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The 1937 World's Fair focused on a "celebration of modern technology;" in French, the full name of the fair translates to "Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,"—"International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life." And exposition it was, as the previously apolitical Pablo Picasso unveiled one of the most famously political paintings of all time, entitled *Guernica*, lending his voice and artistic platform to take a stand against the fascist Generalissimo Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War. The impetus for this public act of loyalty was the bombing of the citizens of Guernica, a small Spanish village, ordered by Franco.

Perpetually evolving bombs over the course of World War II contributed to scientific and military progress, however, far more crucial and powerful technology eclipses and eludes the tangibility of incendiary devices. Formidable advances were made in the science of propaganda, namely the notoriously effective disinformation disseminated by the Nazi Party. To create and execute such an indescribable act as the Holocaust, the Nazis had to devise new ways of influencing the German citizenry's collective consciousness towards acceptance of anti-semitism and eugenics, among other objectives. In 1933, Adolf Hitler created the "Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda." His National Socialism encouraged those in power to act as judge, jury, and executioner, carrying out any act and making and enforcing any law.

To tighten their grip on German society, the Nazis controlled all forms of communication —from the press and fliers to theater and music, films and art. Instead of a diverse, rich culture flush with attributes from other countries, they inundated the culture and transformed the media. Themes of violence against and stereotypes of Jews and other minority groups were commonplace. *The Triumph of the Will* (1935) proliferated pro-Hitler sentiment while *Der Stürmer*, the Nazi newspaper, printed antisemitic cartoons depicting Jews in an exaggerated and false manner, demonizing them for acts that run the gamut—drinking blood, creating communism, engaging in international monetary and political conspiracy. These campaigns would be more forceful before legislation, such as the Nuremberg Laws, that contained anti-semitic law. These ideas would be forced upon the people by radio, public loudspeakers, and education, among other media channels.

Art is one of the most powerful forces against (or for) political evil—it is an extremely influential tool. *Guernica* is Pablo Picasso's form of morally acceptable, political propaganda; he was hoping to make an impact on the hearts of people who see it, instead of playing on their fear and sowing hatred as the Nazis did.

The most crucial theme is the suffering endowed by indifferent, inhumane leaders. Features of the painting artistically display Franco's lack of regard for his people, how he subjected the village of Guernica to Hitler's bomb training, having them killed, for all intents and purposes, by his hand. The tragedy spurred Picasso to create *Guernica* and to make this political piece of art. He knew it was to be shown at the World's Fair, that it would be seen by millions. The painting makes clear that Picasso condemns Generalissimo Francisco Franco's coup and fascist reign as a murderous outrage. The feeling of suffering under oppression is clearly shown,

with multiple figures in artistic, intelligible agony. The ancillary feeling of fear we experience when looking at their contorted faces is also crucial—the empathy displayed by our unease lets us know that we are human, too. As a broad, anti-war sentiment, *Guernica* extends beyond the Spanish Civil War and became a commentary on Benito Mussolini's Italian fascism and Adolf Hitler's Nazism and Holocaust.

Guernica also conveys the importance of free communication. Fascist governments control the media, education, and culture of a people to keep them pliable and compliant. By virtue of painting the centerpiece of the Spanish Pavilion at the World's Fair, Picasso is subverting this quintessential fascist maneuver. He uses culture and the power of art to produce an anti-war statement for the ages. The act of subverting Franco's ideology in front of millions of people is a joke at the expense of the government, no matter how serious the subject matter is. Picasso is thumbing his nose at Franco, telling him that the people of the Republic and of Guernica are too strong, too hopeful, too resilient to fall weak under his rule. This facetious mockery solidifies the importance of art in war. It is necessary to persevere in any way possible, and an act as inspiring as creating is an excellent place to start.

A viewer's eyes are drawn to the horse in the center of the painting. It is one of three animals out of nine characters in all—extremely expressive albeit ambiguously so, larger than any human form, and located next to the white quadrilateral and directly below the sun encapsulating a lightbulb. It has no definite, discernible emotion, instead relying on a contorted neck to convey an untold (nevertheless perplexing) feeling. The horse most closely resembles the tormented woman to the viewer's left. Despite the right-most figure's apparent wails, there is no match for the anguish the two of them show. The collection of figures in varying facial

expressions that comprise *Guernica* suggests an imbalance of power. Picasso employs symbolism to express meaning across the entire painting, yet the horse as a focal point is an artistic choice of consequence. As the figure Picasso wants viewers to see immediately, the horse is a stunning metaphor for Generalissimo Francisco Franco, savagely trampling a man who can be reasonably assumed to represent the people of Guernica. Franco was supposed to be a ruler, yet bombed his own people; the horse is supposed to carry his rider, not crush him.

As Picasso learned about the bombing of Guernica from newspapers and photos, the importance of free communication could not be clearer. By 1933, the Nazis had overtaken media channels in Germany, pumping out propaganda as they saw fit. Undoubtedly, Picasso was aware of the fascist chokehold on the press. In another allusion to the affairs of others, he portrays his figures in black and white—like newsprint. Moreover, viewers see a disembodied face that seems to be watching the events across the painting unfold. This face possesses a lone arm that holds a lamp or candle to the scene in order to illuminate what is happening, after all, "democracy dies in darkness." The pared-down, ghostly journalist is integral to the story of the village of Guernica and to *Guernica* itself. Lastly, viewers notice the man in the lower right corner who has a similar expression to the journalist, but looks less appalled. Perhaps this is Picasso himself, immortalized into the artwork. His former apolitical nature ceased to exist because he had such strong feelings about Guernica. By being in the painting, by creating the painting, he is taking a political stance. He is looking carefully at what happened, but does only that—look. Why? Is he afraid to be explicitly political and does not want to charge his work with partisanship? Or is he doing all he can by truly seeing the village of Guernica, paying tribute to those lost with an eternally haunting anti-war painting?

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