

Picasso arrived in Barcelona in 1895, at the age of thirteen. Until 1904, when he finally settled in Paris, he lived in the Catalan capital, though intermittently. During this decisive period in his artistic life, the painter did a series of landscapes of his initiatory Barcelona: **The landscapes of Picasso's Barcelona.**

At the end of the nineteenth century, Barcelona was becoming established as a modern city and, as such, its urban structure was going through substantial changes: the nineteenth-century enlargement, the remodelling of the eastern part of the city, plans for city reform, the cleaning up of the old city... It was a time of important social changes, of intense political activity and of great artistic and cultural vitality.

The landscapes of Picasso's Barcelona are a past testimony of a time and a place which are no longer here as such. Our gaze today looks to the past. From the relation between the present and its past, history is born. Today, therefore, one hundred years after they were painted, these landscapes Picasso painted become one more bit of the mosaic that makes up the artistic and cultural history of Barcelona at the turning point between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Contemplating these landscapes, we can sense, above all, Picasso's artistic evolution during this period of his professional career, in which he went from learning the trade to discovering and becoming part of the Catalan artistic avant-garde, and then to creating his first personal style: his Blue Period. In this tour of his Barcelona work, one senses how the great painter perfected his artistic technique, how he absorbed influences from other artists, how he let himself be carried along by sensations and feelings, how he metamorphosed the city to suit his expressive needs—in short, how he became consolidated as an artist who was to become one of the top-ranking creators of the twentieth century.

The book is arranged in three chapters: The anteroom: Malaga and A Coruña, The landscapes of Picasso's Barcelona and a Postscript.

The first goes into Pablo Ruiz Picasso's first steps as an artist. Here we have the arousal of his artistic calling in his home town of Malaga and the beginning of his academic training in the Galician city of A Coruña. This is the primeval Picasso, Picasso before his arrival in Barcelona.

Next, in *The landscapes of Picasso's Barcelona*, we see him arrive and get to grips with the new urban environment he lived in, which bore fruit in a series of oils and drawings of great artistic worth, most of which feature places in the old part of the city.

This chapter, the backbone of the book's storyline, is subdivided into five sections inspired in the artist's work itself: The Sea, The Park, The Rooftops, The Windows, The Buildings and The Streets.

The Sea features in many of his landscapes corresponding to the cities where he lived during his childhood, adolescence and youth. In Barcelona it appears frequently during the first years he lived there: the port, the quays, the docks, the beaches... all arise naturally in his work and become an important graphic document of the period, at the same time as a series of anonymous seascapes give him a chance to experiment with light and colour.

The Ciutadella Park, close to the Ruiz-Picasso family home, particularly drew the young Malagan's interest during the first years of his stay in the city. The park had been the site of a large part of the Universal Exhibition of 1888 and still preserved the imprint of this great event that had put Barcelona in the public eye on the international scene.

A city can be read in many different ways, and one is through its rooftops. Many artists have felt the attraction of the Catalan capital's rooftops: patios, dividing walls, tiled roofs, staircases... over which the elegant steeples and bell towers of old Barcelona's secular churches stand out.

While he lived in Barcelona, Picasso changed studios on several occasions. The views he saw from his windows and his place of work make up an account of his everyday surroundings, different points in the city layout which in some cases have disappeared under later town-planning reforms.

Cities are full of constructions which from remote times and until the present have made up a rich architectural and historical heritage. In the buildings we shall see Picasso's interest both in the details of well-known architectural sites belonging to medieval Barcelona and in anonymous houses that could just as well be taken from somewhere in the city as from his imagination.

A series of sequences in the streets closes this chapter. This is a brief selection, chosen out of a large number of scenes mainly done in drawing and showing the people of the city out in the open, to the point that in some scenes the street is sensed more than actually visible. The urban landscape here becomes the narrative support for the human figure, the people of the Barcelona of that time: carriers, nannies, priests, strollers, dirty old men, women of ill repute...

This chapter, the backbone to this publication, illustrates five ways of seeing Barcelona. These are Picasso's Barcelonas. Through him, we see snippets of the urban territory, of its history, of its architectural heritage, of its town-planning, of its people and of its popular traditions.

Each section follows a chronological order and tries to stick to it religiously. Each one sets out to reveal aspects of the subject in the title, but, at the same time, it also tries to illustrate the life of the artist, so that one section complements another. In this way, by the end, we get an overall picture of the artist's life in the Catalan capital.

In April 1904, Picasso left Barcelona for good. In the city he left family and friends, as links that would keep him bound for ever to the city that opened the doors of modernity to him.

A Postscript sums up Picasso's return visits to Barcelona after his departure. Lightning visits, in most cases, or else stopovers on his way to other places in Catalonia, such as Gósol and Horta de Sant Joan, very short stays in the city during which he hardly did any work at all. Nevertheless, in 1917, his skilful hand created his last landscape of the city, his last direct look at his Barcelona, 'the beautiful'.

Besides this, this Postscript ends with the last great landscape of Picasso's Barcelona, an urban landscape that preserves forever the binomial Picasso-Barcelona and that forms another of Picasso's Barcelonas: that of the Museu Picasso de Barcelona where most of the landscapes we shall be looking at are housed.

The works by Picasso are illustrated with photographs or equivalents of the time, perhaps because, as Roland Barthes says, 'The essence of the photograph is to ratify what it represents' [*La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, 1980]; perhaps, also, because, as Susan Sontag says, 'Everyone is a literalist when it comes to photographs' [*Regarding the Pain of Others*, 2003]. We have chosen pictures with a bearing on Picasso: interiors the same as or similar to the ones the artist drew and painted, landscapes photographed around the time when Picasso was working.

Photography, the new medium which, since its invention in 1822, had never stopped developing, had taken over as a new way of capturing the urban reality. It became an indispensable documentary source for getting to know the Barcelona of the time. By its very nature, it became from the outset, as has already been mentioned, a faithful and objective representation of reality, like a mirror held up to nature, as people used to say. It made it possible to capture the transformations taking place in the nineteenth-century city at first hand and from 1880 the spread of this medium coincided with developments in the city's urban planning: Ildefons Cerdà's Eixample and the city's intervention in the new urban spaces inherited after the Revolution of 1868. In addition, as we shall see, in the change from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, the revaluation

of the architectural and artistic heritage was a fact. In this setting, landscape photography became an important instrument for following the evolution of the modern Barcelona and for documenting and cataloguing its historical and artistic heritage.

Step by step, and thanks to technical advances, this new medium progressed irreversibly. Very soon, the snapshot or reportage photograph was born which was to lead to photojournalism and which coincided with the start of the twentieth century. This was the timid awakening of a new use for photography which was to become established over time. The market in photographic material and the new directions the medium took were to lead to its democratisation and its gradual entry into society.

Side by side with Picasso, we shall take a walk through his Barcelonas: some that still exist, others lost in step with progress; some unusual, others everyday; some at street level, others raised on high skylines. Side by side with one of the greatest geniuses of the twentieth century, we shall take a surprising walk through the past and the present with **The landscapes of Picasso's Barcelona.**