In postliberation Paris, Picasso became the symbol of regained freedom. The artist owed much of his popularity among the Parisians to the fact that he refused to emigrate when many French modernists had fled to America.¹ Picasso’s relationship with France reached its high point in the special exhibition accompanying the Salon d’Automne in 1944, known as the Liberation Salon, which was usually reserved for French artists.² Last but not least, he joined the French Communist Party—this was announced the day before the opening of the salon and attracted the attention of the world’s media.³

In the Eastern European countries, liberated by the Red Army from Nazi occupation, a great deal of attention was paid by the communist ideologists—the builders of the new social order—to Comrade Picasso. As an effect of the Yalta Conference, these countries were incorporated after the war into the Soviet area of influence. After the liberation, the Western Allies demanded

³ Pablo Picasso, interview by Paul Gaillard, New Masses, 14 October 1944.
that the rules of democracy be maintained and that free elections be organized. To anyone familiar with Stalin’s methods, such a demand may sound like entrusting a lamb to a hungry wolf. However, Stalin was keen to be perceived as a solicitous protector, from an external point of view at least.

On the one hand, the operation of winding up the political and military opposition held by the army, militia, and security service controlled by Moscow was in progress. On the other hand, an appearance of liberalism was upheld as well as the gentle prosocialist method of persuasion, using a carrot rather than a stick. The artistic society—especially that connected with modernist trends—did not declare its resistance. A great number of artists were either left-wing or involved in the communist movement before the war. Their anxiety was caused by socialist realism as the “compulsory” trend in the USSR. It was perceived by the East-Central European modernists as the contradiction of freedom and progress in art.

That is why any political gesture by a famous artist such as Pablo Picasso was a tremendously valuable element in the propaganda machine. Pablo Picasso became the authority for the communists and as such he helped the new system and the new power to be accepted by the elite, or at least to neutralize the resistance. For that reason, the first months after the liberation were the time of propaganda focused on the political gestures of the artist.

“The notorious Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso, made the following confession about his reasons for joining the Communist Party of France: ‘I became a communist, because the communists are the bravest people in the Soviet Union and in France and in my own fatherland,’” as it was put in the first issue of the Polish periodical Kuźnica, which was intended to shape the new Polish intelligentsia. It was a clear message to Polish artists about where to place their political allegiances. The message was supported by other expressions, such as the text by a friend of Picasso, the Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg, published in the Soviet Literaturnaja Gazieta and then reprinted in the periodicals of East-Central Europe, such as Przekrój and Bildende Kunst.

“Among the communists and the friends of the USSR, there are scientists from France, such as Joliot-Curie, the most prominent artists such as Picasso and Matisse, and the most significant poets, such as Aragon and Eluard. They are not great artists because they joined us, but they joined us because they are great artists.”
The Czechoslovak periodical *Zivot* published a text by French critic and member of the Communist Party Roger Garaudy, which was entitled “Artists without Uniform.” As Garaudy puts it: “It’s every painter’s right to paint like Picasso. It is also his right to paint another way. It’s the communist’s right to like Picasso’s work; it’s also his right to admire the work of any anti-Picasso. Picasso’s painting is not the aesthetic of communism, neither is the art of Taslitsky. There is no compulsory style. Does this mean that Marxism excludes the aesthetic by Picasso or anyone else? Not at all. Marxism is not a prison, but a point of view.”4 The above quotations give the impression of communism as a system in which social and political engagement was followed by freedom in the field of aesthetics. For this reason, the modernists might feel comfortable in the new regime, especially as Picasso was the guarantee of their freedom.

The East-Central European artists and critics seemed to perceive Picasso as the guarantee of freedom; they were aware of the necessity of social metamorphoses in the context of the tragedy of war and wanted to take part in the process. They also wanted to stay in touch with the modernist tradition born in Paris. These dilemmas were expressed by Jindřich Chalupecký, a Czech critic and editor of the periodical *Letters*. Czechoslovakia faced—as Chalupecký put it—the civilizational choice between Eastern socialism and Western modernism. Nevertheless, as he argued, none must be rejected, because it is possible to combine both directions.5 The art of Picasso and the poetry of Paul Eluard were examples of accepting socialism in art. Neither involved abandoning the achievement of modernism. Socialism as the only way of extricating humanity from a deep crisis should not exclude human heritage; rather it should make use of it. In Poland, a similar point of view was presented by the artists associated with the Group of Young Artists and the critics accompanying them. Tadeusz Kantor and Mieczysław Porębski, the most important Polish artist and art critic of the time, wrote in a text, which was also the manifesto of the Group of Young Artists: “For those of us who, in the darkest times of the occupation, stood by the writers and poets of the cultural resistance movement, Picasso’s *Guernica* became the most amazing human

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Part II · Moving Objects

manifestation.⁶ These artists perceived Picasso as the new model of art pos-
tulated by the communist ideologists. They perceived the Spaniard’s avant-
garde style, which was born with cubism as the announcement of the new re-
alism, which was to be more obvious and more simple than the realism of the
time. Mieczysław Porębski wrote as much with reference to nineteenth-cen-
tury realism. He added that a new realism was being created, one that was a
synthesis of all the ravings of surrealism and used all the means of expression-
ism in order to follow the coming reality.

So, the art of Picasso, with Guernica as its most important masterpiece, is
a synthesis of all the trends of modern art and may be the reflection of the real
demand of the new era. The notion of a new era was understood as the com-
prehensive reality born after the horror of the war. In the shadow of catastro-
phe, humanity and its environment could no longer be described in academic
language. It was only modernism with its expressionist means and deformations
of superficial viewpoints that was able to touch the core of reality. This
was the point of what Porębski described as intensified realism.

German surrealist and critic Heinz Trökes described Picasso’s art in a
similar way, calling it spiritual realism. Referring to Guernica and the war
pictures by Picasso, he wrote: “At a time when everyone is deprived of human-
ity and humanist convictions, Picasso does not create the portraits of indi-
viduals, but pictures of disintegrated women with their faces broken by tears,
resting on armchairs, with their faces showing eyes on their foreheads bro-
en by fear, eyes that would call for help from somewhere on another plan-
et. These are the pictures of our time.”⁷ Trökes’s article is one of the points
of view expressed in the discussion held in the East German periodical Bild-
dende Kunst. The debate touched the problem of modernist art and abstract
art. Heinz Trökes’s point of view was not a dominant one in the discussion.
The main opinion expressed was that of Heinz Lüdecke, who summed up the
discussion.⁸ The author described Picasso as a decadent artist, but he under-
lined that this was not an insulting definition; his art was simply connected
to the decadent phase of the bourgeoisie, following the Marxist thesis that
consciousness is defined by existence.

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The discussion on the place of modernist and abstract art in the new socialist world was also held in the art periodicals in Hungary. Here, too, the name Picasso often appeared in various arguments. On the one hand, his art was described as the product of the decadent order of bourgeois society. In this spirit, János Kurta Andrássy wrote his text “Abstract Art in the People’s Democracy.” On the other hand, other critics, such as Porębski and Trökes, focused on the expression of new realism. Such a point of view was presented by the critic connected with the Hungarian European School, Ernő Kállai, in his response to Andrássy’s text: “Attention! The show!” In his opinion, *Guernica* and the war pictures announced the “splendid return of realism.”

The critics, close to the modernist movement in the four Middle European countries, perceived Picasso as an exceptional person—a proleftist artist able to express his engagement in the nontraditional form, the synthesis of several avant-garde trends. They described the form as a new realism, which refers perfectly to the condition of humanity after the catastrophe of war. *Guernica* and the other war pictures proved that there was no space for “art for art’s sake” in Picasso’s work, but the reference to the horrific realities of war and people’s lives was achieved in a sensitive manner.

Before we analyze the response of artists to the above critical expressions, let us ask what were the sources of knowledge about Picasso and his art at the time? The main sources were reproductions in magazines and newspapers. Art periodicals such as *Blok*, *Zivot*, *Bildende Kunst*, *Szabad Művészet*, and *Głos Plastyków* printed pictures by Picasso. There were only two exhibitions with Picasso’s paintings organized in East-Central Europe at the time. In spring 1947, a French-Hungarian exhibition took place in Budapest. Six works by Picasso were presented there alongside the works of other French painters, such as Matisse and Pignon. The most interesting show was “The Art of Republican Spain,” which took place in Prague and Brno in 1946. Even though the exhibition in Czechoslovakia was not a solo show of Picasso’s work, it was a unique opportunity to see the recent pieces by the Spaniard at that time and in that region. Nine oil paintings dating from between 1939 and 1945, as well as seven graphic works, dominated and overshadowed the works of others participants—young Spanish artists. The ideological cont-

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Part II · Moving Objects

text of the exhibition needs to be emphasized.\(^\text{11}\) In the catalog, as well as in official speeches, the anti-Nazi character of the Spaniards’ art, especially of the author of *Guernica*, was firmly stressed. The government was represented by the communist minister, the head of propaganda, Vaclav Kopecky.\(^\text{12}\) The exhibition took place ahead of the general election, in which the Communist Party emerged as the most powerful group.

In Poland, there was no way of coming into direct contact with Picasso’s work, except one occasion, in 1948, when Picasso came to Poland. Although Pablo Picasso was one of the most important guests of the Peace Congress in Wrocław in 1948, initially inspired by Stalin,\(^\text{13}\) there was an attempt to avoid showing his paintings. It is true that a small exhibition of his work was organized, though it only showed ceramics, presenting the artist as a craftsman whose incomprehensible paintings had changed into the products of a pottery workshop.\(^\text{14}\) Picasso’s ceramics were not what his Polish admirers had expected to see. At that time, a retrospective exhibition of his work could have become an unforgettable artistic event, according to Helen Syruskowa, an architect associated with modernism, who took care of Picasso during his visit to Poland. “But there was no attempt to organize an exhibition of his work, nor even a lecture or meeting with students of architecture, sculpture or painting.”\(^\text{15}\) The artist was honored by the state with high distinctions presented by the president, but at the same time he was isolated from the environment of contemporary artists.\(^\text{16}\) Apt is the story, quoted by Francoise Gilot, about how during the official congressional dinner, a Russian accused Picasso of cultivating decadence in art in his “impressionist-surrealist” style.\(^\text{17}\) Such opinions marked the starting point of an increas-
ing intolerance toward modernist art and were a sign of the imminent end of artistic freedom.

Between 1945 and 1948, modernist art developed dynamically as a result of liberal cultural politics. The art of groups such as Grupa 42 in Czechoslovakia—centered around Galerie Gerd Rosen in Berlin—contained plenty of references to Picasso’s art. In the art of Františček and František Gross from Grupa 42, the inspiration of the actual paintings of Picasso, especially the women’s heads shown at the exhibition “The Art of Republican Spain” interfered with cubism in Czech modernism. The most important source of inspiration for Czech artists was the collection of Vincenc Kramař. In Kramař’s collection, besides the works by Picasso and Braque in their analytic cubism period, there was also the notorious 1907 self-portrait by Picasso (now in the National Gallery in Prague). Kramař also possessed works by Emil Filla, the Czech cubist. After his return to Prague from the concentration camp in Buchenwald in 1945, he began to work on a series of pictures that were presented at a show in 1947. Some of his works are dialogues with Picasso’s works, exhibited in Prague in 1946. Picasso’s inactive women sitting in a closed space are contradicted by Filla’s women in action: a sculptor at work and a woman releasing a lark from its cage. The tension between the painters is so clear due to the proximity of Filla’s characters to Picasso’s style—a proximity that is close to pastiche.

Tadeusz Kantor, the leader of the Young Painters Group, also referred to Picasso in his work. His pictures presenting women, which were created in 1945–47, may be the best example. The synthetic form, rigid contour of color planes, expressive clashes of diversified points of view—all these are connections between Kantor’s canvases and the war pictures of women by Picasso. Kantor was not able to see Picasso’s works. The intermediary role was played by young French artists following Picasso—André Fougeron, Edouard Pignon presented in Cracow in 1947. Tadeusz Kantor saw the exhibition of French painters as a presentation of the most up-to-date trends in painting of Paris. In his pictures presenting people at work, such as The Laundress, Kantor uses the postcubist form to present the theme of the efforts of ordinary people. The artist’s social engagement is the clue to these works (Plate 12.1). In 1947, Kantor left Cracow for Paris. After his six-month stay there, his painting changed. Objects and characters disappeared from his canvases and the inspiration from abstract surrealism became clear.
Part II · Moving Objects

The works of one of the leaders of the Hungarian European School, Dezső Korniss, present an interesting synthesis of inspiration from Picasso with geometric discipline. Korniss became familiar with Picasso’s work in the 1930s. Two interesting pictures—which may be perceived as dialogues with Picasso—emerged after the war. One is The Singers (1946), where Korniss transposed the famous figures of The Three Musicians (1921) into geometrical and abstract forms. The other composition that sums up Korniss’s work is the surrealist Grasshopper’s Wedding, which emerged in 1948. The canvas is a dialogue with Picasso’s La Joie de Vivre (1946), the picture referring to Mediterranean culture.

The artists from the circle of the Gerd Rosen Gallery in Berlin, who established the Zone 5 group in 1948, were also strongly influenced by Picasso. In the pictures by Trökes, the leader of the group, one finds echoes of war still lifes with a skull by Picasso. The works by Marc Zimmermann refer to Picasso’s surrealistic period. Both artists were employed by the State School of Architecture and Art in Weimar in the Soviet occupation zone. They were dismissed shortly afterward, as soon as the first semester was over. The surrealist influences in their paintings were the reason for their dismissal.18 Inspiration from Picasso can also be found in the work by artists of the older generation who stayed in the Soviet occupation zone, such as Karl Hofer and Horst Strempel. In a well-known triptych by Strempel, Night over Germany, Angela Schneider found the influence of Guernica.19

The inspiration from Picasso’s art presented above should be seen in an ideological context. For many artists and critics, Picasso became the example of political engagement and modernist painting. The artists’ references to Picasso were a sign that they were joining the trend of social changes, but also a sign that they were stressing the value of art’s autonomy and the freedom of the artist. Soon it became clear that it was not Picasso’s painting that was to become the new model of official visual language of the socialist state. By the end of 1948, the communists consolidated their position in the region and a campaign against “formalism” in art began. The campaign did not omit Pablo Picasso himself. In the part of Germany occupied by the Soviets, which

was about to become the GDR, the campaign took place in *Tägliche Rundschau*—the newspaper of the communist party SED. Adolf Dymschitz, who initiated the debate, did not hesitate to point to the deep contradiction between Picasso the fighter and Picasso the artist. This discord, as the author puts it, should be a warning for his followers, an instruction to modernist artists, which clearly meant: following the formal path would not be tolerated. Explicitly formulated warnings had been issued by an author with the nickname N. Orlow in the text closing the “formalist debate”:

Some representatives of this absurd trend in GDR painting try to hide behind the name Picasso. Picasso painted a number of paintings in a realist style. One example of his realist work is his famous representation of the dove as a symbol of peace. The formalist ‘dislocation’ of Picasso means nothing more than the obvious waste of his talent.

Picasso, the popularizer of the image of a dove and olive branch as a secular peace symbol and participant in numerous peace congresses, was perceived as a warrior for peace. Nonetheless, his art—regarded as formalism—was condemned and forbidden behind the Iron Curtain. The absence of his art was nevertheless balanced by the dove’s omnipresence. The peace dove, which provided a “trademark” for the peace movement organized by the communists, had influenced almost every area of social life. One might find it in paintings, as well as on posters and in the applied arts.

The new “engaged” Picasso masterpieces emerged in the first half of the 1950s. *Massacre in Korea*, which was Picasso’s reaction to the Korean War and the risk of a new global conflict, was painted in January 1951. Even though the communists disliked the painting due to its modernist deformations of women’s bodies and its weak emphasis of the invaders’ identity as the “American imperialists,” it was used in communist propaganda. One example of this may have been the presentation of the picture at the French Painting Exhibition in Warsaw in 1952. The exhibition showed key works by French modernists: Picasso and Léger as artists working with political-

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Part II · Moving Objects

ly engaged subjects. Matisse’s fabric works were also shown, highlighting his involvement in the applied arts. Works by young, politically active painters, such as Fougeron and Pignon, were also shown.22 Ryszard Stanisławski used the following words to interpret Massacre in Korea in an official art periodical: “Even though in comparison with Guernica, Picasso used much more understandable and clear symbols, Massacre in Korea may distract the spectator, whose desire is to see more explicit and less symbolical accusations against the American soldiers, less than a nameless torturer hidden in armor.”23 Massacre in Korea had reappeared in Warsaw four years later. A large-scale reproduction had been placed in November 1956 on Krakowskie Przedmieście, the main promenade of the capital of Poland, as a sign of solidarity with the Hungarians struggling on the streets of Budapest. The context of the Thaw had changed the meaning of the painting. The characters in armor were identified with Soviet tanks.

A small private gallery run by Eduard Henning in Halle in East Germany was an interesting example of how Picasso was perceived by the communists at the time. Personal relationships between Henning and artists such as Braque and Picasso enabled them to organize small shows of their works in Halle. Most of the exhibitions took place in the second half of the 1950s during the Thaw, but the first one, the graphic work exhibition, took place in 1950. Henning also issued a brochure devoted to the artist. The correspondence between central and regional-level party officers focusing on the brochure offers valuable information about the attitude of the East German authorities toward the art of Picasso and the artist himself. “About the content of the book, one may say that it is an attack on our struggle over realism. . . . It is a sophisticated selection of the most formalist works by this revolutionary artist”—these were the words of the chief of the culture department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.24 He also added: “Picasso must not be banned, but the brochure of course will not be launched.”

The above view should be perceived as an official example of the authorities’ approach to Picasso in the Stalinist years, not only in the GDR. As a no-

torious authority and an icon of the communist peace movement, the artist
could not be banned, but his works as the contradiction to socialist realism
were not to be popularized or even shown at all. This kind of schizophrenic
attitude was present until the second half of the 1950s, when the Thaw over-
whelmed the countries that we are focusing on. The Thaw began as the effect
of the famous Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party and Khrush-
chev’s letter condemning the crimes of Stalin’s regime.

At the time of the Thaw—which took a different path in each country
of the region—Pablo Picasso became an important reference for the artists
on their way from socialist realism to modernism. The exit, as well as the en-
trance into socialist realism, took place in the light of discussions held in art
newspapers, where the question of realism had remarkably reappeared. When
analyzing the discussions, one might have the impression of the “thawing”
of the problems that had been “frozen” almost six years earlier. The prob-
lem of Picasso reappeared as well. A cold and tense “Picasso discussion” took
place in Bildende Kunst in 1955. In the discussion, initiated with a text by
Heinz Lüdecke, “The Phenomenon and the Problem of Picasso,” published
in 1955 and involving several German and foreign artists and critics, the fol-
lowing question was raised: Is it possible to reconcile social engagement with
modernist form? As Martin Damus puts it: “some proved that there must be
a contradiction between the progressive engagement of Picasso and his for-
malist art, while others underlined that progressive engagement is also con-
nected with his artistic modernity.”

The discussion also touched on a wid-
er problem, which was the embracing of modernity in a socialist country and
also an attempt to fill the crack that had appeared five years earlier. A similar
discussion held in Poland in the large-format weekly magazine Przegląd Kulturalny (The cultural review) seemed much more liberal. It began with an ar-
ticle by Juliusz Starzyński, a prominent art historian linked to the commu-
nist regime, who on the pages of the official art historical bulletin highlighted
the importance of Picasso’s art.

It was a definite change in the tone of writ-

ing about Picasso and at the same time a revitalization of modernist art. Not

25 M. Damus, Malerei der DDR, Funktionen der bildenden Kunst im Realen Sozialismus (Hamburg: Reinbek,

26 J. Starzyński, “Sztuka wiecznie młoda—kilka uwag o malarstwie Picassa w związku z ostatnimi wystawa-

mi,” Materiały do Studiów i Dyskusji z Zakresu Teorii i Historii Sztuki, Krytyki Artystycznej i Badań nad

Sztuką 1–2 (1955).
Part II · Moving Objects

long after, in *Przegląd Kulturalny*, the young artist Jerzy Ćwiertnia published a text in which Picasso was the main hero. Referring to the Warsaw presentation of *Massacre in Korea*, he put forward the notion of abolishing the opposition to “realism-distortion,” on which the current criticisms were based.27 “There is no art without distortion” ends the article—a brave slogan supported by the authority of the creator of *Guernica*. This text led to the discussion illustrated in many of Picasso’s paintings. Its theme was the level of distortion in art, which at the same time did not altogether do away with thematic aspects.

In Czechoslovakia—despite all the voices breaking the silence about Picasso—the discussion was not taken up.28 Controversy arose due to abstract art, not the modernism of Picasso. After the Thaw, however, Picasso’s work inevitably became a less lively reference and more like a museum object, especially when abstract art turned into the most influential trend. Such a phenomenon had clearly been visible in Poland as early as 1956–57; the same process occurred in Czechoslovakia at the beginning of the 1960s. In the GDR, on the other hand, the process of liberalization had slowed down in 1959 after the congress in Bitterfeld. Since then socialist realism, even if slightly modified, became a compulsory mainstream trend there. In Hungary, where after the bloody suppression of the Budapest revolution there was not even a trace of the cultural Thaw, the embracing of new trends occurred so late that Picasso’s art could cause no lively interest.29

Let us ask how the Thaw concerning Picasso’s work and the elimination of the discrepancy between Picasso the modernist and Picasso the activist were reflected in the art of that time. One might say that there is a clear generation gap in the artistic reception of Picasso. The artists of the older generation, who were connected with modernism and whose reaction to his art was very lively in the second half of the 1950s, preferred to turn to informal and abstract painting. The work of an East German artist, Willi Sitte, seems to be an exception as he joined the trend of socialist realism. After 1954, Sitte took up

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29 Similar as in the DDR, Poland and Hungary before the Budapest Uprising, some texts which revaluate Picasso’s art were published. See E. Korner, “Picasso,” *Szabad Művészet* 1–2 (1956).
the themes from the field of communist propaganda, but he used a costume derived from Picasso’s pictures. In the picture *Mörder von Koye*, Sitte took up the theme of the American massacre of North Korean prisoners of war. The theme was broadcast by the communist propaganda. The model for Sitte in terms of style was *Massacre in Korea* by Picasso. After 1956 Sitte began the series of sketches for *Lidice*, a painting depicting a Nazi massacre in a Czech village in 1942. Sitte’s aim was to create *Lidice* as an Eastern European *Guernica* and embody anti-Nazi communist propaganda. In order to achieve such an effect, Sitte used not only the famous *Guernica*, but also other works such as *The Morgue* (1944–45) and *Massacre in Korea*. The sketches for this picture represent the attempt of the synthesis of the most engaged works of Picasso.

Paradoxically, the older part of Picasso’s œuvre was the focus of younger artists whose debut took place in the 1950s. Young German artists such as Manfred Bötcher and Harald Metzkes looked to the precubist works of Picasso, which meant the possibility of avoiding the principles of socialist realism imported from the USSR and dealing with realist form at the same time. Ralf Winkler (later known as A. R. Penck) was an exceptional painter who used Picasso as his reference. Winkler is the author of plenty of sketches, beginning in 1956 when he analyzed the early and cubist style of Picasso. Also, in his most renowned pictures that emerged in the 1960s, such as *Weltbild Nr 1* (1963), one finds echoes of the diptych *War and Peace*, which emerged in 1952.

Picasso’s art was a kind of ideological rejection of socialist realism, but also a search for its alternative version, the abandoning of academic fossilization and the preservation of representation with a distance to abstract art.

In Czechoslovakia, the followers of Emil Filla gathered in the Group Traasa referred to the tradition of Picasso’s art and cubism (V. Hermanska, C. Kafka, D. Matouš, etc.). These artists attempted to resuscitate the tradition of modernism and connect it with the observation of everyday reality. In their work, apart from the inspiration from Picasso’s war still lifes, one notices the lively influence of Bernard Buffet, whose painting was extremely popular at the time in Paris. The popularity of Buffet confirmed their choice. The beginning of the Prague Thaw in the 1960s brought about the abandonment of reanimated modernism by the young artists who chose the path of abstract art. Dalibor Matouš, one of Filla’s followers, complained about it and criticized
Part II · Moving Objects

the abstract choice of his colleagues. He asked rhetorical questions about whether the “future development would follow Picasso.”

Polish artists of the younger generation, such as Tadeusz Dominik and Stefan Gierowski, underwent a similar evolution. After a short period of being influenced by Picasso, they abandoned figurative art to devote their work to abstraction. The reference to Picasso was in this case a short Thaw episode, a step on the way out of socialist realism, which was always perceived as repulsive, and toward abstract art, which was then so desirable as a synonym of freedom and the renewal of the broken contact with the art of the West.

In Hungary, after the suppression of the Budapest Revolution, the artistic Thaw that would resemble the process in Poland and Czechoslovakia did not take place. The embracing of Western trends came in the 1960s. Picasso was not an up-to-date reference for Hungarian artists. Nevertheless, one finds echoes of his art in the works of some artists, such as the painter Sándor Bortnyik, an active member of the 1920s avant-garde. In the 1960s, he began a series of pictures entitled *Modernization of the Classic*, which took the form of a pastiche, where the masterpieces of old painters were presented in new, modern versions. Picasso’s style was represented by the reference to the famous painting by Tizian, *The Girl with the Fruits on a Tray (Lavinia)*. Bortnyik refers to the series by Picasso, who worked on masterpieces, such as Delacroix’s *The Algerian Women* or *Las Meninas* by Velasquez.

Discussions at the time of the Thaw were the last occasion when Picasso’s work was a vivid political and artistic phenomenon. In the 1960s, the modernism of Picasso seemed to lose its significance as a reference for contemporary artists. Picasso’s art became a part of mass culture. The term *pikas* is a symbol of the process. It was commonly used in Poland to identify any abstract form. The generality of the term echoes the intense reception of Picasso in the first postwar decades when his popularity as the fighter for freedom was far ahead of the familiarity with his art.

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