4 THE CARICATURE
Observe these works of Picasso. What catches your eye?

Caricature of Guillaume Apollinaire
Gósol, 1906
Pablo Picasso

Maya dressed as a sailor
1938
Pablo Picasso

Balzac. VIII
1952
Pablo Picasso

Portrait of Jaume Sabartés with ruff and cap
1939
Pablo Picasso
You may have noticed that they are somewhat strange portraits; a bit of an attempt to make you laugh and with highly exaggerated parts.

Do you know what a caricature is?

In order to answer, let's do a little research:
What is a caricature?

It comes from the Italian term caricare, which means to exaggerate.

It is mainly used in portraits in which, with a sense of humour, distinctive features of the person are exaggerated: both the good and the not so good.

Grotesque heads, s c. 1490, Leonardo da Vinci
The caricature is used in different fields:

- In portraits that exaggerate the distinctive physical or facial features, clothing, aspects of behaviour, or habits to produce a grotesque effect.

- In scenes that want to ridicule political, social or religious situations and institutions, and the acts of social groups or classes. These caricatures usually have a satirical rather than humorous intention.

*The New English Art Club*
1907, Henry Maximilian "Max" Beerbohm
Picasso: the friends and the caricature

Around 1900, Picasso used to frequent the Quatre Gats tavern (Four Cats). Intellectuals and artists of the time, such as Santiago Rusiñol and Ramon Casas, met there. Humour and mockery were tools to consolidate the group and a form of protest against the status quo.

Humorous magazines were also very popular at the time, which illustrated characters and political or current situations with caricatures.

*Interior of the Quatre Gats*  
1900, Ricard Opiso
The young Picasso wanted to be one of them and joined in with their practice of doing caricatures.
In fact, the best way of making a caricature work is to practise it in a shared cultural context: you need to be able to identify the person being caricatured and assess the balance between truth and falsehood of the characterisation.
We find a Picasso who, from a very young age, made humorous caricatures, some dedicated to the people he knew:

**Caricature of Joaquim Mir, 1899-1900, Pablo Picasso.**
Mir was a painter from the "saffron gang", so called because of their abundant use of yellow and orange to paint barren landscapes under an intense sun.

**Pere Romeu in a field of lilies, 1900, Pablo Picasso.**
Romeo, owner of the Quatre Gats tavern, was a rather innocent dreamer, always "going with the lily in his hand."
And of others to make satire in a more critical tone towards issues that concerned him:

A sage, 1899-1900, Pablo Picasso. At the time, painting specialists didn’t understand anything of what contemporary artists were doing.

The pipe smokers (caricatures of Utrillo and Rusiñol), 1903, Pablo Picasso. Picasso mocks artists who had been a reference of his youth, and who, over time, had become bourgeois and stopped being progressive.
Spontaneous caricatures and drawings distracted him from more demanding projects and were a good escape route for Picasso’s irreverent humour. They also helped him to think and plan more accurate caricatures.

Caricatures of various characters
Barcelona, c. 1899
Pablo Picasso
Over time, Picasso would incorporate this idea of caricature into many of his portraits, in which he sought a kind of non-photographic resemblance and rather a more intense psychological depth.

*Portrait of Lee Miller dressed as an Arlésienne,* 1937
Pablo Picasso
Contemporary artists who use the idea of caricature in their works:

Two heads
1982
Jean-Michel Basquiat

Think of England
2000
Martin Parr

Marujas
2017
Marina Capdevila
Challenge: Exquisite Portrait

we can do this portrait better if we work in a group of 4 or 5 people. The steps to follow are:

Step 1: Each person draws on a piece of paper a part of the face of other people, for example: the profile of the face with the hair, the nose, the left eye, the right eye, the left ear, the right ear, mouth... We can put the parts together; someone paints his left eye and nose, and another, his right eye and right ear.
Step 2: Once everyone has drawn the part of the other’s face that they had to do, including theirs, we will distribute each item to the person drawn.

Step 3: Assemble your portrait from the parts they have drawn of you.
Competence proposals

- Choose a caricature of a famous person and describe which features have been exaggerated the most and which most closely resemble reality. Explain why you chose him or her and research his or her biography.

- Explain why you think a feature of one person or another has been exaggerated in a caricature, and do something similar with someone you know; friends or family, movie or TV characters, etc.

- Reflect on the stereotypes of gender and diversity based on caricatures.

If you feel like sharing your ideas, send a mail to museupicasso_educacio@bcn.cat
Bibliography


If you want to know more about Picasso and the Museum, you can visit our website
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