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ART, SOCIAL CRITICISM?
“I never thought about painting for the elite only. I’ve always thought that painting should awaken something, even in those who don’t have the habit of contemplating paintings.”

PABLO PICASSO

What do works of art talk about?

What is the most important thing in a work of art, the message or the form?
ART: beyond beauty

- It makes us reflect on our existence, social problems or life in general.
- It generates reflective and critical thought.
- It is a tool of mediation and a driver of communication.
Examples of artists who make us think:

Banksy
https://www.banksy.co.uk/
« Do women have to be naked to enter the Metropolitan Museum? Less than 5% of the artists exhibiting are women, but 85% of the nudes are female. »

Guerrilla Girls, 1985

Ice Watch, Olafur Eliasson, 2018
https://www.olafureliasson.net/
Picasso and social criticism

Pablo Picasso expressed himself through art.

He captured the historical events of his time through painting. After the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, he placed his work at the service of the fight against fascism and in favour of peace.

Pablo Picasso did not understand his works only as a visual pleasure. Art was, for him, a political weapon.
“What do you think an artist is? ...he is a political being, constantly aware of the heart breaking, passionate, or delightful things that happen in the world, shaping himself completely in their image. Painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war.”

Pablo Picasso
Painted shortly after the German air force attacked the town of Guernica in broad daylight. The violence of this attack on the civilian population, intended to intimidate and demoralise the enemy, hit Picasso hard.

Through his painting, he wanted to represent the fear, helplessness and pain of the innocent.
Guernica as a symbol of the pain caused by war

There are works of art that are moving. In a universal way, beyond time and cultures.

Fragments, figures, gestures, variations and replicas of the canvas painted by Picasso appear where an episode of violence against the civilian population takes place.

Guernica has gradually become an icon for peace, used repeatedly from non-institutional settings and from spaces not only artistic but also of protest.
There are other examples of how he used art for his protests about the political situation in Spain, such as the engravings Dream and lie of Franco: a satire on the military uprising that triggered the Spanish Civil War.

*The dream and lie of Franco (plate I)*
1937, Pablo Picasso
In a comic format, Picasso engraved two sheets with 9 vignettes each:

- In the first page there are humorous cartoons in which he mocks the fascist soldiers.

- In the second page there are tragic cartoons in which he laments the death of the innocent and the attack on the Republic, democratically elected by Spanish citizens.

The dream and lie of Franco (plate II)
1937, Pablo Picasso
Both Guernica and The dream and lie of Franco were presented to the public in the pavilion of the Spanish Republic during the 1937 Paris International Exposition.

Today we can visit the replica of the building that the Spanish Republic commissioned from the architects Josep Lluís Sert and Luis Lacasa, to represent it at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition, in Barcelona.
The dove as a symbol of peace

In 1949, Picasso participated in the World Congress for Peace.

He designed the congress poster with the lithograph of a dove resting on the ground.

For the 1962 congress, he drew another with the dove flying with the olive branch in its beak.
THE CHALLENGE WE PROPOSE TO YOU:

Let’s vindicate

What is the tool of political street protest? The banner! We suggest that you play your part to make clear what you don't like, or what you want to change or that you believe needs to be defended. It could be an individual or group work.

First, we need to reflect on what topic we want to express our discontent with, why and how. Once we have these points clear, which we can put in writing or alternatively make a sketch, we will move on to create. You need to be very brief! Synthesize in a single word, phrase or image.
Competence proposals

1. Create a working group for each of the contemporary artists we have presented. Investigate what ideas they defend and what kind of language they use to express them. Each group should present their research to their classmates.

2. Create your own artistic presentation to capture, following the style of the artist worked on, a topic that concerns you.

3. Create teams and generate a debate a debate based on some of the works that we have known in this section.

If you feel like sharing your ideas send us an email at museupicasso_educacio@bcn.cat
Bibliography

- Picasso: war and peace. Institute of Culture of Barcelona. Museu Picasso, 2004


If you want to know more about Picasso and the Museum, you can visit our website
www.museupicasso.bcn.cat

Museu Picasso de Barcelona

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