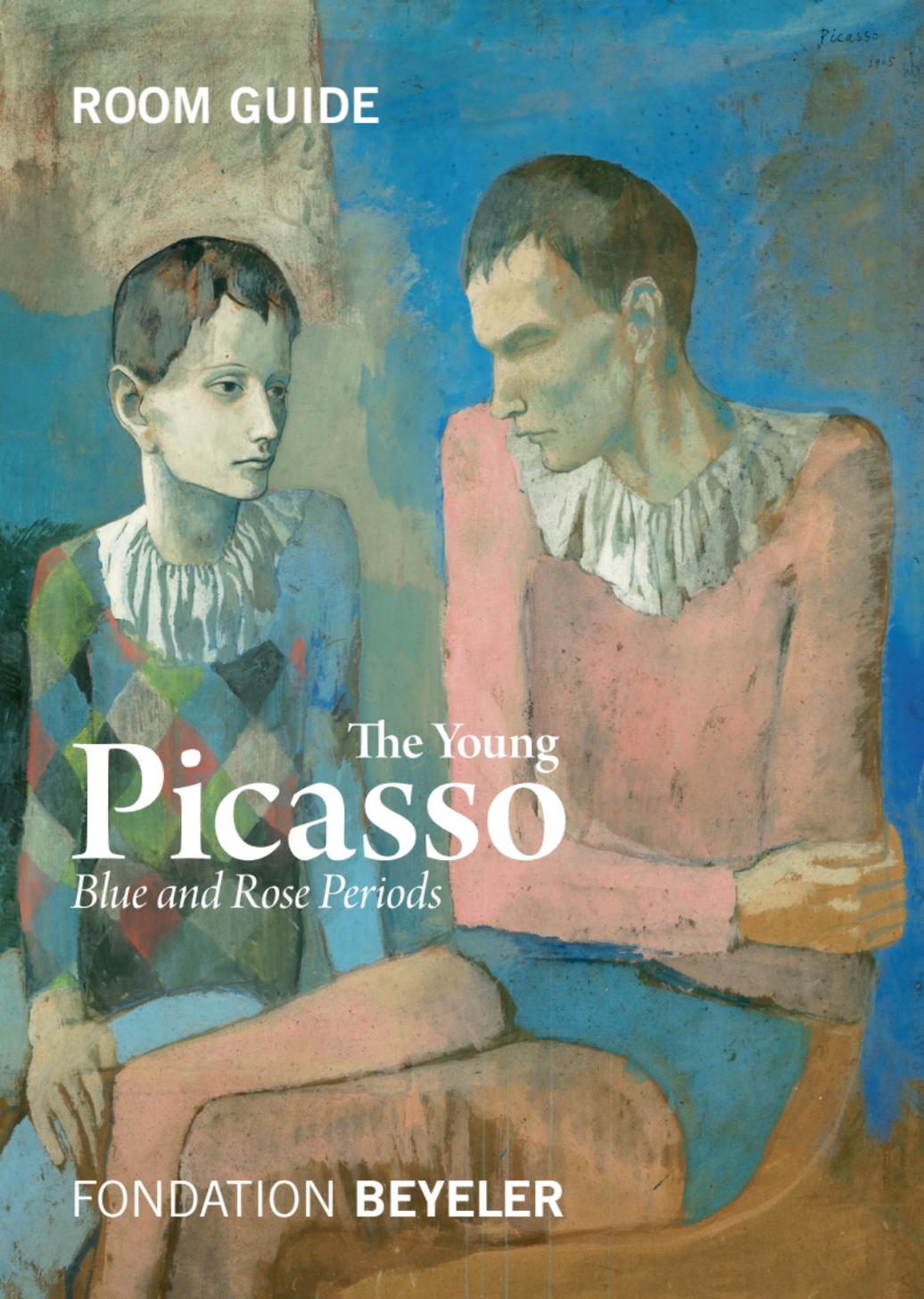


Picasso  
1905

# ROOM GUIDE



The Young  
**Picasso**  
*Blue and Rose Periods*

FONDATION **BEYELER**

## The Young PICASSO–Blue and Rose Periods 3 February–26 May 2019



Cover : Pablo Picasso  
*Acrobate et jeune arlequin*, 1905 (detail)  
Acrobat and Young Harlequin  
Gouache on cardboard, 105 x 76 cm  
Private collection  
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### 1–22

This symbol points out those works in the exhibition that are commented on in the following. Please watch out for the number and symbol on the captions to the exhibits, and the corresponding numbers in the guide.

## INTRODUCTION

Pablo Picasso's pioneering works of the Blue and Rose Periods, which characterise his oeuvre from 1901 to 1906, stand at the beginning of twentieth-century art and at the same time constitute one of its outstanding achievements. Picasso's pictures from these years include some of the subtlest examples of modern painting, and are now counted among the most valuable and sought-after art treasures of all.

The exhibition *The Young PICASSO–Blue and Rose Periods* traces the extraordinary development in Picasso's art that took place within a mere six years. Between 1901 and 1907, the aspiring young artist develops his unique personal style and becomes 'Picasso'.

The exhibition begins with the exuberantly colourful works from the early months of 1901, created in Madrid and then during Picasso's second stay in Paris. In the autumn of 1901, as a memorial gesture after the tragic suicide of his friend Carles Casagemas, Picasso begins to limit his palette to shades of blue, announcing the start of the so-called Blue Period. In the emotionally charged pictures of this phase, which he spends in Paris and Barcelona, the artist gazes into the depths of human misery and engages with major existential themes. His final relocation to Paris in 1904 signals the start of a new stage in his life. It is at this point that he meets his first great love. At the same time his colour preference

shifts, towards reddish pinks and ochres. The fascinating world of the circus becomes a main source of his motifs. In 1906, Picasso stays for several weeks in the mountain village of Gósol, in Catalonia, where he paints in a way that speaks of his quest for a new authenticity. Back in Paris, he continues to elaborate this Primitivist style. His experiments culminate in the formulation of a new pictorial language, announcing the advent of Cubism. Thus the unique works of the Blue and Rose Periods illustrate Picasso's continual striving for innovative artistic solutions, which open up entirely new paths for the art of the twentieth century. At the age of just twenty-five, Picasso becomes the outstanding revolutionary of modern art.

The exhibition has been organised by the Fondation Beyeler, in collaboration with the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Paris, and the Musée national Picasso-Paris.

The exhibition has been curated by Dr. Raphaël Bouvier.

## ROOM 1

### 1

#### **Yo Picasso, 1901**

I, Picasso

The young artist gazes defiantly over his shoulder at the viewer. His white shirt, painted with bold brushstrokes, glows against the dark background; in his right hand he holds a palette with traces of paint which, together with the lively orange and yellow in his cravat and face, create marked contrasts. The aspiring artist produced this self-portrait for his first exhibition at Ambroise Vollard's gallery in Paris. Picasso painted himself here in a style reminiscent of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec or Vincent van Gogh.

The palette alone identifies the subject as an artist. The expressively applied colours, their brushstrokes clearly visible, carry significance: here the painter is not portrayed working, but through his work itself. The painting is a bold statement by the artist newly arrived in Paris—something that Picasso underscores with the inscription 'Yo' (Engl.: I) besides his signature in the upper left corner of the canvas. From this point on, he would sign his works simply 'Picasso'—his mother's surname.

## ROOM 2

### 2

#### **Femme dans la loge (recto), 1901**

Woman at the Theatre

#### **Buveuse d'absinthe (verso), 1901**

The Absinthe Drinker

In his early years, Picasso reused his canvases multiple times, mostly due to a lack of money. He often overpainted his own pictures or—as in *Femme dans la loge* and *Buveuse d'absinthe*—used both the front and back sides. *Femme dans la loge* was done at the time of Picasso's first exhibition at Ambroise Vollard's gallery. While the figure of the aging dancer or courtesan, along with the setting, showcase a colouristic firework, the woman's face is carefully modelled, revealing individualised features.

The work *Buveuse d'absinthe*, today known as the front side, was created only shortly thereafter, and marks the transition from Picasso's early pictures to those of the Blue Period. Here, flat, opaquely applied colours extend over large areas, with individual fields of colour clearly delineated from one another by dark contours. The absinthe drinker sits away from the small table, alone, her gaze blank, self-absorbed. The scene emanates an atmosphere of melancholy and other-worldliness that would later come to typify the works of the Blue Period.

## ROOM 2

### 3

#### **Arlequin assis, 1901**

Seated Harlequin

*Arlequin assis* is one of the earliest Harlequin depictions in Picasso's oeuvre. In an unnaturally twisted pose, the Harlequin sits at a table and turns his head in the opposite direction to the rest of his body. The table jutting diagonally into the picture space offers him a support on which to rest his elbow. As in Picasso's female portraits of 1901, here, too, the hands attract the viewer's attention due to their large size and elongated shape. Surprisingly, the Harlequin with his melancholy posture in fact bears the facial features of Pierrot. Although Picasso was perfectly familiar with the differences between Harlequin and Pierrot, he often mixed up their distinguishing features. At that time, the two *commedia dell'arte* figures were part of popular culture, be it in magazine illustrations, the circus or in the opera.

## ROOM 3

### 4

#### **Autoportrait, 1901**

Self-Portrait

Picasso painted this self-portrait at the end of his second stay in Paris. Compared with the work *Yo Picasso*, exhibited at the Galerie Vollard in the summer of 1901, a clear shift has taken place the following winter. The artist portrays himself bearded and pale-faced, with hollow cheeks, aged and wrapped in a heavy overcoat, making his body appear like a dense mass. The imposing, self-assured pose of the first portrait has given way to a posture conveying uncertainty. Yet here, too, Picasso's intense gaze casts its spell on the viewer.

The self-portrait is one of Picasso's first works that emphasise the rich variety of his range of blue tones. As a means to express melancholy, blue pervades the entire composition, which is divided into blue-green and midnight blue fields of colour. Picasso kept the painting throughout his life.

## ROOM 3

### 5

#### **Casagemas dans son cercueil, 1901**

Casagemas in His Coffin

This impressive work was one of a series of paintings with which Picasso dealt with the tragic loss of his artist-friend Carles Casagemas, who committed suicide on 17 February 1901. In the vertical-format picture only part of the lifeless figure is depicted. The body, diagonally fixed into the composition, is cropped by the coffin and the picture edge. Rendered in profile, the face with its yellow-green colouration and prominent facial contours stands out against the blue-white shroud.

The image represents a variation of the painting *La Mort de Casagemas* from the same period, which is also on view in the present exhibition. In it, the subject's head has been moved close to the viewer and a huge candle emits multicoloured light. By contrast, most of the other works in the Casagemas cycle are rendered in a range of mainly blue tones. Picasso retrospectively remarked: 'The thought that Casagemas was dead led to me painting in blue.'

## ROOM 3

6

### **Femme assise au fichu, 1901**

Melancholy Woman

*Femme assise au fichu* presents a seated woman in profile, introspectively withdrawn, her arms folded and legs crossed. Her brightly illuminated face lends her an appearance both profound and monumental. She is situated in a bare room, probably a cell in the Saint-Lazare women's prison in Paris, which Picasso visited several times in the autumn and winter of 1901–02 to make drawings for his portraits of women. The prison also housed numerous prostitutes, many of whom suffered from sexually transmitted diseases. In paintings such as this one, Picasso found a universal means of representing the social themes of poverty, misery and isolation.

## ROOM 3

7

### **Femme assise, 1902**

Seated Woman

The small clay figure *Femme assise* is the first known sculpture in Picasso's oeuvre, and probably modelled from life, with no variants or preparatory drawings. The forward-leaning, slightly sunken woman is very simply rendered; only her face and hair have been given somewhat greater detail. In her reflectiveness and bulkiness, she fits with the figures of the Blue Period. It is as if Picasso has cut her out of one of his paintings and given her three-dimensional shape. In this work, in which the economy of means is taken to an extreme, form alone is what counts; every moment of narrative has been blocked out. The seated woman is one of the recurring motifs in Picasso's oeuvre, which is here given sculptural form for the first time.

## ROOM 3

8

### **La Vie, 1903**

In *La Vie*, the allegorical masterpiece of the Blue Period, Picasso brings together existential themes such as death, suffering and love in a complexity suffused with melancholy. When the then twenty-one-year-old artist began with the preparatory drawings for this monumental painting in Barcelona in May 1903, he had already been painting primarily blue pictures for over two years. Although Picasso had originally planned the work as a self-portrait, his deceased friend Carles Casagemas appears here once again (and for the final time). Accompanied by a naked woman who nestles against his body, he stands in the left half of the picture, wearing only a white loincloth. He points his index finger at a clad woman, who carries an infant swaddled in a cloth. Appearing in the background as pictures within a picture are further figures, cowering. They lend the work an additional symbolic and enigmatic dimension.

## ROOM 3

9

### **Le Repas de l'aveugle, 1903**

The Blind Man's Meal

Painted in Barcelona in 1903, the picture *Le Repas de l'aveugle* depicts an emaciated blind man sitting before a frugal meal. The man's whole suffering is conveyed by the exaggeration of his body with his bony shoulders, hollow-cheeked face and thin fingers. He is one of those miserable and solitary figures that appear like modern martyrs in Picasso's pictures.

The depicted provisions—the bread and wine—could be interpreted as Christian symbols. The starkly reduced range of colours and the dramatic effect of the scene created by the light lend the image a mystical quality. Here we feel the influence of El Greco's paintings and Spanish religious art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

## ROOM 4

**10**

### **Le Fou, 1905**

The Jester

In the extreme sparseness of his studio at the Bateau-Lavoir, Picasso explored the universe of travelling performers, where the jester was joined by other socially marginalised figures. *Le Fou* was begun one evening in Paris after Picasso had returned from the Cirque Medrano and is supposedly based on a portrait of the poet Max Jacob, who had accompanied the artist. The sculptural treatment of the jester stands out due to both the clear structure of the work and its finely modulated surface. The depth, sensitivity and precision of the artistic gaze is revealed in the marked contrast between light and shade. The impressions of Picasso's hands seem to be embedded in the surface. The high degree of plasticity arises not least from the extravagant form of the cap, with its curved tip surrounded by a crown.

## ROOM 4

**11**

### **Femme en chemise (Madeleine), 1905**

Young Woman in a Chemise (Madeleine)

A young woman, depicted in profile, stands isolated in an empty, dark-blue space. Her slender body is draped in a white blouse. Her left breast, its curve emphasised, is simultaneously concealed and revealed by the flimsily thin cloth. The woman's pale skin and distinct facial features, as well as the delicately defined contours of her body, set her apart from the background. The colour scheme, suffused with light and depth, hints at Picasso's gradual turn to warm pink and brown tones. The identity of the model long remained unclear because Picasso had overpainted the figure of a boy here with the slender silhouette of his first muse and lover, Madeleine. The artist first met Madeleine in 1904, after moving into his studio at the Bateau-Lavoir in Paris. She posed repeatedly for Picasso's paintings in the transitional phase from the Blue to the Rose Period, until the spring of 1905.

## ROOM 4

### 12

#### **Fillette au panier de fleurs, 1905**

Girl with a Basket of Flowers

The painting *Fillette au panier de fleurs* is surprising in many respects. First of all, because of the extended vertical format, which also makes the girl appear elongated. The adolescent stands quite naked before us, with her body turned to the side and a serious expression on her face. A slight counter-movement is suggested in the transition from her feet to her torso. The girl's face is turned towards the viewer and carefully modelled in the manner of a portrait. The body, by contrast, appears somewhat withdrawn, almost unreal. The radiant red flowers in the woven basket create a strong accent against the pale skin, black hair and light blue background. The art dealer Clovis Sagot purchased the picture from Picasso for the modest sum of seventy-five francs. It was one of the first works that the American writer and art collector Gertrude Stein acquired together with her brother Leo, as early as 1905. The Stein siblings subsequently built up a significant Picasso collection.

## ROOM 5

### 13

#### **Le Marchand de gui, 1902–03**

The Mistletoe Seller

With an empathetic eye, Picasso concentrates here on the representation of two poverty-stricken people who together go about their hard, daily work—the selling of mistletoe. The wrinkled yet gentle face of the bearded old man contrasts with the smooth, fresh, yet serious visage of the boy, for whom the companion is at once antithesis and role model. While the two figures do not look at one another, their physical closeness and the old man's affectionate gesture nevertheless suggest the greatest tenderness. With the subtle play of colours, Picasso succeeds in generating a mystical atmosphere. In his dignified appearance, the mistletoe vendor with the child comes here to symbolise a life of poverty endured without resignation and at the same time the hope of happiness.

## ROOM 5

14

### **Acrobate et jeune arlequin, 1905**

Acrobat and Young Harlequin

*Acrobate et jeune arlequin* is among Picasso's most impressive pictures from the world of the circus. Two performers of delicate appearance sit in front of a tattered-looking blue backdrop. On the left is an androgynous boy in Harlequin costume with a chalk-white face, gazing to the right, towards the young man in acrobat's clothing. The latter is depicted with arms clasped and eyes closed. At the transition point between the worlds of blue and pink, both the space and the figures seem to be in a state of transformation. Can the diamond pattern of the Harlequin's costume and the geometric shape of the acrobat's arms be seen as anticipating a 'Cubification' of the body?

As the first-ever museum purchase of a work by Picasso, *Acrobate et jeune arlequin* was acquired for the municipal museum in Elberfeld near Wuppertal in 1911; today it is privately owned.

## ROOM 6

15

### **Arlequin assis au fond rouge, 1905**

Seated Harlequin on Red Background

Picasso never presents his Harlequins as tricksters or buffoons entertaining the audience with wild leaps, but rather as passive, melancholy figures. In *Arlequin assis au fond rouge* the Harlequin sits, motionless, his mouth closed. His naked, slightly splayed legs dangle from a wall. He appears bare, exposed, even though he wears a thin, washed-out costume and a hat. Despite his conspicuously frontal pose, his gaze is not directed exactly at the viewer. Picasso aims at capturing the essence of the figure, his great solitude, which is further accentuated by the vibrant, pulsating red background. The Harlequin figure may also embody the creative, sensitive artist, who must stand his ground in modern society.

## ROOM 7

**16**

### **Les Deux Frères, 1906**

The Two Brothers

A boy carries his younger brother on his back; the two appear to merge together. The elder boy's facial features are finely modelled, whereas those of the younger one are somewhat blurred and reduced to a few shapes. Both figures are naked, and place and time are uncertain.

Only the edge of the floor and dark shadows indicate the room in which they are located. The artist makes it seem here that the figures are made of the same material as the space surrounding them.

The painting was produced in Gósol, a Catalan mountain village in the eastern Pyrenees, where Picasso retreated for several weeks in the early summer of 1906. Far from urban life, he began developing a new pictorial language characterised by simplicity and earthiness. Here, Picasso drew inspiration notably from the naked body, initially from the male and then the female one.

## ROOM 7

**17**

### **La Toilette, 1906**

In the summer of 1904 Picasso met Fernande Olivier, who would become his most important model and was also his companion until 1912. She shared with him a desperately poor life at the run-down Bateau-Lavoir studio building, in Montmartre, Paris. In 1906 she accompanied him to the Pyrenean village of Gósol in Spain. Olivier posed for Picasso, and to an extent her figure became a field for artistic experimentation. In *La Toilette*, Picasso's search for a new archaic formal language still manifests itself in predominantly classical figures. In a bare interior, a naked young woman stands to the left, turned towards the viewer, arranging her hair in a mirror held by a black-haired woman dressed in blue and seen in profile. It is possible that the depictions of both women are portraits of Olivier, highlighting different, contrasting facets of the same person.

## ROOM 7

**18**

### **Buste de femme (Fernande), 1906**

Female Bust (Fernande)

During his sojourn in the Pyrenean mountain village of Gósol, Picasso began experimenting with different techniques and materials, creating wood sculptures that he carved with rudimentary tools. He was interested in achieving a simple, unaffected form and allowed *Buste de femme (Fernande)* to emerge elegantly from the curved piece of wood—the merely suggested arms, buttocks and curve of the breasts and finally the finely carved face. The figure's face and veil covering part of her hair recall the appearance of Fernande Olivier. In this archaic-style sculpture Picasso focuses entirely on the contrast between the qualities of the unworked boxwood and the delicacy of the female face, which possesses an unusual, mysterious presence.

## ROOM 8

**19**

### **Autoportrait, 1906**

Self-Portrait

In his early years Picasso frequently portrayed himself. Although not identified by obvious attributes, this image is also a self-portrait of the artist in which he illustrates his most recent achievements as a painter. The stocky man's solid torso, his greyish skin tone and mask-like face exemplify the Primitivist pictorial language that Picasso developed in 1906. The artist was seeking new means of expression, painting almost exclusively nudes and in the process moving noticeably away from his earlier work.

He was no longer interested in depicting feelings, wanting rather to experiment with new forms and render his subjects with new pictorial means. Picasso's facial features in this painting appear formulaic, stereotypical—and he has moved quite some distance from the aesthetic of the Blue and Rose Periods.

## ROOM 8

### 20

#### **Femme nue assise, les jambes croisées, 1906**

Seated Female Nude with Crossed Legs

Picasso's discovery of centuries-old Iberian sculpture flowed, in the autumn of 1906, into numerous female nudes in which a new, raw style emerged. Among them is this imposing representation of a seated woman in which the artist limited himself to brown and grey tones.

The schematically rendered robust body composed of geometric volumes and the ossified, mask-like face with its empty eyes are typical of Picasso's Primitivism in this period. Thus, the artist introduced here, within a classical picture theme, a new image of the body, aimed at reduction. This was to prove seminal for his artistic development in subsequent years culminating in the painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

## ROOM 9

### 21

#### **Nu debout (verso: Oiseaux), 1907**

Standing Nude (verso: Birds)

In 1907 Picasso carved and hewed new figures in wood, which he in part then painted in colour. The raw form of the sculptures recalls African and Oceanic cult and art objects that the artist was studying intensively and beginning to collect at the time.

In *Nu debout* he sought out the inaccessible and archaic, concentrating on the interplay of powerful and memorable forms. Here, he questions in radical fashion the proportions of the human body and dispenses with emotional content of any kind. The vertical oval of the elongated face is set in relation to the compact torso and almond-shaped belly. On the reverse side of the rectangular wood beam, we see three hieroglyph-like bird motifs. In complete freedom, Picasso allowed the most varied cultural references to flow into his works.

ROOM 9

22

**Femme (époque des “Demoiselles d’Avignon”), 1907**

Woman (‘Demoiselles d’Avignon’ Period)

*Femme*, from 1907, also originated in the context of Picasso’s seminal picture *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* and is the earliest work in the extensive Picasso collection assembled by Ernst and Hildy Beyeler. The sketch-like painting shows a naked female figure with raised arms, depicted in a pose that remains ambivalent. Wearing the cap of a sailor or ship’s captain (perhaps her hair is also set in a chignon), she is presented next to a yellow curtain drawn to the side and in front of a blue and green background. The face, whose features recall those of African masks, clearly reveals the great influence that non-European sculpture had on Picasso in this phase of his career. Whereas the figure’s face, arms and breasts are fully painted and bordered with clear contours, the lower body is sketched with just a few lines. In *Femme* Picasso seems to be deliberately playing with an aesthetic of incompleteness—yet in light of its expressive power and manner of composition, the work is unquestionably finished.

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**ROOM GUIDE**

**The Young PICASSO—Blue and Rose Periods**

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## INFORMATION

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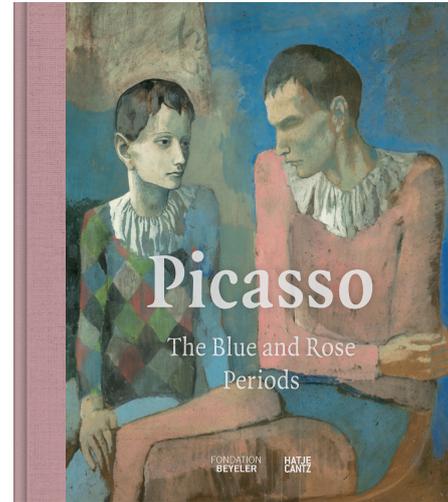
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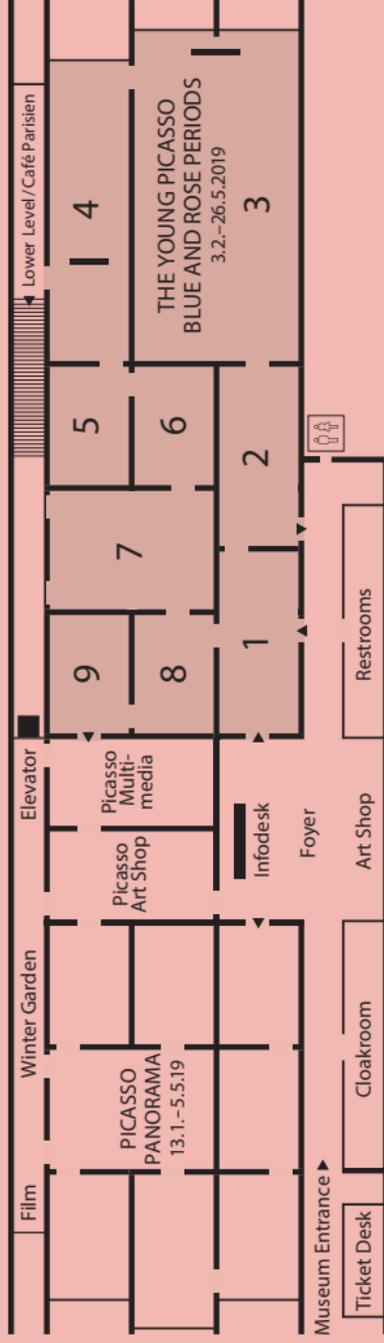
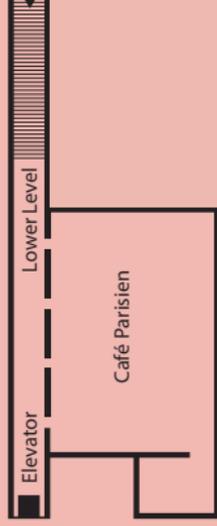


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# THE YOUNG PICASSO BLUE AND ROSE PERIODS



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