The Guernica Effect: The Power and Legacy of Picasso's Guernica

Casey Lesser
College of William and Mary

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorstheses

Part of the History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons, and the Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorstheses/376

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
The *Guernica* Effect: The Power and Legacy of Picasso’s *Guernica*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Hispanic Studies from The College of William and Mary

by

Casey Lesser

Accepted for

(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

Francie Cate-Arries, Director

Susan V. Webster

Carla Buck

Williamsburg, VA
May 3, 2011
The Guernica Effect:
The Power and Legacy of Picasso’s Guernica

by

Casey Lesser
Introduction. Resonance Breeds Relevance: Guernica, From 1937 to the Present

It is fair to assume that a good portion of the patrons who enter the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid in order to view Pablo Picasso’s famous Guernica, do not know that it represents the real Basque town of Gernika. Prior to April 26, 1937 Gernika was best known as the “center of Basque self-rule” (Vale 159). Beginning in medieval times, the General Assemblies of Biscay held their democratic proceedings in Gernika, under an oak tree (Bahrami 49). The Tree of Gernika, where the Assemblies met, has come to be a universal symbol for all Basque people for its strong link to democracy, which lies at the heart of a major Basque principle, autonomy. During the Spanish Civil War, Francisco Franco saw the Basque independence and desire for an autonomous state as a threat and so, to crush such revolutionary ideals, he ordered the Nazi Condor Legion to drop bombs over the small city, which left it and its people, in ruins (Vale 159). Gernika was too small of a municipality to publicize its own side of the story, which turned out to be an aerial warfare exercise for the Nazis. Franco denied that he had ordered the attack and even led the town’s recovery, a pathway into almost four decades of dictatorship (160). This story is told at the Gernika Museo de la Paz, as well as at the Casa de Juntas and, to the informed audience, in Picasso’s Guernica.

In 1997 the German government issued an official apology for their participation in the bombing and Gernika not only accepted this peace offering, but embraced it through forgiveness. (Mitgang). On the wall at the Museo de la Paz hangs a letter from President Roman Herzog in which he states “It was an indefensible act of aerial bombardment. The victims of this terrible atrocity suffered human anguish. We renounce the bombardment by the German aviators and the horror it caused. Now we call for
Lesser 2

reconciliation and peace between our two peoples” (qtd. in Mitgang). The peace museum that was established in 2000, El Museo de la Paz, sits in the center of town and preaches the principles of forgiveness and human rights. A few blocks away, on the edge of town with a mountainous backdrop, there is a mural of Picasso’s Guernica (Fig. 1). All over the sidewalks in Gernika are ceramic tiles with oak leaves painted on them and arrows pointing the way to the famed oak tree. The little oak tree, which has been borne out of the seedlings of the original oak, is the real star of Gernika (Fig. 2). During my own trip to Gernika in August of 2009 I was surprised to find it remarkably tranquil and charming (Fig. 3). Somehow even though Guernica has accumulated a strong following of artists, scholars and art lovers, Gernika is left under the radar, and able to peacefully tell the story of its origins and its tragedies without the corruption of commercialism and tourism. By no coincidence, the democracy and peace that characterizes Gernika today are the same principles that characterize Picasso’s Guernica.

Central to this thesis are questions of legacy and resonance, which include these concepts of peace and democracy. Guernica’s legacy--its meaning at the present, the meaning which it had for previous generations and the meaning it may have for future ones--is not easily explained or pinned down. This is largely due to the resonance that has characterized Guernica to be as relevant today as it was in 1937, as well as during World War II, Vietnam, the Spanish transition to democracy, and the March 11 train bombings in Madrid. Guernica has undergone a transformation from image to concept; the word Guernica has even entered the modern-day vernacular\(^1\). Included in this phenomenon,

---
\(^1\) On November 29, 2009, The New York Times ran an article entitled “A Shopping Guernica Captures the Moment,” with a blurred photograph of shoppers rushing through the doors of a Wal-Mart in Oklahoma, and an article about the Wal-Mart employee who was trampled to death during holiday shopping chaos (Fig. 4) (Goodman). This is an example of how Guernica has become an idiom for a tragic event.
this *Guernica* effect, are the many individuals who have been inspired and influenced by
*Guernica* and have essentially furthered its presence in public forums through literature
and art. It is *Guernica* itself, as well as the related works of art and literature that form the
basis of this thesis.

In preparing an honors thesis on Picasso’s *Guernica*, it is important to recognize
what has already been said and published on the subject. Many have claimed that
*Guernica* is the greatest painting of the twentieth century, and as a result, scholarship on
the painting abounds. While there is a seemingly infinite number of artists, scholars and
intellectuals who have examined *Guernica* in order to explain its meaning, link it to
history, and extol Picasso’s innovative style, not many have taken a step back to look at
*Guernica* from beginning to end, or rather its trajectory from its creation to the present.
Fundamental to my research however, is Gijs van Hensbergen, a scholar who has
researched and published on *Guernica* with such depth and chronology. Van
Hensbergen’s 2004 *Guernica: Biography of a Twentieth Century Icon* is the leading
anthology of *Guernica*’s history, detailing its exhibitions and journeys across the world,
the individuals who have responded to it and the influence it has had upon audiences for
over seven decades. His non-fiction work reads like a novel, and although it is not
burdened with footnotes or in-text citations, the pages of notes and bibliography at the
end legitimize its scholarly quality. Van Hensbergen has essentially consolidated
*Guernica* into book form, covering every inch of its existence. His text has been
enormously helpful for me in establishing a timeline of *Guernica*’s history as well as
offering insightful theory about the painting, which I have used to guide my own
arguments. I consider Van Hensbergen’s text to be foundational and inspirational for my own project.

In the following four chapters I will present four periods of time that define Guernica’s legacy and exemplify its power and resonance. In Chapter 1, “The Birth of a Republican: Guernica’s Debut in the Spanish Pavilion of 1937,” I will provide an overview of Guernica’s Spanish Republican origins with a focus on its role in the Republican Pavilion at the Paris International Exposition of 1937. Using the Pavilion itself to contextualize Guernica during this time, within its first exhibition, I will provide an overview of Guernica itself, as well as its environment, which included numerous other important works of art. Through analyzing some of the key artworks that accompanied Guernica in the Pavilion, including Joan Miró’s Naturaleza Muerta con zapato viejo, and the photo montages of José Renau, I will explain how Guernica’s context informed its meaning. I will also contextualize the Pavilion as a whole, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War and the conflict between Republican and Nationalist ideals. I will argue that given this context, Guernica was a Spanish Republican weapon, which served to denounce Franco and the Nationalists, and fascism in general. Fundamental to this chapter are the core values of the Spanish Republic, which were established in its Constitution of 1931, and put simply, embody the principles of equality, humanism and democracy. Theorists Jutta Held and Ellen C. Oppler, who argue that Guernica’s impact during this period cannot be understood without contextualizing it within the Spanish Pavilion, will help me to formulate my argument, that the Spanish Republic is inherent to understanding Guernica. Finally, through questioning the
relationship between the Spanish Republic and art, I will determine *Guernica*'s role within the Republic, utilizing the concepts of cultural patrimony and national heritage.

In Chapter 2, “Distancing *Guernica* and Gernika: Anti-War Icon in Exile,” I will investigate the concept of exile and question how *Guernica*'s meaning changed while it resided outside of its homeland. The period of time between 1939, the end of the Spanish Civil War, and 1975, the death of Francisco Franco, is characterized by the large number of Spaniards who were forced to live outside of their homeland. Included in this body of exiles is *Guernica* itself. I will follow the painting’s path as it toured the United States and Europe to the point where it was physically damaged and laid to rest at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It is during this time period that *Guernica* began to appear in the art of other artists, and scholars began to respond to it in literature. One theorist I will utilize to inform my argument is Susan Buck-Morss, who discusses the connection between images and globalization and introduces the idea that an image is able to become more influential when it is removed from its initial context. Another important theorist I will include is Steven A. Nash, who comments on *Guernica*'s existence outside of “time coordinates” and its function as “a summa on all wars and all victims” (Nash 17). I will argue that during this period of exile, *Guernica* evolved to no longer represent a specific, Spanish event, but instead all violent acts of warfare that target innocent civilians.

In Chapter 3, “Battle Wounds Behind Glass: The Contradiction in *Guernica*'s Return to Spain,” I will move to Spain and focus on the period of time known as the Transition, during which, in 1981, *Guernica* was sent to Spain and was put on display in Madrid. I will explain how the lasting controversial nature of the Spanish Civil War and Dictatorship made public recognition of these events difficult. A lack of national
reflection and resolution in reference to the traumatic past made Guernica’s role in this society problematic. At the core of my argument is the contradiction that Guernica exposed in Spanish society, between recognizing the Spanish Civil War and Dictatorship and avoiding controversy that public discourse on these subjects could cause. Cristina Moreiras Menor, Carlos Jerez-Ferrán, and Jo Labanyi, theorists who work with the Transition, will aid me in positing an argument about Guernica within the context of the Transition. Central to this chapter is a discussion of the bullet-proof glass that covered Guernica from 1981 until 1995, and the implications involved in protecting Guernica with this glass. Through focusing on primary documents, including the original exhibition catalog for the first exhibition of Guernica in Madrid, as well as Spanish painter Antonio Saura’s critical text, Contra el Guernica, I intend to explain the contradiction that arose as Guernica became a part of the public domain in Madrid in 1981.

In Chapter 4, “Canvases of Catastrophe: Guernica in the Twenty-First Century,” I will discuss the extent to which Guernica has been normalized, and has become a presence in the cultural mainstream. Focusing on works of art, mainly paintings, by contemporary artists, I will discuss Guernica as a theme for modern-day art. With the help of theorist Benjamin Hannavy Cousen, I will consider Guernica as an “embodiment of memory,” and as a memorial for events of tragedy (Cousen 47). While to a great extent Guernica continues to be utilized in reference to events related to warfare, in recent years artists have begun to use it to express broader concepts of tragedy and as a means to express political criticism. I will argue that Guernica is a vehicle that contemporary artists have increasingly utilized in order to legitimize their own endeavors to protest war,
recognize cruelty, promote peace or encourage reflection, in response to twenty-first century events, in the form of a work of art.

Today, seventy-four years after the bombing of Gernika, the concept of cruelty inflicted on a body of innocent people is as prevalent as ever; so too is Guernica. The innovative Cubist style, the power to compel emotion among human beings, and the representation of reality through abstraction that are central to Guernica have offered it a role in the canon of art history, scholarly literature, and popular culture. It is my main concern in this honors thesis to question Guernica’s influence and relevance through the journey from its creation in 1937 to the point where it inspires creation in the present.
Appendix: Introduction

(Fig. 1) Me in front of *Guernica* mural in Gernika, Spain. Personal photograph by author.

(Fig. 2) Gernika Oak in Gernika, Spain. Personal photograph by author. Aug. 2009.
(Fig. 3) Gernika, Spain. Personal photograph by author. Aug. 2009.

Chapter 1. The Birth of a Republican: Guernica’s Debut in the Spanish Pavilion of 1937

At an inaugural reception for the construction workers who built the Spanish Pavilion for the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la vie Moderne in Paris, the site of Guernica’s debut, Max Aub, a Deputy Commissioner General for the Spanish Republic, proclaimed: “Parece casi imposible, en la lucha que mantenemos, que la España republicana haya podido construir este edificio. Hay en ello, como en todo lo nuestro, algo de milagro” (Aub 13) ². As Max Aub reveals in his speech, in the midst of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) the Spanish Pavilion was miraculous, and this text, which is also the first scholarly reference to Picasso’s Guernica, in its rhetoric and purpose, exemplifies the quintessential Republican ideals³. The Pavilion, which was opened on July 12, 1937, one year after the inception of the War, was a manifestation of the foundations with which the Republic was established in 1931, serving as a means through which the Republic could disseminate its principles in order to inspire international support and national pride, to aid in the same fight against fascism that soldiers were battling in Spain (Fig. 1) (Martín Martín 198)⁴. In the first article of the Republican Constitution of 1931, the Republic establishes itself as “una República democrática de trabajadores de toda clase” (Art. 1, Constitución 1). This idea of a

² Max Aub was a writer known for writing about life in Spain during the War, including his memoir El laberinto mágico. He was also a member of the Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas para la Defensa de la Cultura and editor of the Valencia newspaper, Verdad. He was involved in the planning of the Pavilion and a dear friend of Picasso (Hensbergen 25).
³ Aub extols Picasso’s perception of reality and the truth that Guernica represents, as seen in this excerpt from the speech: “Al entrar, a la derecha, salta a la vista el gran lienzo de Picasso. Se hablará de él durante mucho tiempo…Mirad este fresco con atención, profundamente, no os dejéis amedrentar por su difícil apariencia y sus colores extremos…Todo, en ese cuadro, quiere expresar, por sus colores y líneas, más que cuanto se ha dicho por medios semejantes…Si el cuadro de Picasso tiene algún defecto es el de ser demasiado verdadero, terriblemente cierto, atrozmente cierto” (Aub 13-14).
⁴ While the International Exhibition of 1937 began in May of 1937, due to a lack of funding, the Spanish Republican Pavilion was not able to open until July of 1937 (Martín Martín 52).
“democracy of workers” informs the very context of this speech, a reception for workers, exemplifying that it was a priority to hold a reception in order to honor the men who exerted the physical strength that was necessary to construct this important beacon of Republican ideology. Aub further communicates the principle of equality in his use of “lo nuestro,” reflecting Article 2 of the Constitution that states: “todos los españoles son iguales ante la ley,” therefore equating the workers to whom he speaks with himself and any other member of the Republic (Art. 2, Constitución 1). After praising Guernica and the Pavilion as a whole, Aub concludes his speech by saying: “¡Ojalá que, al cerrar, en su día, sus puertas, destruyamos este edificio con la alegría que nos proporcione una victoria decisiva sobre el fascismo!” (Aub 16). These principles against fascism and for freedom, justice and equality are the same ones that characterized the Spanish Republican Pavilion, due to the works of art that it housed, including Guernica. In organizing the Pavilion, it was a major priority to defeat Nationalist claims that the Republic was severely destabilized on the warfront, and that Francoist ideology was effectively destroying Spain’s cultural heritage through its reforms (Daniel 63, 65)\(^5\). With Guernica at the forefront, accompanied by works by contemporary artists, the art of the Spanish pavilion served as a defense against irrational Nationalist accusations, and served as an offense in the fight against fascism.

It is important in understanding Guernica to contextualize it physically within the Spanish Pavilion, and historically, during the Spanish Civil War. The introduction of photography as a means of documentation during the Spanish civil War led to a large sum of authentic, provocative images that would also serve as major sources of

---

\(^5\) Nationalists accused Republicans of destroying Spanish national heritage, as pawns of the USSR, due to their social reforms including the establishment of democracy and the separation of church and state (Daniel 63)
inspiration for artists of this era. *Guernica* was the product of a commission to Picasso to create a mural in support of the Republic for the Pavilion, thus aligning it with the Republic, and asserting its political nature, even before its creation. In her 1988 article “How Do the Political Effects of Pictures Come about? The Case of Picasso’s ‘*Guernica*’,” Jutta Held recognizes *Guernica* as a political vehicle and argues that the political effect that a work of art can have is largely the product of the circumstances surrounding its initial reception. To recognize *Guernica* as political vehicle, as countless scholars and writers have, is a cliché due to its reference to a political event and its blatantly political history, however Held’s argument provides an original perspective. What is unique about Held’s argument is her emphasis on the historical and political circumstances surrounding *Guernica*’s creation and its first exhibition. This premiere reception of *Guernica*, although physically taking place in neutral territory, Paris, was displayed in an international exposition that by its very nature, served to display nations on a very international level. Further, the setting in time and history is within the throes of the Spanish Civil War, which has been cited as the first “media war” (Faber 4). The utilization of visual media in portraying a war was very important because through photography, for the first time, images of the actual war were being distributed across the world, for public viewing via the press (4). In Susan Sontag’s 2003 text, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, she states:

The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) was the first war to be witnessed (“covered”) in the modern sense: by a corps of professional photographers at the lines of military

---

6 A non-intervention policy was initiated by the French Popular Front early in the war after Hitler and Mussolini’s alliance with Franco became public. France, unable to help the Republic itself, presented the No Interference in Spain Agreement to western European nations, in order to deny Franco his powerful allies and thus aid the Republic (Casanova 214).
engagement and in the towns under bombardment, whose work was immediately seen in newspapers and magazines in Spain and abroad. (Sontag 21)

Following her argument, the ability for the civilian to see the war with their own eyes, was a previously foreign concept, and so with the use of photography in newspapers and magazines, war became a much more personal concept. Within this context, the Spanish Pavilion, was deeply influenced by the photographs of the Spanish warfront, in that not only were many of the photographs incorporated into the exhibition, they legitimized the Republican claims of fascist brutalities. Further, the Pavilion’s works of art are legitimized because they were inspired by these photographs. Held supports this notion that “the fight against fascism in Spain was seen as a matter of saving human culture, where all the great masterpieces of this culture, regardless of the particularities of their content and the circumstances of their creation could nevertheless stand as potential witnesses against the destructiveness of fascism,” and effectively furthers the theory that the artworks within the Pavilion had a mission and would serve as testaments against fascism (Held 34-5). Ellen C. Oppler argues in her 1988 text, *Picasso’s Guernica*, that “only by imagining *Guernica* in its intended setting, the Spanish Pavilion in Paris at the very height of the Spanish Civil War, can we understand its extraordinary impact at the time” (Oppler 58). Taking her argument a step further, *Guernica* can only be understood by understanding its inherent Republican alignment and the fact that were it not for the Republic, *Guernica* would not exist. Therefore the Republic’s respect and reverence for art in general, which was hugely manifested in the Pavilion, is key in the understanding of *Guernica* within the context of its initial exhibition.

---

7 Sontag’s prose and the discussion of the Spanish Civil War as the first “media war” effectively recalls perhaps the most famous photograph from the Spanish Civil War, Robert Capa’s *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936* (Fig. 2).
Guernica was a Republican weapon, and with its political implications, not only did it denounce Franco and the Nationalists, it was a severe condemnation of fascism as a whole. In this chapter, with the theories of Held and Oppler as guides, I will examine Guernica in the context of the Spanish Republican Pavilion, and the works of art that the latter contained in order to evaluate the discourse that these works along with Guernica created within the Pavilion. Recognizing the Republic’s values and its high esteem for art, I will evaluate the art itself in order to explain its centrality within Republican ideology. I will argue that the Pavilion was a charged political atmosphere, a Republican expression of bravery and hope, and I will emphasize that it is essential to understand the circumstances of the Pavilion in order to understand Guernica. Physically situated in the Pavilion’s main gallery and commissioned by the Republic, in this chapter I will affirm that Guernica was born a Republican.

In order to begin to connect Guernica with the Republic, it is important to understand the establishment of the Republic and its Constitution, so as to identify its underlying principles. The Second Spanish Republic was established on April 14, 1931, with the intentions to modernize the nation and deal with the social unrest that had plagued Spain since the Crisis of 1898, when it lost its colonies in Latin America. The building pressure in Spain during the 1930s was caused by several factors, including the desire for regionalism among autonomies, a lack of cooperation between the Church and the government, an over-zealous military, and a weak economy with rampant unemployment, which were challenging factors for the Republic (Valis 8). Noel Valis explains that the Republic’s task in this unrest was to “contend with entrenched political, social, and religious opposition” (Valis 8). By the spring of 1936, these issues led to a
politically weak Popular Front, which was vulnerable to the growing fascist party. On July 18, 1936, General Francisco Franco and his Nationalist troops staged a military coup, inciting civil war (Preston 4-5, 87). Plans for the Spanish Pavilion began in December of 1934; however, the outbreak of war in July of 1936 caused the Republic to completely re-evaluate the Pavilion’s intentions, utilizing the ideals that had been a constant in the Republic since 1931 to create a new design (Martín Martín 33). The Republican Constitution of 1931, as discussed previously in reference to Max Aub’s speech, began by establishing a community of equality, liberty and justice. The constitution established democracy, equal rights for citizens, including women, Castilian as the official language, the separation of church and state, Madrid as capital, recognition of autonomous municipalities, and the condemnation of war as political practice (“Constitución”). As fascism ideologically opposed the majority of these foundations, anti-fascism became a Republican principle as well, encompassing multiple Republican ideals. The Republic was also a great proponent of education, with the belief that through education, equality was attainable, and so they carried out great reform in the establishment of secular schools and educational institutions (Holguin 9). It is through these principles that the Republic built a solid ideological base through which its government functioned.

The Republic’s decision to partake in an international exposition, an event where nations unite in one place, as equals, is only fitting, as it is a perfect extension of its ideals. In the Paris guide to the 1867 Paris International Exposition, Victor Hugo wrote: “Qu'est-ce qu'une exposition universelle? C'est le monde voisinant. On va causer en peu ensemble. On vient comparer les idéals. Confrontation de produits en apparence, confrontation d'utopies en réalité” (“What is a World's Fair? The world as neighbors.
We talk a bit together. We come to compare ideals. An apparent confrontation of products, in reality a confrontation of utopias”) (Hugo xxxvii). Seventy years after Hugo published his remarks, the Paris Exposition of 1937 could be read under these same terms; nations were united along the banks of the Seine and in the Trocadero Gardens, in confrontation with one another, situated physically and ideologically as neighbors (Fig. 3). As Hugo remarks, each nation presents its utopia, and since the state of the war-torn Spanish nation in 1937 was far from utopian, the Republic used art to represent the actual nation, and to ask the world for help, not to reach a utopia, but to restore normalcy and democracy. Within Hugo’s words are the ideals of the Republic as well; fraternity and equality were at the heart of the Republican effort.

While in Spain, Republican soldiers were summoned to fight on battlefronts; in Paris, artists were summoned to create for the exposition. The Pavilion was a means through which the Republic was able to communicate the efforts it had implemented since its establishment in 1931, and through works of art, including paintings, sculptures and photomurals, the Republicans were able to visually manifest their values to an international audience. In dire need of financial and political support, the Republic chose to represent itself through its cultural values, instead of its wealth (Held 33). Such a mindset was not the case for the Spanish Pavilion’s neighbors however; the Soviet and German pavilions on either side were literally overshadowing the modest Spanish structure (Fig. 4). The Pavilion was an opportune moment for Spanish Republicans to represent to the world what Jordana Mendelson refers to as the “modernity and humanism of the Republic,” and they did so through a collection of the finest contemporary art of Spain (Mendelson 125). Jutta Held observes the parallel roles of
artists and soldiers, explaining that the Republic had “enlisted international solidarity with the help of artists” (Held 33). This notion of ‘international solidarity’ refers to the artists that produced works for the Pavilion, world-renowned individuals who were already established on an international level, who were intended to draw the much desired attention to the Pavilion, ultimately benefiting the Republic. While Picasso was the biggest name at the Spanish Pavilion, Joan Miró, Alexander Calder and Julio González were not to be scoffed at as leaders in the world of modern art. Mendelson recognizes that the presence of works by renowned artists ensured “that the pavilion would receive the public and critical attention that the Republic was banking on to renew international support for its fight against fascism” (125). This idea extended to the architects of the Spanish Pavilion, José Luis Sert and Luis Lacasa, who planned the Pavilion with function in mind, keeping costs low and using “standardized and pre-fabricated materials,” yet they were still able to produce a stylish contemporary design (Fig. 1) (Mendelson 125).

The Pavilion was in essence an art exhibition with a very careful, strategic and political plan, in order to create a narrative for visitors to consume. The Pavilion functioned as a whole, with all units working behind the same ideology, that of the Republic. To give one work of art more credit than the next is possible, but the circumstances dictated that no one piece of art was as effective by itself as when it was surrounded by its intended compatriots. Marko Daniel remarks that within the Pavilion “no object existed solely in its own right: its content, iconography or message was informed or transformed by others in a different medium and in a different part of the

---

8 Alexander Calder’s *Mercury Fountain* and Julio González’s *Montserrat*, were fundamental works within the Spanish Pavilion.
Therefore, in considering Guernica, which has been reported as the Pavilion’s main attraction, it follows that never was Guernica more effective at leaving an impact upon visitors than when it was surrounded by works of art that were created for the same purpose. In analyzing Guernica then, it is essential to explore some of the Pavilion’s other works as well. I have selected a sample of artworks from the Pavilion, which are important as counterparts to Guernica and in their embrace of the Republican cause.

Aidez l’Espagne by Joan Miró is an artwork that uses the stylized images of modern art to convey a picture of strength in order to rally support for and faith in the Republic (Fig. 5). The artwork was created with the intention of being replicated and sold to raise Republican funds, originally as a postage stamp yet in the end as a poster, which was sold within the Pavilion. Selling this work as a poster not only was beneficial as a fundraiser, it also assured the dissemination of the image and by association the idea that it was intended to communicate. The poster portrays an abstract image; however, through symbolism and the use of color, it is easily understood. The large man who occupies the poster is slightly distorted with a very large right arm. He carries himself proudly, wearing Republican colors, red and yellow, although the poster’s background is blue instead of purple. He holds his bulging muscular right arm in the air, in a fist. This giant fist dispels any doubt that this is a Republican poster, as the fist is a known emblem of the Republic (Greeley 41). The idea behind the poster was ingenious yet simple in that the only thing people had to do in order to “Aidez L’Espagne” (“Help Spain”) was to buy the poster, and because it was created by the well-renowned Joan Miró, it was desirable.

9 In her in-depth study on the Spanish Pavilion, Catherine Freedberg encountered several individuals who had visited the Pavilion, the majority of whom immediately associated their visit to the Pavilion with Guernica (Freedberg 648)
Further, it functioned as a way to circulate the Republican message because as visitors returned home and hung the poster on their walls, they also upheld the Republic.

Another seminal work by Miró that was in the Pavilion is his painting *Still Life with Old Shoe* (1937), which presents modern and abstract artistic techniques in order to represent and disguise a political message (Fig. 6). The painting depicts a fruit (most likely an apple or an orange) being stabbed by a fork, a deformed wine bottle, another object that resembles a piece of bread, and a shoe. Aside from the shoe, these items are traditional for a still life; however, the style, color, and shape of the objects make them completely non-traditional. At first glance, the picture is almost psychedelic, but the overwhelming pool of darkness within which the objects sit prevents this interpretation, and creates a sense of destruction and fear. The vivid colors over the black background create the effect of flames that are red, orange, yellow, green, and pink. Miró’s rendering of these everyday objects makes them appear to be melting, perhaps as a commentary on war and the way that it destroys everyday life. Miró had personal motives to denounce the war in that it was destroying his homeland, and although he was wary about introducing his political ideology in his art, it exists subtly behind his abstract, modernist style. In his essay “Painting and Politics” art historian Robert Lubar analyzes the works of Miró during this era with special emphasis on *Still life with old shoe*, evaluating the influence of politics in Miró’s painting. Lubar maintains that this painting is a metaphor for the problems of the Republic and reflects its collapse:

In the most profound sense Miró’s painting is a microcosm of the crisis of ideology that ravaged the ill-fated Second Republic. Speaking beyond partisan alliances through the language of painting, on behalf of a suffering nation, Miró’s
The position was prophetic. For the failure to address a volatile social reality in the decade preceding the Civil War sacrificed an entire generation of Miró’s countrymen to the political, social and cultural repression of a brutal and anachronistic military dictatorship. (Lubar 160)

This work is not only an example of art that was charged through being presented in the Spanish Pavilion, it is also a direct reflection of the Republic. Lubar indicates that years later Miró recognized *Still Life with Old Shoe* as his own *Guernica*; however, it lacks the clear political message that Picasso was not afraid to show, indicating Miró’s concern over his involvement in politics (Greeley 16). Lubar concludes his essay by creating a parallel between the fear of Miró to represent his political affiliation in his art with the fear of the Republic to address the crisis of modern society, referring to the economy and lack of nationalism (Lubar 160). This painting is exemplary of the intimate relationship between works of art and the Republic that the Pavilion facilitated.

Prominent among other artworks in the Pavilion were the photomurals of José Renau, which served to imagine Republican ideals through the use of photographs, drawings and text, functioning as an educational framework throughout the Pavilion (Alíx Trueba 139). In these murals Renau juxtaposed images from personal and institutional archives that represented the everyday life of urban and rural Spain, the two distinct spheres of the Republic, as well as the specific cultural efforts that the Republic was practicing (Mendelson 138). The murals functioned as narratives through which visitors could learn about the Republic in terms of "economía, agricultura, sanidad, educación, industria, cultura, etc" (Alíx Trueba 139). Gisele Freund, a photographer and French historian who visited the Pavilion in 1937, praised Renau’s murals in their
effectiveness of presenting the realities of the external world (Mendelson 143). Through the juxtaposition of text and image, the murals, as works of art, functioned to disseminate the histories of the Republic and as a result Renau aided the Republic in improving its image and defending its ideals. It is through these photomurals that the Republic was able to present to the world its efforts in educating Spain, creating equality among citizens, and preserving traditional Spanish culture.

Renau’s photomural “Missions pedagogiques de l’Espagne” effectively portrays the republican Misiones Pedagógicas (Pedagogical Missions), expressing their esteem for education and the less fortunate spheres of Spain (Fig. 7) (Alíx Trueba 145). The Misiones were established on May 29, 1931, in the Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas, which stated its purpose:

Hay en este propósito, además del beneficio que la enseñanza nacional puede recibir, el deber en que se halla el nuevo régimen de levantar el nivel cultural y ciudadano, de suerte que las gentes puedan convertirse en colaboradores del progreso nacional y ayudar a la obra de incorporación de España al conjunto de los pueblos más adelantados (qtd. in Caudet 87)

Therefore, through these Misiones the Republic intended to provide the poorest regions in Spain with the culture, history and citizenship they were lacking, in order to establish a progressive society that engaged these people of rural Spain. The Misiones consisted of groups of Republican citizens from urban centers who traveled to rural Spanish towns in order to educate citizens by exposing them to forms of Spanish cultural production. As Caudet points out in his study on the Misiones, they were centered on the belief that citizens who were exposed to culture “podían contribuir a que el pueblo…se integra por
la cultura en la vida política, social y económica” (Caudet 84). This idea is strengthened by Sandie Holguin in her essay on the Misiones, where she links the Misiones to the ideological base of the Institución de Eseñanza Libre in their belief that “once the spirit was nourished, economic success would follow,” meaning that the Republic was feeding the spirit of the people with culture while creating “a national identity that was held together by the glue of culture” (Holguin 48). The Misiones Pedagógicas included the establishment of libraries, the production of theatrical and choral performances, and a circulating museum that exposed citizens to Spanish art history (93). Renau’s photomural portrays another practice of the Misiones, the screening of films. The Renau murals representing the Misiones Pedagógicas are three panels of photographs and text including a quote from the original decree stating the purpose of the Misiones and the following: LES ENVOYÉS DE LA REPUBLIQUE ONT APPORTE DANS LES COINS LES PLUS RECULES DU TERRITOIRE ESPAGNOL LE TRESOR HUMAIN DE LA CULTURE NATIONALE ET UNIVERSELLE (The envoys of the Republic brought to the most remote corners of Spain the human treasure of national and universal culture) (qtd. in Alíx Trueba 144). One can presume that the use of French was strategic in order to accommodate the average visitor to the Pavilion; nevertheless this text frames the mural’s message, that culture was a national treasure and it was of importance to the Republic to disseminate this culture to the far reaches of remote Spain. The panel to the left in this series depicts a young girl happily reading from a book. To her left, the main panel features an aerial photograph of rural Spain with a small town highlighted among hills and valleys juxtaposed with an image of Spanish children and adults seated together looking upwards with facial expressions of awe and delight. Above them a stylized film
projector produces four strings of light, which cross the photograph of the expanse of rural Spanish countryside and connect to the adjacent panel, producing the image of two playful penguins. The Spaniards’ joyful and astonished expressions, the result of viewing the film reel of penguins, create a poignant and engaging effect so that the visitors to the Pavilion were able to partake in this joyful event. The image of rural Spain physically separates the people from the image of the penguins, but the film projector connects them metaphorically, representing the Misiones. This mural exemplifies the Republic’s appreciation of culture and their belief that culture was compulsory for a progressive society.

Another collection of photomurals, “Defensa del patrimonio artístico nacional (Museos, Bibliotecas),” functioned as means of positing a positive, heroic image of the Republic, specifically in reference to its preservation of art from destruction by Nationalists bombs (Fig. 8). This mural narrated the status of Spain’s national heritage, specifically the collection of art from the national art museum of Spain: El Museo del Prado. This series of three panels educate viewers on the efforts of the Republic to protect and ultimately save these artworks through the decision to move the collection from Madrid to Valencia in early November of 1936. Days before, the Republican government had moved itself to Valencia for fear of the imminent fall of Madrid; thus, it was imperative to move the art as well, not only so it could remain with its government, but more importantly to avoid the impending bombing of the city (Preston 164). The panel on the left contains the most telling of the mural’s text:

---

10 In late November of 1936 Franco ordered the bombing of Madrid, with the goal of forcing the Republic to surrender. From November 19 to 22 Madrid was tested like no city had been before. Some 150 people were killed (Thomas 471).
The Republican Government, intellectuals, workers and farmers in arms gave all their efforts to defend the assets of traditional culture. The pictures, sculptures, books and treasured historical Spanish documents were saved from bombs and flames (qtd. in Alíx Trueba 146)
this panel is another one of equal stature and an equally powerful message, stating that the Prado was bombed on November 16, 1936, and featuring the museum’s blueprint flecked with targets to mark where bombs fell. Although there is no further accompanying text, this panel speaks for itself, clearly demonstrating the damage that was done and implying the obliteration of the nation’s art collection that would have happened had it not been for the Republic’s heroic efforts. The main panel at the center of this series is three times the size of its counterparts and portrays an artistic rendering of the evacuation of the Museo del Prado (Fig. 10). On the left side of the panel is an enumeration of the renowned artists whose works were removed safely from the Prado, and it explains that the works were protected in the Torres de Serranos in Valencia. Although this panel lacks photographs, the use of images within it is instrumental. In the foreground to the left are two large black towers, resembling military forts, to represent the Torres de Serranos, and to the right is a large replica of La trinidad by El Greco, being carried by a pair of large white hands, protecting it from the flames that engulf Madrid and the airplanes flying above. The use of this Catholic masterpiece is curious, as the Nationalists were promoters of Catholicism, and the Republic did not recognize any official, state religion. Therefore, while the Republic had no official religion, the decision to use a Catholic painting in this mural indicates that in the case of art, religion was permitted to be a part of Spanish heritage. On the bottom of the panel is a truck that drives toward the towers and a jagged line traces the trajectory from the flaming cityscape of Madrid to the empty space that is Valencia, the path to freedom from the threat of attack. This series of images is powerful in portraying the chaos of Madrid and

11 Franco’s nationalist party was fundamentally Catholic, with the intention to impose Catholicism as the national religion of Spain (Thomas 275-76)
the God-like hands of the Republic carrying this masterpiece of its patrimony protecting it from danger. This combination of images evokes heroism, power and destruction, with an El Greco at the center, a symbol of the politics and value of art that represents a nation.

This representation of the preservation of the Prado collection was also very important in that it commemorated a very proud moment for the Republic, and functioned to deliver the true story behind this event. Prior Nationalist rumors asserted that the Republic was guilty of destruction of national culture, and through this mural, exemplifying the extreme efforts made in the name of art, such claims were debunked (Daniel 68). This commemoration is also important in that it was a precursor to a pivotal moment in February of 1937 when the Republicans were besieged and forced to give up the Prado collection for the sake of its well-being and protection. The collection was given to an international committee in Switzerland where it would be safe (68). While Renau’s mural assures that the collection is safe at the time of the exposition, it fails to recognize that the art is no longer in the possession of the Republic. This moment of losing the Prado's collection is essential to understand not only as it foreshadowed the imminent fall of the Republic, it marked the Republic’s loss of a part of what it had been fighting for since 1931, not only art and cultural heritage but national heritage, the creations that defined Spain as a nation. The isolated incident of the evacuation of the Prado was a shining moment for the Republic, and though it was fleeting, its representation in Renau’s mural reflects that the Republic was more concerned about the art itself than possessing it. With this principle we are able to understand why the Republicans had planned the entire Pavilion around art. The art of the Prado, as well as
the art of the Pavilion fell under the category of artistic patrimony, works of art to represent the Spanish nation, tradition, and national identity.

While *Guernica* is a testimony against fascism, and in favor of the Republic, it is important to recognize that these factors are largely a result of Picasso’s doing, in his creation of the work, and his role within the Republic. While the creation of *Guernica* can be perceived as a very public and apparent act of Republican support, friends of Picasso remark that until the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic, the artist was largely apathetic in reference to his homeland’s politics (Freedberg 605). On September 19, 1936, Picasso was named the honorary director of the Prado, a public statement of his support for the Republic since during this time the Prado was under Republican rule (Van Hensbergen 23)\(^\text{12}\). Although Picasso is said to have supported the Republic’s efforts since its establishment, not until January of 1937 did he represent support of the Republic in his art (Freedberg 604). These works, *Sueño y mentira de Franco* were two cartoon-like etchings that illustrated Picasso’s reaction to Franco’s brutality (Fig. 11). Shortly after meeting with Republicans and accepting his commission to create a painting for the Spanish Pavilion, Picasso created these etchings, which served as further evidence of his sympathy with the Republic (Calvo Serraller 9). In May of 1937, while Picasso was working on *Guernica*, word spread that he was in support of Franco, a rumor that infuriated Picasso and drove him to release a public statement:

La lucha española es la batalla librada por la reacción contra el pueblo y la libertad. Mi vida entera ha sido una lucha continuada contra la reacción y la

\(^{12}\) This appointment was largely symbolic as Picasso resided in Paris and did not set foot in Spain during his occupation of the position and thus he had no real control of what was happening at the Museum (Calvo Serraller 7). Months later the contents of the Prado were evacuated from Madrid for their safety and Picasso remarked that he was “the director of a phantom museum, of a Prado emptied of its masterpieces” (qtd. in Brassai 198).
muerte del arte. ¿Cómo podría cualquiera pensar por un momento que podría estar en el acuerdo con la reacción y la muerte? Cuando comenzó la rebelión, el Gobierno republicano español legalmente promovido por el pueblo me nombró director del Museo del Prado, puesto que acepté inmediatamente. En el panel en el cual estoy trabajando, a que llamaré Guernica, y en todas mis obras de arte recientes, expresó claramente mi aborrecimiento de la casta militar que ha hundido España en un océano del dolor y de la muerte (qtd. in Larrea and Pach 13)

Picasso intended, in accepting the appointment to be director of the Prado, to show his support for the Republic, and Guernica serves as an extension of this support. In accepting the commission for a mural for the Spanish Pavilion, it was clear that no matter what Picasso painted, because it would be a part of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Exposition of 1937, it would be known as a political work of art. That being said, Picasso did not by any means leave it up to the Pavilion to assert the political nature of Guernica; he created a unique, unprecedented composition with the power to condemn fascism and gain the attention of an international audience, exactly what the Republic had wanted.

In reference to looking for subjects for his paintings, Picasso is quoted famously responding “yo no busco, encuentro,” which is exactly the case for Guernica. Less than a year later, after the war began on April 26, 1937, Franco ordered an aerial bombing of the small Basque town of Gernika (Patterson 17). This attack on Gernika was especially shocking and brutal due to its nature as the first instance in the Spanish Civil War in which a civilian town lacking military defense was made a target of attack (Patterson 17). The terror occurred on a market day where the citizens of Gernika and surrounding Basque villages were in the center of town doing their weekly shopping; as a result, 1,654
people were killed and 889 were injured (29). The tragedy of Gernika made news on an international level with photographs of the destroyed town on the front page of newspapers (Martínez 5). The morning after the attack Picasso awoke to images of Gernika in ruin, strewn across his daily newspaper, L’humanité; he had found his muse for the Republic’s commission (5).

When asked to explain Guernica to the public, Picasso insisted “The public who look at the picture must see…symbols which they interpret as they understand them…It’s up to the public to see what it wants to see,” however, the fact that it was specifically commissioned for the Spanish Republican Pavilion resolves any doubts about its depiction of a Republican tragedy, and its purpose, to support the Republic (Barr “Symposium” 14). At present, numerous theories prevail on the meaning behind each of Picasso’s characters in Guernica, and as a result, to be a researcher of Guernica and to come up with an original analysis of the actual work is near impossible, not only due to the credibility of existing arguments, but also because as distorted and abstract as many of the figures appear, within the context of the Republic and the War, their significance is within reach. As far as methodology in analyzing Guernica, a divide and conquer method proves most effective as Guernica is a composition of many separate components, or rather characters. To seek meaning in Guernica, it is necessary to recognize each of the figures that Picasso portrayed. In his approach to analyze Guernica, Eberhard Fisch refers to the figures that make up Guernica as “motifs” and states “several different motifs – each of which is complex in itself – are combined. But their combination in this picture brings their possible meanings and associative power into focus” (Fisch 24-5). Based on
this methodology, I argue that through the close examination of each motif individually, as a whole Guernica attests to a Republican ideology.

The abstract, Cubist forms Picasso employed create a powerful composition full of symbolism that traditional realism would not have accomplished (Fig. 12). The meaning of Guernica, or rather the meaning behind each motif, is a subject of debate; however, in analyzing these images through the lens of the Republic and the War, much uncertainty is resolved. The mother and child, located on the far left of the painting is a testament to the tragedy that the Republic suffered in the bombing of Guernica. The mother is undoubtedly wailing; her head is contorted upwards with her mouth wide open, a sharp tongue pointing to the ceiling. Her tear-shaped eyes lack direction, as though to assert that she doesn’t know where to look or what to do. Even her nostrils are the shapes of tears; she is the personification of tragedy. Eberhard Fisch stresses that the way in which the mother holds her child asserts that he is dead (Fisch 25). Aside from the mother’s apparent distress, the frail, limp appearance of the child’s body, as well as his blank eyes, support this theory. Van Hensbergen associates this woman and child with Michelangelo’s Pieta; it is the emblematic image of a mother mourning over her child (Van Hensbergen, “Piecing”). In terms of the Republic, this mother could represent Spain mourning over the loss of her children, Spaniards who died in the war, or even more simply, the Spanish mothers who lost children in the war.

Directly to the right, beside the woman and child is the bull, a figure that has inspired much dispute due to its seemingly unsentimental expression. This majestic animal stands in the midst of chaos yet appears unaffected and, with his mouth open and eyes glazed over, he appears to be in a daydream. Some scholars, like Vernon Clark,
believe that the bull represents the fascist brutality, the enemy who sees the tragedy without emotion (Clark 75-6). Another theory, from Rudolf Arnheim, is that Picasso represented himself as the bull, a symbol of Spanish heritage, as a sort of savior of their nation in the midst of unrest (Arnheim “Picasso at Guernica” 78). Both theories are credible in the light of the Republican tragedy; however, I agree with Clark, that the bull represents the brutal fascists and their cruelty and blatant lack of humanity. Also, the bull is the least contorted figure in Guernica; thus, he is the least ravaged by the war.

To the right of the bull is his fellow bullfight performer, the horse, an extremely emotional figure due to its appearance, fiercely contorted and screaming with a dagger-like tongue. A spear-like weapon appears to have been stabbed through his torso horribly entering in his back and escaping through his stomach. Many scholars, including Arnheim, recognize the horse as the victims of the war: Republicans and the Spanish civilians (Arnheim “Picasso’s Guernica” 28). Van Hensbergen adds that the horse is known as the companion of man, and so this horse, obviously in pain, is meant to gain sympathy; watching this horse suffer can be equated with watching a friend suffer (Van Hensbergen “Piecing”). Juan Larrea has a unique theory that the horse represents “ignoble Nationalist Spain,” perhaps drawing from the grotesque imagery used to depict the horse (Larrea 34). This bull-horse pairing is often associated with the bullfight. Herschel B. Chipp wrote an entire chapter on the concept of the bullfight that is present in Guernica; this motif of struggle between enemies fits very well with the ideas of Arnheim and Van Hensbergen in the context of war (Chipp 103). I agree that the horse is the victim, and he expresses the pain of war in his expression and warped body.
Below the horse, practically under its hooves, is a physically broken man, perhaps to represent the broken Republic, consisting of a head and two arms. He is being trampled by war, and his two arms and head are all that remain of him, and are all disjointed. His open mouth and eyes further emphasize his state of death. It is very interesting to compare his two arms; one is completely inhuman and lifeless, full of scratches and cuts and even has black fingernails. The other holds a flower and a dagger in its fist and is much more lifelike, with some scratches or cuts on the forearm and a rather pristine hand holding tightly onto his weapon while the flower seems to grow out if his fist, perhaps as a sign of hope. Van Hensbergen indicates that he is meant to represent a Republican soldier, with the emblematic fist, and the knife and flower as symbols of hope, virtue and dying without shame (Van Hensbergen, “Piecing”). I agree that the man represents a Republican soldier, as he is the most broken, and also that his intact arm with the dagger and flower may represent the concept of the soldiers as men of honor who were the Republic’s last hope.

At the top of the composition towards the left is a ceiling lamp in the shape of an eye with the light bulb as the pupil and rays of light emanating from it like sharp, spiky eyelashes. Van Hensbergen indicates this light has been associated with the bombs of Gernika, but also the eye of God or even Picasso, watching over the town. In my opinion, the overhead lamp illuminates this scene and thus makes it visible, so it is meant to represent the bombs. More evidence to this theory is that several diagonal lines formed within the composition point to the lamp as though pointing to the source, and the rays of light that emanate from it are chaotic and sharp. It is not a warm light to guide the way or
bring hope, it is crude with its exposed light bulb; I believe its eye-like shape is either coincidental or intentional by Picasso to create ambiguity.

To the right, at the top of the composition, there is a woman with one outstretched arm holding a torch emerging from through a window frame; she appears to be worried; however, her action and the torch portray her coming to the rescue, shining a light on the scene, swooping in to help. She recalls the Statue of Liberty raising her torch in the air, and I interpret her as hope, as the Republican spirit emerging from outside, coming to the rescue. Below her is another woman who appears to run towards the center of the painting in a diagonal path. She has often been interpreted to be fleeing the scene as she is in the motion of running, almost like a runner at the beginning of a sprint (Van Hensbergen, “Piecing”). Ellen C. Oppler has associated her with the refugees who were leaving Spain at this time (Oppler 77).

The final human figure, another woman, furthest on the right holds her arms in the air, and screams as it appears that she is being consumed in flames. She too has eyes and nostrils shaped like teardrops and her head is bent impossibly far backwards attempting to look upwards or perhaps to escape the flames. Van Hensbergen characterized these women as the women of Picasso, his mother and sister who were in Spain during the war, and his lovers. Although Picasso never returned to Spain, living in Paris for the years of war until his death, his family was in Barcelona; he was also a notorious womanizer, so it is possible that these women had personal meaning for Picasso (Penrose 94). I interpret all of the women to be Republicans suffering from the war, either in pain themselves, or because they watched their friends, loved ones, and/or fellow citizens suffer.
Between the bull and the horse there is a dark bird with one white wing, which has been interpreted to be a dove that has been crushed in order to represent the peace that the nationalists squandered. Throughout the composition, all of the figures’ eyes are visible; there are no profiles, true to Picasso’s style, and no emotion is spared. Curiously, the scene takes place indoors, as evident from the perspective lines framing the walls and ceiling of a room, as well as the floor tiles. An arrow is strewn in the mess between the horse and the broken soldier, perhaps to point to the way out; however, in this enclosed, chaotic space, there is no safe way out, like the war for the Republicans. The black, white and gray tones of the painting reflect the newspapers where Picasso first perceived the Gernika attack; however, the complete lack of realism defeats a direct reference to the press, instead perhaps using the newspaper to color the scene in order to provide it with the credibility that a newspaper has. When I look at Guernica, I am subconsciously drawn to the gash in the middle of the composition, painted over the horse figure, like a black hole in the canvas. While it is located on top of the figure of the horse, it is drawn slightly beyond the horse’s outline, suggesting that perhaps Picasso wanted to paint what it would look like if someone took a knife and cut through the painting’s canvas. To me, this gash completes the work in that there is so much pain and suffering, that the work itself is damaged and broken. Its inclusion only makes the work more painful, suggesting that if one were to damage Guernica in such a way, they would only be worsening the situation. The effect of a thorough visual analysis of Guernica is nearly sickening. Guernica was created to produce an effect within the viewer, to inspire distress, sympathy or fear. I believe that to stand before Guernica and not feel anything is only possible with one’s eyes closed. In that same moment of reaction to the painting, the next
rational thought is to question what are these awful images? The war-torn Republic. Picasso effectively forces *Guernica*'s viewers to respond to the painting whether consciously or not, in the attempt to instill in them the slightest fraction of what the Republic was feeling in 1937. Like its allies within the Pavilion, *Guernica* serves to represent the Republic, educate the viewer, and rally support for the Republic. *Guernica* is an effective weapon in the fight against fascism.

Following *Guernica*'s debut in the Pavilion, it eclipsed the major event that it portrayed; art and history merged within the canvas, only adding to its influential power, which was utilized, while the canvas toured the world, in raising funds for the Republic. The Republic’s strong efforts in the Pavilion to represent Republican culture and values with a political agenda largely shaped the reception of *Guernica*, and had *Guernica* not made its debut to the world enclosed in a space of Republican ideology, it never would have attained such a strong political persuasion. While the Pavilion was demolished at the end of the Paris Exposition, and the Republicans lost the war, in the end the Republic left a legacy that lives on within its art.

During the spring of 2010 the Museo del Prado held an exhibition entitled *Arte salvado*, which celebrated the Republic’s efforts some seventy years ago to preserve the masterpieces of the Prado. This exhibition served as a reminder to the world about the Republican reverence for Spanish culture and tradition. In an introduction to the exhibition, the Spanish President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero said:

Las autoridades republicanas pusieron entonces todo su empeño en evitar que las obras de arte que constituyen uno de los elementos esenciales de nuestro patrimonio y de nuestra identidad, sufrieran un solo rasguño en medio de los
terribles combates y el desorden provocados por la contienda. La conciencia de la importancia de este patrimonio era tal que el presidente de la República, Manuel Azaña, ante la posibilidad de que alguno de los tesoros del arte español sufriera daños irreversibles, llegó a decir: ‘Es más importante la salvación del Prado que la propia República.’ El destino de España se percibía como irremediablemente unido al destino de su patrimonio. Porque, como apuntó Bertolt Brecht en julio de 1937, ‘con cada hectárea de suelo se defiende un centímetro cuadrado de una pintura del Prado.’ (Zapatero 3)

This modern day homage to the Republic and its president, from the words of the current president, is a reflection of the Republican respect for art, which not only served to maintain Spanish national identity, tradition and culture it was also a major Republican motivation in fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Through the Pavilion, the Republic created a whole new collection of works to add to its artistic patrimony and to represent a new chapter in Spanish history. Today in the center of Madrid, the original capital of the Republic, there are two national art museums, the Museo del Prado, containing the art that the Republic went to great lengths to preserve, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, containing the art that the Republic went to great lengths to produce and disseminate, with its most notable artwork being *Guernica*. It is in this context of the Republic that *Guernica* was born, and it is through Republican action, through being a weapon of the Republican ideology, that its fame and power only grew with the passage of time. The simple ideals of equality and humanism that started the Republic are what *Guernica* fights for, to this day.
Appendix: Chapter 1

(Fig. 10) Renau, Josep. *Defensa del Patrimonio Artístico Nacional* (close-up). 1937.


<http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3ADE%3AI%3A2%3AAD%3AE%3A4609&page_number=322&template_id=1&sort_order=1>. 
Chapter 2. Distancing *Guernica* and Gernika: Anti-War Icon in Exile

Although Picasso’s last visit to Spain was in 1934, essentially, his last trip home was in the summer of 1937, when he visited the Spanish Pavilion in Paris (Van Hensbergen 81). It is said that upon arrival at the Pavilion, Picasso removed his shoes and entered the Pavilion’s threshold barefoot. Van Hensbergen compares this symbolic act to “a Muslim entering a Mosque or a Jew treading on the sandy floor of the synagogue” (81). Picasso, surely aware of the grave state of his actual homeland, relished this opportunity, as Van Hensbergen explains it “to walk once again on the brown earth of Spain” (81). Although Picasso may not have realized, from the end of that visit to his death, he was an exile, like many of his fellow Spanish Republicans, and, at the end of the Paris Exposition in 1938, *Guernica* was one as well. Although *Guernica* had never been to Spain before its “homecoming” in 1981, its existence within the Spanish Pavilion and its allegiance to the Republic afforded it Spanish citizenship. Therefore, in the period of time from 1938 to 1981, while *Guernica* resided outside of Spanish territory, it was in exile.

In this chapter I will layout three phases that occurred over these four consecutive decades, which I will treat as case studies and environments in which *Guernica* was transformed, while influencing audiences around the world. I will argue that during this period of exile, through these phases, *Guernica* evolved to the point where it no longer solely represented a small Basque town and referenced the Republican fight against fascism. *Guernica* became the representation of Dresden, Berlin, Hiroshima, and many other defenseless civilian zones that fell prey to war, and it referenced the anti-war movements that arose, with a peak in the United States during the Vietnam War in the 1970s.
At the time of Guernica’s creation, its Republican, anti-fascist association laid the foundations for its significance; in the years of exile, these ideals, removed from Spanish territory, afforded it transnational appeal. It is important in acknowledging Guernica’s exile, to recognize that the years it spent outside of Spain are largely the result of Picasso’s requests, in addition to its being unwelcome in Spain. Picasso recognized Franco’s Spain as an unsuitable environment for his inherently Spanish, Republican masterpiece, and without a doubt, Franco recognized Guernica as a threat to his dictatorship. However, Picasso always intended to send Guernica to Spain one day, once a democratic government was established (Esteban Leal 231). In her essay, “Estudios visuales e imaginación global,” Susan Buck-Morss discusses the connection between images and globalization. Buck-Morss states that “La fuerza de la imagen surge cuando se desprende de su contexto” (Buck-Morrs 157). Guernica as an image, therefore, was most tested during its years of exile, when it was removed from its initial context, to prove its “fuerza” or “force,” while thriving during World War II and the Cold War. Steven A. Nash supports Buck-Morss’s theory in his discussion of Guernica, stating that Guernica’s ultimate meaning lies outside of its context. Nash writes, “the true meaning of the painting is lifted out of space and time coordinates in the civil war to become a summa on all wars and all victims” (Nash 17). It is during this period of exile that Guernica as this “summa,” gained the “force” necessary to emerge as a universal anti-war icon.

Phase 1. The 1940s: Exiles Seek Refuge While World War II Intensifies.

For Guernica, the end of the Paris Exposition was an opportunity to serve as an emissary for the Republic in order to disseminate a message of anti-fascism to a larger
Lesser 53

audience around the world. From the end of the Paris Exposition in November of 1937 until November of 1939, *Guernica* traveled in support of the Republic, raising funds for Republican soldiers and refugees, as well as raising awareness of the dire situation that fascism was creating in Spain. As Gijs van Hensbergen explains, *Guernica* “had a job to do” (Van Hensbergen 83). *Guernica* also became a means by which to encourage volunteers to join the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War (82). In 1938 Picasso lent *Guernica* to a traveling exhibition organized by Paul Rosenberg, an art dealer who became Picasso’s only conduit, including 118 paintings by Matisse, Picasso, Braque, and Laurens (83). The exhibition visited Norway, Denmark, and Sweden from January to April of 1938 (83). Within this setting, in contrast to its initial placement in the Spanish Pavilion, *Guernica* was “removed” and, as Herschel B. Chipp explains, “placed among largely retrospective works by artists who were at least as well known as Picasso, [*Guernica*] did not raise the heated controversy it had in Paris” (Chipp 156). Even so, Van Hensbergen remarks that *Guernica* was “the star” of this traveling exhibition (Van Hensbergen 83). That September *Guernica* was returned to Picasso, who had already planned a British tour that would commence in October. *Guernica* was shown in London at the New Burlington Galleries from October 4th to 29th, where it received a relatively low attendance, especially in comparison to the subsequent exhibition. Across town in a working-class neighborhood, the Whitechapel Art Gallery attracted four times the crowds with its *Guernica* exhibition (Chipp 156). Evidently, *Guernica* was more intriguing to the middle and lower class public, which is likely related to its democratic identity. The Whitechapel exhibition charged visitors a pair of boots as admission which were all then lined up in rows on the gallery floor in front of *Guernica* before being sent to Republican
troops in Spain, indicative of the dire straits of the Republican army (158). The British tour, ending in February of 1939 in Manchester, was characterized by art critics’ reactions of outrage and disapproval towards Guernica, denouncing Picasso’s “social theme” and accusing him of being “detached” from the reality of the Spanish struggle (158). Nevertheless, this criticism afforded Guernica attention and exposure to further its cause, which it carted across the Atlantic to the United States. Picasso sent Guernica to New York to aid the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign at the Valentine Gallery in May of 1939, with proceeds sent to aid the wave of Spanish refugees who had fled their homeland two months prior as Franco declared his victory (160). It was subsequently sent on a tour of the United States, continuing to raise funds for Republican refugees, from August to October of 1939, making stops in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago (Oppler 41).

The period of time after the US refugee tour was a critical moment for Guernica in that it marked the beginning of its gradual transition from an icon of the Spanish Republican anti-fascism struggle to that of an increasingly universal anti-war icon. In September of 1939, World War II broke out with the German invasion of Poland; at the same time, Guernica was sent back to New York to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) for the 1939 Picasso retrospective, Picasso, Forty Years of His Art. Beginning at this moment, during the next four decades from 1939 to 1981, Guernica went through a series of phases, becoming gradually less Republican and more transnational, as a symbol to denounce war. Beginning with World War II, and continuing through the cold war, warfare became an everyday reality for a global audience. Attacks on Dresden, Berlin and Hiroshima all recalled Picasso’s tragic scene. The world became more familiar with
Guernica as it spent the majority of the next twenty years on tour throughout the United States and Europe, and its image increasingly evoked current events. Van Hensbergen writes that “particularly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Guernica’s imagery became more recognizable, indeed painfully familiar” (Van Hensbergen 5). During this time, Guernica’s existence outside of Spain and outside of a Spanish Republican setting afforded it exile status, allowing for this gradual disassociation from the Republic.

The Picasso retrospective at MoMA in New York in November of 1939 through January of 1940, was the first non-Republican stage for Guernica, and so it opened a set of metaphorical doors for the re-interpretation of the painting; this exhibition marks the beginning of Guernica’s first phase of exile during which it was still associated with its origins. Exile is a concept closely associated with the Spanish Civil War, as the war ended with a clear division in Spain between winners and losers, vencedores y vencidos, and many Republicans, as vencidos, had no better option than to enter exile. Franco’s victory marked not only the beginning of forty years of dictatorship, but also the end of the Republic within Spain and the beginning of its fragmented existence throughout exile territories. Most exiles left Spain in five major waves starting in September of 1936 and continuing through March of 1939, when the largest number of refugees left Spain (Kamen 279). In El exilio español (1936-1978), authors Julio Martín Casas and Pedro Carvajal Urquijo describe the commencement of exile during the Civil War: “En la España dividida por dos bandos irreconciliables se desató una violencia represiva, nunca antes conocida, que provocó las primeras avalanchas de refugiados” (Martín Casas 26).

The five waves of exile started in September of 1936, when the nationalists took over the Northern coast, in the late summer of 1937, when they occupied the Basque provinces, in the summer 1938, when they took over Aragon, in January and February of 1939, when the Catalan front was defeated, and finally in March of 1939 after Madrid was taken and the Nationalists proclaimed their victory (Kamen 279).
While France was a primary refuge for exiles to escape to, due to its proximity, other destinations included the Soviet Union, England, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, as well as the United States and territories in Latin America, most significantly in Mexico (280).\(^{14}\) In 1945 the Republic re-established itself, officially meeting as a government-in-exile in Mexico City, the largest center of Spanish Republican exiles (Faber 157-58). Among this body of exiles, there existed a significant number of intellectuals determined to pursue creative and scholarly freedom. The attention that *Guernica* received while in New York was a source of pride for exiles, and also a symbol that the Republic was still alive. The connection between *Guernica* and the restoration of the Republic in Spain was key, and *Guernica* became a symbol of hope that their own ability to return home was on the horizon. This body of Republican exiles watched as *Guernica* assumed celebrity, recognizing it as the Republican denunciation of fascism, reacting with their own cultural works to express Republican pride, while appropriating *Guernica* in order to strengthen their own anti-war messages. An example of this Republican exile reaction is apparent in the publication, *España Peregrina*, a Republican journal published by exiles in Mexico in 1940, which included *Guernica* in its first edition. In an article titled “Picasso en Nueva York,” Juan Larrea, a surrealist poet and intellectual in exile in Mexico who came to be a well-known *Guernica* scholar, wrote about the Picasso retrospective of 1939 at MoMA, *Picasso, Forty Years of His Art*, with an overwhelming sense of Republican pride. While giving the exhibition high praises, he recognizes Picasso as a fellow exile and a major aide in the Republican effort. At the end of the article he affirms the retrospective’s success and proclaims that a success for Picasso is a success for the Republic: “Su triunfo

---

\(^{14}\) The evacuation of children was a continuous effort during the war, resulting in the distribution of children throughout Europe and the Americas, often finding hardships concerning living conditions or political pressure (Kamen 280).
actual es considerado por nosotros como nuestro” (Larrea 36). *Guernica* is the only work Larrea discusses from the exhibition, and does so righteously and passionately expressing delight and awe:

> Fruto del insoportable aguijón de angustia fue ese extraordinario *Guernica* que hoy en la Exposición de Nueva York ocupa el testero de honor que le corresponde como al cuadro moderno más famoso del mundo...un torbellino delirante que arrebata al espectador como una ola enfurecida para sacudirle y dejarle en cualquier rincón con el alma para siempre amoratada (Larrea 36)

One can only assume that for Larrea, as a Spaniard, a Republican and an exile, this exhibition of *Guernica* held intimate, emotional significance, and hope for the future.

Key to the consideration of this phase is World War II, which consumed the political and social landscape; brutal scenes of warfare effectively translated *Guernica* into everyday life. Although, within the MoMA retrospective, *Guernica* was not recognized at the time as one of Picasso’s greatest works, it was acknowledged as representative of his most recent work and, more importantly, in the throes of the War, *Guernica* presented a familiar, memorable scene to audiences. This phenomenon began with the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, during which *Guernica* was touring the United States, and so Americans faced with this reality gained a truer understanding of the painting. The following major attacks of World War II included Berlin, Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and again *Guernica* provided an illustration of the tragedies.

Meanwhile, during World War II, Picasso remained in Paris where he was forced to deal with Nazi confrontation; *Guernica* had marked him as a rebel in World War II Paris. Pierre Daix explains: “Because of *Guernica*, Picasso had become a symbol of
intellectual resistance to the Nazis” (Daix 263). In a *Newsweek* article of 1944, titled “Picasso and the Gestapo,” Picasso confirmed an anecdote that had been rumored to be true about a Nazi soldier who visited his studio. The soldier pointed to a copy of *Guernica* that Picasso had hanging on the wall and asked Picasso, “Did you do that?” Picasso famously responded: “No, you did” (“Picasso” 98). He also claimed that, as the soldiers would leave his apartment, at the end of these frequent visits, he would pass out postcards of *Guernica* as a “souvenir” (“Picasso” 100).

**Phase 2. The 1950s: Condemnations Ensue While Travel Comes to a Halt.**

While the 1950s brought on the disquieting Cold War, *Guernica* traversed its final rounds of peripatetic exile. After residing at the MoMA from 1942 to 1953, *Guernica* toured the world continuously from 1953 to 1958, and was once again in the spotlight. Van Hensbergen compares *Guernica* to a “theatre backdrop” in the way it could be disassembled, rolled up and shipped away in a box as it moved from venue to venue (Van Hensbergen 82). These five final years of travel in the 50s, in addition to the initial six years after *Guernica*’s creation and its stay at MoMA, resulted in serious damage to the canvas, to the point where it could no longer support the stress. Consequently, *Guernica* was deemed unfit for further travel for fear of permanent damage, and so in 1958, it ceased to travel. Andrea Giunta uses the damage that *Guernica* underwent during this time to mirror the erasure of its original meaning, which at this time was accelerating. Giunta states:

---

15 In 1953 *Guernica* traveled to Milan and Brazil, in 1955 it traveled to Paris and Munich, in 1956 it traveled to Germany, Brussels, Amsterdam, Stockholm and Moscow, in 1957 it returned to MoMa, then was sent to Chicago and in 1958 it made its final trip to Philadelphia, before being returned to MoMA permanently where it would stay until 1981, when it was sent to Madrid (Oppler 42-44).
All the superlatives that one hears at the merest mention of Picasso’s *Guernica* suddenly vanish when one describes the actual surface of the painting. Tears, missing pieces, cracks, accretions, reinforcements, deformations, holes, dirt, crevasses, rips, retouching, microfissures, warps, relocations, rebuilding, wear and tear: the terms refer more to a ruin than to a splendid icon of the twentieth century. In its current condition, it might be wondered if it hasn’t all but disappeared, if what we now see isn’t the mummification of the work that was once painted to shock the world, if what is now exhibited is hardly more than its cadaver.

However, as history has demonstrated, the dead don’t necessarily lose their power. Occasionally they continue to grow (Giunta 750)

Giunta essentially affirms that the Republican life that *Guernica* once embodied died during this period in which it was physically damaged; however, the multiple readings that came to replace that original message only made *Guernica*, as she deems, an “icon of the twentieth century” even stronger.

As *Guernica* became so closely aligned with an anti-war message, it also lent itself to movements for peace, and so did Picasso (Van Hensbergen 3). In 1949 Picasso’s “peace dove” served as the logo for the World Peace Congress in Paris (Oppler 42). The next year, in June of 1950, the Korean War broke out, and in October Picasso attended the World Peace Congress in Sheffield, England. Again, he designed an image for the poster, this time a dove in flight (42). That November Picasso received his first Lenin Peace prize for painting (42)\(^{16}\). In January of 1951, Picasso painted *Massacre en Corée* (*Massacre in Korea*), a painting that criticized the American troops in Korea, which went

---

\(^{16}\) Picasso won a second Lenin Peace Prize in 1962. The Soviet Union award Picasso with the Lenin Peace Prize to recognize his work for Peace. Earlier, in 1944, Picasso publicly announced that he was a member of the French Communist Party (Oppler 42).
fairly unnoticed by the critical community, much to Picasso’s dismay (Fig. 1) (Van Hensbergen 203). The painting is an unmistakable reference to Francisco de Goya’s *El tres de mayo de 1808* (1814), a work to illustrate the Spanish War of Independence, particularly the executions of Spaniards by French troops. *Massacre en Corée* depicts an outdoor scene of presumably American soldiers on the right, clad in grey that renders them naked and at the same time wearing armor. They point firearms resembling jousting or fencing swords, at a naked, innocent Korean family. The pregnant mother only intensifies the tone of cruelty and inhumanity. The painting is interesting in that the Koreans become successively less abstract in their renderings from left to right, moving from twisted expressions of distress and pain to a simple sad looking girl to a rather lifelike baby on the ground. In contrast, the “American soldiers” are the furthest from realistic, perhaps suggesting that they lack humanism and compassion. Van Hensbergen recognizes the work as a “pendant piece” to *Guernica* (204). Picasso is quoted as saying to his friend about the work, “That picture threw people, and did not appeal. But I myself have begun to see it for what it is, and I know why it was met with surprise: I had not done *Guernica* over again – which was what people were expecting” (qtd. in Van Hensbergen 204-5). I would argue that in this quote Picasso captured perfectly what this painting meant in 1951. It was painful to look at for Americans, and it was not the powerful yet enigmatic *Guernica*; artists, art critics and intellectuals yearned for *Guernica*’s sequel, but evidently in the continuance of war and the destruction of human lives, the world had not learned from the original’s lesson. *Massacre en Corée* was what Picasso was willing to contribute instead: a blatant condemnation. In using similar imagery to that of *Guernica*--the twisted faces, the black, white and grey angular forms
and bodies--Picasso recalled *Guernica*, but this time in reference to Korea. Picasso himself associated *Guernica* with Korea in this instance, and effectively assisted in moving *Guernica* away from Gernika.

In the late 1950s, Fernando Arrabal (1932-), a Spanish playwright in exile in Paris, wrote his play *Guernica* (1959), appropriating Picasso’s images in order to emphasize his anti-war ideology. Arrabal’s *Guernica* is the story of a Basque couple that find themselves trapped in their collapsing house during the April 27, 1937 bombing of Gernika. The audience witnesses what will be their final dialogue and death. Lira, the wife character, was using the bathroom at the time of an air raid, where she is now stuck and partially buried under debris. Lira speaks to her husband, Fanchu, who is on the other side of the door, in a crazed state having a hard time grasping the situation at hand. Fanchu constantly wills his wife to stand up and get out of the bathroom; however, Lira, slightly more aware of the dire situation as she is partially buried in debris, whimpers and whines, insisting that she is stuck and cannot get out. She asks Fanchu to come rescue her but he seems to not hear her and rambles on, telling her to get herself out. Interspersed in this dialogue, Lira and Fanchu bicker about their marriage, their love for each other, and Lira repeatedly asks her husband to look out the window to make sure the Gernika Oak, the symbol of Basque identity, is still standing. We find out that they had a son, who was killed in Burgos during the war. There are several references to the war and to Franco, “el general;” Lira wonders when the war will end and Fanchu answers pessimistically, saying “el general” will not stop until he has control over all of Spain. As their exchange continues, numerous air raids interrupt them and each time Lira becomes more worried.

---

17 Arrabal wrote *Guernica* in 1959 and it was published in Spain under the anagram *Ciugrena* (Oppler 190). It was first performed in German, in Germany in 1960, and it was published in French in 1961, then in English in 1969.
and hurt, and Fanchu becomes more insistent that Lira simply unbury herself and come out of the bathroom. It is not until the end of the play that Fanchu climbs over the wall to rescue Lira, at the same time that an air raid sounds and they are both swallowed in rubble, meeting their deaths.

The war was fundamental to Arrabal’s childhood and upbringing, since he was born in 1932 and lived in Spain during the war and early years of dictatorship; thus, his play functions as a reaction to his own personal experiences with these hardships (Oppler 193). Arrabal draws upon the theme of the innocent lives that were taken in the face of war, and includes in the stage directions “ver cuadro de Picasso,” directly linking the play to Picasso’s Guernica (Arrabal 113). In the instances where Arrabal includes this direction, a mother and child enter the stage, overtaking the Fanchu-Lira dialog, as they cross the stage with expressions of distress, in search of safety. Arrabal writes in his stage directions “Durante el bombardeo atraviesan el escenario, de derecha a izquierda, una mujer y una niña con aspecto irritado e impotente (ver cuadro de Picasso)” (Arrabal 113). This mother and child element is inspired from Picasso’s mother and child pictured on the far left of Picasso’s Guernica, and they enter the stage three times. The final time the child is replaced with a small coffin, which the mother carries. This scene is especially powerful, portaying the mother’s loss of her child, and creating the image to describe that now she must carry this tragedy with her for the rest of her life. As the play draws to a close, the audience watches as Lira and Fanchu bicker in a rather childish manner, only to realize their love for one another immediately before being buried alive in their own home. Arrabal’s decision to draw inspiration from Guernica not only aids in the physical imagery of the play, but it also sets the play’s tone, which is extremely dark, and could be
lost or misconstrued without the reference to Guernica that one experiences through the title as well as the scenery and the script. Arrabal appropriates Guernica through the quintessential image of mother and daughter to present a simple scenario of tragedy. Picasso’s figures become real people, and Arrabal effectively translates the painting into a relatable, everyday scenario, essentially exemplifying the reality behind Guernica’s abstract images.

In 1959, when Arrabal’s play was first published in Spain, it was modified in order to avoid censorship, but was done in such a way to maintain its criticism of the war and Franco (Oppler 190). The title was changed to Ciugrena, an anagram of the letters in Guernica, and the stage directions referring to Picasso’s painting were omitted. In the 1965 version of Ciugrena the references to Picasso are present. The fact that it had to be modified at all speaks to the controversial nature of the work that Franco’s Spain would not tolerate, because of its criticism of Franco. Ciugrena was possibly decoded by Spaniards suffering in Spain and recognized as a smart, masked criticism of Franco’s brutality. Through appropriating Picasso’s Guernica in his own Guernica, Arrabal creates a palpable and eloquent anti-war message that allows him to speak beyond the specific tragedy of Gernika and not only make the criticisms of fascism and Franco that are inherent to Picasso’s work, but also utilize its power to emphasize the tragedies of war.


While exile was the best option for many Spaniards, some did not leave Spain and suffered under Franco, in inner exile. Paul Preston describes “inner exile” as “the conscious retreat into a private world in a society whose values are alien” (Preston 240).
Thus, these Spaniards in inner exile found themselves in Franco’s dictatorship, which was alien to them, especially in comparison to the former Republic. Equipo Crónica (1964-1981), a team of two Catalan artists who were born in Franco’s Spain, Manuel Valdés (1940-1981) and Rafael Solbes (1942-), were among few Spaniards whose inner turmoil, the result of inner exile, manifested itself in the 1960s and 70s in art that was exhibited within Spain (Cerdeira 11). Valdés and Solbes formed their own way to express denunciation through drawing from well-known Spanish art and pop art, which they would quote in their works in a critical way. Carmen Cerdeira explains Equipo Crónica’s method: “Utilizar el propio legado de la mejor pintura clásica española para elaborar un discurso crítico” (11). Guernica became a subject for the two artists, and so they created a short series titled Guernica-69, in 1969, which consisted of seven paintings, which they exhibited that year in Spain, quietly, in a private gallery in Bilbao (Van Hensbergen 260). Not only did the artists intend to criticize the dictatorship in which they were living, but they also commented on the Vietnam War. Guernica had eclipsed its Spanish Civil War, anti-fascism, to become a transnational icon. These artists saw the time period in which they were living as one of corruption and tragedy, and so through Guernica, they expressed their outrage and they intended to remind their audience of the lack of humanity at the present on a global level. Ciscar Casaban remarks: “As Picasso made very clear, it seems evident that there are moments in history that require more forcibly the political commitment of artists, moments where non-committed art is feeble and dishonest. Indeed Equipo Crónica is not disappointing in this sense, since their work has a political-social content that addresses a moment of American expansionism (Vietnam) and the dictatorship in Spain” (Ciscar Casaban 6). Like their name describes, Equipo
Crónica was concerned with chronicling the world in which they lived, as Ciscar Casaban describes, creating a “chronicle of the social and political reality of the time,” which they did through art, and specifically in this case, through Guernica (Ciscar Casaban 6).

In 1969, while planning a museum of Contemporary Art in Madrid, Florentino Pérez Embid, the Spanish Director of Fine Arts, sought approval from Franco to express the Spanish government’s desire to have Guernica sent to Spain. The chaos that ensued has been nicknamed “Operación retorno,” which in itself is a misnomer because Guernica had never been to Spain or rather Franco’s Spain, and Picasso made sure that it would not. Given Franco’s approval, Pérez Embid argued that “Guernica (given by Picasso to the Spanish people) is part of the cultural patrimony of this people and should be on exhibition in Spain as proof of the definitive end of the contrasts and differences aroused by the last civil conflict” (qtd. in Van Hensbergen 258). This speech was published in the Spanish conservative journal, El Alcázar in 1969, along with an image of Guernica (Van Hensbergen 258). The entire issue was unheard of and was completely hypocritical as just years earlier there was a scandal over Xabier Gereño, a man who had been sent to jail for simply receiving a postcard of Guernica (264). In response to Embid’s proposal, in 1970 Picasso drafted legal documents with his lawyer, Roland Dumas, to affirm that Guernica would be sent to Spain “when public liberties are re-established in Spain,” and he announced: “You understand that my wish has always been to see this work, and those that accompany it returned to the Spanish people” (qtd. in Van Hensbergen 265).

Equipo Crónica responded to the “Operación retorno” events with their series, Guernica-69, which was shown at Galeria Grises in Bilbao; not only an important step in
Guernica’s role as an anti-war icon, it was important in that it was being shown within Franco’s Spain, resisting censorship and criticizing the recent events. Equipo Crónica said about Guernica-69, “for us this series represented an opportunity to reflect about the process of transforming an image and its meaning” (Castro Floréz 62). Therefore, through using images of and from Guernica, Equipo Crónica intended to transform its meaning. I believe that the nature of Guernica, offering itself to numerous cases of anti-war protest, enabled them to do so. The most esteemed of the series is the painting La visita (1969), most obviously reflecting Francoist Spain’s attempts to possess Guernica (Fig. 2). The painting shows a stark, white, expansive gallery with a group of people entering from the far doorway and Guernica hangs on the wall on the right, with the figures literally jumping out of the canvas in attempt to escape. The gallery reflects Guernica’s color palette, a grey, dreary, empty place, and at the top we see a window with a bright blue sky with perfect cartoon clouds, as if to compare this gallery with a dreary jail cell being hidden from the light of day. The group walking in appears to be all men, all dressed in black suits, with no remarkable visible features. Van Hensbergen calls these men “the grey men, the ambassadors, the army, the navy, the powers and the institutions” (261). The painting essentially explains that if Guernica was to return to Franco’s Spain, the unbearable hypocrisy would drive the paint right off the canvas, or rather, Guernica’s meaning would be erased. I interpret this painting to be a warning that sending Guernica to Spain would be like sending it to prison, where its evocative power would be silenced and tarnished, it would be neutralized and empty of meaning, which as Perez Embid described, would be perfect for Franco’s Spain.
Another painting from *Guernica-69*, entitled *Después de la batalla* (1968), portrays the empty landscape from a painting by artist Ortega Muñoz (Fig. 3) (Castro Flórez 66). This image shows some of the characters from *Guernica* strewn across an empty desert, a dried out countryside or fields yet to be harvested. It comments on the desperation of the situation in Spain “after the battle,” (the Spanish Civil War), which was Franco’s dictatorship. In this work, Equipo Crónica has cut apart Picasso’s work and selected some pieces to be set upon a new background, with color, pop-art and the *Guernica* figures re-sized and presented at a smaller scale. Although it seemed Picasso’s figures could not have appeared more helpless than they were in *Guernica*, now the bodies are stranded on an empty, desert-like plain and are more powerless than ever. This painting’s date sets it outside of the “Operacion-retorno” timeline, so I interpret it to reference inner-exile and the desperation within the empty desert of Franco’s Spain.

Another Equipo Crónica work, *Guernica* (1971), combines a piece of the original work with a classic pop art motif to create a powerful image (Fig. 4). In this new *Guernica*, Equipo Crónica has utilized the section of Picasso’s *Guernica* with the writhing horse and the overhead lamp/bomb and placed a pop art illustration of an explosion with the word “WHAAM!” in bright red and yellow splashes of color, directly over Picasso’s images. The “WHAAM!” explosion, which may be comical in other contexts, is powerful and almost resembles a ball of fire, suggesting that something has been launched at the canvas to create destruction and result in an explosion. It presents itself to the audience in a satiric, almost condescending way, as if to say “this is a powerful work, it is literally exploding.” I think that the combination of this powerful

---

18 Presumably this piece *Guernica* (1971) was not part of the original *Guernica-69* series, as it was painted in 1971.
piece of *Guernica* with this explosion emphasizes *Guernica*’s polemic and obtrusive
denunciatory power against war.

A final work from *Guernica-69*, entitled *El embalaje* (1969), summarizes the
series well, especially in the context of the 1969 controversy over “Operacion-retorno”
(Fig. 5). This painting, which is actually a mixed media piece consists of a canvas
covered in cardboard and rope, except for a small section at the upper right corner where
the cardboard has been ripped away to reveal a piece of *Guernica*, again the same part
that is visible in the previous work, with the horse’s head and the overhead lamp/bomb. I
believe this painting, like *La visita*, refers to the attempts to neutralize *Guernica* through
sending it to Spain. Since the painting is covered it is not able to affect audiences and not
able to live out its mission to speak against war. The fact that Equipo Crónica has torn
away the corner is metaphorical for what they have done in this entire *Guernica-69* series;
they have exposed *Guernica* once again, this time to the Spaniards in Spain and they are
blatantly rebelling against Franco’s regulations, for the sake of letting *Guernica* speak,
and denouncing the war and fascism that dictated their lives.

Although the Equipo Crónica series largely dealt with *Guernica* through the anti-
fascist lens, the modern way in which they approached it made these works
comprehensible and powerful outside of Spanish culture and history. At this point in time,
while Equipo Crónica was criticizing their own local situation, they were also painting
against the warfare that was consuming other parts of the world, the Vietnam War.
Equipo Crónica represents, for my purposes, the last artists or intellectuals to appropriate
*Guernica* specifically against fascism, and yet at the same time, they were not limiting
their work to one battle. *Guernica* became a tool to make statements, to speak for the
activists, the hurt, and the artists, in order to strengthen and legitimize their arguments against the wars that were consuming parts of the world with similar situations of attack, where much innocent blood was shed.

In New York, anti-Vietnam protest was thriving, and while chaos ensued, *Guernica*, alive and well at the MoMa after some extensive conservation processes, was at the center of debate and activism. In 1968, during a peace parade in Central Park against Vietnam, protesters walked the parade holding a poster of *Guernica* in the air. A major debate was created in 1970 as the Art Workers Coalition (AWC) and the Artists and Writers Protest (AWP) collaborated to write a letter to Picasso, asking him to remove *Guernica* from the United States. These artists and intellectuals were concerned about the activity in Vietnam, specifically the My Lai massacre, which they deemed “genocide”. The 256 letters that accumulated, stated:

Tell the directors and trustees of the Museum of Modern Art in New York that *Guernica* cannot remain on public view there as long as American troops are committing genocide in Vietnam. Renew the outcry of *Guernica* by telling those who remain silent in the face of Mylai that you remove from them the moral trust as guardians of your painting (qtd. in Frascina 161)

Here, these artists and intellectuals recognized that the United States was a toxic environment for *Guernica* and there was major hypocrisy in possessing this painting while performing the very acts that it deems deplorable. Although the AWC and AWP had secured a way to get their letters to Picasso, administrators at MoMA intervened for fear of the ramifications that would consume the Museum as well as Picasso, if the letters reached him (Frascina 198). Representatives from the activist organizations tried for
years to get any form of the petition to Picasso, but the Museum had barred all communication, even so far as to get Jacqueline Picasso, Picasso’s second wife, on their side (Frascina 198-99). What isn’t clear is whether they feared Picasso would be offended or would actually consider the request. Of course Picasso would not have sent *Guernica* to Spain while Franco was still alive, but perhaps somewhere else?

In 1974, chaos reached its peak as artist Tony Shafrazi walked into the *Guernica* gallery at the MoMA, approached the canvas with a can of spray paint, and managed to write in large, red letters “KILL LIES ALL” before he was arrested and removed from the Museum. Although conservators were on the scene immediately and able to remove the graffiti easily due to the previous restorations that included covering *Guernica* with a varnish, Shafrazi had made his mark; he was angry over Vietnam and President Nixon, and so he reacted, as an artist, in the attempt to change *Guernica* to reflect the present. Van Hensbergen explains “What Shafrazi argued most forcefully was that he repoliticised the painting, recharging it for a new generation” (277). This act, although perverse, was important in closing *Guernica*’s chapter of exile. While during this period of exile, *Guernica* was allowed to stretch and grow, to become a transnational icon and to speak for the dead and injured who could not, it had reach a point where the United States could no longer possess it as its own. The death of Francisco Franco in 1975 was not only a joyous occasion for Spaniards and remaining exiles, it is likely that the Museum of Modern Art breathed a sigh of relief as well. *Guernica* had outgrown its present accommodations; its ability to speak against World War II was impressive and passionate; however, its power in the United States had reached a standstill as Vietnam ensued. *Guernica* had reached a peak during this period of exile; however, after many years its
constant universal power lost its foundations. *Guernica* needed to be reconnected with the reasons it had been painted and with its own people to be fully appreciated and understood once again. Just like conservators had wiped the spray paint clean off of *Guernica’s* surface, some forty years of exile had wiped clean *Guernica’s* connection to its origins.
Appendix: Chapter 2


(Fig. 3) Equipo Crónica. *Después de la batalla*. 1968. Accessed 14 Apr. 2011.

<http://www.comunitatvalenciana.com/no-date/cronica-del-guernica-en-el-ivam-0>.
(Fig. 4) Equipo Crónica. *Guernica*. 1971. Accessed 14 Apr. 2011.


http://www.arteinformado.com/Eventos/38735/humano-demasiado-humano-arte-espanol-de-los-anos-50-y-60-coleccion-de-arte-contemporaneo/
Chapter 3. Battle Wounds Behind Glass: The Contradiction in Guernica’s Return to Spain

“El cuadro fue pintado por España y para España, pero seguramente todavía tiene millones de enemigos en nuestro país” – Rafael Alberti, 1981

In the May 1982 edition of The Burlington Magazine, an art historical publication operating out of London, writer Douglas Cooper reflected on the significance of Guernica’s recent repatriation:

That Spain, the country whose Civil War provided the basic spark of inspiration, which set Picasso’s pictorial imagination to work to produce this amazing masterpiece, should today be able to present Guernica in a more perfect setting than ever before, is in itself ironical. But it is true. And Guernica is there in Madrid, which it will never leave again, as a noble but no less frightening successor to the Dos and Tres de Mayo by Goya (Cooper 292)

It is fair to assume that Cooper’s vision of the Civil War masterpiece being welcomed home with open arms to a nation ready to embrace its historical significance is characteristic of what the world outside of Spain expected from the return of Guernica in 1981. In reality, that image of tying up the loose ends from a messy war with an iconic painting at the center was more romantic than realistic. Guernica was praised at this time because it was a masterpiece by Picasso, it exemplified modern art, and it had traversed the far reaches of the western world, but there was a contradiction in considering the work in light of the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship. The spectacle that surrounded Guernica’s homecoming and exhibition with the Museo del Prado brought with it a wave
of publicity, launching the work into the public sphere. A problem and subsequently a contradiction arose during the fall of 1981 in Spain; while discussion of the war and dictatorship’s tragedies and victims was restricted to the private sphere, a portion of this discussion needed to enter the public sphere because it was fundamental to understanding Guernica.

This time period in Spain, known as the Transition, was an inopportune moment for Guernica’s return, in that its original values, the ideals of the Spanish Republic and the denunciation of fascism, were sidelined in the public sphere. The Transition covers the transitional period of time at the end of Franco’s dictatorship upon his death in November of 1975 and into the establishment of a democracy. In her important study of this period, Cultura herida, Cristina Moreiras Menor states:

Como una experiencia que va desde una temprana exaltación (mediados de los setenta hasta comienzos de los ochenta), donde se produce la alegría de la novedad tanto como del desapego de un pasado doloroso y no deseado, hasta una completa desilusión al enfrentarse a la evidencia de que la democracia no solo ha traído la libertad, sino también un afecto herido cuyo origen se encuentra en la incertidumbre que la propia democracia trae consigo, pasando por una fase donde ‘la ganancia democrática’ se experimenta desde una importante experiencia de disminución (lo que se ha venido llamado el período del desencanto) (Moreiras Menor 15-16)

She also notes that the cultural works produced during this time were characterized by “zonas de tensión” and “incertidumbre fundamental” (16). As the title of Moreiras

---

19 I say “with” the Museo del Prado because Guernica was not in fact displayed in the Prado’s main edifice. Instead it was housed in one if the Museum’s annexes, the Cason del Buen Retiro, located a few blocks away.
Menor’s book implies, the wound that the Spanish Civil War left also wounded Spanish culture of this period, which became characterized by tensions, uncertainty and taboo. In their book *Unearthing Franco’s Legacy* (2010), Carlos Jerez-Ferrán and Samuel Amago discuss the “silence” during the Franco regime and into the Transition in the introduction to their book:

> As often is the case with authoritarian governments, the silence that followed what happened during and after the Civil War was due mainly to the fear inflicted on the populace by the prevailing ideology. This collective pact of silence (known in Spain as the *pacto del silencio*) was also created in part by the genuine fear some Spaniards felt of seeing their country slip back into a painful past that was still all too vivid in their minds, especially at a time when the newly born democracy was in a process of consolidation (Jerez-Ferrán 2)

In the midst of this society of fear and silence, *Guernica* spoke loudly; the tension between explaining the work to the Spanish public while staying within the limits of the Transition presented a dilemma.

> Underlying the uncertainty and disillusion of the Transition was the fact that while Spaniards sought relief over the end of war and repression, a concept coined by Jo Labanyi, “the discourse of victimhood,” as well as public reflection were issues that were largely restricted from public spheres (Labanyi 123). The problem of creating a national, public discourse on the Spanish Civil War is one that was not officially resolved until 2007 with the legislation of the “Ley de Memoria Historica.” During the Transition, it could be said that the nation consisted of two Spains, but instead of Republicans and Nationalists, they were rightist conservatives and leftist liberals, a concept that has
continued beyond this period of the Transition. As Labanyi states in her article, “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain,” “The memory of the violence of the civil war and dictatorship has been forced to remain a private matter until very recently, thanks to repression under the Franco dictatorship and a lack of interested interlocutors at the time of the transition” (Labanyi 120). According to Labanyi, recent debates in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have centered on “forcing the issue into the public sphere” (120). Speaking in the context of the debates surrounding the flow of civil war discourse in Spain in 2008, Labanyi affirms that she believes that the victims of the war should be able to reflect on their experiences and express grief: “My own position would be to regard it as paramount that those who have suffered from political repression to be able to articulate that pain in the public sphere” (121). Guernica, the image of civil war violence that had been appropriated to reflect the dictatorship as well, upon its return felt the effects of the civil war wound as it was created by Picasso as a means to “articulate that pain in the public sphere,” yet its ability to do so on a public, official level where it would aid in the nation’s process of healing, was hindered. Antonio Gómez López Quiñones explains that the Spanish government essentially tried to “congelar y fijar el cuadro de Picasso como pieza maestra del modernismo pictórico español, obra cumbre de la tradición plástica del país y sacralizada piedra de toque del canon cultural patrio del siglo XX” (López Quiñones 175). The best option was to recognize it for its artistic successes, yet at the same time, Guernica’s history and origins made it absolutely necessary to discuss topics like the bombing of Gernika, the Second Republic and exile; herein lies the contradiction. López Quiñones argues, “El Guernica se desviste de su doble condición de homenaje a una serie de víctimas civiles y denuncia de un
pronunciamiento militar, para metamorfosearse en un canto a la concordia política de la Transición, que desprestigiaba y desestimaba el recuerdo (imprudente e inoportuno) de la Guerra Civil” (178). No longer pure homage and denunciation, in the contradictory climate, Guernica was often separated from the war. López Quiñones explains that Guernica “no tenía ya como principal referente la Guerra Civil Española ni el sufrimiento de una población civil bombardeada por el Tercer Reich en connivencia con el General Franco, sino el entramado político de la transición, y el tácito pacto para el olvido que pusieron en sordina el violento pasado en aras de un pacífico y prometedor presente” (178). Guernica in the public sphere was very much a reflection of Spaniards in the midst of Transition; there was a hesitance between expressing relief and joy in the face of democracy while reflecting on the raw past and stifling these emotions for fear of offending others or creating public controversy. In this chapter I will argue that Guernica in 1981 was theoretically a means through which victims of the war could express grief and find solace, yet the context of the Transition hindered the possibility to do so on a public, official level. A contradiction characterized the handling of Guernica in the public sphere, as it was stuck in a limbo between recognizing recent tragedies and pushing them into the periphery.

While Guernica’s period of exile afforded it distance from its Republican, civil war origins, allowing it to assume the role of transnational anti-war statement, the diminishing of that distance involved in the return to Spain created complications. From the moment of its celebration on the runway at Madrid’s Barajas Airport to the opening of the Guernica-Legado Picasso exhibition at the Casón del Buen Retiro on the centennial of Picasso’s birth, the return of Guernica was made into a spectacle. The
return of Guernica was a national celebration and commemoration of democracy, coined by some as the end of the Transition, the “return of the last exile,” and the long-awaited possession of the newest artwork to enter the canon of Spanish art history. Iñigo Cavero, the Spanish Minister of Culture in 1981, emotionally exclaimed upon the arrival of Guernica in Madrid, “Hoy regresa el último exiliado” (qtd. in Vilaró 1). After years of misgivings among the Picasso heirs and disagreements within the Spanish government, the Museum of Modern Art and Picasso’s lawyer, Roland Dumas, an agreement was signed between the MoMA and Iñigo Cavero, effectively transferring Guernica and the accompanying sketches from the Museum of Modern Art to the Spanish government (Guernica-Legado Picasso 171; Cooper 291). Guernica’s chapter of exile closed quite literally as Iberia flight 952 landed in Madrid on the morning of October 10, 1981, at 8:35 am, and Cavero, through this statement implied that the return of Guernica concluded Spanish exile as a whole (Vilaró 1)\(^{20}\). While it is likely that Cavero was speaking metaphorically, without the intentions to go into the politics of Spaniards in exile, he does address the subject of exile, which plays into the contradiction. The topic of exile recalls the wave of Spaniards who left Spain due to oppression and/or fear of oppression. Therefore, in this instance, although he does not elaborate, contextualize or corroborate his statement, another element of the contradiction, Cavero recognizes the many Spaniards who left Spain because of Franco and were able to return home after his death in 1975. His use of Guernica in this way transforms it into a final flourish in the process of repatriation, serving as a sort of commemorative conclusion, or rather a long-awaited

\(^{20}\) The flight carried Guernica, the accompanying 63 preparatory sketches that Picasso had made for the masterpiece, as well Cavero and Javier Tussell, Spanish Director of Fine Arts from New York to Madrid (Vilaró 1).
stamp of approval; it signified that Spain had achieved the worthy democracy for which Picasso and Spanish exiles had been waiting.

**Guernica through Bullet-proof Glass: The Guernica-Legado Picasso Exhibition of 1981**

At the inauguration of the *Guernica-Legado Picasso* exhibition at the Casón del Buen Retiro in Madrid, Minister of Culture Iñigo Cavero declared:

> El *Guernica* es un grito contra la violencia, contra los horrores de una guerra, contra la barbarie y contra la negación de una sociedad civilizada que supuso una confrontación entre seres humanos. Nadie debería interpretar la obra como bandera de un sector. Contemplemos el 'Guernica' como un rechazo puro y simple de la fuerza bruta (qtd. in Castaños Alés)

Cavero gives a well-established explanation of the work, verbalizing the same transnational anti-war sentiments that characterized *Guernica* during its period of exile. His mention of “la fuerza bruta” is where *Guernica*’s “grito” is inscribed, yet through making this statement aside from civil war discussion, the audience has no foundation through which to understand *Guernica*’s scream and force. Franco’s Nazi attack on Gernika is the original situation from which to understand *Guernica*, and it is that moment in 1937 where fascism founded the meaning of the image and allowed for future bombings and violence to be associated with the same image. Likely due to the polemic surrounding the war, and the existing left and right politics, Cavero chose not to mention the bombing of Gernika, but at the same time, he is sure to recognize the horrors of war, violence and brute force, which are concepts that were not specific to the Spanish Civil
War, but certainly would have sufficed and led the audience to recall the war on a personal level.

While a full image of *Guernica* on a book cover would likely do the work an injustice, in the case of *Guernica-Legado Picasso* catalog, one would expect to find at least a cropped section of *Guernica* on the cover, especially since *Guernica* is in the exhibition’s title. Perhaps an image of the horse and the lamp, the mother and child, or the weeping woman in flames would suffice? In reality, the exhibition directors chose to put one of Picasso’s accompanying works on the cover, and although these works were a major part of the exhibition, they mean the most together and alongside *Guernica* itself, especially in the case of the one that was chosen for the cover. The colorful, *Cabeza de mujer llorando con panuelo (III)* is represented on the cover and shows little resemblance to *Guernica* and its themes (Fig. 1). It is important to point out that the work is from October of 1937, months after *Guernica*’s creation, and is therefore a development on the themes in *Guernica*. It is actually the only accompanying work that Picasso continued to develop after *Guernica* was finished and sent to the International Exhibition (*Picasso: Tradition* 234). In the caption for this work inside the *Guernica-Legado* text, it is described: “este óleo verdadera obra maestro dentro de estos ‘postscritos’ de ‘Guernica’ nos muestra una gran concisión en el dibujo y un acierto total en el colorido” (*Guernica-Legado* 143). This work is a Cubist portrayal of a woman crying, shown from the chest up with one arm nearly disjointed from her body, and her thick rectangular fingers hold an angular handkerchief that she holds near the opening of her mouth, almost as though it is coming out of her throat. She is dressed in dark brown and black clothing that is geometrically wrapped around her body, while a bright purple, pointy, triangular
handkerchief is perched on her head. Like the figure in *Guernica* and typical of Picasso, she is shown in profile, yet we are able to see all of her features (both eyes, both eyebrows, both nostrils). Her skin is bright chartreuse and her features are painted with thick, black line. Her eyes are the most three-dimensional part of the work, as they are two geometric half-spherical shapes. Tears spill out of her eyes like thin streams of milk being poured out of two small bowls, and they continue to stream down her face in solid, linear lines with rounded circular forms at the bottom. Her nostrils, like those of the figures in *Guernica*, are shaped like tear drops. Her mouth is more of a fluid, rounded shape, yet her light blue pointed teeth stick out like fangs. While Picasso intended for this work to reference the war and express the pain and suffering that was going on in his homeland, that message would have been lost on visitors to the exhibition since it was not included in the catalog (“Picasso: Tradition” 234). The decision not to display *Guernica* on the cover of the exhibition catalog, which, unlike the exhibition, was able to travel and disseminate the work to other parts of Spain and the world, is more evidence of the hesitance toward releasing *Guernica* into the public sphere.

The *Guernica-Legado Picasso* exhibition catalog opens with the following quote, from one of Picasso’s many esteemed colleagues, Joan Miró, as a sort of preface to the essays and images included in the catalog:

Recuerdo cuando hace años estuve en Guernica, a la sombra del árbol de Guernica. Y siento una gran emoción ahora que el *Guernica*, la gran obra de Picasso, es recibida en España con todos los honores. Recuerdo también los días en que visitaba a Pablo en su taller de la Rue des Grands Augustins y la pasión
This quote from Miró sets the tone of the exhibition catalog: a romantic stage for a reunion marked by pride and nationalism with the necessary references to war and dictatorship. Miró has omitted the negative connotations associated with Guernica, as the catalog largely manages to do as well, yet his reference to Gernika, and the emotion he felt there under the tree, which is a symbol of the reason why Franco chose to destroy that town, is an example of the subtle way that war and history made their way into the catalog, feeding contradiction. This can also be seen in the “Nota editorial,” where the final paragraph consists of acknowledgements and states “muy especialmente a aquellas que prestaron sus servicios a la segunda Republica española, que han intervenido en este histórico trabajo” (Guernica-Legado 1). Here, the exhibition officially acknowledges those who helped the Second Republic and were involved with Guernica, most likely in the commission, its display at the Spanish Pavilion, its tour as an emissary of the Republic and its safekeeping until 1981. The Second Republic is clearly regarded in a positive light, as it is recognized as the creators and the guardians of Guernica. This acknowledgement confirms for the Spanish public that Spain still recognizes Guernica’s ties to the Republic, something with which a rightist at the time may have found issue. The “Nota editorial” also explains that the essays included in the catalog are from Spaniards who were in some way connected to Guernica’s creation or original exhibition in the Spanish Pavilion, or, as in the case of scholar Herschel B. Chipp, have been instrumental in the painting’s journey since then (1). Thus, while Guernica’s origins as a
Republican painting and a key work in the Republican Pavilion of 1937 are mentioned, they are hardly emphasized and are subtly included in this brief editor’s note.

It is interesting to take a look at the format of the catalog, especially focusing on the ways the essays are presented; the catalog’s design literally and figuratively pushes the essays into the margins of the exhibition. While it is important to display the works of art first and foremost, and each image deserves its own page, the editor’s decision to split the opposite pages in half dedicating half to the essays and half to the images’ captions is curious. Each essay is presented in italics, formatted into a narrow column on each even numbered page, and in a small font that is not easily read. It almost says to the reader that this information is marginal, reading it is optional, and what is important are the images. Perhaps the editors were wary about the information that the essays included in terms of the war and associated taboo.

The majority of the catalog’s text comes from personages who were key players in the 1937 Spanish Pavilion, whom I discussed in my first chapter: thus, the Republic is a thread that flows through all five essays. José Renau, the Spanish Director of Fine Arts in 1937 and a major organizer and artist involved in the Spanish Pavilion of 1937, wrote the first essay, “Connotaciones testimoniales sobre el Guernica,” giving his own story concerning Guernica and his relationship to the work as well as Picasso. As an artist himself, Guernica was very influential in his life, as was the friendship he was able to form with Picasso. Renau mentions his role in the Republican Pavilion and the commission of Guernica in 1937, his years in Argelès-surr-Mer concentration camp, and his exile until 1976. He focuses on his return to Spain, in the midst of plans for Guernica’s return, and the way he was bombarded with questions about the work, as it
became known that he was involved in the original commission. He describes the public
discourse on *Guernica* and the media’s obsession with the work, calling it “una verdadera
tempestad” (12). He concludes his essay sharing a story of his last experience being one-
on-one with Picasso, where he told Picasso that he hoped one day *Guernica* would be
shown side by side with Velasquez’s *Las meninas* and Goya’s *Tres de mayo*. Renau
concludes his article revealing that Picasso had sent him money every month when he
was released from the concentration camp, and how he had done the same for many other
Republican refugees, and through doing this, he gave the 150,000 francs that he had
received for the *Guernica* commission back to the Republic. Renau’s largely Republican
discussion including mention of the concentration camp, his difficulties in exile and his
return to Spain, also presents a contradiction as he mentions these themes of controversy,
yet there is no mention of Franco, fascism or the dictatorship and very little mention of
the war.

Josep Lluis Sert, one of the architects for the Spanish Pavilion also wrote an essay,
“La victoria del *Guernica*,” which I would deem a “short and sweet” nostalgic essay
recalling his relationship to *Guernica* in the Spanish Pavilion, and his friendship with
Picasso. He provides a narrative of his own experiences of knowing Picasso during the
commission and when Picasso had begun to paint *Guernica*, and during the final
exhibition of the work in the Pavilion. He describes the power of *Guernica* in the
Pavilion and the way it only increased as time elapsed. Sert explains that he was able to
visit *Guernica* frequently while it was in New York, and now that it was in Madrid, it
was victorious. While Sert recognizes the work as a premonition of World War II, and
freely mentions the Republic, he shies away from *Guernica’s* politics.
Javier Tusell, Spanish Director of Fine Arts at the time of the exhibition in 1981, wrote “El Guernica y la administración española,” the lengthiest essay in the catalog, which provides an in-depth Republican history of Guernica that even includes mention of Franco. Tusell explains that he had compiled his information from Spanish documentation of Guernica through the years that he was able to obtain. This work is the most valuable in the catalog due to its breadth of knowledge, careful research, and courage to present the whole story. Tussell’s homage even begins to border on audacious. Tracing Guernica through time and discussing it in terms of the Republic, the Spanish Pavilion, the Spanish Administration and Picasso, the first attempts of repatriation, the Transition, and the final return, Tussell compiled the most up to date, complete history of Guernica at the time, as he concludes with the events of the present and he provides a full image of the war, repression and Transition.

In Herschel B. Chipp’s essay in the catalog, “El Guernica y sus trabajos preparatorios,” the art historian discusses Picasso’s development of Guernica, tracing the trajectory of his sketches and preparatory works, as well as the multiple stages of Guernica that Picasso made on the actual canvas, concluding with the final work and its significance. A major portion of Chipp’s text is analysis of the figures in Picasso’s work, which, as I included in Chapter 1, is a discourse which includes Franco, fascism and the Republic. Although Chipp argues that Guernica was not meant by Picasso to describe the Spanish Civil War, as he states, “Picasso nunca se propuso representar el suceso,” it is still necessary to discuss these topics in terms of the painting’s origins and the discourse surrounding the analysis of the work, which in 1981, was already extant (Chipp 148). Still, Chipp furthers the contradictory nature of the catalog, including some references to
the war, yet he fails to scratch the surface. Chipp states about the bombing of Gernika
“La noticia del bombardeo de Guernica había proporcionado Picasso la impresión que
necesitaba para abalanzarse sobre el cuadro cuyo comienzo tanto había diferido” (146).
Here he explains that the bombing of Gernika was a catalyst for Picasso to react to, but he
doesn’t explain the fascist brutality that drove Picasso’s response. Chipp concludes his
essay, which essentially concludes the catalog, stating that Guernica’s return to Spain
was really Picasso’s return to Spain. In his words: “en múltiples niveles de significado y
de emoción, tanto en lo humano como en lo artístico, creo, un cuadro poderoso y personal
que en cierto modo lo reemplazaría” (Chipp 148). His decision to focus on Picasso draws
the audience towards the work’s artistic importance and neatly wraps up his discourse
concluding that the return of Guernica to Spain was the fulfillment of Picasso’s last wish.

The most intriguing and frustrating part of this exhibition, and perhaps this entire
chapter of Guernica’s history, was the thick, bullet-proof glass and metal cage that
encased Guernica for fourteen years from 1981 to 1995. If Guernica was now home, in
its intended setting in Madrid, why was it now for the first time being displayed under a
barrier of metal and glass? On September 21, 1981, the American Time Magazine
commented of the glass: “Ironically, one of the 20th century's most passionate protests
against violence will have to be protected by special bulletproof glass” (“Return”). Not
only did the glass partially impede visual perception of the painting, it effectively
removed Guernica from the public sphere and served as a barrier between the painting
and the people, hindering the presence of Guernica’s anti-war ideology and anti-fascist
origins from entering a public forum. The glass was an indicator that lingering civil war
ideologies assured that the once purely Republican Guernica was not appreciated on a
unanimous level. It is safe to say, as Rafael Alberti was quoted saying in an article in *El País* in 1981, that *Guernica* had millions of enemies in Spain ("Rafael"). Spanish officials feared real, physical violence and damage to the painting from radical rightists. While the glass had a practical purpose, the concept and the vision of *Guernica* inside a giant glass case, a blatant anti-war statement being protected from war, resulted in a sort of numbing or neutralization of the original image. *Guernica* was isolated, in a bubble, symbolizing that fear of what could happen, reflecting the contradiction of the work, as it was at the center of the public sphere, yet behind a barrier limiting the discourse it could provoke.

**Criticism through Complaints: Antonio Saura’s *Contra el Guernica***

In 1982, some months after *Guernica*’s debut, artist Antonio Saura released *Contra el Guernica*, a controversial text that criticized the Spanish government’s handling of *Guernica*’s return. Saura was an influential Spanish artist, born in Huesca, Spain, in 1930, known for his paintings but also a successful printmaker and an articulate writer, working during the dictatorship and in the midst of the avant-garde movement (Jeffett). Saura’s “libelo” was a lengthy series of complaints, each a few lines long, beginning with “Odio,” “Detesto,” or “Desprecio,” followed by reasons why the artist hated, detested or despised *Guernica* or Picasso. For example, “Detesto al *Guernica* porque es un cartelón y porque, como sucede a todo vulgar cartelón, su imagen es posible copiarla y multiplicarla al infinito” (Saura 45). In reality, Saura’s complaints were not attacks on *Guernica* or Picasso but rather a critical reaction to the storm of publicity and blatant disregard of traumatic history that characterized *Guernica*’s return. While initially Saura’s grievances appear to be a disorganized listing of negative statements, in actuality
they are carefully worded and situated, and demonstrate that Saura was extremely well versed on the current events surrounding *Guernica*, as he includes direct quotes from the press as well as scholarly and official opinions. He also varies and organizes the tone of his statements, alternating between sarcastic, harsh, honest, frank, witty and humorous comments. López Quiñones explains in his article, “‘Ese arte superior’: El *Guernica* según Antonio Saura y el recuerdo de la Guerra Civil,” that Saura’s work expresses what no one had yet, that *Guernica* was a representation of real events and through it Picasso served his responsibility as an artist to portray reality. López Quiñones explains that *Contra el Guernica* “pretende explicar finalmente que el cuadro de Picasso supone una reflexión sobre la responsabilidad de la representación, no como experiencia mimética (en la que ni Picasso ni Saura creían), sino como acto de acercamiento a la realidad” (López Quiñones 185). Saura, through his series of complaints about *Guernica*, effectively delivers point by point what was wrong about the return of *Guernica* to Spain, including the spectacle and publicity, the erasure of the Spanish Civil War, the bullet-proof glass, and the commoditization and commercialization of art.

Beginning with my previous example, it is necessary to analyze a few of Saura’s laments in order to understand his agenda as a whole. I have selected a sampling of Saura’s criticism from the collection of 280 complaints that make up *Contra el Guernica* to exemplify the themes Saura touched upon and the range of his condemnations. Towards the beginning of the work is “Detesto al *Guernica* porque es un cartelón y porque, como sucede a todo vulgar cartelón, su imagen es posible copiarla y multiplicarla al infinito,” which can be interpreted as a response to the commercial reproductions of *Guernica* that were created (Saura 45). Also exemplary here is the way that Saura steals
opinions from others in order to create criticism; in this case, he criticizes those who were referring to *Guernica* as a sort of giant poster. He builds upon that idea bringing in the commercial aspect to express his opinion that art degenerates with the influx of manufactured facsimiles. Another line from Saura, “Detesto al *Guernica* porque sin ser un cuadro de historia es tristemente una de las composiciones más extraordinarias de la historia del arte,” which reflects the government’s handling of Guernica and failure to properly recognize its historical origins, to the point where it no longer referenced a historical event (46). Here, Saura sarcastically agrees with the official view of *Guernica* as a non-historical work and an extraordinary work of art. “Detesto al *Guernica* porque el avión donde viajaba aterrizó con cuarenta y cinco minutos de retraso,” is a criticism of the way the press covered every detail concerning Guernica’s return, including the fact that plane’s forty-five minute delay made headlines in Spanish newspapers on the morning of September 10 (46). Here Saura’s sharp criticism evokes a message of “who cares?” and broaches the subject of “what is newsworthy?” and why did the press create such a circus around trivial logistics like this one? “Odio el nuevo exilio del *Guernica*” is a more serious and powerful comment from Saura. He recognizes that Guernica used to be in exile and now in its return to Spain it had entered a new exile; his argument is corroborated by the way Guernica was sheltered behind glass (48). Saura expresses this same idea again with the concept of a nightmare, stating “Detesto la llegada de *Guernica*, fin de una pesadilla de cuarenta y dos años y comienzo de otra” (49). “Odio la cárcel de cristal que convierte al *Guernica* en acuario de pirañas más que de fenecidos fantasmas” is one of a few of Saura’s creative ways of criticizing the bullet-proof glass (50) Here Saura implies that Guernica should be a place where the ghosts, the victims and
memories, of the war and dictatorship can be laid to rest but instead this barrier of glass marks it as a space of real, unresolved violence. “Detesto la satisfacción política y artística declarada a la llegada del Guernica, ya que es bien sabido que el arte no debe nunca mezclarse con la política” is a sarcastic comment on the separation of art and politics in this situation where politics should really be at the heart of Guernica (51).

“Odio al Guernica porque al llegar a Madrid una estúpida salva de aplausos saludó la caja de madera que lo contenía” is a reference to the spectacle, that on the runway at Barajas a crowd had formed to clap for the painting that was not yet visible; essentially, they were clapping for the wooden box that contained Guernica (56). “Odio al Guernica por la cantidad de libros malos que se han escrito y se van a escribir y porque ninguno de ellos explica satisfactoriamente mi desprecio” is a reference to the influx of publications on Guernica, none of which would have put forth anything close to the negative opinions that Saura was in the midst of creating (57). “Desprecio al Guernica porque su llegada ‘cierra un capítulo de agravios y venganzas culturales por motivos estrictamente políticos’” reflects the notion that emerged in Spanish society that Guernica’s return marked the end of the Transition (60). “Odio al puño levantado que apretando una espiga se oculta tras el actual sol-bombilla del Guernica” is a very literal comment as it refers to the early stages of Guernica that can be seen in Dora Maar’s photographs where the bomb/lamp/sun image of Guernica was originally a giant fist, the sign of the Republic (Fig. 2) (61). Perhaps Saura includes this to draw attention to this fact and wishes Picasso had not decided to remove the blatant political symbol. “Odio el negativo del Guernica” is a reflection of the way that Spanish officials presented Guernica without the many negative connotations that are inherent to its understanding and because of this the
painting was surely conveyed to an audience of Spaniards in a very positive light (68).

“Odio el ‘Pablo nuestro de cada día’ del Guernica” is one of Saura’s several criticisms to the way Picasso was being equated with God (76). “Desprecio al Guernica porque demuestra que algunos pintores piensan y es bien sabido que los pintores no deben pensar, sino pintar,” reflects the erasure of Picasso’s ideology that was behind the work and again touches upon the separation of art and politics that occurred (82). Through these few examples one can develop an idea of the irony, sharp wit and unrelenting critical lens that Saura puts forth in this work. While each line has its own agenda, when combined with some two hundred eighty other agendas, Saura’s criticism becomes a well-researched, thorough, and smartly presented dissertation on everything wrong with Guernica’s return, or rather everything wrong with Spanish society in 1981.

Due to the state of Spanish society in 1982 when Contra el Guernica was released, many who read it thought it was a major criticism of Guernica itself and of Picasso and thus it was received with outrage (Saura 7). Clearly Saura was not actually infuriated with Guernica but instead the misconduct associated with the publicizing of this hugely important painting. In 2009, Saura’s work was re-published, thanks to Félix de Azúa and his collaboration with the Reina Sofia Museum. This action in itself was something that could be done only because of recent progress that had been made in Spain with the interest in the recuperation of historical memory called for by the 2007 Law of Historical Memory. The re-publication of this work is important because now, outside of the parameters of the Transition, the work can be understood as the sharp, artistic analysis that it was meant to be.

**Recuperation through Restoration: Guernica Re-contextualized**
The Law of Historical Memory and the debates around the recognition of the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship have played a major role in contemporary Spain in reversing the damage done during the Transition; while not officially connected, Guernica has felt the Law’s and the debates’ effects. Slowly but surely the contradiction surrounding Guernica in 1981 has been evolving into a more full, stable discourse without so much fear that radicals will attempt to destroy the work. In 1992 Guernica, its accompanying drawings and the bulletproof glass were moved to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid’s modern and contemporary art museum. Guernica was returned to the traditional museum setting it had experienced in the MoMA, set alongside contemporary works. In 1995, even the bullet-proof glass was removed. In 2006, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the arrival of Guernica in Spain as well as the 125th anniversary of Picasso’s birth, the Prado and the Reina Sofia collaborated on a commemorative exhibition titled Picasso: Tradición y vanguardia. The exhibition spanned both national museums and included Picasso’s works from collections around the world as well as the two museum’s holdings; additionally, works by other Spanish masters were included as complements to Picasso to demonstrate the canonical precursors to his work. Organizers took advantage of the priceless masterpieces at hand and focused on the juxtaposition of the works, with Guernica at the heart of the Reina Sofia show. In the exhibition catalog, both museum directors, Miguel Zugaza of the Prado, and Ana Martínez de Aguilar of the Reina Sofia, explain the Reina Sofia exhibition: “Here the show focuses on the artist’s moral commitment to society, surrounding his most emblematic work with his complete iconographical denunciation of the barbarity of war” (Zugaza 12). Guernica hanging side by side with Goya’s Tres de
mayo was quite a pairing for Spanish society; the two great wars that had shaped modern Spain in their most emblematic visual manifestations confronted one another.

Unfortunately, in 2006, there were still some remnants left behind from the contradiction of the Transition. The exhibition catalog opens with a diplomatic précis of Guernica’s arrival from Minister of Culture Carmen Calvo: “The arrival in Spain of Pablo Picasso’s Guernica in 1981 and its bequest was the most important cultural event in the country’s recent history and, undoubtedly, the most eloquent symbol of the end of the political transition and the recovery of our democratic liberties” (Calvo 5). One would have to be well versed on modern Spanish history to understand that Calvo is in fact talking about the end of the war and repression and the restoration of democracy; even in 2006 this was not put into plain terms. Further, within the catalog is a history of Guernica that provides a historical background of the creation and commission, including the Spanish Pavilion and Republic and little mention of Franco. The work is ironically similar to the catalog of 1981 in that there is a palpable tension in the discussion of the Spanish Civil War in reference to Guernica. Although the exhibition was foremost a homage to Picasso and to Guernica in particular, a major disservice was done for audiences without any previous knowledge of Guernica in that they could not have understood the work’s powerful meaning and significance to Spain.

In an interview in the fall of 2010 with El País, writers Iker Seisdedos and Ángeles García asked Jose Girao, the former director of the Reina Sofia who made the decision to remove the bullet-proof glass, to comment on their conception of Guernica as “La gran virtud y a veces también el gran castigo del Reina Sofía.” In response, Girao revealed the true intentions behind the removal of the glass, explaining “nosotros
This idea of recuperating the history of the Spanish Civil War did not culminate in Spain until 2007, with the Law of Historical Memory or la Ley de Memoria histórica. In 2008, Manuel Borja-Villel, the director of the Reina Sofía, renovated the collections in the galleries surrounding Guernica. For fear of damage, Guernica was not to be moved; however, with Borja-Villel’s renovations Guernica could be seen in a completely new way, in its original intended setting. Borja Villel intended to re-create the atmosphere of the Republican Pavilion of 1937 (García). Today Guernica is adjacent to galleries containing a miniature model of the 1937 Spanish Pavilion, Miró’s Aidez l’espagne, Alexander Calder’s Mercury fountain as well as many more of the original works that were Guernica’s original counterparts. It is very likely that Borja-Villel, in calling for these renovations, acted out of the opportunity that historical memory offered. Freed from glass, amongst old friends, after seventy years Guernica finally felt at home again.
Appendix: Chapter 3

(Fig. 1) Picasso, Pablo. *Cabeza de mujer llorando con pañuelo (III)*. 1937. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid. Accessed 14 Apr. 2011.

Chapter 4. Canvases of Catastrophe: *Guernica in the Twenty-First Century*

In the closing paragraphs of the introduction to his book, *Picasso’s War*, Russell Martin describes his first encounter with *Guernica* at the Reina Sofia in Madrid, surrounded by fellow museum patrons from around the world, on September 11, 2001. Martin writes:

None of us was aware as we stood across from the brutal, horrific, yet somehow mesmerizing images of Picasso’s war, that in those same moments the twenty-first century had been forced forever onto a new tack, that once more – as had happened in little Gernika – humans had transformed themselves into demons, and other humans suddenly search for reasons why (Martin 7).

This real situation, juxtaposing 9/11, the closest equivalent Americans have to the bombing of Gernika, with Picasso’s *Guernica*, establishes *Guernica* as a crossroads for comparable tragedies. *Guernica* in this way has become a site of memory, whether one is physically standing before the painting at the Reina Sofia in Madrid, or elsewhere staring at a poster, a contemporary replica or an image on a computer screen. *Guernica* is a context, a space, an image to which new catastrophes can be connected to in order to find solace or, as Martin suggests, to search for answers. It has been noted that New York doesn’t have a *Guernica* yet to call its own to commemorate 9/11. The ever-resounding message that Picasso inscribed in *Guernica* allows it to continue to transcend national borders as an icon that is universally comprehensible; *Guernica*, as this crossroads, as a site of memory for mourning and reflection in the face of warfare or tragedy, is the commemoration of 9/11 and countless other acts of warfare and tragedy that have marred the world since 1937.
In an art exhibition to commemorate the horrific 11-M Madrid train bombings of 2004, renowned Basque photographer Alberto Schommer (1928-) contributed an image titled *El Guernica movido* (Fig. 1). To the informed Spanish audience, in this context of Spanish tragedy, Schommer’s photograph, a blurred image of *Guernica* behind a crowd of museum patrons, speaks volumes. Not only does it feature a piece of Spanish cultural patrimony, something which the Spanish nation can unite behind, it re-awakens the tragedy of Gernika, and revives Picasso’s characters. Once again the horse and bull writhe in the light of the exploding lamp, but this time the horse is the entire Spanish nation and the bull is Al-Qaeda. *Guernica* in reference to the Spanish nation no longer marks a division in the Spanish populace, but instead a sense of uniting nationalism. The visual movement inherent to the work, which is easily perceived without the accompanying title, is a physical manifestation of *Guernica*’s resonance and prevalence not only to the terrorist attacks but to the world in which we live, where such events are far from isolated incidents.

As is true with the twentieth century, the twenty-first century thus far can be characterized by constant catastrophes including warfare, genocide and natural disaster, rendering *Guernica* as prevalent as ever. At present, *Guernica* is strewn across the Internet in online newspaper articles, blogs and websites featuring contemporary art, cartoons, graffiti and consumer goods like coffee mugs and key chains. During its period of exile, as I discussed in Chapter 2, *Guernica* ascended to a status of transnational anti-war icon; in the twenty-first century citizens across the world have been appropriating *Guernica* in text and image in order to express grief over tragic events predominantly still having to do with warfare, but also in reference to other topics of tragedy like genocide.
and natural disasters. At present, *Guernica* is largely praised, remembered, and utilized in new works of art by contemporary artists to comment on disastrous events, most recently including the BP oil spill and the conflict in Libya.\(^{21}\) By far the most reactions to *Guernica* have occurred in reference to the war in Iraq and related events of controversy and terrorism. Gijs Van Hensbergen writes in the introduction to his 2004 *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon*, “Picasso’s *Guernica* is the image that draws our constant attention to the proximity of catastrophe” (6). As these first eleven years of the twenty-first century have already developed a reputation of constant “catastrophe,” *Guernica*, at least in the art world, has entered a new heyday.

Van Hensbergen closes his text at the end of the twentieth century, as his title indicates, and suggests that *Guernica* had become “normalised,” exemplifying this fact by quoting Miguel Vallé-Inclan, the librarian at the Reina Sofia, who suggested to him, “Perhaps, it is difficult to say but perhaps, we are the first generation that can look at *Guernica* as just a painting” (qtd. in Van Hensbergen 332). While it is my first instinct to argue that *Guernica* is by no means “just a painting,” in considering the works that I will analyze in this chapter, and the freedom of speech that also characterizes the twenty-first century, it is fair to argue that *Guernica* has been normalized, and that its entrance into the cultural mainstream has stripped *Guernica* of the controversial political stigma that characterized the work from its creation to the removal of the glass case at the Reina Sofia in 1995.

\(^{21}\) For the juxtaposition of *Guernica* and Libya, see this March 8, 2011 comment on TIME Magazine’s website, criticizing President Obama for not yet taking action in Libya while using *Guernica* as a leading image: [http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2011/03/08/libya-your-move-mr-president/](http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2011/03/08/libya-your-move-mr-president/). I will discuss reference to the BP oil spill later in this chapter.
Inherent to *Guernica*’s resonance in the twenty-first century is its distillation of a specific event and its role as a site of memory. In his 2009 article, “Memory, Power and Place: Where is *Guernica*?” Benjamin Hannavy Cousen establishes Picasso’s *Guernica* as an “embodiment of memory,” specifically, “cultural memory” (Cousen 47). Cousen defines “cultural memory” as “the way something originating and existing in the realm of cultural production such as a painting can operate both to transmit a ‘memory’ of an event and indeed become the ‘memory’ of the event beyond its temporal moment” (47). *Guernica* is a concrete example of this “cultural memory” because, as Cousen explains, it is grounded in a single, specific event with a set time, location, and history, in his words “the canvas itself has a traceable and locatable history” (47). He furthers that as this “embodiment” of cultural memory, *Guernica* “has a burden of ongoing duty” and is “a work that moves into the future” (48). Thus, as this emblem of “cultural memory,” since its creation, Picasso has essentially lent *Guernica* to other artists and intellectuals to further *Guernica* as a memorial or rather a site of memory for subsequent events of tragic proportions. Cousen broaches Van Hensbergen’s subject of ‘normalisation,’ expressing that such a notion could be perceived in reference to the end of *Guernica*’s traveling years, as it became a part of the permanent collection at the Reina Sofia where all petitions to lend the work to other institutions, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, have been refused (56). Cousen refutes this perception of ‘normalisation’ as a result of stagnancy, remarking that although *Guernica* will not physically move in the future, “the painting will still have work to do for there is unfortunately a surplus of traumatic events breaking ever forward into the future for which *Guernica* has a relevant role” (56). Cousen ties up his argument stating “the painting and its meaning(s) are no
longer the property of any individual or group” and memory can be used as a tool “to
one up new understandings of the painting” (48). Following Cousen’s argument

*Guernica*’s “work” can be seen in an array of contemporary artworks that utilize

*Guernica*’s images and/or composition to memorialize subsequent events and make commentary on the twenty-first century world. These artworks, like Schommer’s *El Guernica movido*, continue to memorialize events of warfare, efforts for peace, and in recent years artists have begun to use *Guernica* to broach isolated events that are not necessarily connected to war. In this chapter I will argue that Picasso’s *Guernica*, as a site to memorialize a myriad of events of warfare and tragedy, is a vehicle that contemporary artists have begun to utilize in order to legitimize their own endeavors to protest war, recognize cruelty, promote peace or encourage reflection, in response to twenty-first century events, in the form of a work of art.

**Mimicking the Masterpiece: Contemporary Artists Take on Guernica**

Schommer’s photograph, *El Guernica movido* was a part of the exhibition, *Arte solidario: Exposición conmemorativa del primer aniversario de los atentados en las estaciones de Atocha, El Pozo y Santa Eugenia*, to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the train bombings in Madrid on March 11, 2004. This event, known as 11-M (11 marzo), occurred two and a half years, or rather 911 days, after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Both attacks perfectly align with the Gernika attack of 1937, especially in the sense that the attacks were targeting innocent civilians. Also, just as the Gernika attack was planned for a market day when the most civilians would be in town, the New York and Madrid attacks were planned for rush hours when the most people would be in or around the World Trade Center, in the
Lesser 106

case of New York, and on the commuter trains, in the case of Madrid. Schommer’s image is a somber one of dark ephemeral silhouettes, suggesting ghost-like figures, set upon the equally blurred backdrop of Guernica. It suggests that this site, Guernica’s gallery at the Reina Sofia, ironically, across the street from the Atocha train station, was a place to go to in search of reason in the recent tragedy. At the same time, returning to the concept of resonance, it is as though this movement is going on simultaneously with the train bombings, as though some supernatural force connects Guernica to the nearby catastrophe. An interesting fact about this photograph is that Schommer took it in 1994 (Schommer 200). This only reinforces the resonance of Guernica in that he was compelled to take the photograph in 1994, yet it was as relevant as ever in 2005. In the end, as I previously stated, it is this revival of Guernica that stands out; although it is not a recent phenomenon, history is in the process of repeating itself. Javier Tusell’s essay “Imágenes de lo inaceptable,” in the Arte solidario catalog offers examples of art of the twentieth-century canon of art history that focused on the representation of war and violence, what he calls ‘lo inaceptable,’ as a preface to this exhibition, which presents works that also present this ‘inaceptable’ but now specifically referencing the 11-M terrorists attacks. Tusell concludes his essay by explaining what the recent attacks have revealed: “nos revela que el terrorismo de masas no hace otra cosa que prolongar realidades anteriores” (20). Thus, he implies that the artworks in this exhibition which are meant to represent these new acts of terrorism, recall and revive the attacks and catastrophes of the past, just as new artists and intellectuals like Tusell recall and revive Guernica.
In 2003, artist Sophie Matisse took on the first major twenty-first century catastrophe for U.S. citizens, 9/11, through combining *Guernica* with the artistic style of her great-grandfather, Henri Matisse. A meaningful tone is established from the outset as she combines her own heritage with the fresh tragedy of 9/11 and the ever-meaningful *Guernica*. Matisse showed three pieces at the Francis M. Naumann Fine Art Gallery in New York in February of 2003, which as a series can be interpreted to represent the evolution of an idea, with the last piece presenting the most compelling connection between *Guernica* and 9/11. Matisse, a classically trained American artist whose previous series of paintings featured replicas of canonical paintings with missing personages and objects, begins her series on *Guernica* with a fairly exact replica of Picasso’’s work, yet painted with the colors that her great-grandfather commonly used in his paintings (Fig. 2) (Wilkinson 46). The addition of colors makes the work even more chaotic than the original and resembles psychedelic images, linking the piece to its pro-peace connotations. Overall, the use of color seems wrong and distracts from the emotion that the expressive characters originally presented, and as a result takes away from *Guernica*’s powerful resonating message. The work in no way references 9/11 and is ineffective in its use of *Guernica*, as no immediate message is presented; it seems to be more of a personal work for Matisse, as she has infused her grandfather into *Guernica*. The next work, *911 Guernica I* presents sections of *Guernica* in different proportions, rendered in a more naturalistic style, that resembles some of the work of Henri Matisse (Fig. 3). The focus is on a realistic, less abstract portrayal of Picasso’’s contorted horse and a mother who appears to be covering her daughter’’s ears, while she herself cries. Picasso’’s characters seem to have broken out of their original places in the canvas to find
new, more suitable ones; Matisse has shifted the positions of some figures and eliminated others altogether. A child in a Gap sweatshirt appears on the left side of the composition below the bull, and the words “In God We Trust” are printed on the upper left of the composition, both of which combine to reveal that this is meant to represent a modern-day event in the United States. The painting presents contradictions in that the realistic characters call for a similarly lifelike composition and so the pile of limbs and bodies in different proportions present in the composition do not make sense, and suggest that the characters are emerging from the sides of the canvas or levitating in the air, something that Picasso avoided through the use of Cubist, abstract forms. Matisse converted Picasso’s lamp/bomb motif into a female eye, which stares at the viewer. Instead of replacing Picasso’s figures with corresponding ones in a new style, Matisse has created an entirely new composition featuring Picasso’s characters in a less abstract style that appears to represent something akin to a dream or rather a nightmare. The title informs the viewer that the subject is 9/11, but there is nothing within the composition that indicates this theme, which is troubling, and any message that Matisse was trying to express is absent. In the third painting of the series, 9/11 Guernica II, Matisse utilizes Picasso’s composition; however, she substitutes his figures with her own, which are rendered in Henri Matisse’s style, with thick black brushstroke-like outlines, filled in with the same bright, varying colors from the first painting (Fig. 4). This painting, in contrast to the previous one, is more effective in referencing 9/11, as it appears to be an indoor office scene with bright blocks of color that depict walls, doorways, hallways and perhaps even cubicles that could exist within one of the World Trade Center towers. In addition, Picasso’s soldier has become a fallen businessman with a button-down shirt and
a necktie, the exploding lamp remains, quoting Picasso’s original bomb motif, and the crushed dove has been converted into a plane in front of a blue patch of sky that may represent the second plane outside, about to hit the other tower. According to the Naumann Fine Art Gallery, the two 911 Guernica works “present viewers with a visual reenactment of the horrific attack that took place at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and warns of the dangers that will result should we engage in war with Iraq” (“Sophie Matisse”). Following this train of thought, one could interpret the use of bright vivid color in these pieces as a means of reviving the Guernica scene and giving it new life, similar to what Schommer did through presenting moving, blurred images. The Naumann Fine Art Gallery concludes the discussion of this exhibition stating “Sophie Matisse’s adaptation of Guernica proves that a painting that was made over sixty years ago can still convey a powerful message, one that is charged with new meaning for a modern, contemporary audience” (“Sophie Matisse”). Matisse engages in this discourse of Guernica’s presence in the twenty-first century, and through drawing from her own heritage and ideas she offers a new vision of Guernica for the 9/11 generation.

Around the same time in the United States, in the wake of 9/11, the United Nations found Guernica’s resonance problematic as they were called to deal with their own Guernica replica. In February of 2003 United Nations officials hung a blue curtain over the Nelson Rockefeller Guernica tapestry at the United Nations building in New York during Colin Powell’s visit to propose the war in Iraq.22 The Guernica tapestry

---

22 In 1955 Nelson Rockefeller commissioned the creation of a tapestry replica of Guernica, a project which was supervised by Picasso himself. Instead of the black, white and gray tones of the original canvas, the tapestry employs shades of brown and tan. Upon Nelson Rockefeller’s death, in 1985 his widow Happy Rockefeller lent the tapestry to the United Nations to be hung in the New York headquarters (Anderson and Dunlap). The tapestry hung at the United Nations from 1985 to 2009, when it was loaned out to the Whitechapel Gallery in London for Goshka Macuga’s year-long exhibition The Nature of the Beast (Macuga). It is unclear where the tapestry resides at present.
would have been the background for Powell’s televised proposal for war in Iraq, which was of course a highly sensitive subject to begin with. According to Maureen Dowd, New York Times Op-Ed columnist, diplomats explained that Guernica, in the same frame as Powell and his speech, would send, in her words, “too much of a mixed message” (Dowd 27). While UN officials claimed that Guernica was too distracting as a background on television screens, it is very likely that they were actually concerned with the blatant contradiction and irony that Powell’s address in front of Picasso’s masterpiece would create (27). Dowd critically states, “Mr. Powell can't very well seduce the world into bombing Iraq surrounded on camera by shrieking and mutilated women, men, children, bulls and horses” (27). As a result of the cover up, the United Nations incited more protest than they would have if they left the tapestry uncovered. In Spain, employees of the Reina Sofia organized a protest outside the museum with a large replica of Guernica and picket signs, with the message, “¡No a la guerra!” In New York, protestors stood outside the UN building holding posters of Guernica with the same message. This UN Guernica cover-up incident, in addition to the initiation of the war in Iraq, caused major unrest among a world audience and it is within this context that a major wave of responses in the form of art works inspired by Guernica have emerged.

One such response is Guernica by Michael Patterson-Carver, an American folk artist and as Brian Libby described in The Oregonian in February of 2008, a “lifelong political activist” who was surely attracted to the political irony of the Guernica cover-up scandal (Fig. 5) (Libby 16). Patterson-Carver’s Guernica, typical of his body of work, is a watercolor with an inherent critical commentary on some aspect of politics: other topics

---

23 It is unclear who specifically made the call to cover the Guernica tapestry, whether the US government was involved or not. There are rumors that the Bush administration was involved.
he has illustrated include the 2008 presidential election, gay rights, feminism, and the Bush administration. His *Guernica* illustration is slightly unique in his body of work in that it portrays a specific event, although in representing the *Guernica* cover-up scandal he clearly claims to criticize not only the event and the UN’s involvement, but the Bush administration in general as well. His classic folk artist style is effective as it is child-like in the cartoonish, two-dimensional rendering of the images, yet sophisticated in the organization, careful attention to detail, and sharp wit he offers, resulting in a perfectly comprehensibly narrative scene. He exaggerates the facts of the scandal to create a cutting, humorous criticism. In the foreground Colin Powell speaks at a podium and to the left we see the leaders of Poland, Bulgaria, and Serbia, nearly identical figures in military garb, and to the right is the Albanian leader portrayed the same way, with England and Saudi Arabia to the left. In the background is the President at the time, George W. Bush, with Vice President Cheney, carrying his infamous shotgun, and two other members of the Bush administration, who are in the process of covering the *Guernica* tapestry with the blue curtain. The bright blue color that Patterson-Carver utilized, in contrast to the other colors present, which are mostly drab and dark, is an effective representation of this cheerful blue drapery as a means to fix or rather cover up the problems at hand. His inclusion of detailed facial characteristics are also very effective, portraying each figure with solemn faces, except for England and Saudi Arabia who appear slightly amused and England even smiles. Through the use of *Guernica* and this event surrounding the tapestry at the UN, in this painting Patterson-Carver is able to make a smart criticism of the Bush administration and the war in Iraq as well as represent and remember this important event.
Goshka Macuga, a Polish artist who lives in London also chose to comment on the *Guernica* cover-up through art, but she did so through a full-scale exhibition, incorporating *Guernica*’s history, to comment on the work’s function as a backdrop for politics (Macuga). Macuga’s exhibition, *The Nature of the Beast*, was part of the re-opening of the Whitechapel Gallery in London in April of 2009; *Guernica* visited this same gallery in January of 1939 during the British tour to increase support of the Republic (Searle). The exhibition, running from April of 2009 to April of 2010, included the actual Nelson Rockefeller *Guernica* tapestry on loan from the United Nations building, as well as a blue curtain that served as a backdrop, a round glass conference table, and a cubist sculpture made by Macuga of Colin Powell (Fig. 6). The exhibition’s official introduction from the Whitechapel Gallery defines Macuga’s art thus far as “multi-faceted installations that offer narratives around art and society” (“Introduction”). In her letter to visitors to the exhibition Macuga emphasizes her interest in *Guernica* in its first trip to the Whitechapel in 1939, as well as its role in tapestry form at the United Nations building in New York from 1985 to 2009 (Macuga). In both of these cases, *Guernica* served as a “backdrop for political debate,” which Macuga wishes to continue through her exhibition as the exhibition space was presented as a free, public venue for groups and organizations to meet and have discussions at the round table, before the *Guernica* tapestry (Macuga). The only conditions for visiting groups were that they take minutes and photographs during their proceedings and turn them into the Whitechapel for the gallery’s archives. In an interview with Achim Borchardt-Hume in *Art Journal* in 2010, most likely at the end of the exhibition’s run, Macuga explains “The tapestry is a copy, which has its own history. I wanted to use an object in the exhibition which would
shift the historical reference of the *Guernica* bombing in 1937 to a new time frame” (Borchardt-Hume 66). She explains that through allowing for her exhibition to be a space of meeting and discourse she satisfied her aspirations for the exhibition to accumulate its own history, adding to the galleries archives that had informed her work so much in the first place, in reference to the *Guernica* visit of 1939 (66). Towards the end of the exhibition, Macuga commissioned her own tapestry of a photograph of Prince William speaking before the *Guernica* tapestry with an audience standing in front of him (73). Macuga explains that in creating this work, she was looking at “the social function of textiles” as well as art as a “democratic platform” (71).

Macuga’s exhibition is extremely valuable to the understanding of *Guernica* in the twenty-first century, especially her inclusion of this same *Guernica* tapestry. Using this tapestry now as a “democratic platform,” speaking before the tapestry has become an empowering experience; the tapestry in Macuga’s exhibition inspires speech, whereas in its previous setting at the U.N. it was deemed a hindrance. Through her exhibition Macuga also revived *Guernica* in allowing audiences and organizations to interact with the work and consider its power in the light of modern politics. Macuga in effect did the opposite of what had been done at the United Nations in 2003; roles were reversed as the tapestry covered the blue curtain. Macuga took advantage of the democratic values that the *Guernica* tapestry possesses and, through dedicating a space, a public domain, purely to this tapestry, she gave visitors a voice in the politics of the twenty-first century.

*Guernica*’s anti-war message has often been associated with movements for peace, and in the twenty-first century, *Guernica* has become a means through which to engage young people in peace movements. Exemplary of this confluence of peace and youth
engagement is *Kids’ Guernica*, an international community mural project launched in 1995 which calls for groups of children from communities around the world to create peace murals that are the exact dimensions of Picasso’s *Guernica*, on canvases, which are then sent to another community in another country to serve as an ambassador and represent how that community interprets the concept of peace through art (Anderson, *Kids* 3). Tom Anderson, one of the founders of the organization, explains that children are “asked to envision how they could promote peace as citizens of their country and the world, in a locally and culturally specific manner” (6). In the catalog for an exhibition of these murals at Florida State University in 2009, Anderson notes: “the project has been responsible for perhaps as many as 250 murals, with international exhibitions, and peace workshops across the globe” (30). Many of the murals are created by school groups where teachers show their students Picasso’s *Guernica* as a point of departure for talking about violence, war and peace (12). Many of the murals are brightly colored, featuring doves and diverse cultures united in circles, while some are more abstract, depicting naturalistic or dream-like scenes featuring humans, animals and nature (Figs. 7,8). What is notable about the works is that few actually reference *Guernica*, the exceptions being the murals from Australia and, unsurprisingly, Gernika (Figs. 9,10). Picasso’s *Guernica* really serves as a point of departure for the entire project; kids are not asked to re-create *Guernica* visually but conceptually. *Kids’ Guernica* calls children to use *Guernica* as a model to create visual images of peace that they can share with a global audience to promote world peace.

This connection between youth engagement and *Guernica* can be seen in the case of the 2006 *Guernica* Graffiti contest, *Homenaje a Guernica*, which was sponsored by the Reina Sofia during the *Picasso: Tradition and Avant-Garde* exhibition, which marked
the twenty-fifth anniversary since the return of Guernica to Spain. The contest challenged Spanish youth to design a graffiti mural that captured the essence of Guernica and served as homage to Picasso’s masterpiece. The winning designs were reproduced on large walls in the museum’s courtyard and put on display for the public (Martínez, Homenaje). Not only did this contest encourage young Spaniards to engage with Guernica, thinking about the work artistically, ideologically and historically, it also inspired many young people to go to the Reina Sofia for the first time. Guernica served as a mediator between the young Spanish population and the art world. This implies that Guernica’s anti-war message and harsh, biting images were interesting for these young people. As Guernica is an important piece of Spanish cultural patrimony and heritage, young Spaniards were challenged to think about what the work means in the twenty-first century, and in their own lives. In addition, through juxtaposing the graffiti with this national museum, graffiti was legitimized for this young audience and elevated to works of art. Although there was no official connection to peace in this contest, the nature of these young people learning about Guernica, about the horrors of war and violence, was essentially giving them a lesson on expressions of peace, as well as the role of art in a community as a vehicle for engagement in civil society and for public expression of social issues. The publication created after the contest states in its introduction:

A los jóvenes les resulta muy difícil encontrar lugares en los que expresarse con libertad y descubren en las actividades artísticas un potencial y un canal de expresión fundamental. Brindar a los jóvenes la posibilidad de expresarse libremente es la mejor de las contribuciones que desde los museos podemos hacer,
This graffiti competition served as an outlet not only for artistic expression but also for young Spaniards to express themselves in general. The Reina Sofia recognizes these youths as the future of the nation and the least they can do is give them the freedom, with the help of *Guernica*, to express themselves.

Contemporary American pop artist Ron English has been using *Guernica* in his body of work for many years, incorporating it into his works while utilizing “culture jamming.” In a 1990 article in *The New York Times*, Mark Dery first discussed the term “culture jamming.” First used by the band Negtivland in 1984, Dery explained that the term was created to describe artistic works that sought to criticize the media driven society. Dery calls it “artistic ‘terrorism’ directed against the information society in which we live” (Dery). In reference to the artists who carry out this artistic style, whom he calls “culture jammers,” he explains "Cultural jammers draw upon this cacophony of fragmentary media images. At the heart of their reassemblies is the hope that there could be another kind of world, a world where rather than a devaluation of the human in favor of the commodity, there could be an understanding of the commodity in the service of the human” (Dery). Ron English’s work is an excellent example of “culture jamming,” as he juxtaposes canonical works of art with icons and images of American popular and consumer culture. English has come back to *Guernica* numerous times in his career, likely because of the inherent power and denunciation of Picasso’s work and the interesting interplay that *Guernica* poses to American society. In his *Guernica Aerial View*, the *Guernica* scene is portrayed from above and we see the Nazi plane at the top of
the composition, with Mickey Mouse as the pilot (Fig. 11). This juxtaposition of the original *Guernica* crisis from Picasso’s work with the American Disney icon Mickey Mouse, who is the instigator of chaos, presents a criticism of American consumerism and indicates that it has caused major disarray in American society. Whereas many of the twenty-first century works that utilize *Guernica* are also denouncing war or similar acts of cruelty, in the case of English, true to the “culture jamming” ideology and style, he is interested in consumerism, commercialism and the ever-expanding age of information and technology. Maria Arnedo explains English’s use of *Guernica* stating: “toma los elementos del *Guernica* original como base sobre la que construye un discurso contestario, sirviéndose para ello de aportaciones de la cultura de masas e iconos de la cultura pop” (Arnedo 801). Therefore, through *Guernica*, English creates the negative tone he desires in reference to commercial America, and by integrating icons of American culture he sets up a powerful discourse. One of English’s most recent *Guernica* works, entitled *X-ray Division*, portrays the *Guernica* scene, yet it appears that the painting has been x-rayed and in the background are newspaper clippings from events in American history including the assassinations of JFK and John Lennon, the death of Marilyn Monroe as well as Nixon’s resignation and World War II attacks (Fig. 12). Under the pretense that the viewer is able to see this scene through the lens of an x-ray machine, it is suggested that none of this would be visible to the naked eye, and perhaps English means to say that these are the “skeletons” America has been hiding behind the commercial society since World War II. Although English utilizes *Guernica* to create condemnation in a very new way, his methods fit in well with the discourse of
denunciation that *Guernica* is able to illuminate through the inherent reproving nature of the work.

A lighter, simpler example of culture jamming can be seen in the works of American painter Leslie Holt. Holt’s current body of work is characterized by reproductions of a wide variety of the canonical paintings of the history of art with a light spin in that in each painting she includes Hello Kitty (Combs). For example, in *Hello Guernica*, Holt has reproduced Picasso’s original, yet on the right side of the canvas, just below the woman coming out of the flames with her arms in the air, is a little Hello Kitty with her arms raised mimicking the Picasso figure, wearing a red dress and hula-hooping (Fig. 13). Holt says about her body of work done in this style:

> Hello Kitty is pointing toward social or political issues, such as war, genocide, or gender identity. I rely on her to charm the viewer into looking, but her innocent, playful appeal contrasts with the serious adult subject matter. With this contrast of adult and childlike content and these ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural icons, I hope to elicit laughter and irony (qtd. in Combs).

Holt has effectively accomplished this goal in the *Guernica* work in that she has made *Guernica* humorous and there are few images that could be transposed on top of *Guernica* that would be more ironic and delightful than a hula-hooping Hello Kitty. In this case, Holt is investigating the iconicity of Hello Kitty, but not necessarily making a criticism about her ability to transform the tones of classical masterpieces of art history. Instead, she experiments with juxtaposition and uses the technique of culture jamming to present a clever, light take on a very serious, burdened painting.
Another culture-jamming take on *Guernica* is at the center of a recent scandal that arose due to the use of a Louis Vuitton bag in a *Guernica* scene that intermingles genocide and celebrity gossip. In her recent painting *Darfurnica*, a *Guernica*-sized take on the tragic genocide in Darfur mixed with American Hollywood gossip, Nadia Plesner utilizes *Guernica* to legitimize and strengthen her criticism of the frivolity of American society in contrast to the tragedies of Darfur (Fig. 14) (Plesner). Central to the painting is a naked child of Darfur holding a Louis Vuitton bag, which caused the designer brand to sue the young Danish art student. While the court case is in the works, it is interesting to consider whether Plesner would have found herself in this mess had she not referenced *Guernica* in the work, perhaps using a different title and composition, but with the same basic figures. It is fair to say that *Guernica*’s reputation and negative connotations led Louis Vuitton to react against its inclusion in this painting, as the *Guernica* factor affords it a wider audience who would recognize its origins and composition, as well as add a serious connotation of protest and denunciation linking it to Picasso’s original work. While there is no way of knowing if *Guernica* is really at the heart of this scandal, what is clear is that the Louis Vuitton scandal has given Plesner and *Darfurnica* more press, exposure, and comparison to *Guernica* than it ever would have were it not for the lawsuit.

In 2006 Taiwanese artist Lee Mingwei began to create sand murals depicting *Guernica* to describe this phenomenon of *Guernica*’s resonance in recent years. Mingwei began *Gernika in Sand* in 2006, an installation work featuring oversized replica of *Guernica* made with different colored sand, which would then after several weeks on exhibit be systematically altered to the point where it no longer resembled Picasso’s work (Fig. 15, 16). The creation and alteration of the work was carried out by both Mingwei
and visitors to the exhibition, building a sense of community within the gallery space. Mingwei continued to show this installation through 2008, on three separate occasions in London, Chicago and Brisbane. In 2008, while *Gernika in Sand* was in Brisbane, Australia, at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), the online art newsletter *Arts Update*, reported that Mingwei’s work “reflects Picasso’s enduring legacy and demonstrates one artist’s influence on another” (“GoMA”). Mingwei, too, was inspired by *Guernica’s* power and saw it as an outlet to make his own statement about events of tragedy through a work of art. Mingwei’s work is recognized as “a means of encouraging audiences to consider the way we respond to destructive events such as war – through his work we are encouraged to see that there is hope after destruction” (“GoMA”). Instead of focusing on a specific event like the war in Iraq, Mingwei emphasizes these events as a collective and the nature of the tragedy that takes place. In his statement about the *Gernika in Sand* exhibition, Mingwei cites *Guernica* as a “departure point” to look at the larger concept of what happens when people are made into victims (Mingwei). Mingwei says about his work, “Instead of simply being critical of what happened in the town of Guernica, I want to focus on the ideas of impermanence and beauty as ways to respond to such events. Therefore, my *Gernika in Sand* focuses on the larger phenomena of destruction and creation” (Mingwei). He goes further, saying “Rather than focusing on the cruelty of the massacre *Guernica* depicts, I hope to draw attention to the meaning of impermanence and the beauty which can grow from loss” (Mingwei). Mingwei picks up on the beauty of hope and a better future that Picasso was also utilizing, as this idea of “beauty which can grow from loss” is reminiscent of the fist holding a flower in Picasso’s *Guernica*. The action of constructing *Guernica* and physically moving it to create new designs and
images is a literal, physical manifestation of the process that twenty-first century artists have been doing in response to Guernica. Like Schommer’s El Guernica movido, the movement, the reverberations of Guernica, are the focus of this work. Mingwei has a unique purpose as he intends to portray that out of tragedy something positive will surface.

During the week of March 18, 2011, in Bushwick, Brooklyn, two graffiti artists, known as Overunder and No Touching Ground, collaborated on a mural homage to the recent horrific earthquake in Japan (Fig. 17) (Schmelzer). The graffiti mural, entitled “Helping Hand,” depicts a huge life-like hand and forearm emerging from several storefront entryways that are covered with aluminum security gates, each with a word graffitied on it including “optimism,” “cope,” “host,” and “give.” The focus of the mural is the tattoo on the forearm of a notepad with a to-do list, with the tasks “pay rent” and “donate to Red Cross Japan” written on it. This graffiti mural depicts an alternative attempt at community engagement; through playing into the alternative nature of the neighborhood, using tattoos and graffiti, the mural effectively reaches out to its audience proposing an honorable cause. I cannot help but point out the similarity between the gesture of this arm and the outstretched arm of the fallen soldier in the bottom left corner of Picasso’s Guernica. While Guernica does not give such blatant instructions to its viewers, and whether it was intentional or not, “Helping Hand” follows Guernica’s lead in engaging a public to recognize a tragic event, and respond to it. Just as Guernica denounced fascism and was utilized to support the Spanish Republic, these contemporary artists utilize graffiti in order to aid in the crisis in Japan. While I have explored this tendency among twenty-first century artists to utilize Guernica in order to react to
modern-day hardships, it has become clear that it is not so much Picasso’s images and composition, but the action that is important. Although *Guernica* is by no means the first artwork to portray a tragedy, its history and pathway to the mainstream of popular culture make it fair to say that it set the precedent for contemporary artists who are utilizing art in order to recognize hardship and call fellow citizens to take action and lend a hand in the face of adversity.
Appendix: Chapter 4

(Fig. 2) Matisse, Sophie. *Guernica*. 2002-03. Sophie Matisse. Accessed 14 Apr. 2011.


(Fig. 9) Kids' Guernica mural, Australia. 2005. *Kids' Guernica*. Accessed 14 Apr. 2011.


![Guernica Aerial View](http://www.popaganda.com/media/blogs/art/painting_3Dguernica.jpg)


![Image of the painting *Darfurnica* by Nadia Plesner](image-url)

Conclusion: The Wound That Will Not Heal.

During my first trip to Spain when I was 15, as I was leaving the Reina Sofia, a postcard in the gift shop caught my eye. I realized that I had traversed the museum for hours and somehow missed the one painting I was familiar with. Although it meant missing my curfew that night, I went back into the museum to find Guernica. I was unprepared for my first encounter; unaware of its meaning and power, all I knew was that this was a key work in the trajectory of Spanish art history. It was July of 2004, and I’m certain that I was also unaware of the terrorist attacks that Madrid had suffered some four months earlier on March 11. As I started to study Guernica at William and Mary, during my freshman seminar, Imagining Madrid, the class which introduced me to Schommer’s El Guernica movido, I realized Guernica’s significance in my own life, having grown up in New York during 9/11. In the summer of 2008, I saw Guernica for the second time, then focusing a research project on the iconography of the bull, bullfighting, and Spanish identity. My third encounter was in the spring of 2009, when I was part of a research team for a Mellon-funded project entitled Mapping Memory in Madrid. Then, in the context of Spanish Civil War studies, searching for sites of memory throughout Madrid, Guernica was more meaningful than ever. My assignment in the project was to concentrate on the way exhibitions were being utilized to commemorate the Spanish Civil War, and I found myself focusing on Guernica. As our trip ensued, it became clear that Guernica was not only on exhibition at the Reina Sofia. While visiting the Almudena Cemetery, we saw the communal gravesite of soldiers from the Nazi Condor Legion, the group responsible for bombing Gernika. On a visit to the cultural organization CSIC, we saw a presentation on Carabanchel, a well-known prison during Franco’s regime that had
been recently demolished. The presentation featured the graffiti that gradually covered the prison walls once it had been shut down, including a graffiti replica of Guernica, with the caption “¡Por un mundo sin barrotes!” (Fig.2). It is during this trip that I began to recognize Guernica’s resonance, as I experienced it firsthand.

The recent 2007 Law of Historical Memory in Spain guided and inspired our Mapping Memory project, and while not in an official sense, it relates to Guernica’s resonance, especially in the recent years. In the law’s “Exposición de motivos,” the purpose of this legislation is explained: “La presente Ley quiere contribuir a cerrar heridas todavía abiertas en los españoles y a dar satisfacción a los ciudadanos que sufrieron, directamente o en la persona de sus familiares, las consecuencias de la tragedia de la Guerra Civil o de la represión de la Dictadura” (“Ley”). Therefore, through this legislation of reconciliation, the contradiction that was so prevalent during the Transition is finally settled; the civil war and dictatorship are now subjects that can not only be officially discussed and recognized in public forums, they can be resolved. The Mapping Memory trip inspired me to visit the Basque town of Gernika, another site of memory, in August of 2009, and Madrid again that December. It is during that trip to Madrid that I became familiar with Antonio Saura’s Contra el Guernica, which the Reina Sofia had recently re-published. During the summer of 2010, while in Madrid again to begin research for this thesis, I found Andrea Giunta’s Guernica: El poder de la representacion: Europa, Estados Unidos y América Latina, the result of a symposium in Buenos Aires in 2007 to discuss Guernica’s transcontinental impact. Each visit to see Guernica has re-affirmed its constant relevance and unending influence on modern scholars and artists.
Canadian artist Viktor Mitic uses paint, brushes, guns and bullets to make paintings; it is only fitting that he made a replica of Guernica (Fig. 3). First painting his images in bright shades of blue, yellow and red, Mitic then takes a step back, and with remarkable marksmanship, he fires a gun at the canvases, tracing the outlines of his figures with bullet holes (Whyte 6). The small holes and black burn marks are a stark contrast to the bright colored images, which are most often portraits of figures that present a certain irony, like John Lennon, Gandhi, John F. Kennedy and Jesus. Mitic’s Guernica, entitled Blasted Guernica (2009), is almost an overstatement. I say almost because there is something valuable and original in the work that Mitic is doing in the realm of art and politics. The bullet holes in the painting are reminiscent of the gash in the middle of the Guernica composition which, as I discussed in Chapter 1, intimates a hole in the canvas. Now that there are actual bullet holes that were intentionally shot into the canvas, Guernica is re-contextualized into the twenty-first century; bullet-holes can be interpreted as a modern take on the wound. While the Spanish nation has recently come to officially recognize the wound of the civil war and dictatorship, which has persisted for decades, the same can be said for Guernica; since 1937 scholars and artists have recognized and responded to Guernica’s wound, which is its legacy. This wound that Guernica literally and metaphorically embodies is the image of the pain and suffering that it represents. While Spain works on ways to close the wound of the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship, Guernica’s wound remains open, resonating in response to the tragedy and suffering that transpires on a global level, everyday.
Appendix: Conclusion

(Fig. 1) Me in front of Guernica at the Reina Sofía in Madrid, Spain. Personal photograph by author. June 2010.
(Fig. 2) Anonymous. Carabanchel Prison, Madrid. Accessed 14 Apr. 2011.


Works Cited


Anderson, Susan Heller and David W. Dunlap. “*Guernica Returns, In Another Medium*.”


---. “Imágenes de lo inaceptable.” Arte solidario: Exposición conmemorativa del primer aniversario de los atentados en las estaciones de Atocha, El Pozo y Santa


<http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/02/03/030203fa_fact_wilkinson>.

Zapatero, Jose Luis Rodríguez. “Introducción.” Arte Salvado: 70 Aniversario De La Intervención Del Comité Internacional Para El Salvamento De Los Tesoros De

Acknowledgements

In the fall of 2009, while I was studying abroad in Sevilla, Spain, I wrote an e-mail to my art history professor, asking if I could write my final paper on Guernica. This is the response I received:

Me gusta mucho el tema, pero al trabajar sobre un cuadro vas a encontrar una serie de dificultades muy grandes, ya que tienes que conocer qué pasó con el cuadro en cada instante y tienes que analizar los movimientos artísticos que hacen que Picasso cree la maravilla que es el Guernica. Por supuesto que también tendrás que conocer el contexto histórico. Yo por mi parte te animo, pero descubrirás que es un trabajo difícil el que has decidido.

So, while I was warned that a paper on Guernica might be too complicated and difficult, I would like to thank my professors, family, and friends for the encouragement and guidance that allowed me to prove this professor wrong by completing this thesis.

I must thank first and foremost, my advisor, Francie Cate-Arries. Over the past 4 years, from meeting her on admitted students’ day, taking her freshman seminar, going to Madrid with her to do research, taking her senior seminar and finally writing this thesis with her, she has become more than an advisor and a professor; she has been an inspiration and a friend. I can confidently say that her encouragement, constructive criticism, honesty and knowledge have shaped this thesis as well as my growth as a scholar. After all, it was Professor Cate-Arries who encouraged my interest in Guernica and presented the opportunity to begin this thesis. In the past year Professor Cate-Arries has corresponded with me every week, either through e-mail or in-person, all the while tirelessly editing this thesis, in its many drafts and stages and her advice and wisdom
have been invaluable. As I move on to graduate school, I can only hope to find an equally charismatic, enthusiastic, and kind person to be my advisor.

I also thank Professors Buck and Webster for agreeing to be on my panel for my defense which entailed reading this entire thesis, something that I have a hard time doing. I would also like to thank Professor Webster for encouraging me to pursue Art History and to explore other works of Hispanic art over this past year. I also must thank my ceramics professor, Marlene Jack, along with my entire advanced ceramics class this semester, for their kindness, optimism, and humor.

I also owe a lot of thanks to the Charles Center for the generous grants they have awarded me over the past couple of years, including a research grant that allowed me to visit Gernika and Madrid while I was abroad in Sevilla during my junior year and an International Summer Research grant, which allowed me to do research in Spain at the Reina Sofia last summer.

I must also thank my parents for the support that they offered me during this stress-filled process. To my mom, thank you helping me to keep perspective by reminding me that there were other more important things in my life than this thesis, something which I needed to hear once in a while. To my dad, who recently wrote a dissertation for his doctorate, thank you for your commiseration and understanding.

I thank my friends, at William and Mary and at home, for supporting me through breakdowns and breakthroughs, over lunches, dinners, drinks, the Internet, basically over all meals and media. I recognize that this thesis has consumed my senior year of college and I thank my friends for standing by me from start to finish, always with encouragement and optimism.
Finally, I thank Pablo Picasso, whose life of audacity, talent and wit, provided me with the inspiration and motivation to finish this thesis.