The 'anti-photographic' photography of Pablo Picasso and its influence on the development now known as Cubism

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THE ‘ANTI-PHOTOGRAPHIC’ PHOTOGRAPHY OF PABLO PICASSO
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MOVEMENT NOW KNOWN AS CUBISM

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University and
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Master of Arts

in

The School of Art

by
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Cubism is like standing at a certain point on a mountain and looking around. If you go higher, things will look different, if you go lower, again they will look different. It is a point of view.

- Jacques Lipchitz
Frontispiece: Picasso with Camera, c. 1930
Photograph.
Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers.
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
Yale Collection of American Literature.
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ABSTRACT

By examining the relationship between photography and painting at the turn of the nineteenth century, it becomes clear that the two mediums have more in common than art historians acknowledge. The two share obvious formal qualities such as form, perspective, depth, and spatial relationships. These formal qualities make it easier to see the potential overlap between the two mediums, as Picasso did during the summer of 1909. Although Picasso is not well known for his photography, the large collection of photographic imagery found in his estate now makes it possible to firmly establish the place of photography within his oeuvre. Indeed, when examining the photographs that Picasso took in the small Spanish village of Horta de Ebro, it is possible to give photography its proper due in the development of the movement now known as Cubism.
CHAPTER 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY AND PAINTINGS
AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

The photographs Pablo Picasso made at his stay in Horta de Ebro (now known as Horta de San Juan) in the summer of 1909 directly influenced the subsequent realization of his first Cubist paintings: *The Reservoir, Houses on a Hill*, and *The Factory* (See Figures 1, 2, and 3). However, the literature on this subject is slim and art historians often overlook photography as a catalyst to his development of the movement now known as Cubism. In order to understand these paintings, it is critical to understand the way in which Picasso used the camera to try to solve the problem that faced both painters and photographers at the turn of the century – that of trying to represent and reconcile a three-dimensional object within a two-dimensional frame.


Figure 3. Pablo Picasso, *The Factory*. Summer 1909. Oil on Canvas. 20 7/8 x 23 10/16 in. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
From the very beginning, the relationship between photographers and painters was complex. When photography was first announced to the world in 1839, painters both despaired and rejoiced.\(^1\) Photography replicated reality so well that the painter could never hope to achieve the same results. However, the French painting style of the 1860s and 1870s would become known for its celebrated revolt against the smooth precision of academic painting that mimicked life so well. Photography essentially freed painting from the depiction of reality, which was indeed a cause for celebration and anguish. Painting decidedly shifted away from representing traditional subject matter and the academic representation of reality, yet it also frequently remained entrenched in the conventional single-point Renaissance perspective.

Photography, on the other hand, could both replicate that same perspective and deny it. By simply pointing the camera at anything but the horizon line, Renaissance perspective vanished. When positioned upwards or downwards, the camera produced an image that had no depth. Truly, space became compressed within the image. However, for the most part, photographers did not stray too far from conventional subject matter and instead remained faithful to external appearances.

Initially, photography was used by professionals and amateurs alike. This was because photography cameras, chemicals, and papers were readily manufactured, affordable, and accessible to the middle class a mere twenty years after its invention. Mary Warner Marien, art historian and author of *Photography: A Cultural History* described the reach of photography towards the end of the nineteenth century as follows:

> By 1870, photography was no longer a novelty… Experiments in photomechanical processes led to the development of half-tone plates in the

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1880’s. By the 1890’s, photographs could be cheaply reproduced in magazines and newspapers. The Kodak Camera, introduced in 1888, marked the debut of photographs produced directly by the middle class consumer, rather than by professional photographers…For the general public, technological advances in photography were more compelling than intellectual uneasiness about imitation and authenticity.²

Indeed, by 1900, the public was accustomed to the quick, easy experience that cameras at the time provided and did not bother with intellectual questions concerning the nature of “reality.” As it was generally understood at the time, the camera mechanically reproduced what was found in the viewfinder and, if the practitioner had proficient technical skills, the resulting print would represent life as it stood before him, albeit in tonal gradations of black and white.

In his article, “The Camera Point of View in Painting and Photography,” the American writer and art critic, Charles Caffin (1854 – 1918), explained important parallels between painting and photography:

Similarly even the methods of the painter, so far as he represents nature, approximate to the photographer’s … He [the painter] flattens the forms, reduces them to masses, and brings the latter into relations of color and light values. He does it with the brush on canvas, the photographer either by regulating the exposure or by controlling the printing, or, through both.³

Photographers and painters, in this changing world at the turn of the century, did not appear as different as once perceived. Although the two groups of artists used different media, the inherent problem of representing the three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional plane confronted both the painter and the photographer. Issues of space, depth, and depiction were inherent to both types of media.

Speaking about the reputation of photography at the turn of the century, J.M. Bowels explained in his article “In Praise of Photography,” published in October of 1907, that:

It is very interesting to be at the birth of an art. This is the privilege of those who are watching the steady advance of the Photo-Session and their European associates. In the best of this work, it seems to me that these men already have proved that photography can do certain things that cannot be accomplished by any other medium. This will appear a horrifying assertion to a hide-bound laborer in one of the older arts, but once granted that the camera is an art tool, it is a perfectly logical statement.4

Bowels accepted the camera as a tool and went so far as to assert, “photography can do certain things that cannot be accomplished by any other medium.”5 In this statement, he pushed against the accepted norm of the time. The camera had gained the public and the amateur’s trust but it had yet to convince the intellectuals of its importance as an “art tool,” if not, in fact, an art in itself.

At the turn of the century, Picasso was already known for his paintings yet even to this day his use of photography is hardly acknowledged. However, there is new evidence that suggests that Picasso also knew about photography at this time. Several thousand photographic images were discovered in his estate at the time of his death. Picasso not only knew about photography, but that he was using photography as a resource as early as 1899 – 1900.6 A photographic illustration depicting Joan Oliva Bridgman’s poem “Ode to Phryne” was published in Joventut, in April 26, 1900. Only a few months later, Picasso completed Illustration for Joan Oliva Bridgman’s poem, “The Call of the Virgins,” for the July 12, 1900 issue of Joventut (See Figures 4 and 5).

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5 Ibid.
6 Anne Baldassari, Picasso and Photography: The Dark Mirror (Houston, TX: Flammarion, 1997) 7.
Figure 4. Anonymous, *Portrait of Christiansen.* Photograph illustrating Joan Oliva’s poem “Ode to Phryne” *Joventut,* no. 11, April 26, 1900.

Figure 5. Pablo Picasso, *Illustration for Joan Oliva Bridgman’s poem,* “The Call of the Virgins” *Joventut,* no. 22, July 12, 1900.
This is the earliest example of Picasso’s use of photography as a resource. Indeed, there are too many similarities between the two images to dismiss the idea that the preceding photograph was not a direct influence on Picasso’s illustration. Although the woman is more reposed in Picasso’s illustration, it is clear that from the angle of the woman’s head, the shadow and highlight detail on her torso and the omission of her right arm that she is based off the same woman. Although this illustration is not based on his own photograph, it does show that Picasso was using photography as a resource early in his career.

Picasso was not the only one to see the potential success of the interplay between photography and painting at this time. Indeed, ideas about painting and photography were converging in Paris during this period. George Besson (1882 – 1971), a French art critic, sought to find out what those in the intellectual circles of Paris thought about the blurring distinction between photography as an art and photography as an art tool. In an article written for Camera Work in October of 1908, he observed:

Photography has a very undesirable reputation amongst the artists of our times. They know only the faults of its extremely mechanical precision, its ordinary commonplace results, and the absence of feeling and of life, which are shown in its modern representations.\(^7\)

He continues to explain that his goal in writing this article was to “remedying the conditions a little.”\(^8\) Besson interviewed certain artists, men of letters, and important critics in France such as Auguste Rodin, Gustave Geffroy, Henri Matisse, and Frantz Jourdain. He asked them the following, “First: Do you believe that by means of photography, works of art can be produced?” and “Second: Do you approve of interpretation by means of photography and the intervention of

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\(^8\) Ibid.
the photography by the different means at his disposal, to realize, according to his taste and in his own personal style, his emotions?" Unfortunately, it is unknown which photographs Besson used as examples for his interviews. However, the responses are telling. It is important to realize that these were the questions confronting the intellectuals in and around Paris, questions regarding ideas about representation, photography, and the role of photography in producing works of art. Although these artists were not using photography themselves, they certainly had formed opinions about the value of photography and its burgeoning acceptance in the art world.

Responding to Besson’s inquiries, French post-impressionist painter Charles Cottet (1863 – 1925) affirmed:

These photographs reveal a great deal of intelligence, and artistic temperaments in the authors, but I must say that the greatest pleasures given to me by such as are purely photographic. I am not fond of those prints which are retouched and transformed to death by processes of interpretation, for then I find myself in the presence of a shocking clash between two different methods.10

His response that he finds the “greatest pleasure” in the example that was “purely photographic” shows a changing attitude toward photography at the turn of the century. The camera was gaining acceptance as an art tool and also gaining acceptance as a type of art, specifically one that remained true to its inherent qualities, rather than mimicked drawing or painting.

At this time, manipulated gum oil prints suffered a definite decline in popularity. In fact, there was a growing tendency to prefer photographs that were decidedly more realistic: photographs that remained inherently representative rather than illustrative. French art critic Gabriel Mourey responded to Besson’s questions that, “photography produces works of art only

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10 Ibid., 21.
when it remains photography.” His response implies that this shift to prefer the realistic print went further than just a few men in Paris.

Besson later noted in his article that, “if it is worth doing, then the camera has no rival, for this is the truth of beauty, or to put it in another way, the beauty of truth.” Picasso was, perhaps not vocally, but nevertheless, an important member of this changing consensus towards photography. As a painter, he had already gone as far as to mimic a photographic illustration – it was not a far reach for him to take that one-step further by taking his own photographs and thereby coming to specific conclusions, retroactively designated as “cubism,” within the medium of painting.

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12 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUMMER OF 1909

Picasso took his first landscape photographs during the summer of 1909 at Horta de Ebro (See Figures 6, 7, and 8). These photographs directly led to Picasso’s breakthrough in painting and to the subsequent development of the movement now known as Cubism. Before this summer, Picasso had actively been searching for a way to represent reality. As a painter, and moreover as an artist, he was seeking to represent life not from the perceived reality of the eye, so much as from an imagined view of reality by the mind. Most importantly, he sought to do this within the confines of a two-dimensional space.

When Picasso took these photographs, he was not acting specifically as a “photographer” as we understand the term today. Instead, Picasso was using the camera as a tool. Picasso was not a straight photographer as per the usual suspects at the time – he did not grapple with the issues presenting photographers of the day, who were defending their practice as an art. Although Picasso was using photography as an amateur would, simply pointing and shooting the camera, he was specifically focusing on composition and spatial relationships.

These images decisively influenced Picasso’s paintings in such a way that his closest friends and patrons, such as Gertrude Stein (1874 – 1946), acknowledged this shift in his work (See Figure 9). Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo Stein were American expatriates who moved to Paris in 1903. Shortly after, their home on the Left Bank at 27 rue de Fleurus became known for its Saturday evening soirees. Stein was a close friend of Picasso’s – she knew the intricacies of his work and received constant updates from him. More importantly, she was his patron (See Figure 9). Writing about these photographs, Stein commented:

But the essential thing, the treatment of the houses was essentially Spanish and therefore essentially Picasso. In these pictures, he first emphasized the
way of building in Spanish villages, the line of the houses not following the landscape but cutting across and into the landscape.\textsuperscript{13}

Examining the photographs, it is clear that just as Stein writes, the lines of the houses did not follow the landscape but cut into it instead. Picasso’s vantage point, especially in Figure 6, \textit{Horta de Ebro (The Reservoir)} and Figure 7, \textit{Horta de Ebro (Houses on a Hill)} diminished the typical horizon line. Instead of placing the horizon in the center of the photograph, as per the usual Renaissance perspective, the skyline here is in the uppermost part of the picture plane. From his vantage point, the houses certainly looks as though they cross into each other, at all angles, and look almost as if they sit on top of one another.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{landscape.jpg}
\caption{Figure 6. Pablo Picasso, \textit{Landscape, Horta de Ebro (The Reservoir)}. Summer 1909. Gelatin Silver Print. 9 x 11 3/8 in. Picasso Archives, Musée Picasso, Paris.}
\end{figure}


These photographs were in high contrast suggesting severe tonal ranges and simplified buildings into shapes. His photographs also showed both an upward glance and a downward view. Although individual buildings are discernible in his photographs, what made these photographs stand out is that the architecture and the light combine to emphasize the planar aspects of the buildings. All of the elements are flattened – the three-dimensionality of the structures is deemphasized. It is easier to imagine these sprawling vistas as a multiple viewpoint of a singular building, which is what Picasso did in his paintings *Houses on a Hill* and *The Reservoir.*

In each of the landscape paintings that Picasso completed during his summer stay in Horta, it is clear that he developed and transformed the landscape, and the planar relationships of form, as he saw fit, and did so by utilizing photography. By combining multiple viewpoints into one, Picasso attempted to control the perceived problem inherent to both photography and painting: that of trying to represent three-dimensional objects onto a two-dimensional plane. Instead of using the traditional Renaissance perspective, that of a single viewpoint, Picasso combined viewpoints in order to show a more real landscape, one that was not perceivable by the eye alone.

Picasso himself emphasized the importance of these photographs in several postcards that he wrote to Stein over the course of the summer. In these postcards, he explained the importance of his work he was completing and explained when subsequent paintings could be viewed (See Figure 10). The first existing postcard sent to Stein from the beginning of August 1909, reads, “I am working and tomorrow will send some photographs I took of here and of my pictures.” Fernande Olivier, Picasso’s mistress at the time, included, “Do the photos of the village make
you long to see it [?]. Picasso then wrote, on either August 5 or 12, “Dear friends I enclose three photographs of four of my pictures. I’ll send you some more one of these days.”

Anxiously, he wrote to Gertrude and Leo again, in mid-August, “Tell me if you received the photographs of four of my paintings. One day soon I’ll send you some more of the country and of my paintings.” Picasso, having taken the photographs and photographs of his paintings, waited to hear back from Stein as to what she thought of his pictures. Sadly, her replies to him have not survived. However, by September 13, Picasso had returned to Paris and was preparing a small exhibition for friends. Fernande Olivier, in her memoir *Picasso and His Friends*, first published in 1933, recalled:

> It was in Aragon, in a little village called Horta near Saragossa, that Picasso’s cubist formula was defined and established; or rather on his return from a trip there. He brought back several canvases, the two best of which were bought by the Steins. They were landscapes painted in a geometrical design.

Fernande’s account is important because it again emphasizes that is was in Horta, during the summer of 1909, that “Picasso’s cubist formula was defined and established.” Importantly this account also affirms that it was at this exhibition that the Steins’ bought *Houses on a Hill* and *The Reservoir*. Additionally, it was either at this vernissage or at the Steins’ atelier, that the photographs of Horta were brought out numerous times in order to show the similarities between the photographs and the paintings of Picasso completed at Horta.

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15 Ibid., 58.
16 Ibid., 59.
Figure 9. Man Ray, *Gertrude Stein with Portrait by Picasso*. 1922. Photograph. Man Ray Online Trust.

This postcard reads, “Dear friends, the pictures will not be put up until the day after tomorrow. You are invited to the vernissage Wednesday after noon. Yours truly, Picasso.” Dated September 13, 1909, this postcard was sent after Picasso’s return from Horta, yet it highlights the importance of these paintings. Picasso rarely exhibited his paintings, in fact, he was known for not doing so. However, upon his return from Horta de Ebro, the first thing he did was to exhibit these new works.

As noted, Picasso invited a few friends and patrons to this small exhibition, chiefly among them, Gertrude Stein. Gertrude noted the influence that the summer of 1909 had on Picasso’s work. She affirmed:

> Once again Picasso in 1909 was in Spain and he brought back with him some landscapes which were, certainly were, the beginning of cubism. These three landscapes were extraordinarily realistic and all the same the beginning of cubism.¹⁸

Speaking as a friend would be telling enough, but the fact that Stein spoke as a friend and also as a patron stresses the significance that Picasso himself places on these paintings. Not only was he interested in showing his friends his work, but he also wanted to prove to one of his most crucial patrons that he was making worthy strides in his work. Stein made the claim that these paintings “were, certainly were, the beginning of cubism,” which is a noteworthy claim in and of itself. Additionally, this recollection came from her notes that she wrote several years after the fact, so it is especially suggestive that she retroactively recognized and assigned such consequence to these paintings.

Stein further explained this same episode in her book, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, published in 1933:

But to go back to the three landscapes. When they were first put up on the wall naturally, everybody objected. As it happened, he and Fernande had taken some photographs of the villages which he had painted and he had given copies of these photographs to Gertrude Stein. When people said that the few cubes in the landscape looked nothing but cubes, Gertrude Stein would laugh and say, if you had objected to these landscapes as being too realistic, there would be some point in your objection. And she would show them the photographs and really the pictures as she rightly said might be declared to be too photographic a copy of nature.19

Writing from the viewpoint of Toklas, Gertrude spoke of herself in the third person. She emphasized her own role on this occasion, stating that the paintings were “too realistic” and “too photographic.” The photographs were brought out to convince the attendees of the hyper-reality of these vistas. Again, Stein explained the event in her notebooks almost exactly as she had in *The Autobiography of Alice Toklas*:

Picasso had by chance taken some photographs of the village that he had painted and it always amused me when everyone protested against the fantasy of the pictures to make them look at the photographs which made them see that the pictures were almost exactly like the photographs.20

Stressing the importance of the work, she commented, “the pictures were almost exactly like the photographs.” These photographs were not only a starting point for the paintings from Horta, but they were also an ending point, making a complete circle in Picasso’s search to represent an object not from one viewpoint, but from many.

When considering the fact that Picasso not only took these photographs himself, but also that his esteemed friends such as Gertrude Stein took notice and attributed such importance to the photographs, it becomes more and more obvious that these photographs held great significance for Picasso. He made a point of sending these images to Stein and furthermore, allowed close comparisons to be made between the photographs and the paintings. Picasso then went as far as to have a small exhibition and viewing party for these paintings after his return, at which his photographs were also produced to satisfy the curiosity of the attendees. All of these aspects emphasize the magnitude that Picasso himself attributed to his stay in Horta and the work that he produced there.
CHAPTER 3: THE ‘ANTI-PHOTOGRAPHIC’ WORKS OF PICASSO

Daniel Henry Kahnweiler (1884 – 1979) a German-born art historian, art dealer, and, more importantly, close friend of Picasso’s, tried to explain this new style of Cubism.

It was, that is to say, a profound reaction against impressionism. The latter had tended towards spontaneity, attempting to record the most fleeting aspects of the outer world. Every visual impression seemed worthy of capture; all that mattered was to present it in all its freshness. Cubism disregarded appearances. Unsatisfied by the fortuities of a single visual impression, it endeavored to penetrate to the very essence of an object by representing it, not as it appeared on a given day at a given time, but as it exists ultimately composed in memory.\(^{21}\)

He reiterates that this was an art that was “unsatisfied” with a “single visual impression,” and that it attempted to represent an object “as it exists ultimately composed in memory.”

Kahnweiler recognized what his painters were trying to do, and he, in turn, tried to explain these paintings in words. He explained in his book *The Rise of Cubism*:

The nature of the new painting is clearly characterized as representational as well as structural: representational in that it tries to reproduce the formal beauty of things; structural in its attempt to grasp the meaning of this formal beauty in the painting. Representation and structure conflict. Their reconciliation by the new painting, and the stages along the road to this goal are the subject of this work.\(^{22}\)

This statement appears very simple yet it encapsulates all that Picasso was trying to accomplish at the beginning of his endeavor. This new art “Cubism” was based firmly in the reality and the truth of the thing of the painting at hand.

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However, it was not just the truth of the thing that Picasso was trying to preserve, it was the *ultimate* truth of the thing; it was the rendering of a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional plane that he grappled with that led to his experiments in this manner. It was not a focus on a thing from one side, because as Kahnweiler writes “representation and structure conflict.” Instead, it was the test of capturing a thing from every angle and rendering that in its entirety on the flat plane of the canvas. Kahnweiler continued that:

To represent three dimensions and color on a flat surface, and to comprehend them in the unity of that surface. ‘Representation,’ however, and ‘comprehension’ in the strictest and highest sense. Not the simulation of form by chiaroscuro, but the depiction of the three dimensional through drawing on a flat surface. No pleasant ‘composition’ but uncompromising organically articulated structure. In addition, there was the problem of color, and finally, the most difficult of all, that of amalgamation, the reconciliation of the whole.  

Picasso was concerned with representing a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional plane – these same aspects were inherent to the medium of not only painting, but also, of photography.

The photographs of the buildings and houses at Horta appeared faceted to Picasso, the different sides of the same building seemed to pile on top of one another. Fanning out from each other, these buildings provided a way to visually see more than one viewpoint at a time. In his article, “On the Possibility of New Laws of Composition,” Sadakichi Hartmann commented on the new role of photography:

The facility of producing detail and the differentiation of textures, the depth and solid appearance of dark planes, the ease with which forms can be lost in shadows, the production of lines solely by tonal gradations and the beautiful suggestion of shimmering light, all of these qualities must be accepted as the fundamental elements of any new development.

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Photographic representation, no doubt, will become addicted more and more to space composition, to the balancing of different tonal planes and the reciprocal relations of spaces.²⁴

All of these aspects appear in the photographs from Horta. They are well composed, forms are produced by tonal gradations alone, and the relationship of spaces is integral to the image. Horta appeared this way in the photographs because of the landscape itself and also because of the specific elements of these particular photographs. The flatness of the tones did not differentiate the space and there was no horizon line to disappear to or trick the eye into a sense of three dimensionality. Instead, there was just a flat, two-dimensional faceted picture. All of these elements inherent to these photographs lead to Picasso’s subsequent paintings, his first successful “Cubist” works.

Charles Caffin, the author of the pivotal article, “The Camera Point of View in Painting and Photography,” examined previously, explained further that the role of the artist was to represent the “actual appearance of things.” He noted:

At this time, it is to be repeated, we have been considering the artist, whether the painter or photographer, as occupied with representing the actual appearances of nature. To do so, whether by the brush or the camera is to have the photographic vision and to render the subjects photographically. There is, however, that other field of art which is occupied, not with the facts of sight, but with ideas of the imagination. This is outside of the range of the photographic point of view.²⁵

Caffin asserted that it was the role of the artist to be concerned with the “actual appearance[s] of nature” and to “render subjects photographically.” However, as he then suggests, there exists “that other field of art” where the artist was not concerned with the “facts of sight,” and instead

becomes enthralled with “ideas of the imagination.” This is what Picasso was interested in, not a painting where subjects were rendered with visual precision. Rather, he was interested in painting in such a way that the object that materialized from the mind’s eye alone.

Writing in 1911, Alfred Stieglitz, an American photographer and the editor of *Camera Work* commented that, “in the month of April, Pablo Picasso was introduced to the American public. Picasso, a young Spaniard living in Paris, is one of the leading influences among modern painters.” Throughout that year and early into the next, Stieglitz organized groundbreaking exhibits of modern art at his gallery 291. He promoting this new art along with photography in the pages of *Camera Work* and by the summer of 1912 he was so taken with non-photographic art that he published a special number of *Camera Work* in August 1912 which was devoted solely to Matisse and Picasso.

This exhibition stemmed from the interest in modern art from Paris. In late 1910, Marius De Zayas (1880 – 1961), a Mexican artist, writer, and gallery owner, travelled to Paris on behalf of gallery 291. Prompted by Steichen’s interest, de Zayas visited the Salon d’Automne. It was there that he first encountered Picasso’s work. Because of their common language, de Zayas interviewed Picasso, who was to be featured in the following edition of *Camera Work*. He observed that:

> When he [Picasso] paints, he does not limit himself to taking from an object only those planes, which the eye perceives, but deals with all those, which, according to him, constitute the individuality of form; and with his peculiar fantasy, he develops and transforms them.

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This again reiterates that Picasso was not concerned with what the “eye perceives” alone. It echoes Caffin’s assertion and tries to explain, again, exactly what Picasso was trying to achieve with his painting. De Zayas continued:

Picasso has a different conception of perspective from that in use by the traditionalists. According to his way of thinking and painting, form must be represented in its intrinsic value, and not in relation to other objects. In his paintings, perspective does not exist: in them, there are nothing but harmonies suggested by form, and registers which succeed themselves, to compose a general harmony which fills the rectangle that constitutes the picture. 28

Picasso, De Zayas, Frank Burty Haviland, and Edward Steichen were directly responsible for choosing the 83 drawings and watercolors for the show documenting Picasso’s development from 1906 to 1910. Upon viewing these selected pieces, Stieglitz then “praised Picasso’s ‘anti-photographic’ work.” 29

Figure 11. Edward Steichen, Cover of Camera Work. 1903 – 1917.

At this time, the camera had no rival in depicting the world as it existed in front of the viewfinder. Photography was thought to represent reality, and represent reality so well that it was thought of as *representational*. With this, the responsibility for painters to depict reality gave way, and fell on the shoulders of photographer instead. Picasso’s photographs, and thus subsequent paintings, were *beyond* photographic, *beyond* perceived visual reality, and not representational (or photographic) of a single viewpoint reality. When these viewpoints were brought together, they were representative of an all-encompassing one, one that tried to represent a three dimensional object within a two dimensional space by converging these viewpoints, not into a singular view point, but into a multiple viewpoint, which when viewed on a two dimensional surface, was capable of showing all viewpoints simultaneously.
When Stieglitz deemed Picasso’s work “anti-photographic,” he was not implying that Picasso’s work was anti-representational or somehow abstract. Rather, Stieglitz was implying that Picasso’s work was beyond representational. It was more real than reality. Stieglitz could see the beginnings of this in Picasso’s work. It was this tendency to try to represent a thing from all viewpoints, rather from one single vantage point that was “anti-photographic.” Picasso’s work, and especially Picasso’s photography at this time, finally eliminated the traditional Renaissance perspective and with it the single viewpoint. At last, Picasso had found his way.
CONCLUSION

By further examining Picasso’s paintings and more importantly, recognizing the photographs he took during the summer of 1909, it is possible to see how Picasso arrived at his first “Cubist” works. Issues surrounding photography and painting were the talk of the day, and by realizing that the inherent qualities common to both mediums, Picasso was able to take the final step in realizing how he wanted to approach his work. The photographs at Horta allowed Picasso to envision multiple viewpoints at the same time, something he was striving towards in his paintings. Accepting that photographs were inherently thought to be “representative” sets up the argument to realize that it was not that Picasso’s work was the opposite of representative, rather, his paintings went beyond the merely representative, to something truly ‘anti-photographic.’
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VITA

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