

Cubism



Picasso, Portrait of Kahnweiler, 1910
Juan Gris, Breakfast (Le Petit déjeuner), 1914

Cubism - Overview of Development

Cubism - The Project

Cubism - The Figure

Cubism - Still Life



“picture plane” = surface of canvas



L: William Claesz Heda,, Still Life with Ham, 1631-34

R: Cézanne, Still Life with Vessels, Basket, and Fruit, 1888-90

Note different viewing experiences.

L: Window onto another world. You don't notice the surface of the painting, known as the "picture plane."

R: Not convincing window. Notice that you are aware of the picture plane.



Cézanne, Still Life with Vessels, Basket, and Fruit, 1888-90

Cézanne is point of origins for Cubism

Cézanne attempts to add three key issues all at once:

Truth to Vision: Dynamic vision - experience and Impressionism

**Truth to thingness of things - experience and academic painting/
experience**

Truth to materials - can see it is only ever paint on canvas

**Painting/art making as a series of experiments, in an effort to
grapple with making an object that speaks of truths.**

**Stages of Cubism
(somewhat artificial, but helpful)**

Picasso, The Dryad, 1908

“simplification”



Léger, Seamstress, 1910

“geometricization”

**the form of any part is reduced to
simple planes - see face**



**Picasso, Head of Woman with
Pears, 1909**

“facets”

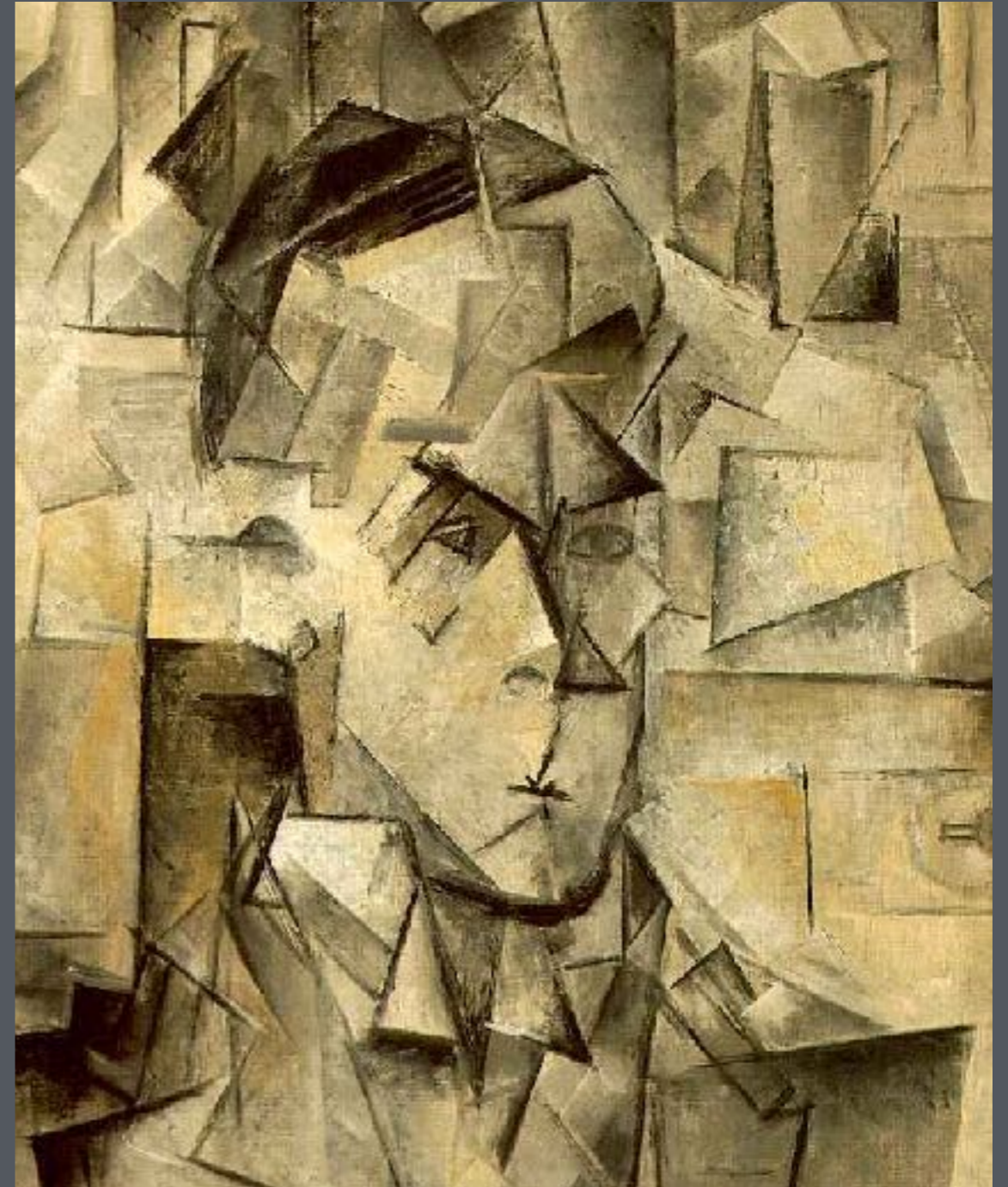
like a jeweler cutting gem

**form now represented by
smaller planes**





**facets provide greater ability
to convey complexity of the
shape/structure of object**



**disintegration of “facets”
no longer with clear edges**

**Picasso, Portrait of
Wilhelm Unde, 1910**

**disintegration of
“facets”**

image become flatter

**foreground and
background merge
(see to right and left of
face)**

thing/figure still present





**Edges of planes are broken/
dissolved and run together
(both are heads)**

Picasso, Accordionist, 1912

Edges of planes are broken/
dissolved and run together.

They intersect and overlap, but
none are clearly defined (or
even oriented logically).

harder to separate foreground
and background

even greater flatness

thing/figure still present

“presence” is key



Cubism - The Project



INSPIRATION #1: Cézanne,

Cézanne, Still Life with Vessels, Basket, and Fruit, 1888-90

"I want to make of Impressionism an art as solid as that of the museums."

INSPIRATION #2: AFRICAN ART

Mask from modern day Zaire, early
20th c

Note: geometricization of
facial features

gets Picasso to start thinking of
other ways to represent mass and
volume

Borrow is a form of primitivism - a
decontextualization of mask from
original use/function



**Picasso,
Demoiselles
D'Avignon, 1907**

Note:

**borrowing
structure from
African masks**

**upper right =
striations for
shadow**

**figure in right
corner foreground**



**Botticelli, Birth of Venus,
late 1400s**

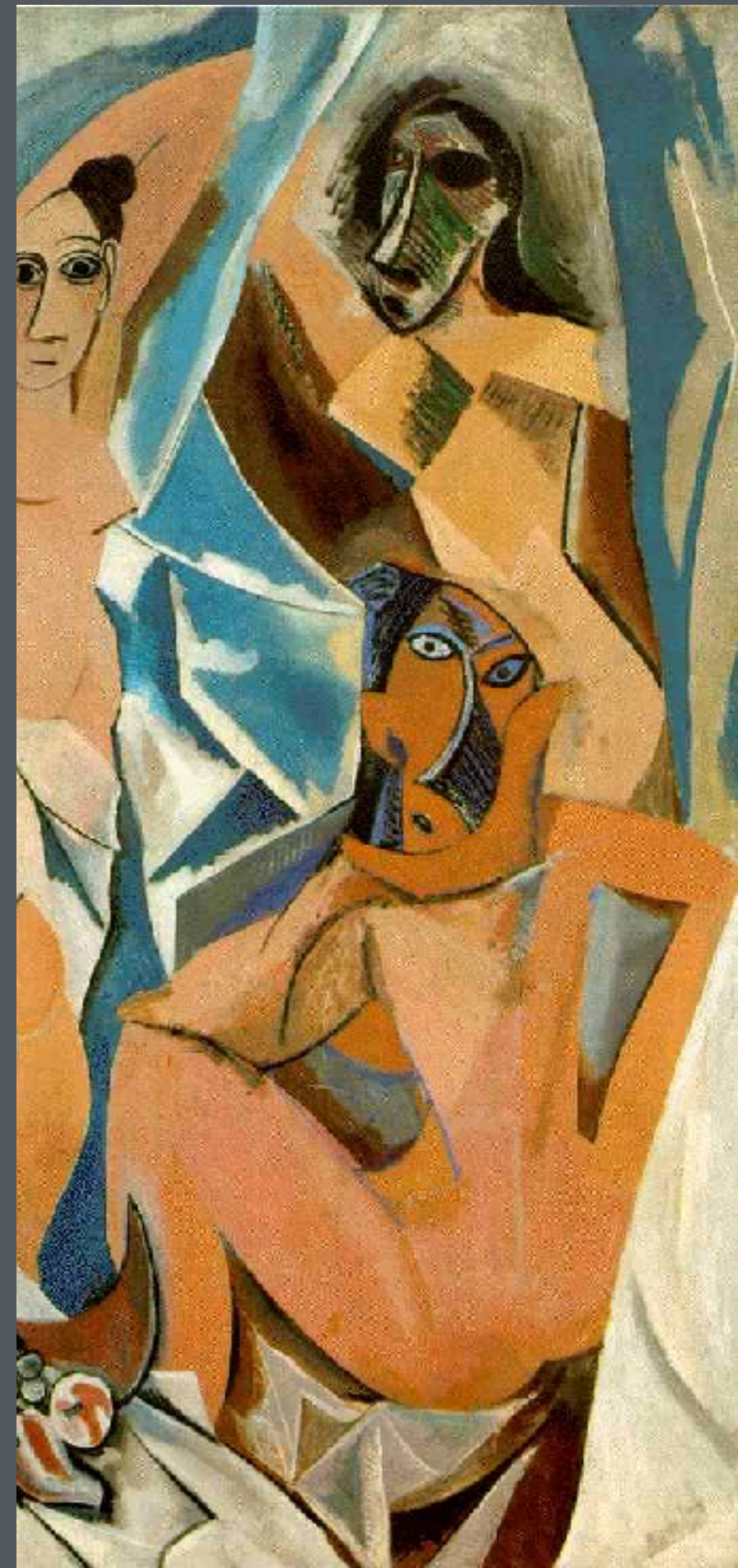
**Picasso, Demoiselles
D'Avignon, 1907**

Artistic Problem:

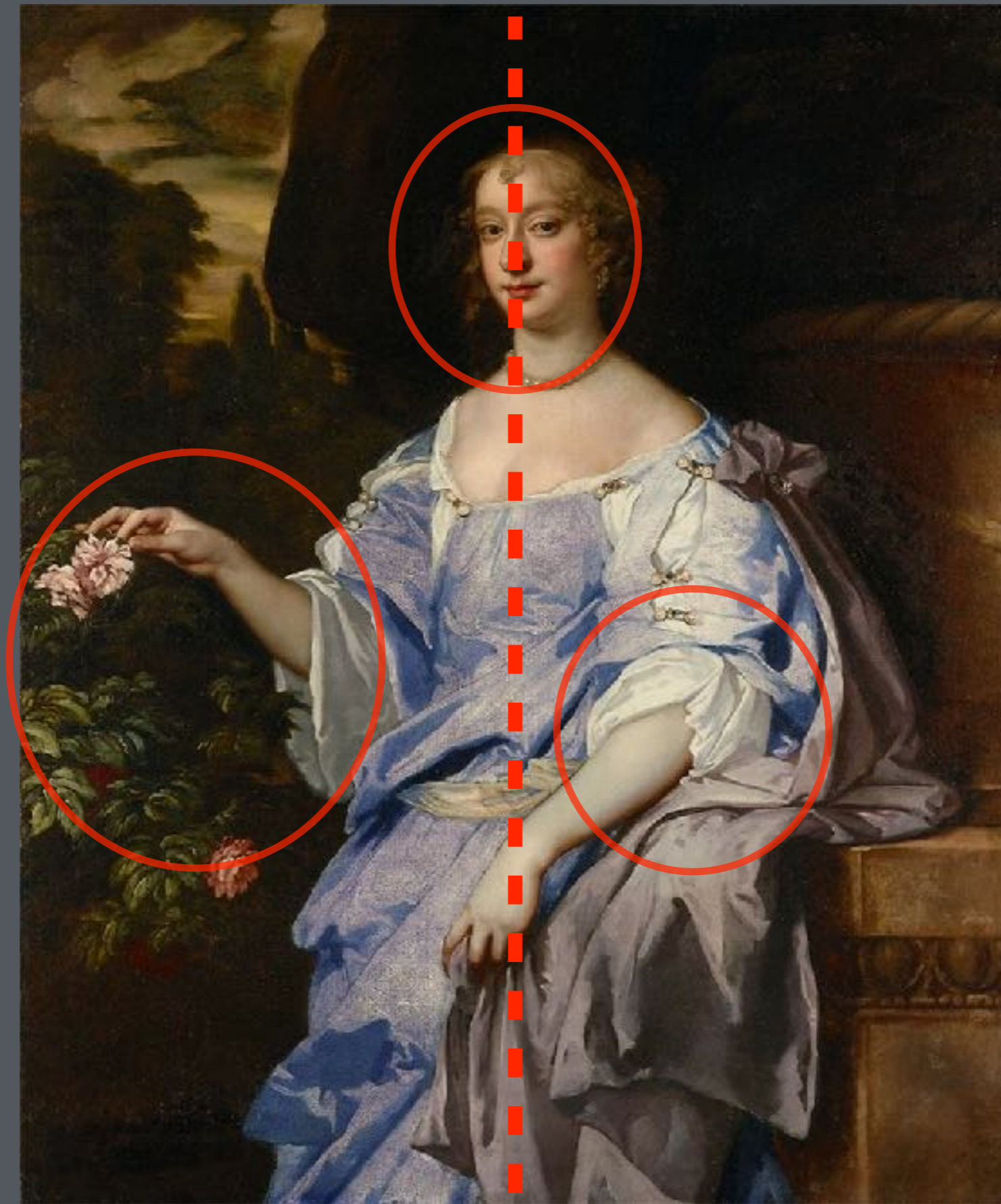
**Can you represent and relate
volumes in space without
using traditional shading of
light and dark (modelling)?**

**If so, need to invent new
pictorial language.**

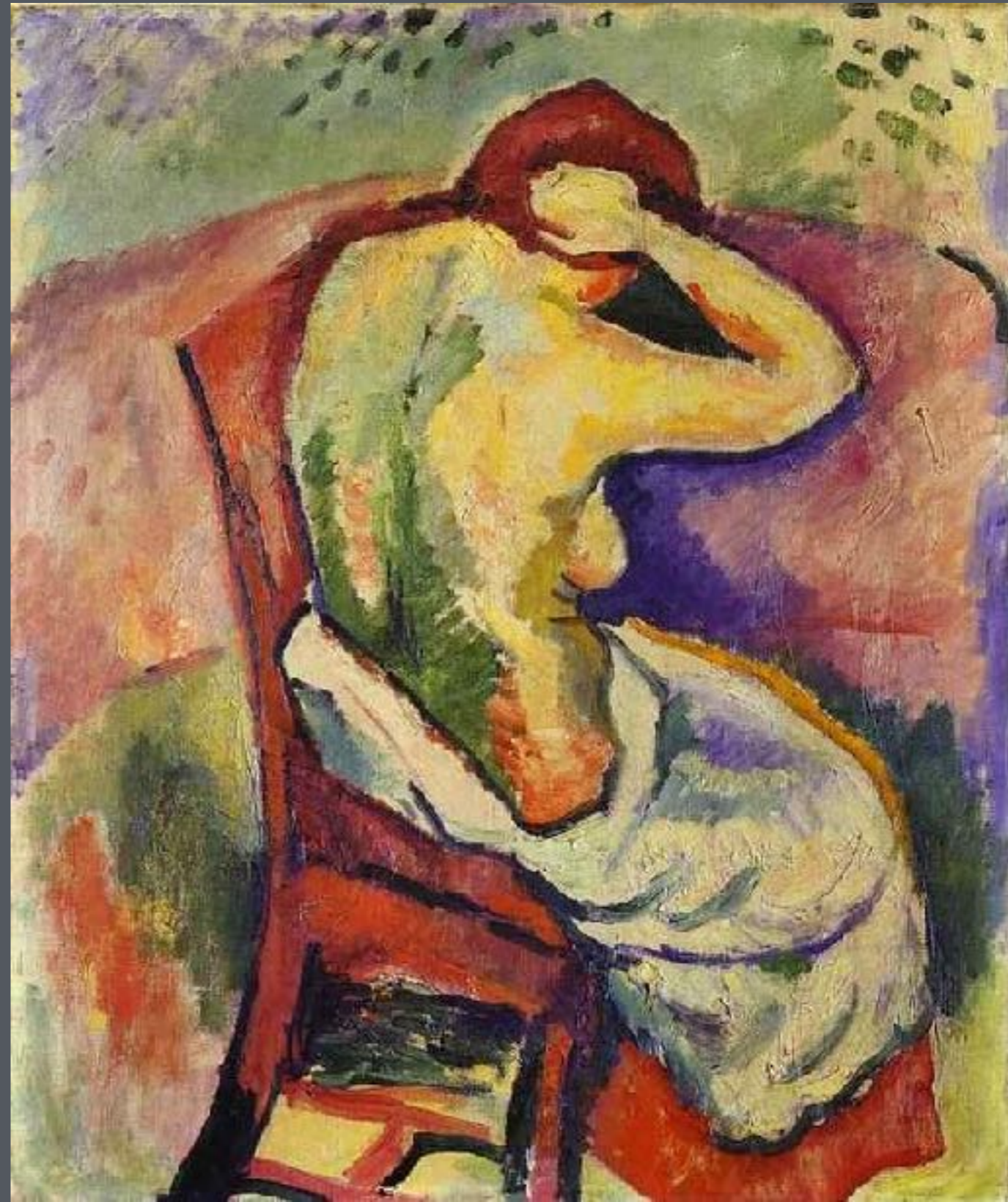
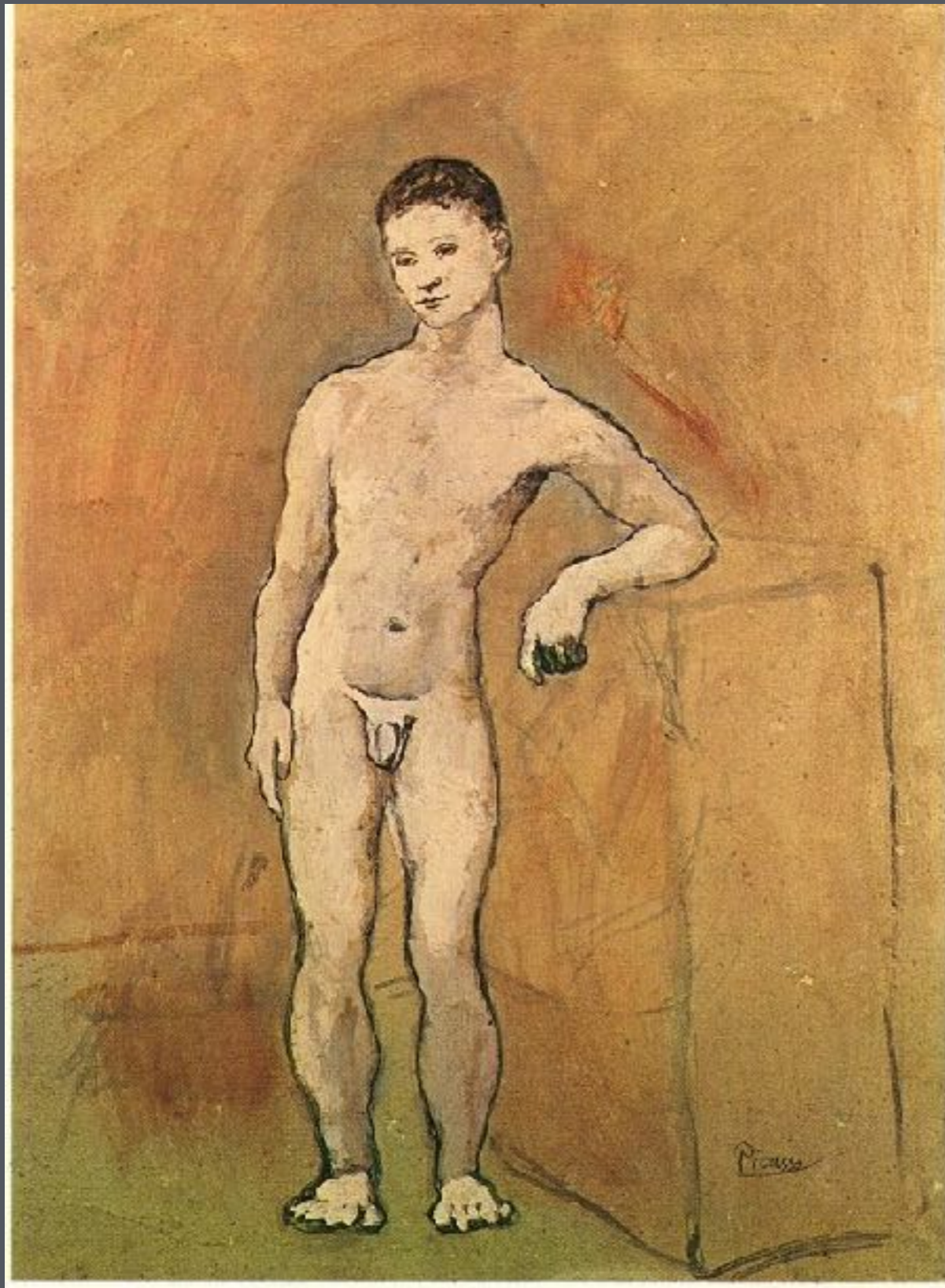
**PROJECT: Invent new
pictorial language to render
objects in space and in
relation to each other.**



Cubism - The Figure



17th -c Portrait - Note 1) composition (body along central axis) and 2) areas of greatest visual interest are head and area around hands/to the side of the figure



Pablo Picasso, Nude Youth, 1906
Georges Braque, Seated Nude, 1906



Picasso, Demoiselles D'Avignon, 1907
Braque, Gran Nu, 1907



Picasso Three Women, 1908 (facets, ambiguity regarding which figure is in front of which)

**Picasso, Head of Woman with
Pears, 1909**

“folded” quality



**Picasso, Woman in
Armchair, 1909**

facets

note shading



**Picasso, Portrait of Wilhelm
Unde, 1910**

**eliminate color b/c color = a
surface quality**

*****P and B interest in form/
structure**

breaking down of facets

**a series of planes that slide
into and away from each
other (see next slide)**





RIGHT: edges of the planes/facets no longer are defined by clear edges on all sides.
Compare how the forehead in each.

RIGHT: figure and background are less distinct in the right. Due to the lack of color, but also because the facets are “breaking” apart.

**Picasso, Portrait of
Vollard, 1910**

**Further dissolving of
facets.**

**“Opening” of planes
that define the mass
and volume of the
figure.**



**Picasso, Portrait of
Kahnweiler, 1910**

further fragmentation

**Note that foreground and
background no longer so
distinct.**



Picasso, Aficionado 1912

Note “indicators” of figure and object. Use them to identify objects/location.

No desire to lose the “presence” of the objects.

Definition of aficionado:
Aficionado definition is - a person who likes, knows about, and appreciates a usually fervently pursued interest or activity : devotee





note: Picasso retains same composition and therefore same areas of visual interest, but a radically different way to represent a body in space on a two-dimensional surface



Picasso, Aficianado 1912 (Analytic Cubism)
Picasso, Smoker, 1913-14 (Synthetic Cubism) - COLLAGE

Picasso, Smoker, 1913-14

**Creation of depth by juxtaposition
of flat planes of color (uniformly
colored shapes)**

**How do the flat planes create the
smoker?**





Cezanne, Madame Cezanne, c1890
Picasso, Man with Pipe, 1914

Cubism - Still Life



Heda, Still-life with Ham and Roemer c1631-4

**Jan Jansz.
Treck, Still-Life,
1649**





Cézanne, Still Life with Vessels, Basket, and Fruit, 1888-90



Picasso, Still life, c 1906
Braque Still life, c 1906



Braque, Braque Guitar and Accordion, 1908

Braque, Pitcher, 1909

**Which objects
been reduced to a
construction of flat
planes?**

**Where multiple viewing
positions indicated?**



Picasso, Still life, 1909

facets

more monochrome

greater number of facets







Picasso, Still life, 1909

facets

**Where object reduced to
facets?**

**Where multiple viewing
positions indicated?**



**Braque, Violin and
Candlestick, 1909**

**note dissolving edges
of planes**

**differentiation of
foreground and
background collapsing**

**more "clues" to objects
since harder to read
than portrait**



**Braque, Violin and Pitcher,
1910**

**How does it seem as if
assembled from different
viewpoints?**



**Braque, Still Life with
Violin and Harp, 1912**

Use title as a clue.

**Where are the
indications of the
violin? Harp? Other
objects?**

**(see next slide for
image of harp)**







Picasso, Still Life with Chair Caning, 1912- COLLAGE

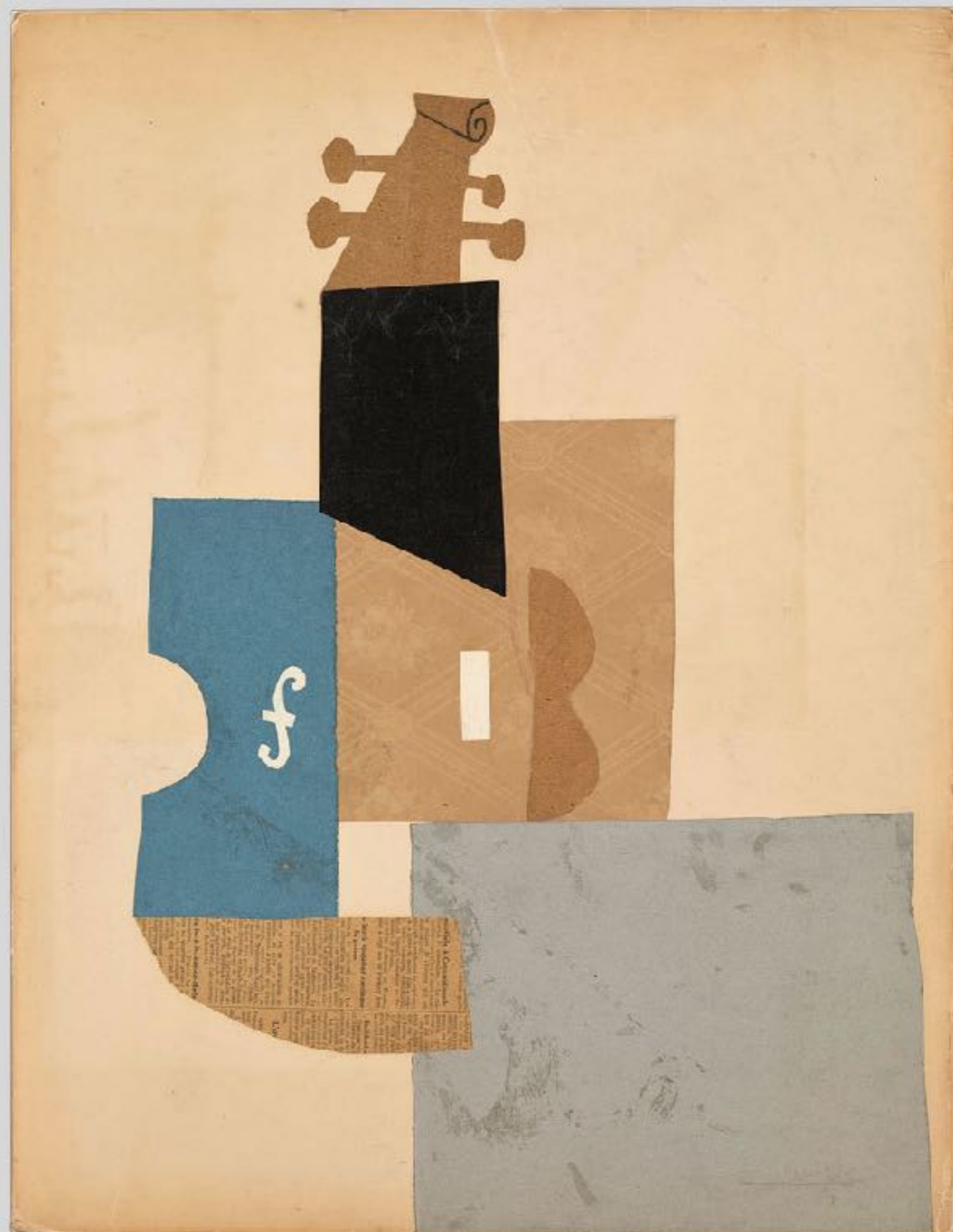
Pablo Picasso, Violin, 1912

papier collé/collage

papier collé = paper only

collage = all materials

Note that even with minimal shapes of flat color (here cut paper), we understand that we are looking at a violin.



Picasso, Guitar, Sheet Music,
Glass, 1912



Juan Gris, Breakfast (Le Petit déjeuner), 1914



Jean Metzinger,
Soldier at a Game of
Chess, 1914-15, oil on
canvas

