



TITLE: *Le Cirque*

ARTIST: Pablo Picasso

DATED: On the print 21. 4. 60

SIZE: Image: 20 x 25 3/4; Framed; 30 x 34 1/2 inches

MEDIUM: Lithograph

ACCESSION #: 60.10

Additional works in the collection by the artist?

Yes  No



### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web. – Pablo Picasso

### ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) is considered one of the greatest artists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He took the lead in developing several new styles of art. In the early 1900s, Picasso with another artist, Georges Braque, started an art movement called *Cubism*. With Cubism, shapes of objects were flattened and simplified. Cubists frequently painted objects in different sections showing these objects from various angles.

Picasso was also a leader for other new art methods such as collage and assemblage. He created collage works by putting together things like newspaper and chicken wire with paintings. Assemblage utilized everyday objects to create sculpture. For example, Picasso made use of a bicycle seat and handlebars to create a bull's head with horns.

Picasso's pioneer spirit influenced the art world move to abstract art. Picasso frequently modified his artistic style, generally changing after he experienced mastery of the style. Thus, his works are divided into periods. He didn't like to return to past styles. Instead, Picasso constantly looked for something innovative and searched for different ways to express himself.

### MEDIA DESCRIPTION

**Lithography** The lithograph is a print which utilizes a water absorbent stone or metal plate. Lithography is a type of graphic method which relies on the fact that water rejects oil, and oil rejects water. If a spot of greasy medium is applied to a water absorbent plate, when that absorbent material is soaked with water, the grease will refuse the water. When, however, pigments are applied to the soaked plate, the pigments will be refused by the water, and instead will stick only to the original greasy mark. The spot can then be transferred to a piece of paper as a print.

Before starting lithography, Picasso focused on etchings combined with other methods. After starting lithography in 1928, he used lithography techniques more and more. He utilized lithography to deal with all his thematic areas.

### CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Picasso's work is divided into a number of periods: Young Picasso Period, Blue Period, Rose Period, African-Influenced Period, Cubist Period, Neo-classical and Surrealism Period, and his later period which included a variety of styles. Although this print, *Le Cirque*, was done in 1960, his interest in the circus began during the Rose Period. The Rose Period emerged in 1904 and ended in 1906.

During these years Picasso began to utilize circus artists as his major source of inspiration. The circus artists generally carry symbolic meaning. Even though circus society was derided and marginalized, circus artists performed with pride. Picasso identified the plight of the fine artist with the circus performer.

Picasso's contact with the circus was common at various times in his career. In Barcelona, at the turn of the 19th century, Picasso watched circuses passing through the town. Later, he watched travelling circuses on the Paris boulevards which became a place where the young Picasso and his friends met when they first came to stay in the city. It was at the end of 1904 and in 1905 that the circus turned into a main source for his compositions. He fabricated scenes where acrobats and tight-rope walkers play out the roles of their everyday lives, their personal problems, their source of isolation and misunderstanding within the mainstream society.

This print shows a somewhat different feeling from Picasso's earlier circus art works. As mentioned, during the Rose Period, Picasso expressed the circus artists' isolation or marginalization from society. However, this print was created in 1960, much later in Picasso's life. At that time, Picasso was already much celebrated by the public. Reflecting his improved situation, the circus artist actively performs surrounded by a large audience. This print used just one plate. The print is monochromatic unlike color prints that are made using a different plate for each color.

### REFERENCES

Contextual information retrieved from <http://pablo-picasso.paintings.name/rose-period/>  
<http://www.artmagick.com/exhibitions/exhibition.aspx?id=667>  
Media description. retrieved from <http://www.arcyart.com/ad-lithography.htm>  
Picasso quote retrieved from [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/p/pablo\\_picasso\\_3.html#ixzz1HdcdTNOi](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/p/pablo_picasso_3.html#ixzz1HdcdTNOi)  
Sateren, S. S., & Picasso, P. (2002). *Picasso*. Mankato, Minn: Bridgestone Books.  
Terminology retrieved from <http://www.arcyart.com/ad-assemblage.htm>, <http://www.mineralprospector.com/lithographic-stone>  
Walther, I. F. (1986). *Pablo Picasso, 1881-1973: Genius of the century*. Cologne: Taschen.

### RELATED TERMINOLOGY

**Lithographic stone:** Lithographic stones are very compressed and fine-grained limestone. This stone is easily cut into large slabs, and of a light color.  
**Assemblage:** Assemblage is an art term used to describe an art work that is assembled rather than painted, drawn, modeled or carved. The art work can be assembled entirely or in part and its constituent elements can be performed, or they may be natural or manufactured material objects or fragments not intended as art material. When applied to sculpture the art work is referred to as assemblage sculpture.

Completed Spring 2011 GaYeon Lee



*The Circus Rehearsal*, November 11, 1933, printed 1939, drypoint, plate: 7 3/4 x 10 15/16"; sheet: 13 x 17"

## Going to the Circus – Like Picasso, **ACTIVITY LESSON PLAN: K–5**

**Session Activity!** Each student will have the opportunity to abstract an image to show excitement as Picasso did in his work, *Le Cirque*.

### Objectives

1. Students will be introduced to Picasso's circus prints and paintings.
2. Students will be introduced to Picasso's transfer of emotional feeling into his images.
3. Students will explore the abstraction of images through simplification of them using only line.

### Materials

- Circus images by Picasso (found on the Internet)
- Images and video clips of the FSU Flying High Circus on the Internet
- A wide range of internet or magazine images
- Pencil or black pen

**Vocabulary** Abstraction:  
The process of taking away or removing characteristics from something in order to reduce it to a set of essential characteristics.

### Procedure

**Study of print as part of a larger unit:** This print could be incorporated into a unit on the circus since Tallahassee is a unique community that hosts its own circus at FSU, the Flying High Circus. A study of the print and accompanying activities could potentially follow a field trip to the circus. However, many students might have the opportunity to go with their families. Certainly information, photographs, and video clips can be found on the internet and students can access these.

### Study of Print

1. Show *Le Cirque* and other images by Picasso which use the topic of the circus. Many images regarding the circus can be accessed on the internet.
2. Show student images and video clips of the FSU Flying High Circus (can be found on their website). Discuss what they see, and what they feel as they look at the images. Ask many of the same questions you might ask as you discuss the Picasso print (see series of questions with #3 below).
3. Discuss Picasso's *Le Cirque*. Ask students the following:
  - a. Tell what is happening in this print.
  - b. Who are the people or characters in the image?
  - c. If you were going to a circus performance, how would you feel? Happy? Excited?
  - d. While you were watching the performances how would you feel (name acts students might see)? Amazed? Admiring?
  - e. Would you clap and cheer for the performers? Would the audience be quiet or noisy?
  - f. What feelings does Picasso try to express in his circus print?
4. Show a photograph of the circus next to Picasso's print *Le Cirque*. Ask students to explain the way Picasso made his images more simple or abstract, as contrasted with the photograph. Elicit responses about deletion of color and the emphasis on line. Ask students to explain Picasso's method of conveying the excitement and sound of the audience. Ask them to describe the line. How does Picasso simplify the circus scene?
5. Ask students to find images that show activity and emotion. Ask them to choose and identify the activity and the emotion in the image. Students can access images through the internet or using magazines.
6. Students will recreate or abstract this image through simplification and the use of only line. Students can redraw the images or use a tracing process. Ask students to vary their line to create a sense of excitement.

### SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: K–5

Strand B: Creation & Communication

Standard: The student creates and communicates a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts.

### SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS: 6–12

Strand D: Aesthetic & Critical Analysis

Standard: The student assesses, evaluates and responds to the characteristics of works of art.

## Creating Your Own Personal Symbols, **ART HISTORY LESSON PLAN: 6 – 12**

**Session Activities:** Picasso identified with the circus clown. Thus he drew and painted the circus many times during his life. Particularly, during the Rose Period, Picasso painted the clown with a sense of sadness. Like Picasso, other artists have been interested in this setting. There are paintings, drawings, engravings, sculpture and photographs related to the topic of the circus by other artists such as Marc Chagall, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, Paul Klee, and Fernand Leger.

The students will explore Picasso's circus artworks, which reflected his emotions and sense of himself during his life, as well as compare and contrast the way other artists expressed the circus in their artworks. Through the process outlined, the students will determine personal symbols for themselves as Picasso did in a number of his works including the piece titled *Le Cirque*.

### Objectives

1. Through group discussion and individual research the students will explore artwork focusing on some aspect of the circus by Picasso as well as other artists like Mark Chagall, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, Paul Klee, and Fernand Leger.
2. Students, through comparison and contrast of the Picasso imagery with other artist's works, will determine the purpose and messages of Picasso's circus works, primarily that the clown in the work is a symbol for himself as an artist.
3. Students will determine their own personal symbols for themselves as artists like Picasso did.

### Discussion, Research, and Activity

First, the student will do a critical analysis of the print *Le Cirque* by Picasso and then a painting from Picasso's Rose Period focusing on the circus, the 1905 painting titled *The Family of Saltimbanques*. During the discussion, ask students to pay special attention to the mood of the works and the position and characteristics of the clown figures.

Ask students to find other circus works by the artists mentioned above and choose one for further exploration. Each student will compare and contrast the work of the other artist with either of the works by Picasso. Provide the student with a worksheet of questions that includes appropriate critical analysis points to elicit 1) information about each artist's attitude toward the circus, 2) each artist's overall mood in the works, 3) the position, importance, and characteristics of clown figures, 4) any important symbols in the works, 5) the artist's message, and 6) the artist's reasons for using the circus to convey that message.

After students determine the clown figure may stand for Picasso himself, ask students to note the difference in the treatment and environment of the clown from the earlier Picasso work to the later piece, *Le Cirque*. Discuss the reasons for this in terms of Picasso's life as an artist and his fame at each time in his life. Discuss what seem to be Picasso's personal feelings about his position as an artist in each piece. As Picasso selected a personal symbol, ask each student to select a symbol for him/herself as an artist. Ask each student to sketch the symbol and then share stating the reasons for selection. If so desired, the sketches can be used to produce larger and more complex works in other media.



*The Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905, Pablo Picasso, oil on canvas, 83 3/4" x 90 3/8" .

**Vocabulary** Saltimbanque:  
A French word that means acrobat, performer, and entertainer.