# Picasso’s Portraits

## Slide 1

Hi, today we’ll be looking at portraits by Pablo Picasso. Picasso was born in Spain in 1881, lived to be 92 years old, and died in 1973. He was a very social fellow, worked in many art styles, and was always interested in what other artists were doing.

Our first image is Picasso’s “Old Guitarist” located in the Art Institute of Chicago. This work was painted during his Blue Period in 1903/1904. His blue period was a time in his life when he was unhappy or blue, and he worked with a very muted palette. This period was brought on by the suicide of a close friend. Here he depicts an old man playing the guitar using various shades of blue. The old man seems wrapped up in grief or dismay and Picasso has painted him as literally wrapped around the guitar. Here’s a great reason to view works in person rather than online or in books: if you stand directly in front of this work and then take one step to the left, and look at the area above the guitarist’s head, you’ll see an under drawing of another face. Picasso may have reused the canvas or repainted the figure. Picasso’s personal life eventually improved and he went onto his Rose Period where he used red and pink color schemes.

## Slide 2

The next image shows Picasso’s “Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler” from 1910 which is a cubist work. Picasso’s best known as the creator of cubism, but he’s actually the co-creator. An artist by the name of Georges Braque worked with Picasso and together they created the Cubist style. This work is an example of analytic cubism, which broke objects into parts and even sometimes reassembled them for aesthetic purposes. The subject is a man, but it’s almost impossible to distinguish among the fractured pieces, although his face near the top and his folded hands at the bottom are visible.

## Slide 3

The next portrait is “Mother and Child” from 1921. Picasso was inspired by a visit to Rome and his works took on a decidedly classic look. The figures are robust and the mother’s garment appears similar to a toga. The child plays in mother’s lap while she gazes down lovingly. Picasso had married just a few years prior and produced many images of mothers and children during this time period.

## Slide 4

Picasso concentrates on flat forms and color in “The Red Armchair” from 1931. It is an abstract portrait of a woman sitting on a chair. Remnants of his analytic cubist style remain as the woman’s face appears in both profile and frontal views. Note the wall behind the woman’s head; with a just a short line above her head and an angled chair rail to the left, Picasso gives the illusion of space within a room.

## Slide 5

Our last image may or may not be a portrait. It’s the Chicago Picasso, designed by Picasso but never named or explained. It was fabricated locally in Gary, Indiana and is made of 160 tons of steel. Some people believe it’s a baboon, a dog, or even a woman that modeled for Picasso. Sadly, we Chicagoans honor this monumental sculpture by placing hats or helmets of our various sports teams on it.

Thanks for joining me on this study of Pablo Picasso’s portraits.

Created and Narrated by Sue Stelford ARTS 112 Course Developer