choice, Nijinska did not belong to this world, but she had lived in proximity to it for years. Cocteau's libretto[5] was filled with lifestyle details that he wanted her to incorporate into the ballet: a team of acrobatic dancers appearing at Ciro's (a classy Monte Carlo nightspot), images of the Prince of Wales playing golf, slow-motion films of foot races, and so on. About the music, Cocteau wrote: 'Some scenes must be arranged with the music, others without it or, at least, without a visible relationship between the choreography and the musical rhythm. The dances, gestures, and poses of these last scenes are simply accompanied by the orchestra, as in films'. He demanded a consistent approach to the subject matter and expected Nijinska to follow suit, using gesture to convey 'the "hidden meanings" and obscenities of the operettas that have inspired these scenes'. He concluded with claims about the ballet as a disposable artefact. 'The ballet must go out of fashion in a year and remain an image of 1924', he announced. 'The ballet must be an article of fashion […] *Le Train Bleu* must […] be […] a monument to frivolity. […] One can deceive artists about what they want or expect, but not people of fashion about fashion'.

Nijinska did not respond well to Cocteau's deluge of suggestions. Boris Kochno, the future ballet director who was then Diaghilev's twenty-year-old assistant, attributed this not to the libretto, with its ten scenes, virtual absence of dances, and non-stop flow of mimetic incident, but to Nijinska's mulish determination to ignore the high-life details knitted into Cocteau's imagined ballet. 'The personalities and events from which Cocteau proposed that Nijinska draw her inspiration', Kochno wrote, 'belonged to the worldly milieu of the day, a milieu that Nijinska, who led a quiet, secluded life, didn't know and, furthermore, detested. She did not speak French and so could not explain herself to Cocteau or get him to accept her ideas. Although Diaghilev used to intervene, acting as interpreter and mediator, their relations from the outset were tense, if not hostile'.[6]

In fact, Nijinska's life was far from quiet and secluded. From 9 a.m., when company classes began, until 11 p.m., when evening performances or rehearsals ended, she was surrounded by people – dancers, accompanists, rehearsal masters, company administrators, all of whom conducted their business in Russian. This was the professional world of the Ballets Russes, the dancers' world, one to which Cocteau and his protégés did not belong, even if they occasionally fraternised with its artists. Kochno did not belong to that world either, but

5 There are two identical typescripts of the libretto. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Bronislava Nijinska Collection. The published libretto is reproduced in Aschengreen 1986, pp. 270–73. Another version, translated into English, appears in Ries 1986, pp. 192–94. The quotations are from the libretto in the Nijinska papers.

6 Kochno 1970, p. 216. Among the writers who have echoed Kochno are Aschengreen 1986, pp. 125–35; Ries 1986, pp. 92–95; and Charles-Roux 1975, pp. 229–34.

fig. 45

Anton Dolin as Beau Gosse in *Le Train Bleu*, ca. 1924
Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation Collection, Gift of Parmenia Migel Ekstrom, 1990
Inv. b MS Thr 495 (187)

Diaghilev was making a place for him there and increasingly allowing him to throw his weight around. Diaghilev's inner circle was all-male but largely gay, and however much Cocteau may have believed that art was 'born of the copulation (*coït*) between the male element and the female element of which all of us are composed'[7] – an idea to which Diaghilev certainly subscribed – only men, apparently, had the luxury of embracing their other half.

While Monte Carlo's grand opera season was in full swing, Nijinska left for Paris in mid-February, almost certainly to confer with Cocteau and possibly also with Milhaud, although none of the composer's published writings mention her in any capacity, even as the choreographer of his ballet.[8] The meetings with Cocteau did not go well. 'Ask Nijinska how she's feeling about me', he wrote to Diaghilev in late February. 'I am not going to make a move unless I am sure she will listen to me, for ridiculous diplomatic games are useless. I do not insist that my name appear on the program as director […], but […] I do insist on being listened to'.[9]

Some kind of compromise must have been reached. At Dolin's insistence, Nijinska, accompanied by Diaghilev, went to see the acrobatic adagio team of Marjorie Moss and Georges Fontana, who were dancing in Monte Carlo at the Métropole Hotel. Nijinska was impressed by their routine and, according to Dolin, the waltz in *Le Train Bleu* was to a 'great extent inspired by these beautiful dancers'.[10]

Rehearsals for *Le Train Bleu*, subtitled an *opérette dansée*, began in earnest in Barcelona, where the company opened in mid-April. 'I very much like the first dance', Diaghilev reported to Kochno, 'which is quite gymnastic. I made a long speech to the company, explaining just what the word "operetta" means, what Milhaud's music is about, and what is, in my view, the plastic problem that this ballet presents. I was listened to with devout attention. I think everything will be all right and hope that […] this ballet will be a true expression of ourselves'.[11]

All went well until the company reached Paris, where it was due to open its season at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées on 26 May. The ballet was still unfinished, but with several weeks remaining until its premiere on 20 June, the situation was far from desperate, as it was the only new work in rehearsal. Still, there remained a great deal of 'preparatory work' to be done, including the rehearsing of difficult ballets such as *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring) and *Le Train Bleu*, unperformed for nearly a year.[12] Most rehearsals took place in 'dark' venues such as the Théâtre Cora-Laparcerie, where in mid-May a journalist from *Le Gaulois* caught up with Diaghilev as Nijinska rehearsed *Les Noces* (The Wedding) under work

7 Cited in Burton 2002, p. 76.
8 In his memoirs Milhaud mentions Cocteau, Diaghilev, André Messager (who conducted the premiere), Laurens, and Chanel (Milhaud 1953, p. 159).
9 Cited in Kochno 1970, p. 216.
10 Dolin 1931, p. 67.
11 Cited in Kochno 1970, pp. 216 and 219.
12 Grigoriev 1953, p. 196.

fig. 46

Souvenir programme of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at the Théâtre de la Gaite-Lyrique, May 1921
Colour lithograph by Picasso on the cover
Private collection

lights. Surrounding him was his 'staff' – Picasso, Auric, Cocteau, and Dolin, soon to be the 'new Nijinsky of the troupe'.[13] They were there again a week later, this time with patrons and society friends of the company, and once more Nijinska was conducting the rehearsal. The novelist Joseph Kessel wrote: 'Mme. Nijinska sees nothing except her dancers, hears nothing except the lively rhythm of the piano. The magnificent demon that inhabits her seizes her completely. She seems caught up in a spectacle that she herself has arranged, by a harmonious force that she herself has unleashed, and of which she remains, by her will, taste, and instinct, mistress of every section'.[14]

The dancers were in their regulation rehearsal clothes, sweating under the work lights, the faces of the men tense with effort, the women 'tender' and 'expansive'. Speaking of Milhaud's score, Kessel wrote: 'The music is clear and sparkling. The invention of Jean Cocteau has the sharp eye and colour of our time. Here are beach games, magnificent groups, merry fights, and dives. The movement of bodies evokes the August sun with their freedom and a fashionable beach with their studied elegance. Suddenly, breaching the groups, an adolescent flies out. He has that strength, that passion, that bold and secret fire one recognises in great dancers. He leaps, turns, precise, vigorous, and light; he walks on his hands, falls back, gets up, and disappears. This is Dolin, the new discovery created by Diaghilev with his divining rod' [fig. 45].[15]

Not all rehearsals were so amicable. When Cocteau first saw the ballet in Paris, he exploded, according to Kochno. Declaring that Nijinska had ignored his directions, 'Cocteau persuaded her to modify the numbers she had done. When she came to putting the finishing touches on a new version of the ballet, he intervened again and, in highhanded fashion, interrupted rehearsals, and substituted pantomime scenes for dances that Nijinska had created. The atmosphere at rehearsals was highly charged, and, on the verge of the opening, the dancers still did not know whether they should obey Cocteau or Nijinska'.[16]

The dress rehearsal was hell. Cocteau was 'furious', wrote Dolin, 'because this was wrong and that was wrong'.[17] Nijinska cried, Dolin cried, and in the remaining hours before the curtain went up, much of the choreography was changed. At Cocteau's insistence, Dolin's role was beefed up, and at the last minute Nijinska invented a new *pas de deux* for the two of them in a large dressing room. There were costume problems as well. Although Chanel had sat in on rehearsals, only the four principals had been scheduled for fittings. When the other dancers appeared on stage, it turned out that many of Chanel's swimsuits did not fit and had to be hastily altered, while the knitted fabric made it hard to partner (nobody seems to have realised it might be slippery), a problem in Sokolova's duet with Woizikovsky, who had to throw her spinning into the air, then catch her as she came down, a move that Nijinska probably adapted from acrobatic adagio routines.[18] The set by sculptor Henri Laurens seems to have made little impression, although the freestanding semi-Cubist beach cabanas marked a partial break with Diaghilev's reliance on traditional painted décor [cat. 117]. As if anticipating the ho-hum reception of Laurens's set, Diaghilev had persuaded Picasso to allow the company's scene painter, Prince Alexander Schervachidze, to enlarge a small gouache of two women running along a beach for use as a front curtain. Picasso was delighted with the result [see fig. 15] and dedicated the curtain, his third for the company, to Diaghilev.[19] Accompanied by a commissioned fanfare by Georges Auric, the magnificent new 'Ballets Russes curtain [...] by Picasso', as it was identified in the souvenir programme, opened not only the ballet but also the season.[20] The episode was yet another instance of Diaghilev's genius for improvisation, although the curtain's *zaftig* giants could not be more different from the company's increasingly slender women.

13 Jacques Brindejont-Offenbach, 'Pour la Ville Olympiade. Les Ballets Russes à Paris', *Le Gaulois*, 17 May 1924, p. 1. See, also, Valois 1937, p. 46.
14 J.[oseph] Kessel, 'Une répétition chez Diaghilev', *Le Gaulois*, 25 May 1924, p. 1.
15 Ibid.
16 Kochno 1970, p. 219.
17 Dolin 1931, p. 83.
18 Ibid.; Sokolova 1960, p. 222; Kochno 1970, p. 219; Dolin 1985, p. 62. For Chanel's attendance at rehearsals and costume fittings, see Charles-Roux 1975, p. 231.
19 Kochno 1970, p. 219. The others were for *Parade* (1917) and *Le Tricorne* (The Three-Cornered Hat, 1919).
20 'Ballets Russes de Serge de Diaghilew, Grande Saison d'Art de la VIIIe Olympiade, Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Mai–Juin 1924', available at Gallica (bnf.fr).

fig. 47

Pablo Picasso
Three Dancers in the Studio,
cover image for the hand programme
of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes
at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt,
May–June 1926

Despite the awful dress rehearsal, the premiere of *Le Train Bleu* was a huge success, above all for Dolin. It took place at a charity gala presided over by the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna and the Marquise de Ganay which brought high French and international society to the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. The Marquis de Polignac took three boxes to accommodate a score of guests; the dress circle was resplendent with diamonds.[21] At the supper party that followed the performance, Cécile Sorel, the great actress of the Comédie-Française, planted a kiss on the young man's face, telling him, 'My dear Dolin, you were superb!' 'Stravinsky kissed me', the new star wrote to his mother. 'Nijinska and I kissed, Sokolova and I also. It was a big triumph and I am so happy'.[22] Four days later Robert Brussel, who had been writing about Diaghilev's undertakings since 1906, told readers of *Le Figaro* that 'Mons. Anton Dolin has all the qualities of a very great dancer: strength and flexibility, beauty of pose, virtuosity […], a theatrical sense, and musical intelligence'.[23]

The Diaghilev season at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées was part of the Grande Saison d'Art organised in tandem with the Olympics. The Games put swimmers and gymnasts on the front pages of Paris newspapers, while Suzanne Lenglen, the first female tennis celebrity and a Paris native, who was expected to dominate women's singles both at Wimbledon and the Olympics, captured headlines when illness forced her to withdraw from both. It was the perfect background for *Le Train Bleu*, a ballet celebrating youth and the pleasure of physical exertion, just as the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, which the Ballets Russes had helped to launch in 1913 with the premiere of *Le Sacre du Printemps* but to which it had never returned, was viewed by many as its 'true setting'.[24] 'I left the Ballets Russes once again dazzled', wrote Fernand Gregh in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. 'I know […] that *Les Biches* [The Does] has already been given this winter in Monte Carlo and that *Les Noces* was performed for us last year. […] But it was the whole of the evening that seemed to produce an incomparable feast'.[25]

Compared to Diaghilev's 1923 season, dominated by the premiere of *Les Noces*, the press was divided not about the continued vitality of the Ballets Russes and its 'singularly gifted' *animateur*, but about what one critic called 'the increasingly mythic group, Les Six', three of whose members – Auric, Francis Poulenc, and Milhaud – had written music for the season's new works.[26] In spite of its success, *Le Train Bleu* also proved controversial. On the one hand, it was fun, lively, a modern operetta with

21 Jacques Brindejont-Offenbach, 'Petite Feuille: Le "Train Bleu" arrive à Paris', *Le Gaulois*, 20 June 1924, p. 1.
22 Dolin 1985, p. 63.
23 R.[obert] B.[russel], 'Les Théâtres', *Le Figaro*, 24 June 1924, p. 4.
24 See, for example, Jacques Brindejont-Offenbach, 'Les Théâtres', *Le Gaulois*, 10 April 1924, p. 6; Fernand Le Borne, 'Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Les Ballets russes', *Le Petit Parisien*, 28 May 1924, p. 4; Paul Collaer, 'La Saison de Paris', *Arts et Lettres d'Aujourd'hui*, 15 June 1924, p. 545.
25 Fernand Gregh, 'Chronique dramatique', *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 31 May 1924, p. 7.
26 Paul Dambly, 'Les Concerts. Le bilan des Ballets russes. Dernières auditions du Festival Mozart', *Petit Journal*, 3 July 1924, p. 4.

'easily digestible rhythms and melodies', a sketch full of gaiety and the 'physical joy of a troupe of bathers at the seaside'. On the other, Cocteau's libretto, even if it displayed style and invention, was taken to task for what some critics perceived as its banality. One disgruntled observer called Milhaud's score 'music in pyjamas', drawing attention to the latest fashion in resort wear 'with the oompah-pah of circus music', highlighting the ballet's combination of snobbery and slumming in the domain of circus, music hall, and café-concert.[27] This surrender to the popular – albeit within a setting of privilege – was strongly criticised by André Levinson in the theatrical newspaper *Comœdia*. Yes, he says, it can be amusing to see the circus ring, dance hall, cinema, and fairground transposed to the grand lyric stage. In the long run, however, 'theatrical dance' – by which he really means ballet – 'will never be able to live off the music hall. By borrowing from other genres, it will quickly end by ruining itself'.[28] Levinson managed a word of praise for the work's two 'highlights': the scene in slow motion – one of Cocteau's happiest inventions – and the diving scene.

Cocteau himself remained unhappy about the choreography. To the writer Louis Gautier-Vignal he confessed, 'I find Nijinska's choreography silly, small, and without anything new'.[29] Yet numerous reviews speak knowledgeably and highly of her contribution, not only to *Le Train Bleu* but to all the ballets presented that season in Paris. Boris de Schloezer in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* observed about her 'method': 'In *Les Biches* as well as in *Les Fâcheux* [The Bores] she seeks to reform the so-called classical dance, now by introducing certain attitudes and movements characteristic of modern dances, now by assimilating descriptive and expressive gestures into its texture. […] Almost always she succeeds in melding these diverse elements; but even if she gets it wrong, the path she takes seems so fruitful that we owe it to ourselves to support with all our sympathy the efforts and researches of this artist'.[30]

Indeed, her choreography for *Le Train Bleu* won praise even when the libretto was found wanting. 'Mme. Nijinska's choreography is so ingenious, so varied', wrote Louis Schneider in *Le Gaulois*, 'that this ballet or rather *opérette dansée* becomes something lively, young, fresh, and very agreeable'. *Le Figaro*'s veteran critic Robert Brussel summed up her achievement: 'Choreography of the very highest value dominates the whole of the performance. Honours go to Mme. Nijinska, whose talent I have never seen more fertile than in *Le Train Bleu*'.[31]

Only Fernand Divoire seems to have had an inkling of what went on backstage. He noted that the ballet was different from what Cocteau had conceived: he wanted 'two-minute tableaux, independent of the music like cinema visions; he did not want the music […] to be danced in order to impose his own personality on the dance', hinting at the frustration Cocteau must have felt because he lacked the tools of a choreographer. Divoire found *Le Train Bleu* amusing and 'remarkably well danced'. He noted, too, groups and figures 'where Nijinska finally had a little freedom', especially 'a great turning wheel formed by all the dancers'.[32] Since Divoire had interviewed Nijinska in the past, it is quite possible that the information about Cocteau's intentions came directly from her.

On 2 July, a few days after the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées season ended, Diaghilev met with the company for a pre-holiday pep talk. 'Soldiers', he addressed them, 'I am pleased with you'. Then he shared his plans for the coming year: a tour of Austria and Czechoslovakia in the autumn, five months in Monte Carlo, a season in London, followed by one in Paris where, as always, he would present his new works. Among them was a ballet by Auric and another by an unnamed Russian composer who was only twenty. Addresses were exchanged, and everyone left for a well-earned rest.[33]

Nijinska and Chanel never worked together again. Within seven months of the premiere of *Le Train Bleu*, the choreographer, still smarting from the trauma of that less than happy collaboration, left the Ballets Russes. Unlike Chanel, Nijinska never again worked with Cocteau.

27 Henry Prunières, 'Le Train Bleu (aux Ballets Russes)', *Revue Musicale*, 1 August 1924, p. 153; R.[obert] B.[russel], 'Les Théâtres. Théâtre des Champs-Elysées', *Le Figaro*, 24 June 1924, p. 4; Louis Schneider, 'Les Premières. Ballets Russes', *Le Gaulois*, 24 June 1924, p. 4; Adolphe Boschot, 'La Musique. "Le Train Bleu"', *L'Echo de Paris*, 24 June 1924, p. 5.

28 André Levinson, 'Au Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. "Le Train Bleu". Le Spectacle', *Comœdia*, 24 June 1924, p. 2.

29 Cited in Kihm, Sprigge and Béhar 1968, p. 159. Gautier-Vignal's letter is undated.

30 Boris de Schloezer, 'Chronique musicale', *NRF*, 1 July 1924, p. 118.

31 Louis Schneider, 'Les Premières. Ballets Russes', *Le Gaulois*, 24 June 1924, p. 4; R.[obert] B.[russel], 'Les Théâtres. Théâtre des Champs-Elysées', *Le Figaro*, 24 June 1924, p. 4.

32 Fernand Divoire, 'La Danse', *Revue de France*, 1 August 1924, p. 646.

33 J.[acques] B.[rindejont]-O.[ffenbach], 'Les Théâtres. On raconte que…', *Le Gaulois*, 3 July 1924, p. 3.

LE TRAIN BLEU

Pablo Picasso, *The Bathers*, 1918 [detail of cat. 118]

109 Bronislava Nijinska
Choreographic notes for *Le Train Bleu*, 1924
Ink on paper, 15.2 × 22 cm
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.,
Music Division

110 Jean Cocteau
Libretto for *Le Train Bleu*, 1924
Ink on paper, 22.2 × 34.6 cm
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.,
Music Division

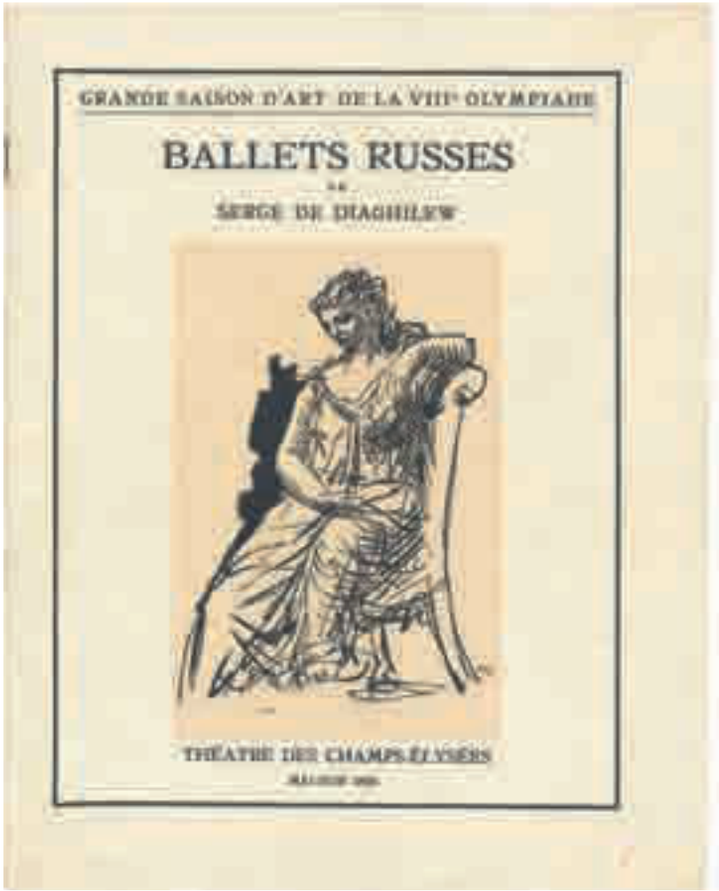
111 Pablo Picasso
Two Women Running on the Beach (The Race), 1922
Gouache on panel, 32.5 × 41.1 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris,
Acceptance in lieu, 1979
Inv. MP78

112 Pablo Picasso
Seated Woman in a Chemise, 1923
Oil on canvas, 92.1 × 73 cm
Tate, Bequeathed by
C. Frank Stoop, 1933
Inv. N04719

113 Pablo Picasso
Woman by the Sea, 1922
Oil on canvas, 58.4 × 48.3 cm
The Minneapolis Institute of Art,
Bequest of Putnam Dana McMillan
Inv. 61.36.24

114 Pablo Picasso
Maternity, 1923
Charcoal on canvas, 130 × 97 cm
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso
para el Arte, Madrid

115 Pablo Picasso
Seated Nude, 1922–23
Oil and charcoal on canvas,
130 × 97 cm
Colección Abelló



116 Souvenir programme of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, 1924
Print on paper, 27.3 × 21 cm
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. AG.IMP.56

117 *Le Train Bleu*, 1924
Vintage prints, 19.7 × 24.7 cm
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Music Division

118 Pablo Picasso
The Bathers, 1918
Oil on canvas, 27 × 22 cm
Musée national Picasso–Paris,
Acceptance in lieu, 1979
Inv. MP61

119 1992 reproductions of the costumes made by Chanel for *Le Train Bleu* in 1924
Collection L'Opéra National de Paris

Perlouse bathing costume, 1992
Cotton jersey
Inv. G-B-LTB-92-F-001-001

Gigolo bathing costume, 1992
Cotton jersey
Inv. G-B-LTB-92-H-300-001

Flapper bathing costume – soloist, 1992
Cotton jersey
Inv. G-B-LTB-92-F-003-001

Golf player outfit, 1992
Cotton jersey, cotton, tweed, and silk
Inv. G-B-LTB-92-H-301-001

Tennis champion outfit, 1992
Silk
Inv. G-B-LTB-92-F-002-001

Flapper bathing costumes, 1992
Cotton jersey
Inv. G-B-LTB-92-F-300-001






120 Sasha
Le Train Bleu: Léon Woizikovsky, Lydia Sokolova, Bronislava Nijinska and Anton Dolin, 1924
Vintage print, 25.4 × 33.3 cm
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Music Division

121 Gabrielle Chanel
3-piece sport ensemble, 1927
Silk
Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris
Inv. HC.PE.1927.2

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Image on p. 1:
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Portrait of Olga with Fur Collar, 1922–23
[detail of cat. 72]

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