**Cubism**

The Cubist movement in the visual arts was created by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914. They were later joined by Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Robert Delaunay, and others. The name derives from a review that described Braque's work as images composed of cubes. Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907) signalled the new style, which was inspired by African sculpture and the later paintings of Paul Cézanne. Cubist work emphasized the flat, two-dimensional, fragmented surface of the picture plane, rejecting perspective, foreshortening, modelling, and chiaroscuro in favour of geometric forms. The work made in this style from 1910 to 1912 is often referred to as Analytical Cubism. Paintings executed during this period show the breaking down, or analysis, of form. Artists favoured right-angle and straight-line construction and colour schemes that were nearly monochromatic. After 1912 the phase known as Synthetic Cubism began. Works from this phase emphasize the combination, or synthesis, of forms in the picture. Colour assumes a strong role in the work; shapes, while remaining fragmented and flat, are larger and more decorative; and collage is often used. Many subsequent 20th-century avant-garde movements were influenced by the experimentation of the Cubists.

**Cubist Theory**

Cubism began as an intellectual revolt against the artistic expression of previous eras. Among the specific elements abandoned by the cubists were the sensual appeal of paint texture and colour, subject matter with emotional charge or mood, the play of light on form, movement, atmosphere, and the illusionism that proceeded from scientifically based perspective. To replace these they employed an analytic system in which the three-dimensional subject (usually still life) was fragmented and redefined within a shallow plane or within several interlocking and often transparent planes.

**Analytic and Synthetic Cubism**

In the analytic phase (1907–12) the cubist palette was severely limited, largely to black, browns, grays, and off-whites. In addition, forms were rigidly geometric and compositions subtle and intricate. Cubist abstraction as represented by the analytic works of Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Juan Gris intended an appeal to the intellect. The cubists sought to show everyday objects as the mind, not the eye, perceives them—from all sides at once. The trompe l'oeil element of collage was also sometimes used.

During the latter, synthetic phase of cubism (1913 through the 1920s), paintings were composed of fewer and simpler forms based to a lesser extent on natural objects. Brighter colours were employed to a generally more decorative effect, and many artists continued to use collage in their compositions. The works of Picasso, Braque, and Gris are also representative of this phase.

**The Scope of Cubism**

In painting the major exponents of cubism included Picasso, Braque, Jean Metzinger, Gris, Duchamp, and Léger. The chief segments of the cubist movement included the Montmartre-based Bâteau-Lavoir group of artists and poets (Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, Gertrude and Leo Stein, Modigliani, Picabia, Delaunay, Archipenko, and others); the Puteaux group of the Section d'Or salon (J. Villon, Léger, Picabia, Kupka, Marcoussis, Gleizes, Apollinaire, and others); the Orphists (Delaunay, Duchamp, Picabia, and Villon; see orphism); and the experimenters in collage who influenced cubist sculpture (Laurens and Lipchitz).

**Cubist Inspiration and Influence**

In painting the several sources of cubist inspiration included the later work of Cézanne; the geometric forms and compressed picture space in his paintings appealed especially to Braque, who developed them in his own works. African sculpture, particularly mask carvings, had enormous influence in the early years of the movement. Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907; Mus. of Modern Art, New York City) is one of the most significant examples of this influence. Within this revolutionary composition lay much of the basic material of cubism.

The cubist break with the tradition of imitation of nature was completed in the works of Picasso, Braque, and their many groups of followers. While few painters remained faithful to cubism's rigorous tenets, many profited from its discipline. Although the cubist groups were largely dispersed after World War I, their collective break from visual realism had an enriching and decisive influence on the development of 20th-century art. It provided a new stylistic vocabulary and a technical idiom that remain forceful today.



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*Still Life with Lemons and Oranges* **Pablo Picasso**

**Bibliography**

See G. Apollinaire, The Cubist Painters (1913, tr. 1949); R. Rosenblum, Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art (rev. ed. 1967); D. Cooper, The Cubist Epoch (1971); C. Green, Cubism and Its Enemies (1987); W. Rubin, Pioneering Cubism (1989).

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