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| Artist | Pablo Picasso (Spanish) |
| Title | Les Demoiselles d’ Avignon |
| Date | 1907 |
| Medium | Oil on canvas |
| Scale | 243.9 CM X 233.7 CM |
| Scope/s | * Painting influenced by primitive ideas by a non-French artist * The female figure by a non-French artist |
| Style | Proto-cubist, Cubist |
| Patron | None |
| Location | The Museum of Modern Art |
| Function | Part of the permanent collection of the museum of modern art, portrays five nude female prostitutes in a brothel on Carrer d’Avinyo, street in Barcelona |

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| Formal features/How ‘Modernist’? | |
| Composition | Radical break from traditional composition and perspective. Depicts 5 naked women composed of flat, splintered planes. Compressed space appears to project forward in jagged shards, while a slice of melon in the still life at the bottom of the composition teeters on an upturned tabletop |
| Colour or texture | Dirty shades of brown and nude are used to depict the skin of the prostitutes. The ladies appear to blend into the background as the shards surrounding them are this same burnt brown. The blue breaks up the scene acting as a contrast. The only other colour which appears is on the fruit, a vibrant red – the only pure living thing. The brown shards appear to be the shadows of the ladies. |
| Light & tone | The solid gaps of white between the shards, appear to light the scene. The ladies seem to be very close to one another, lit strongly as if they are on display – perhaps a reference to their occupation and the sale of their bodies. A deep shadow is shown surrounding the masked ladies on the right of the painting. The shadows could reference this dark powerful magic which Picasso believed primitive art held. |
| Space & depth or relief | Epic scale for a painting. The ladies appear claustrophobic as they are positioned so closely together. The upturned table holding the fruit appears the closest to us. With the scene set so close to viewer, they are forced into the scene. It becomes uncomfortable, increasingly with the centred ladies eye contact with us. |
| Line or brushwork | Thicker lines are used to define the bodies of the ladies, their bodies appear almost outlined. The bodies of the ladies appear defined by detail of the face and breast. The mark making appears a lot smoother. Around the lady in the mask (standing) etching, sketchy mark making has been used to create this dramatic dominance over the other ladies. She looks petrifying. |



Stylistic comment and artistic influence: Cubism acts a style to show all the possible viewpoints of a scene at once. Inspiration came from the energy exuded from Paris. The focus was on attacking every accepted convention of standard painting – typical of Picasso who created these principles (1907-1914)

Use or development of materials, techniques & processes:

New techniques exploring cubism. Analytical Cubism where artists explored geometrical shapes as features. Then Synthetic cubism with the adding of material as a collage (Caned chair)

Influence from technological factors:

* Advance in art with cubism employing geometric shapes in depictions of human and other forms. Visual abstraction.
* Exposition Universelle 1878 showed new technology alongside the colonial exhibits with the human zoo displaying 4,000 indigenous people

Critical text quote:

“The masks weren’t just like any other pieces of sculpture, they were magic things, they were weapons”

Influence from cultural/social factors:

* Fascination with primitive art, reflected in the blocky, pared-down forms and forceful, angular planes. Striking shapes and contours.
* He did away with pre-existing artistic conventions, like naturalism and perspective.
* His own lusts, anxieties with complex relationships with women
* Rejection of bourgeois society, colonialism, traditional art, sexual inhabitations and outdated mores and conventions
* ‘Venus’ women of European fetish as an ideal, supernatural form. The new perception of women.

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Influence from political factors:

* Encompassed ancient carvings from the Iberian Peninsula, the landmass that was divided into Spain, Andorra and Portugal.
* Home of the prostitutes, Avignon, Street in Barcelona
* Protest the atrocities of Africans self-rule. He validated African fetishes, and African culture as something to be taken seriously rather than curiosities.
* Colonial brutality and the rule of the whites
* Flourishing of prostitution in Europe and treatment of the female prostitutes- blamed for the spread of syphilis