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The Language of Art: A Conversation Between Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso

Marisa Jones Hooser

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THE LANGUAGE OF ART:
A conversation between Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso

Marisa Jones Hooser

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Abstract

The Language of Art: A conversation between Matisse and Picasso.

Marisa Jones Hooser

This study focuses on the dialog between Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso and lays a unique groundwork for instructors in Discipline-Based art education (DBAE). Using two artists, rather than one, it reveals the importance of the basic art elements in a comparative analysis and stylistic variation of both. The art of Matisse and Picasso was intertwined even before their first meeting as it continued to be even after Matisse’s death. It is popular belief that Matisse and his work influenced Picasso’s career, but surprisingly little attention has focused on the influence of Picasso on Matisse’s work or, more specifically, on the way in which they communicated these eloquent visual conversations. To show the extent of the communication between Matisse and Picasso, ten still life and portrait groups are analyzed and connected through their brilliant exchange of the elements of art. The emergence of the Picassian and Matissian styles will also be discussed as the language of art seems to merge what began as two distinct styles, into a wonderful and complex mix.

The art elements have been used universally as communication between the artist and the work of art, and this language of visual signs speaks to us from all of the known civilizations. Matisse and Picasso took this artistic language a step further in communicating not only of themselves, but also to each other in a back and forth artistic interchange that lasted nearly fifty years. The conversation in this study is between the language of the artists’ works, rather than a verbal exchange between the two. Instead of literal words to create a dialog, it is a conversation between two different personalities by use of the universally used art elements. With differing backgrounds, their impressions, thus their art varied greatly, even within similar themes.

Matisse and Picasso provide an astonishing artistic interaction that would certainly provide a classroom teacher with motivational dialog and stimulating subject in teaching all four areas of Discipline-Based art education. By helping the students understand the connection between two artists, they can know more about and better understand the importance of each.
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Sketches of Color Plates
by Marisa Jones Hooser
March 2001
Chapter One

A. Problem Statement

Comparing and analyzing the works of two artists, rather than that of a single artist, provides the classroom teacher an exceptional model with which to incorporate critical thinking and move students above and beyond simply memorizing facts. The advent of Discipline-Based art education (DBAE) was the initial move toward a more complete and rewarding look at art in the classroom, but it needed another push in integrating art history, art production, aesthetics and art criticism.

Studying pairs of artists and discussing how cultural backgrounds affected their interpretation of the world and thus their art, students can see connections between culture and expression. The old saying, “Who we are affects all we do” certainly applies in art. Artists’ personalities hugely affect how they depict their world, as much as our backgrounds affect the way in which we perceive and interpret their art.

Teachers should combine the four areas of DBAE for their students to fully comprehend each area individually. When and where the artist lived is certainly pertinent to understanding art. This knowledge allows the students to make their own conclusions as to why the artists used the styles they did, or why they chose a particular subject.

A teacher should not only teach art production and introduce students to incidental art facts -- the ultimate goal should be three-fold. First, the students should have the opportunity to experiment with as many media (clay, sculpture, painting, drawing, weaving, etc.) as the school budget permits. Secondly, and perhaps, most importantly, the students should incorporate things, such as style, from other artists into
their own art in a unique manner. Finally, we as art educators should want the students to look at a particular work of art and ponder its meaning. Why did the artist paint this? When was it painted? How does it affect me? What emotional response did the artist anticipate from me?

As an educator, I believe that if you can create a connection between concepts for the students and promote an atmosphere where students are encouraged to ask “why,” the job is only half-complete. Success occurs when your students can take his new knowledge and develop their own valid interpretations of the art. Matisse and Picasso are excellent examples of how pairing two artists can lead to a different approach to teaching art and to promote critical thinking.

**B. Purpose of Study**

Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, both artistic geniuses in their own right, together provide a glorious combination of visual, verbal and artistic interplay that would entice anyone. When one considers the relationship between the two artists and the interactive visual display of conversations, their works can be even more deeply appreciated. The works of both artists have been personal favorites of mine for years, but discovering the interaction between the two intensified my interest and appreciation into a constant yearning for more. This love and appreciation for these particular artists’ creations, caused the initial comparing and analyzing, but the unique way they influenced each other caused even greater admiration.
Amazingly, these two very different artistic personalities, using the same (sometimes identical) subjects, created strikingly different visual images, and interpretations. From an educational standpoint, this interaction between Matisse and Picasso provides an exemplary situation for students to study contrasting styles through similar subjects and the art elements. Comparing these two artists and their works, and enticing student interest in art history, art production, aesthetics and art criticism, give validity to the concept of DBAE. Their different personalities directly influenced the way they made and viewed art. An obsession with each other’s work generated another facet to their exchanges: an anticipation of each others’ response and an attempt to surpass it.

Two goals of this study include evoking genuine interest from students and helping teachers introduce art history and cultural differences. Individually, Matisse’s and Picasso’s dynamic careers are interesting; together, however, their amazing artistic exchange will stimulate any student. Recently, DBAE has been a significant force in art education, but this particular way of contrasting two artists opens a new way of viewing and combining these disciplines in an interesting way for the teacher, as well as the student. I have divided specific works of both artists into categories that directly relate to each other in concept and subject, as well as the predominant art element.
C. INTRODUCTION

Art, whatever else it may be at a given time, is essentially a medium of expression. The artist always communicates something to the sensitive observer. Sometimes this communication can be verbalized, but more often than not, it is impossible to express. Something other than our written and spoken language is at work: the language of art. If communication is to take place, the observer must be sensitive. Sensitivity in this case means familiarity with the language of art. Of course, the language of art deals with lines, shapes, values, and textures instead of the letters, words, and paragraphs of the literary language, or the notes, chords and harmonics of music. (Ocvirk et al. 3)

The art elements have been used universally as communication between the artist and the viewer of art. Each individual part is essential in creating a whole, from the emotion of the artist to the interpretation of the viewer.

Music is often thought of as the universal language. This statement does a disservice to art, which is equally universal. In fact, art’s language extends back to prehistoric man [sic], about whose music, if any, we have no knowledge. The language of visual signs speaks to us from all of the known civilizations. (Ocvirk et al. 1)

Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso took this art language a step further in communicating not only of themselves, but also to each other in a back and forth artistic interchange that lasted nearly fifty years. The conversation in this study is between the language of the artists’ works, rather than a verbal exchange between the two men. Instead of literal words to create a dialog, this conversation between two personalities used the universal elements of art. Coming from differing backgrounds, their impressions, and thus their artwork, varied greatly, even within like-themes. They knew so much about each other’s work that they anticipated their friendly rival’s next move and, thus, attempted to top it. Their personal and educational differences aside, they
became each other’s most stern critic, and eventually became friends. Matisse even said of Picasso and himself, “we are the North and South Poles” (Bois 236), referring to the differences in schooling and personalities. Popular belief holds that Matisse and his work influenced Picasso’s career. But, surprisingly little attention has been focused on the influence of Picasso on Matisse, or more specifically, the way in which they communicated these eloquent visual conversations. Matisse, who was classically schooled and had studied law at the University of Paris, was a fitting rival for the rogue and Freudian-following Picasso. They were cultural opposites who respected and saw a higher talent in each other and were also fascinated with each other’s work and changing styles, each almost obsessed with knowing the details of each critique of and work of the other.

To examine the extent of the communication between Matisse and Picasso, ten still-life and portrait groups will be analyzed and connected through the intriguing exchange of the art elements. The emergence of the Picassian and Matissian styles will also be discussed as the language of art seems to merge what began as two distinct styles into a wonderful, complex mix.

“One could write a history of the art produced in the first half of our century by drawing on Matisse and Picasso alone, which means that, when Picasso responds to Matisse, he addresses all that is not Picasso, all that does not stem from Picasso, and visa versa” (Bois 16). The art of Matisse and Picasso was intertwined even before their first meeting in 1907 and continued after Matisse’s death on November 3, 1954.

The artistic conversation continued with intensity for nearly five decades and
had influenced so much of their lives that, upon Matisse’s death, Picasso not only
mourned his friendly rival but also had lost his best artistic stimulus. Picasso did not
attend the funeral and withdrew artistically—producing no major work until he returned
with a more Matissian style than ever, as if “the death of Matisse had freed a particular
fiber, which Picasso always kept repressed in his art, as if it had to wait for his partner’s
demise to be able to publicly acknowledge how much he cared for him” (Brill 7). This
point is made obvious in Picasso’s *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* series discussed later.
The length of these interactions and the large number of instances of interactive play
through sculpture and painting cause me to limit this study to the groups of portraits and
still life. These two categories reveal these dialogs best through the art elements over the
longest duration. The time lapses added to the intensity and dynamics of these elaborate
conversations. Both artists were prone to return to themes they had worked on before,
sometimes almost identically. In many respects, they were challenging their old works by
doing them again in their newer styles and, in both sculpture and painting as much as
they challenged each other.

**D. Limitations and assumptions**

This study investigates only a narrow portion of the many areas in which Henri
Matisse and Pablo Picasso interacted in subject matter, by using the art elements as a
guide and a formalist approach; expressionism is not a focus of this paper. The artists
shared interests in mirrors, Minotaurs, armchairs, and numerous other subjects, but the
works chosen here show the most directly related use of art elements, as well as similar
subject matter to be analyzed and compared. A persistent theme involved figures in armchairs, explained when Matisse stated that the pleasure his art gave him was “like a good armchair. The restfulness, serenity, and apparent ease of his art, even at its most revolutionary, are basically foreign to Picasso, the great ‘discomfter’. Suffering and disruption are never far from the surface in his work” (Andreae 2).

Through my research I have assumed that the numerous interpreted conversations and interactions between the two artists were as intentional as they are interesting. I’ve limited the study to ten groupings consisting of still life and portraiture. Many figurative works connect the two artists, particularly in relation to The Dream series, (not included here) that are unique creations of the nude female figure showing quite different interpretations. These nude pieces show the most intense differences in the artists’ personal views: from the more innocent, reverent work of Matisse, to the overtly sexual images of Picasso’s female-- but are inappropriate for a thesis concerning the education of children.

E. Procedural Overview

After researching and analyzing the related works of Matisse and Picasso, I found that the artistic conversations led to an obvious chronological organization (at least within each series) including works created after their first meeting in 1907 and ending with Picasso’s first major works produced after the death of Matisse in 1954. The color plates were carefully chosen not only because of similar subject matter, and the dominant use of
particular art element, but also on the basis of the educational appropriateness of each series in connection with DBAE.

Chapters two and three concentrate on biographical information while the first discussion of the artistic dialogs begins in chapter four by contrasting three groups with the emphasis on shape and form. The first of the groups contains two still-life paintings: Matisse’s *Still Life with a Plaster Bust* (1916, o/c, The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania) and Picasso’s *Still Life: Bust Bowl, and Palette* (1932, o/c, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris). This pair is followed by an almost identical exchange of painting and sketches, and ends with two Matisse paintings in which he actually inserted a small version of the first painting into the background of the second.

Chapter five discusses color and repetition, showing one of the most brilliant displays of conversation and mingling of the artists’ styles. The first of the group is Matisse’s *Harmony in Yellow* (1928, o/c, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Thannhauser Collection) in which the secondary element of the sleeping woman is picked up and developed in the remaining three works. (It is this grouping that includes numerous other works by both artists involving other sleeping, nude and erotic female figures, and is discussed briefly in chapter eleven.) Chapters six through eight concentrate on unity, color, line and texture. Each chapter presents a comparison and analysis of the artists’ interplay in that particular aspect.

The last of the comparative chapters, chapter nine concludes the study with Picasso’s *Studio at ‘La Californie’* series. These paintings seem to summarize the extent of the interplay between Matisse and Picasso, not only from an artistic perspective but
also as an honorary tribute, as the nonverbal dialog continued even after the death of Matisse.
Chapter Two

A. PICASSO’S EDUCATION

Picasso once stated, “I wanted to be a painter, and I became Picasso” (Lowe and Hould cover jacket), in an apt survey of a triumphant career (1881-1973). “The Spanish artist’s enormous output, from the eight-year-old’s beginnings to the late work of a man of ninety-one, is surely one of the most diverse and creatively energetic in the whole history of art, and it is no exaggeration to see him as the genius of the century” (Lowe and Hould cover jacket). Part of Picasso’s success lay in the philosophy of his painting: “He wanted the beholder of his paintings to feel an effect similar to that produced on himself, while he was painting” (Bois 27).

At 11:15 PM on October 25, 1881, the midwife had given Picasso up for dead, and had turned her attentions to his mother. Picasso’s uncle, Don Salvador, saved him from suffocation by blowing his cigar smoke into the tiny infant’s face, making him cry. Walther observes that “people used to admire his vitality even when he was ninety. This vitality was certainly the most important aspect of his art and it had been there from birth” (8).

Picasso’s father was an art teacher, museum curator and artist, and his whole education took place in schools and colleges where his father was on the staff. His father, Don Jose’ Ruiz Blasco, was the first person to encourage his artistic talents. In September 1892, Picasso attended La Guarda Art School where strict academic education was the rule. He was “taught the essentials of art history; the models they followed in
their exercises were the masterpieces of ages past” (Lowe and Hould 19), and from his early youth he became familiar with the sculptures of antiquity by copying them over and over. Picasso’s father was offered a professorship at La Lonja school of art in Barcelona in 1895, and after Picasso passed the entrance exam, his father’s influence allowed him to skip the beginner courses. According to Walther, “before Pablo was allowed in an advanced course in classical art and still life, he had to submit a project file within one month. But little Pablo handed in his work after only one day. Not only that, but he had done better than senior students in their final exam projects” (8). Picasso then attended art academies in Barcelona from 1895 to 1897, where he essentially did the same activity of copying from existing designs. “He had an excellent memory for the formal qualities, one which stored them so deeply that they became part of his own way of thinking” (Lowe and Hould 13), which was normal for young artists who were influenced as they tried to find their own style. “And Picasso was not merely copying, he was quickly able to harmonize various influences into new wholes. He was imitating, yes--but he did so in order to find a style entirely his own” (Lowe and Hould 28).

Picasso refused to follow the “beaten path of traditional education” (Walther 8) and his fascination with art went back to his early youth. Walther states, “Picasso used to tell people that he had really only been interested in the way the teacher wrote numbers on the blackboard. He would copy their shapes, but he had absolutely no interest in the mathematical problem, and often wondered how he ever managed to learn basic arithmetic” (8). Instead, he would “make drawings whenever possible. To him this seemed to be the only way in which he could express himself appropriately” (Walther 8). He followed his father’s style until about the age of thirteen. After telling his father of
his intentions, his father “handed me (Picasso), his paint and his brush and never painted again” (Walther 8). Later, Picasso found his “father’s academic methods outdated and impossible to make do with routine and mediocrity” (Lowe and Hould 8). Completely aware that leaving the academy would seriously damage his relationship with his father, Picasso bravely and arrogantly made a radical break in 1897, and went to Madrid, completely uncertain of his future. By 1906, he had sold most of his Rose Period paintings, making him financially secure for the first time, followed by his first New York exhibition in 1911.

Picasso’s arrogance sometimes appeared rude in his self-descriptions of his work. He was straightforward and candid in explaining why he painted like he did. He stated that a “painter paints to unload himself of feelings and visions, and to express [his/her] conception of what nature is not” (Barr 270). Picasso continued his hatred for those that followed all the rules of art when he wrote:

What a miserable fate for a painter who adores blondes to have to stop himself putting them into a picture because they don’t go with the basket of fruit! How awful for a painter who loathes apples to have to use them all the time because they go so well with the cloth. I put all the things I like into my pictures. The things-so much the worse for them: they [the viewer] just have to put up with it. (Barr 270)

Picasso continued his analogy by saying “a picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destruction. I do a picture – then I destroy it” (Barr 270). Perhaps this refers to his idea that there really is no abstract art: “You must always start with something. Afterward you can remove all traces of reality” (Barr 270). He wanted only emotion projected by his art.
Despite all his traditional training, Picasso felt that “to find is the thing. When I paint, my object is to show what I have found and not what I am looking for. What one does is what counts and not what one had the intention of doing” (Barr 270).

Ingo F. Walther summed up Picasso’s career best in 1980 when he said:

There can be no doubt that, both in quantity and quality, Picasso’s art is unparalleled and that his paintings, sculptures, etchings and ceramics reveal the hand of someone who deserves to be called Genius of the Century. But would he have reached such heights if he had not been the kind of person he was? He may have been a revolutionary, he may have introduced countless innovations and he may have broken with a tremendous number of outmoded traditions, but none of this is really enough for a person to be regarded as a genius. There must have been something else, a certain charisma, something that fascinated and enchanted both critics and admirers alike. And Picasso did indeed have an abundance of it. (Walther 7)

B. PICASSO’S FAMILY

It is through relatives, friends, and of course biographers that we learn of the artist as a person. They provide the link between the man as artist and the person.

Picasso spent the first ten years of his life in Ma’laga, Spain, where he was born. His family was far from rich and it was often difficult for them to make ends meet. Picasso had described “his early childhood in idyllic terms; picturing himself as an infant prodigy whose unusual promise was quickly comprehended by his prescient mother. He recalled that he could draw long before he could talk, that his first word was the insistent demand, ‘piz, piz’, for lapiz or pencil” (Gedo 8).

In contrast to Picasso’s early descriptions of his mother and childhood, he later told a much different story which seems to be more consistent with his portrayal of women in his art. Early on, Picasso gave “cheerful descriptions of his mother who
dominated the household with her common sense and lovableness” (Gedo 8). Later, he described her to Françoise Gilot as a “tiny but tyrannical woman who dominated the family so completely that he was forced to flee Spain in order to escape her” (Gedo 8).

Picasso’s career was laced with two wives, two biographical memoirs, four children, and nearly twice as many known mistresses, in addition to his 60’s rebellion against social taboos. Gert Schiff said, “I have always known Picasso to be unhappy with women, from his first one to his last one.” Picasso reserved “his most savage modes of distortion for his treatment of women” (3). Emile Benoit even went as far to say that “Picasso destroyed his fear of women in his art” (1).
Chapter Three

A. MATISSE’S EDUCATION

Henri Matisse was born in 1867, the year the Cutty Sark was launched. The year he died, 1954, the first hydrogen bomb exploded at Bikini Atoll. Not only did he live on, literally from one world into another; he lived through some of the most traumatic political events in recorded history, the worst wars, the greatest slaughters, the most demented rivalries of ideology, without, it seems, turning a hair. Perhaps Matisse did suffer from fear and loathing, but there is no trace of them in his work. (Hughes 1)

Born on the last day of the year 1869 in LeCateau-Cambresis, France, Henri Emile Benoit Matisse was the son of a seed merchant, and was expected to carry on the business of his father. He did not prepare for his chosen profession early in life. His early schooling was in Saint Quentin (1882-1887). In 1887, he began two years of study at the Faculty of Law in Paris and in 1889 worked as a clerk in the law firm of Maitre Duconseil in Saint-Quentin. An attack of appendicitis confined him to his bed for a year, and while he was convalescing, his mother presented him with a box of paints. He quickly discovered he had a passion for painting and began taking drawing lessons in 1890 at the Quentin de la Tout School while continuing as a clerk in the law firm.

Against his better judgment, Matisse’s father allowed him to pursue his new passion and to register at the Academie Julian in Paris in 1891. While there, he prepared for the entrance examinations to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He failed the examinations on his first attempt but became an official student in 1895 (Ner’ret 7).

Matisse began his long and successful journey into art history by copying paintings in the Louvre. Unlike Picasso, he “was no precocious talent, no child prodigy. Far more, the development of his life’s work grew gradually and steadily out of an
unparalleled devotion to color, light and space, and the creation of harmony” (Volkmar 7). Matisse’s system of painting followed three main rules. The first which “signals the end of color values as distinct and fixed entities. Any color can perform any given job: even black can be the color of light” (Bois 29). Secondly, he felt that one could transcend size with scale. He wanted art that could expand, and accordingly all of his art appeared large, regardless of the size of the canvas. Thirdly, “everything that is not useful in the picture is harmful” (Bois 29).

Matisse’s first successful exhibit was in 1896, at the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, but his next exhibit at the Salon de la Nationale was badly received. Like many other artists, Matisse suffered financial difficulties and his wife, Amelie-Noemie Alexandrine, was forced in 1900 to open a milliner’s shop to help meet the family’s living expenses. Soon, many successful exhibitions followed at the Salon des Indépendants at Berthe Weill’s at the Salon d’Automne, and at Vollard’s. In 1908, he opened an Academy at the Invalides in Paris, and he also had exhibitions in New York, Moscow and Berlin. In 1913, he had exhibits in New York, Chicago and Boston.

Matisse initially became famous as the “King of Fauves,” an “inappropriate name for this gentlemanly intellectual: there was no wildness in him, though there was much passion” (Benoit 1).

B. MATISSE’S FAMILY

Henri Matisse and his mistress had their first child, Marguerite, in 1894, and he married the mother, Amelie-Noemie-Alexandrine Parayre, in 1898. Their second child,
Pierre, was born in 1900. Matisse and Amelie separated in 1940. In 1907, his decades-long and complicated association with Picasso began. Three years before his death, Matisse had exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and in Cleveland, Chicago, San Francisco and Tokyo. At the time of his death on November 3, 1954 in Nice, Matisse had developed and created his unique art over a span of sixty years, and he had changed the direction of modern art. Today, he is recognized as one of the twentieth-century artistic geniuses. (Ne’ret 249)

Matisse saw life and his art entirely unlike Picasso. Matisse once stated, “I am unable to distinguish between the feeling I have for my life and my way of expressing it” (Leymarie, Read and Lieberman 12). This became more obvious after he abandoned his legal career and overcame the resistance of his father. He “later obtained permission to go to Paris for a formal apprenticeship where he was carried into a kind of paradise, a haven of peace where he felt free to be himself, and where he could find his real world and the direction of his destiny” (Leymarie, Read and Lieberman 12).

Picasso and Matisse were active to the end of their lives, but while Picasso was preoccupied with his aging sexuality, Matisse moved into a period of selfless invention. In this last phase, too weak to stand at an easel, he created his paper cuts, carving in colored paper, scissoring out shapes, and collaging them into sometimes-vast pictures. These works, daringly brilliant, are the nearest he ever came to abstraction. (Benoit 1)
CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONVERSATION BEGINS…

Sketched after **Henri Matisse**’s *Still Life with a Plaster Bust*  
(Spring 1916, o/c, 38 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches,  
The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania)  

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso**’s *Still Life: Bust, Bowl and Palette*  
(March 1932, o/c, 51 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches,  
Mus’ee Picasso, Paris)
Chapter Four: THE CONVERSATION BEGINS

A. Still Life with Bust

A perfect introduction to the visual dialog between Matisse and Picasso can be discovered in Matisse’s *Still Life with a Plaster Bust* (1916, o/c, The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania), and Picasso’s *Still Life: Bust, Bowl and Palette* (1932, o/c, Musée Picasso, Paris) which followed sixteen years later. The similarities are extraordinary in the general placement of objects, and both have complex areas of overlapping planes in the lower left quarter. The differences are equally interesting: Picasso’s composition is as centered as Matisse’s is dispersed.

Only later in their careers did the replies come closer together. This distinctive delay in response that is so intriguing. Evidencing Matisse’s typical open composition and use of the approximate 39 x 31-inch canvas, *Still Life with a Plaster Bust* is filled with the space of what appears to be an artist’s studio. Several points of equal interest are all united by the simple use of color, shape, line and texture. Matisse sought to “incorporate some of cubism’s disjunctive language while keeping the expansiveness and decenteredness of his own best work” (Bois 15). Yellow and the use of line continue throughout the painting, drawing the viewer’s attention to each harmonious shape and color. The rectangle is repeatedly used; the yellow frame on the left side of the painting is what gently draws the viewer’s attention up the canvas to the paintings in the background. The eye continues to the yellow bust, down to the bowl of yellow fruit and to the yellow table legs. Matisse used this unifying method so effectively that nothing in the painting is overlooked. Pink is matched up next to yellow, as Matisse often did, and is repeated on the table edge. The color red is unusually limited in this particular piece
and only appears in a single flower, surrounded by a simple oval textural effect for leaves
with that same shape repeated in an outlining pattern under the portrait bust.

Matisse used black for contours and also as the main color source to suggest
texture. An abundance of black used in the background shapes balances the outlines and
counters the use of pink, yellow and green. This green reappears, toned down to a more
aqua color in Picasso’s reply.

Picasso’s *Still Life: Bust, Bowl, and Palette* is larger than Matisse’s version and is
more vertically elongated, yet contains only a fraction the number of objects found in the
Matisse work. Picasso not only used an obvious portion of Matisse’s 1916 painting, but
even used a similar title. The parallels continue as a dialog in the repetition of the
rectangular shapes, the yellow fruit and the bust. Like Matisse, Picasso used the
placement of objects to carefully pull the viewer’s attention through the painting. Black
outlining is used, but Picasso’s use of color is dominant. Deep red, instead of the yellow
preferred by Matisse, appears in the art palette as well as in the stripe and check pattern,
but the use of the aqua wall running into the light blue cloth draped around the bust ties
the composition together.

White is also a unifying force. The white chair back points the viewer to the wall;
there, the eye jumps to the palette and into the platter of yellow fruit. White is repeated
in the bowl and toward the white bust and light area of the draped fabric. Picasso ended
the conversation by taking only a small portion of Matisse’s subject matter, and created a
separate and unique whole. Yet, note that Picasso did not include his *Still Life with Bust*
in his 1932 retrospective—maybe thinking that he had not distanced himself enough from
Matisse this particular time.
CHAPTER FOUR: SHAPE AND FORM…

Sketched after Pablo Picasso’s
Still Life with Fruit Dish, Guitar, Plate and Apples
(1946, oil and charcoal on plywood, 37 3/8 x 69 7/8 inches
Mus’ee Picasso, Antibes)

Sketched after Henri Matisse’s
Sketches of Picasso’s Still Life with Fruit Dish, Guitar, Plate and Apples
(1948, sketchbook, pencil on paper, 9 x 11 3/4 inches, Private Collection)
B. SHAPE AND FORM, SIMPLIFIED

Otto Ocvirk points out that “the complete unity of a painting registers in a moment, although this is hardly the method recommended for true appreciation” (15). While quite true, the momentary perception is a very good place to start the comparison of these particular works. The two artists are seemingly “practicing the arbitrary organization (of each other), or inventive arrangement of all of the visual elements according to principles that will develop an organic unity in the total work of art” (Ocvirk et al. 10). This small grouping shows how closely Matisse and Picasso followed each other’s work. One of few, that is the closest in form is Picasso’s *Still Life with Fruit Dish, Guitar, Plate, and Apples*, which is almost repeated shape by shape in Matisse’s sketches of the same name, nearly two years after Picasso’s was completed. They learned from each other and expanded, stretching the original ideas to new limits. These sketches of Matisse are obviously the preliminary sketches for a planned counter statement to Picasso.

Picasso’s completed version used a combination of oil paint and charcoal. The large (37 x 68 inch) rectangular plywood, the inclusion of the drawn areas and the quantity of empty negative space cause this finished painting to look like a study in shape and composition.

Matisse’s sketches done two years later show how closely he followed and studied Picasso’s work. He did not even try to change the layout of the model. Matisse seems to show Picasso that he can create a nearly exact composition with minimal effort and minimal size. He re-emphasized this apparent dig by sketching it just as quickly a second time.
The artists’ personality differences are evident even in these nearly identical compositions. Picasso’s *Still Life with Fruit Dish, Guitar, Plate and Apples*, use of color and form, as well as the largeness of the plywood, are a perfect example of his bold and charismatic character. His simple use of shape and color boldly filled the space. Typically, Picasso’s shapes and colors are very purposely chosen to abstract the forms and also alter the feelings evoked when viewing the work. Picasso didn’t use realistic colors any more than he used realistic shapes. Ironically, though he chose to entitle the piece by each individual object included, as if he wanted to stretch the imagination as far as possible and then pull the viewer back to reality by the title, to where he had started as an artist.
Sketched after **Henri Matisse’s The Pineapple**
(1948, o/c, 45 3/4 x 35 inches, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: The Alex Hillman Family Foundation Collection)

Sketched after **Henri Matisse’s Large Red Interior**
(1948, o/c, 57 1/2 x 38 1/4 inches, Musée National d’Art Modern, Paris)
C. MORE SHAPE AND FORM

This section consists of only two Matisse paintings that are closely related. What Matisse was saying from one painting to the next is a thought-provoking expression of himself. *The Pineapple* (1948, o/c, 45 ¾ x 35 inches, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Alex Hillman Family Foundation Collection), painted first is a “gravity-free immersion into color” (Bois 204). *The Large Red Interior*, (1948, o/c, 57 ½ x 38 ¼ inches, Mus’ee National d’Art Moderne, Paris), “are the last of the Vence interiors and the last major canvas Matisse ever painted, both acknowledges and ends the cubist excursion, flooding the pineapple picture with a sea of red” (Bois 204).

*The Pineapple*, while instantly recognizable as a Matisse, has very Picassian traits. Bois identifies these Picassian traits as elements of the cubist syntax: “dissociation of color and contour; overlapping of planes and its attendant effect of transparency; ambiguous sculptural corporeality of the wrapping paper unfolding around the fruit” (Andreae 18).

The eye quickly goes to the table while the folded wrapping paper carries the attention across the page. *The Pineapple*, using simplified shapes with equally bold and simple color application, illustrates the notion that less is more.

The more Matissian second painting includes the first painting on the wall of a crowded interior. This grouping shows how individual parts of one’s painting can be incorporated into later works. This example is particularly good for teachers to stress the building blocks of scope and sequencing. Not only do skills grow upon each other, but a creative joining of these stages can be incorporated to make a unique whole.
CHAPTER FIVE: COLOR/ REPETITION AND THE SLEEPING WOMAN...

Sketched after Henri Matisse's *Harmony in Yellow*  
(Summer 1928, o/c, 34 5/8 x 34 5/8 inches, Private Collection)

Sketched after Pablo Picasso’s *Woman with Yellow Hair*  

Sketched after Pablo Picasso’s *Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters*  
(April 1936, o/c, 21 ¼ x 25 5/8 inches, Private Collection, Sketched after Henri Matisse’s *The Dream*  
(October 1940, o/c, 31 7/8 x 25 3/8 inches, Private Collection)
Chapter Five

A. Comparison

This series with the theme of the sleeping woman is filled with repetition of theme, shape, color, pattern, and also has the most diverse dialog over a twelve-year span, 1928-1940. Through this interchange, both artists display distinct style changes, ending with Matisse as more Picassian than ever; their personalities and art language, at least on canvas, seem to merge. This group seems to provide the biggest exchange of styles and each anticipated response of the other. Picasso, while keeping both the simplified and abstracted forms, still manages to incorporate many characteristics of Matisse in these two examples.

First, Picasso’s Woman with Yellow Hair shows the woman’s profile distorted, yet she appears soft and tranquil. Secondly, he places and crops the figure so that it seems much larger than the actual canvas size. Both are characteristics borrowed from Matisse.

Picasso’s second example, Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters, is obviously more Picassian than Matisse-like, but still includes some of his friend’s characteristics. This time, Picasso borrowed Matisse’s more muted colors from Matisse’s Sleeping Woman and also used this element in the title, to re-emphasize the connection of the two. With Picasso’s first reply, he was showing Matisse how Matisse should have done the sleeping figure, and now is showing him how Picasso would do it.
B. Matisse, *Harmony in Yellow*

Matisse’s *Harmony in Yellow* (1928, o/c, 34 5/8 x 34 5/8 inches, Private Collection), at first glance is a still life and would be considered so, except for the rest of the conversational sequence. The table and still life are the focus of attention and the sleeping woman is secondary, but many focal points, either directly or indirectly, bring the attention to the sleeping woman. The circular table edge and the horizontal top of the checkerboard and what appears to be a stack of books also pull the viewer’s eye to the figure. This sleeping figure becomes the subject of the following conversation between Matisse and Picasso. *Harmony in Yellow* is a harmonious blending of texture and expression, each object as well as the elements being of equal importance. Bois states that Matisse “asks himself if he could put a Manet still life into the middle of an early Matisse and the ‘stylistic collage’ is dumbfounding. Never has Matisse’s impulse to blind the viewer been so efficient: we indeed have trouble perceiving the reclining woman in a black and yellow dress, unusually cropped at the waist by the frame” (36).

The actual canvas size of *Harmony in Yellow* is fairly small in comparison to the monumental impression that it evokes (this follows Matisse’s third idea of transcending space). The dominant use of yellow, the repeated elements, and the intricate eye map cause this particular work to be enjoyed more at each viewing. In Matisse’s usual manner, the negative area is lavished with texture and pattern that are repeated throughout; the checkerboard design is repeated on the edge of the table, and the flowers in the vase are seen again in the wallpaper. After the first examination of the flower vase, the eye follows the vertical stripes of the curtain down the vase again and over to
the figure. The sleeping woman’s face is the most detailed element, drawing focus to the figure while the dress seems to blend with the background.

Matisse gracefully places and repeats color, giving equal weight to each element and the subject itself. The color range is mostly limited to primaries, and the use of yellow is dominant, thus the title. This element brings up another personality difference between the two artists: Matisse almost always named his work by the feeling he wanted to evoke or the art element that he wanted to stress, and Picasso usually named his works quite literally. Matisse wanted the viewer to enjoy the color and the harmonious way it worked throughout the piece. He didn’t want to draw immediate attention to any particular portion without the viewer enjoying the ride along the way.
C. Picasso, *Woman with Yellow Hair*

Picasso took an aggressive move toward Matisse three years later with *Woman with Yellow Hair* (1931, o/c 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches, The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York, Thannhauser Collection). Not only did Picasso use Matisse’s secondary theme of the sleeping woman, but he carefully avoided naming it so, including only ‘yellow’ in the title instead. Picasso purposely titled this work exactly what it was, as he often did, but wanted to draw even more attention to Matisse’s *Harmony in Yellow* that it answered. Arrogantly or ingeniously, Picasso wanted to make sure that the viewer got out of the work what he had intended the viewer to grasp: Picasso’s visual dialog to Matisse, a bit subtler. Concerning Picasso’s turn in this interchange, Yve-Alain Bois states that Picasso was telling Matisse, “Here is what I’d do if I were you” (137).

Unlike Matisse’s, Picasso’s figure fills the canvas, and the surrounding area is minimal. Picasso only used a simple horizontal pattern below the figure, in marked contrast to the rounded lines of the woman. The circular movement of the hair and arms, as well as the stripes, pulls the area of focus to the figure. In Picasso’s allusive way, he took out all that was unnecessary and effectively created what Matisse spent so much effort in calculating; a map for the eye to follow to reach the same destination. Picasso’s figure here even seems to possess the innocence that usually surrounds Matisse’s women.

The basic shape of Picasso’s female figure in *Woman with Yellow Hair* mimics that of Matisse in *Harmony in Yellow*. Picasso managed to capture the essence of Matisse’s earlier work with a few simple lines, but manages to leave the viewer with the
same feeling of contentment. This begins his use of line as decorative, as well as functional.

Although the painting is flat, the angled lines of the chair give the illusion of a puffy cushion as well as a textural effect, and the rounded lines of the woman soften her. Picasso used the vertical stripe pattern to draw the attention up the painting towards the figure, contrasting with her soft and rounded form. The woman is still abstracted, but in a more flattering and feminine way than he usually shows. The stripes run into the sweep of the arm and encircle the face in profile and continue down to the breasts, lap and back to the chair. The eye’s map is quite efficient and simplified, perhaps to show Matisse that he could do the same thing with less.
D. Picasso, *Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters*

Picasso continued this series in 1936 with *Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters*, (o/c, 21 ¼ x 25 5/8 inches, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris. ( Picasso had used this theme in other works, such as The Mirror, 1932, and The Dream 1940, but these paintings have more sexual and Freudian connotations and thus don’t seem to fit this grouping.) Note that this time around Picasso used “sleeping woman” in the title and posed the figure as its mirror image. He has also changed the color scheme and more severely abstracted the figure. Oddly, this particular figure has more detail, yet is more abstracted. The unifying theme remains the same, with the figure as the primary focus with minimal background details.

The figure’s position is reversed and Picasso distorts the features in a way only he could have done. Although the hands are placed in a cradling effect, this example hints at sexual connotation in the development of the breast area.

Picasso again used the straight lines of the shutters in the background to contrast with the rounded lines of the soft woman. He also uses more dominant lines as a decorative function in the hair and fabric folds, which we’ll see much more of in both artists’ later works. The slats in the shutter draw our attention across and down the canvas to the angled lines under the draped hands. The hands still appear relaxed, holding the head, yet are much more angled than the previous example (*Woman with Yellow Hair*). This composition slightly changes the sleeping woman into someone who could be holding or nurturing a child by the placement of the hands and the comical rendering of the female breasts. Picasso continues the decorative effect by repeating the use of the
circular shapes in the breasts, fingernails, ears and eyes. He uses this technique well in making the painting about something more than a portrait. He likes to show that each shape and line and color are relevant on their own accord, even if together they don’t form a figure.

Picasso’s title, *Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters*, described what he included in the composition and what he wanted the viewer to see. In contrast to the parallel Matisse painting, Picasso invites the viewer to go inside the woman’s mind, going beyond what is literally on the canvas. He created the pose and color theme, but wanted the viewer to read an interpretation based on his choices.
E. Matisse, *The Dream*

*The Dream*, by Matisse (1940, o/c, 31 7/8 x 25 5/8 inches), came nearly four years later, but shows a stronger influence from Picasso. Again, Matisse entitled his work in a way that invites the viewer to read the woman’s thoughts. He created the pose and color use, but wanted the viewer to decide upon the meaning of these choices.

This painting is nearly the same size as the above-mentioned Picasso but is more rectangular -- larger, yet more delicate in form. Matisse did to Picasso what had been done to him. Bois says that Matisse is calmly replying to Picasso’s *Woman With Yellow Hair* “Here’s what I would do if I were you” with:

…yes, but you don’t have to relinquish your cubist dissociation for the sake of your demonstration. And you know very well that my colors are more subtle than you care to admit: I give my cold vermilion, through its neighboring colors, the depth, the suppleness of venetian red. I could have used Venetian red right from the start, but its effect on its neighbors is far less intense. The violet of the table, the warm pink of the flesh, the blowing yellows, the ebony ink--none of this would resonate half so much if I had chosen ready-made solution. But I commend you for reminding me of something: to keep my color and my drawing from splitting, to combine them in the single decorative effect, I should let each of them run its course freely. (Bois 265)

With very little background emphasis, the figure fills most of the composition. Matisse distorted the figure as Picasso often did, yet he did so in a more flattering and innocent fashion. Matisse added more texture, as in the Romanian blouse that he often used, but simplified these patterns in a more geometric style.

These last two paintings seem to show the most obvious differences in the two artists’ personalities, at the same time showing the ultimate in respect for each other. Some critics even compare this *dream painting* of Matisse to the likeness of the Virgin
Mary, the theme of which is certainly the ultimate contrast to Picasso. But, I believe the slight change in the position of the arm and the possibility that Picasso’s woman (*Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters*) appears to be cuddling something was a limited move toward the mother image, specifically done in response to Matisse’s reverence for women. Matisse merely took it one step further in making the figure more Madonna-like.

Matisse also used a lot of raw black and red but counters these with the use of pink and white. The pelvic area is black in order to hold the weight of the outlines and decorative patterning of the blouse. The use of organic shapes in the background and the repetitive use of the oval shape holds the composition together in a state that suggests natural innocence.

Ironically, Matisse is credited with the “Madonna-theme” in this series, though Picasso first initiated the cradling hands. Even more ironically, it was Picasso who showed the female in a positive and nurturing way.

In summary, this series seems to provide the largest trade-off of styles and anticipated responses of the other. Picasso, while keeping both the simplified and abstracted forms, still managed to incorporate many characteristics of Matisse in both of his examples. First, in Picasso’s *Woman with Yellow Hair*, he showed the woman’s profile distorted, yet she appears soft and tranquil. He also placed and cropped the figure so that it seems much larger than the actual canvas size.

Picasso’s second example in this series (*Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters*) obviously is more Picassian than Matisse-like, but it still includes some of Matisse’s
This time Picasso used a more muted color palette, and borrowed Matisse’s sleeping woman from *Harmony in Yellow* and also used this aspect in the title, to re-emphasize the connection between the two. With Picasso’s first reply, he was showing Matisse how *Matisse should* have done the sleeping figure, and now in the second example is showing how *Picasso would* do it.

The figure’s position is reversed and the features are uniquely manipulated in a way only Picasso could have done. Although the hands are placed in a cradling posture, there is a hint of sexual connotation in the development of the breast (also, very Picasso-like). Interestingly, Matisse also pulls in some characteristics of Picasso even in the last “Madonna” pose by alleviateing all unnecessary aspects of the background and by simplifying the female into a brilliant sweeping shape, while maintaining his own use of placement and implying feminine innocence.
Sketched after **Henri Matisse**’s
*Interior in Yellow and Blue*
(1946, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 3/4 inches, 
Musée National d’Art Moderne, 
Paris)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso**’s
*The Chinese Chest of Drawers*
(March 1953, o/ Plywood, 
58 x 45 inches, 
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 
Richmond, Virginia: Collection of 
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso**’s
*Claude Drawing, Francoise, and Paloma*
(1954, o/c, Musée Picasso, Paris)
Chapter Six

A. Comparison

Created nearly seven years apart, Matisse’s and Picasso’s still-life paintings used almost identical compositional form, while having quite different actual subject matter. These two paintings are clearly connected and unified by a similar use of shape and color. The intricate line work is eloquently done, but it is the use of shape and color that will be the main point of this chapter discussion.

Matisse’s *Interior in Yellow and Blue* (1946, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 ¼ inches, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris) is large and bold in shape and color. *The Chinese Chest of Drawers*, by Picasso, (1953, o/plywood, 58 x 45 inches, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia; Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon), is larger, and equally bold. Matisse and Picasso both use yellow, the placement of a rectangle in two opposite corners and the inevitable shape left in between. Both paintings have an abundance of line, both using black.

B. Matisse, *Interior in Yellow and Blue*

In *Interior in Yellow and Blue*, “Matisse pays even more tribute to Picasso’s way of thinking: first by antropomorphizing [sic] the commonly used armchair (it is now marching toward us) and next, by dissociating color and drawing more than any other picture” (Bois 189). Matisse shows a classic placement of objects for a still life or a quiet view of a room; nothing is unusual or innovative until you note the geometric divisions
of the page, “almost as though color had become an element of collage” (Bois 189). Each
shape is important enough to stand on its own. Interestingly, the rectangles create the
look of separate paintings within the whole, yet most of the detail is in the center shape.

Matisse’s simple use of color is also cause for consideration: he only used blue
and yellow, with the exception of a green that is a combination of the two.
This color use is another way to point out the individuality of each part and how the
combination of the two create an interesting whole. Once again, Matisse uses an
intricate eye map to allow the viewer to enjoy every intentional stroke of the brush.

The canvas is divided into a checkerboard-like pattern of four rectangular areas.
Once the viewer sees both blue rectangles of the background, the eye is brought back
down through the legs of the chair, along the table edge and down that leg to the bottom
of the canvas. Matisse used the rounded shapes in the ornate leg work and repeated them
in the lemon shapes, thus drawing the attention up the right side of the painting and to the
rounded glasses and vase. He used geometric patterning on the vase, which draws the
attention intentionally up the wallpaper and over to the plant and vertical lines of the
stand. This brings focus back to the upper blue rectangle, causing the viewer to wonder if
this is a painting or a window.

C. Picasso, *Chinese Chest of Drawers*

Picasso’s *Chinese Chest of Drawers* is even larger but includes less information.
Picasso seemed to have started out with the geometric shapes used in Matisse’s *Interior
in Yellow and Blue*, and then created a composition within those shapes. He actually
creates a black square inside the upper right rectangle to emphasize this point. Picasso does this again with the mirror shape and the side of the chest of drawers.

He also places a small tree in the lower portion as a bid toward Matisse’s possible window. The lower rectangle shape leaves some ambiguity as Matisse did with the window, leaving the viewer uncertain of whether it is a carving on the side of the chest or a painting propped up next to it. Either interaction is irrelevant to the effectiveness of the composition.

Although the eyemap is similar in this painting, the attention seems drawn to the middle of the canvas. Picasso has used much decorative line, both angular and organic, but the use of the white shape is dominant. The viewer’s eye follows almost the same pathway as in Matisse’s, yet encounters more points of interest along the way. Matisse’s usual less-is-more elegantly moves the eye across the composition, but the bold textural lines of the chest’s surface and the repeated lines in the plants keep the observer wondering exactly what she is viewing. The zigzag line in the upper left draws the attention from the lower yellow rectangle to the flower vase and mirror. The eye zigzags back down the chest of drawers, up the tree and back down and across the open drawer to the beginning. In contrast to Matisse’s use of separate shapes and colors, Picasso doesn’t seem to be able to pull off the separate-but-equal manner as beautifully or effectively as Matisse.
D. Picasso, *Claude Drawing, Francoise, and Paloma*

Picasso’s *Claude Drawing, Francoise, and Paloma* (1954, o/c, 45 3/8 x 35 inches, Musée Picasso, Paris) adds a new dimension to the conversation by allowing the colored rectangles to remain without being stagnant this time. The unifying factor is provided by these shapes and colors. The blue and green colors lavishly enhance the black, gray and white. The white is repeated and strategically placed in the lower portion, with both figures looking at or touching it directly. Claude, the boy figure, is actually touching the paper with an outstretched arm and Paloma, the girl, is looking down at it also. Francoise is cowering in the background out of the shadows, and even her out-stretched arms are encircling the children as she looks at the white paper.

The gestural effect of Francoise in the background, scratched into the black paint, gives an eerie feel of motion, almost as if she herself is holding the composition together. The lines of her body, even the strands of her hair, draw attention to the children sitting in these strangely placed shapes of color. The eye map simply, from almost everywhere one looks, draws attention to the center of the canvas.
Sketched after Henri Matisse’s *Red Interior: Still Life on a Blue Table*  
(1947, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 inches, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf)

Sketched after Henri Matisse’s *Interior with Egyptian Curtain*  
(1948, o/c, 45 ¾ x 35 1/8 inches, The Phillips Collection, Washington D. C.)
COLOR AND LINE

E. Matisse, Red Interior: Still Life on a Blue Table

This series consists of two of Matisse’s Vence interiors and is considered by many as the period of some of his greatest works. Matisse’s Red Interior: Still Life on a Blue Table (1947, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 inches, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf) and his Interior with an Egyptian Curtain of 1948, (o/c, 45 ¾ x 35 1/8 inches, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D. C.) begin the next series with unity as the focal point. Both use the same basic triad of colors, but with different preferences, and have the same leaf shapes seen through a window. The decorative line is emphatically a unifying factor.

Red Interior: Still Life on a Blue Table shows a brilliant use of primary color with red being dominant and most unifying, but Matisse repeats several shapes, showing a second unifying factor as well. Matisse used the diagonal zigzags to connect the separate shapes, thus flattening the space while creating a beautiful texture. The same red and zigzag design reappears outside the window, also causing confusion as to whether it is a window or a painting. These diagonal lines create a wonderful tension against the organic and spherical shapes. The round blue table is in brilliant contrast to the warm orange red of the background and fruit, and is seen again in the flower vase and around the greenery. The circular profile of warm yellow is a fiery addition to the window shutter and the plant. The colors move flowingly in and out, complimenting each other in a way that stands on its own.
Matisse elegantly places most of the objects running off the page in open composition to allow the viewer to comprehend much more of the imposed space. He overlaps objects and connects them in numerous ways in spite of the contrasts. Again, he shows that less-is-more, and he can stretch the typical compositional rules to create space with overlapping and re-flatten the composition with the decorative line. He creates space in an unconventional way, allowing the viewer to take it all in and accept it in their own way.

**F. Matisse, Interior with Egyptian Curtain**

Matisse takes similar objects from the first of this series and places them in *Interior with Egyptian Curtain*. This time he allows for the traditional three-dimensional functioning of the table, bowl and window frame, but he uses the same decorative line to create a flat patterning both in and outside the window. The plant here is very similar in design to the plant in *Red Interior*, yet has higher color contrasts. The right side of the painting is draped with the Egyptian curtain to create space, but is patterned in such a way that it gives little suggestion of depth, as if Matisse were trying to defy the rules of composition. He continuously uses traditional elements of painting and mixes them in a specific non-three-dimensional effect to push the limits.

Matisse wanted to “bring you into his painting: to make you fall into it, like walking through the looking glass” (Hughes 3). These two paintings show Matisse’s obvious love of “pattern and pattern within pattern: not only the suave and decorative forms of his own compositions, but also the reproduction of tapestries, embroideries,
silks, striped awnings, curlicues, mottles, dots, and spots, the bright clutter of over furnished rooms within the paintings” (Hughes 3).

Matisse used mostly primary colors again, yet complimented them with black. The black helps create the three-dimensional space in the shadows and under the window sill, while the same black serves as a flattening device in the curtain. Also, the shapes are used carefully in the curtain, seem to form an ingenious blend of the organic shapes of the fruit and plant. The linear leaf shapes are rounded out, but placed similarly in the curtain, and the pear shapes are angled to more diamond shapes.
Sketched after Henri Matisse’s *The Green Rumanian Blouse*
(1939, o/c, 24 x 18 1/8 inches, Private Collection)

Sketched after Pablo Picasso’s *Child Playing with a Toy Truck*
(1953, o/c, 51 ¼ x 38 ¼ inches, Musée Picasso, Paris)
Chapter Seven

A. Comparison

Matisse and Picasso continue the conversation of decorative line in *The Green Rumanian Blouse* (Matisse, o/c, March 1939, 24 x 18 ¼ inches, Private Collection) and *Child Playing with a Toy Truck* (Picasso, o/c, date, 51 ½ x 38 ¼ inches, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris).

Matisse in *The Green Rumanian Blouse* used a smaller canvas than *Woman with a Purple Robe*, but took a closer view, creating the feeling that the figure is much larger. The viewer may be confused about the way the figure merges with the wallpaper and how the striped chair blends into the skirt. Picasso echoes the idea of patterning, creating more detail in the background, mostly with organic shapes, in contrast to the linear patterning of the little boy’s shirt. Picasso uses essentially the same canvas size as with the earlier decorative example *Woman Seated in a Garden*, but arranges the space entirely differently. He placed the child not in the center as in the previous example, but in a crouched position in the lower left quarter of the composition. Interestingly, this placement of the smaller figure in such a proportionately small part of the canvas appears equally important as the decorative negative space.

Considering the DBAE theory of teaching, this series is also a useful example for the classroom teacher to use to show different perspectives on dealing with positive and negative space, as well as the unusual placement of Picasso’s figure in *Child Playing with a Toy Truck*. Both portraits deal with an abundance of decorative line, but aside from
these two facts the similarity ends. These two works offer a brilliant contrast of showing two completely different ways of creating a portrait.

**B. Matisse, *The Green Rumanian Blouse***

Matisse’s *The Green Rumanian Blouse* is unified by the cropped placement of the politely placed figure and the repetitive quality of rounded lines paired with the linear pattern in the chair and wallpaper, adding even more visual interest.

The color scheme is predominately cool, with just a touch of warm yellow and red to draw the viewer’s eye from the bottom of the canvas up toward the figure’s face. The blue and green provide a calming effect as well as providing a connection between the figure and the plant.

Interestingly, Matisse varied the quality of line by width and type, yet repeated them in several different objects. The shape of the woman’s hair directly mimics the shapes enclosed in the decorative pattern of the blouse and reappears in the plant (or merely decorated pattern) that seems to connect the figure to the chair and background. The repeated width of the thin back of the chair is not coincidentally almost the same width as the background shapes. Nor is it an accident that the vertical lines are repeated in the shirt and then reappear occasionally in the blouse. This combination of the linear, rounded shapes, and method of outlining creates a flatness, yet the decorative patterning again creates a rich unifying effect, combining the figure and the background into a balanced whole.
Matisse allows the viewer to absorb all the art elements by moving the eye effectively and efficiently from the lower left corner through the composition. The vertical stripes of the chair and the trim itself pull the viewer’s attention up and right, to the center of the figure. At this point the viewer can take in the detail of the blouse, following up the neckline and her right arm and back over to the left side of the canvas. The leaf shapes seem to grow out of the blouse, drawing focus to the top of the canvas, and down a stripe of the wallpaper to the hand, which seems to support the head. Her face is framed with black hair that mimics the shapes found in the blouse and is simplified in the plant shapes. The same long leaves, seeming to frame the face, let the eye linger there before following her left shoulder and down her arm, so the viewer savors the detail of the blouse and follows the curve of the forearm. The repeated curve of trim on the chair back moves the eye over to the fingertips. Each object, line and route of the viewer’s eye is of equal importance. Matisse never used anything that wasn’t needed for the whole effect--again showing that what isn’t useful isn’t needed.
C. Picasso, *Child Playing with a Toy Truck*

*Child Playing with a Toy Truck* is dramatically decorated so that the patterning and negative space equally balance the child in the lower left corner. The figure is even distorted with the abundant flat lines on the shirt. The decorative affect switched from the scratching technique to a more painterly fashion. Interestingly, the plant-like design of lines and circles of the background are simplified, varied and used as separate devices surrounding the child.

Picasso incorporates an interesting color palette in creating a primitive background with the olive green and warm red earthen tones on the base line in contrast to the pure bright blue stripes in the boy’s shirt. The white is used as a unifying factor, repeated in every aspect of the composition, from the plant-like markings in the background to the rocks or marbles on the ground, as well as into the child’s skin and clothing and toy truck. The background shapes and colors seem to represent an African influence: this time the figure is dark-skinned. Picasso shows an interesting combination of organic and geometric shapes. The shapes of the background appear more organic, but as they separate into lines and circles on the way down the canvas, they become more objective on the truck and the shirt. What started out as plant symbols turn into balls, circles and even patterns on the truck.

The child is deliberately placed in a square on the bottom left of the canvas and is wearing a shirt covered in an abundance of stripes, judging from the way the placement counters the jungle of plant shapes behind him. Also, the placement of the this square is in the same general area as the lower left rectangle in *The Chinese Chest of Drawers* done
later the same year of 1953. Picasso was still experimenting with divisions of the canvas.
Not only is the child placed in the bottom corner, but he is in a crouched position, drawing even more attention to this area of the composition.

Line is not used as an outline as much as it is for decoration. The figure is still flat, but the idea of modeling shows up in the area of the leg and ankle. The lines also appear more rounded at the top of the page and transcend into the stripe pattern of the shirt. The lines don’t create a textural feeling as did the ‘scratched’ ones in the earlier examples, yet they do create an enjoyable atmosphere.
CHAPTER EIGHT: TEXTURE AND DECORATIVE LINE…

Sketched after Pablo Picasso’s
Seated Woman
(1937, o/c, 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches,
Zervos VIII, 324,
Musée Picasso, Paris)

Sketched after Henri Matisse’s
Woman in Purple Robe with
Ranunculi
(1937, o/c, 31 7/8 x 25 5/8 inches,
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston:
The John A. and Audrey Jones Black
Collection)

Sketched after Pablo Picasso’s
Woman Seated in a Garden
(1938, o/c, 51 1/2 x 38 1/4 inches,
Collection of Mrs. Daniel
Saidenberg)
Chapter Eight

A. Picasso, *Seated Woman*

The years between 1937 and the early 1950’s saw numerous examples of extraordinary and innovative use of line and texture by both artists— from decorative painterly lines to hard and delicate lines, scratched into the surface of the paint. Matisse and Picasso show two views of the incredibly rich use of line through the subject of a seated woman. Three paintings, each of a seated woman—yet each evokes a completely different emotional response. Picasso’s pictures range from the shallow and geometrical figure to a woman becoming one with a garden—each female being equally subjective.

Picasso’s *Seated Woman* (1937, o/c, 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches, Zervos VIII, 324, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris) bridges between the decorative line and the newer textured and scratched line of the later pieces. Picasso used a fairly large canvas, cropped the female figure and placed her in what seems to be the corner of a room. The angles of the corner are meant to balance the linear texture of the clothing and counter the rounded shapes of the female body. The bold color is equally important to the composition.

The primary colors are dominant with the use of white interjected throughout, even accenting the linear pattern in contrast with the stark black. In the usual Picassian manner, the figure becomes more of an object or a formation of shapes rather than the revered female of Matisse. Yet this particular one, even in spite of the spherical breasts and Mona Lisa smile, appears deep in thought and not merely sitting. But as soon as
viewers think that this woman of Picasso’s is in deep thought, they consider that she is pondering an empty corner.

**B. Matisse, *Woman in a Purple Robe and Ranunculi***

*Woman in a Purple Robe and Ranunculi* (1937, o/c, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The John A. and Audrey Jones Black Collection), by Matisse, adds a new dimension to the artist’s work. He added a profusion of decorative and texturally effective line by scratching into the paint’s surface. The form and color are equal in importance, but the exuberant use of line and texture introduce a new facet of Matisse’s portraits. Elegantly, the objects and line are placed in a way to lead the viewer to enjoy the richness of each stroke, while not subtracting from the effect of the painting as a whole. Again, Matisse uses a small canvas (31 7/8 x 25 5/8 inches) and creates a monumental feeling of scale. The painting holds many areas of attention, yet the eye is easily able to view the work as a whole. Matisse’s fondness of and appreciation for the female figure is obvious.

The flower vase sitting on the cylindrical table pulls the viewer’s attention up through the vertical patterning of the wallpaper on the left side, across the canvas, lingering on the female figure long enough to take in all the marvelous detail. The eye then moves through the opposite arm and rests on the bold red and white design on the black wallpaper background in the upper right of the painting. Matisse instinctively includes a horizontal stripe in the yellow chair, reconnecting to a brief repeat of the red, white and black design from above. Our attention is drawn along the diagonal dotted
lines of the rug and then returns to the bottom left corner of the painting to absorb it all again.

Matisse’s colors are as deliberately chosen as the shapes and placements used. The way black is used through the work is as effective as the way the purple robe stands out against the red of the wallpaper and fruit, and the slightly varied greens of the skirt react to each other. And what appears to be a textured green pillow stands in contrast to the warm green of the wallpaper on the upper left. Matisse used the yellow in the flowers, lemon, and necklace and again on the chair back. This use of color and the careful placement of line creates space in a flatly painted composition. A decorative line quality is varied by the use of rounded lines as in the green wallpaper and flowers, to the more jagged and thin lines in the purple robe. Additional variety is provided and then varied even more by the delicate lines scratched into the paint itself.

C. Picasso, *Woman Seated in a Garden*

Picasso, in *Woman Seated in a Garden* (1938, o/c, collection of Mrs. Daniel Saidenburg) used the method of scratching into the paint even more than Matisse did in *Woman in a Purple Robe*. He created a textural pattern on nearly every surface, obviously abstracting the female figure as well as the plants. Picasso takes the same basic scratching technique and the subject of the seated female, and through his own view of women shows her as an equal to the plant and texture—no more or less than an object.

Picasso used Matisse’s yellow, yet in a muted form in the background and also as textured line. He also used a variant of Matisse’s cool green. The use of yellow in the
background, on the chair and in her dress, help create unity between the female figure and the garden. Picasso also repeated the same radiating lines from the leaves to create similar textures within the figure.

Picasso’s use of straight and bent lines accentuate the angled and geometric shapes of the figure and add interesting contrast to the rounded leaf shapes. The profuse use of line and textural quality creates interplay between the importance of the subject matter and the mere decorative nature of the shapes. The woman, as stated in the title, is sitting in a garden, but by the use of the same lines and angles on the plants and on the figure, she becomes part of the garden itself. This technique flattens the painting, yet it is enhanced and richly textured by the line qualities and scratching strokes.

These three portraits of seated women show sharply contrasting depictions from the vacant look of the first, to the relaxed and richly patterned woman indoors, and finally to a woman almost hidden within a garden. These works deal with the negative space and the emotional mood created by the use of empty space in each painting. The classroom teacher can use these examples to discuss and contrast emotional intentions in two different styles: What happens when you place the same basic figure on a white background, in a crowded room or in a garden?
CHAPTER NINE: MORE DECORATIVE LINE

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s**
*Seated Woman*
(April 27, 1938, Ink, pastel and wash, 30 ¼ x 21 5/8 inches, Zervos IX, 133, Collection of Ernst Beyeler, Basel)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s**
*Seated Woman* (#2)
(April 29, 1938, Ink, pastel and wash, 30 1/8 x 21 ¾ inches, Zervos IX, 332, Private Collection)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s**
*Portrait of Madame H.P.*
(1952, o/c, 57 ¼ x 38 inches, Zervos XV 215, Collection of Edouard Pignon, Paris)
Chapter Nine

A. Comparison

Picasso continues the path of finding new function with the use and dominance of line, and only Picasso is included in this particular category. These three compositions begin in April 1938 and continue through 1952. The stylistic changes are obvious and the details intriguing. In the last of this triad, done sixteen years after the first, Picasso added mesmerizing texture and line qualities to the modeled figure, as in his early work. The combination of these two styles is amazing.

B. Picasso, Seated Woman (1)

Picasso’s Seated Woman (1938, o/c, Ink, gouache and chalk, 30 ¼ x 21 5/8 inches, Zervos IX, 133, Collection of Ernst Beyeler, Basel) used softer colors and ink to create a more delicate line similar to the narrow scratched ones of the previously discussed works. The figure is more distorted than in earlier works and becomes a form of amusing geometric shapes and line. The choice of color and line seem to soften the shapes, but the figure still lacks the grace and innocence of Matisse’s female subjects. From the hat to the large nose to the diamond-shaped chest, the woman has a light-hearted appearance.
C. Picasso, *Seated Woman (2)*

Picasso’s *Seated Woman* (April 29, 1938, Ink, pastel, and wash, 30 1/8 x 21 3/4 inches, Zervos IX, 332, Private Collection), or *Seated Woman #2*, as will be used here to limit the confusion, is a play off his own previous version. This view of the woman is as amusingly exaggerated as the chair is oversized. In a manner seen also in Picasso’s *Woman Seated in a Garden*, the figure becomes part of the chair and the background. Many similarities exist between the first *Seated Woman* and this second one, especially in the face and hat as well as the placement of the figure in a wooden chair. Instead of the woman being cropped and seeming large, she is shown in full figure on the chair.

The colors are muted again with a dominant use of yellow and a multitude of decorative lines with black ink. The figure seems to be enclosed or framed by the chair back with the chair seat and legs, all drawing attention to her position in the center.
D. Picasso, *Portrait of Madame H.P.*

The last of this series is Picasso’s *Portrait of Madame H.P.* (1952, o/c, 57 ¼ x 38 inches, Zervos XV, 215, Collection of Edouard Pignon, Paris). This one is painted with oil and is nearly twice as tall as the previous two. *Portrait of Madame H.P.* was chosen because of the combination of line use and the more prominently modeled figure. The woman herself is seated rather gracefully, yet has a humorous expression on her face and quite comical looking feet and hands. Strangely, the colors used are more naturalistic, but the figure seems to be more human and interesting. She no longer seems to be only an object to Picasso, but still lacks the honor that Matisse pays his women. The seated figure fills most of the page, and her hair is richly textured with contrasting line and color. The body is rounded and even modeled by some shading as well as the show of draped fabric. This time Picasso has eliminated most of the background and has placed the figure once again as the focal center.
Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s The Studio at ‘La Californie’** (#1)
(October 23, 1955, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 inches, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, Donation Louise et Michel Leiris)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s The Studio at ‘La Californie’** (#2)
(October 28, 1955, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 inches, Daros Collection, Switzerland)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s The Studio at ‘La Californie’** (#3)
(March 30, 1956, o/c, 4 7/8 x 57 ½ inches, Musée Picasso, Paris)

Sketched after **Pablo Picasso’s The Studio at ‘La Californie’** (#4)
(April 2, 1956, o/c, 28 5/8 x 36 1/8 inches, Private Collection)
Chapter Ten

A. Overview of ‘La Californie’ Series

After Mattise’s death on November 3, 1954, Picasso went through a period of mourning, not producing any major work for nearly a year. Some critics say that The Studio at ‘La Californie’ series (1955-1956) show the extent of this mourning. Four paintings by Picasso are included in this series all with the same title. For purposes of comparison, each will be referred to an assigned number. The ‘La Californie’ series seems to summarize the extent of Matisse and Picasso’s interaction as well as their friendship. The emotional isolation is overpowering in the first studio, while the celebration of all that was Matisse is in the second version.

Matisse needed to stay in the same state of mind when he produced his work. His favorite place to find this peaceful existence was the Cote d’azur, where he “found a vast apartment in a white Edwardian wedding cake [building] above Nice--the Hotel Regina. This was the Great Indoors, whose elements appear in painting after painting: the wrought iron balcony, the strip of blue Mediterranean sky, the palm, and the shutters” (Hughes 4). Almost all of these are included in The Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#2).
B. Picasso, *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (1)

Picasso’s *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (#1) (October 23, 1955, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 inches, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris. Donation Louise ET Michel Leiris) was followed by *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (#2) (October 28, 1955, o/c, 45 5/8 x 35 inches, Daros Collection, Switzerland) on exactly the same size canvas. Both works share several elements: the chair, the white figure and the arched windows.

*The Studio #1* is the most somber of the four paintings, even having a wiped-out or ghost-like appearance to it. The light from the window seems to be illuminating a dark, quiet studio. One lone figure sits on the right side in an eerie, white aura. The area surrounding the figure contrasts with the muted and wiped-out areas with its stark white on black. The figure’s back is turned to the studio and could symbolize either Matisse leaving the art world or his spirit keeping watch over Picasso during his time of loss. The familiar wooden chair and plant seem to eulogize his friend. Those same items strangely appear wiped out as if showing they were from the past. But the figure remains firm, stagnant and isolated.
C. Picasso, *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (#2)

Picasso seems to be conversing with Matisse, even after his death. He used the same leaf/plant shapes as Matisse and even placed them in a window setting. *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (#2) is the same in canvas size as #1 but takes in a broader area and includes several familiar elements: the chair, the white figure and the arched windows. The main unifying factor is in the decorative line, but particularly interesting is how the spiral eye map draws the attention to the window in the center, the same window borrowed from Matisse. Picasso used geometric and abstracted methods, yet seems to maintain a sense of space that Matisse had left teetering between flat and three-dimensional. Although this work is more cluttered and abstracted, the sense of space remains, and the ambiguous effect lies in our comprehending what is in the space rather than what the space actually is.

Picasso’s *Studio* has the colors that he had been using during the early 1950’s with more than half the canvas covered in black. Some say it shows Picasso mourning Matisse’s death. He seems to be showing darker colors, but humorously abstracted and simplified the figures and furnishings to add a non-literal light-heartedness to the painting—as if the mourning period is ending and “grief has done its work” (Bois 236). The way in which white is placed next to the black makes the decorative line more interesting and the few colors used more obvious in contrast.

The path the viewer’s eye follows is more complicated in this particular painting of Picasso’s, more like Matisse. The many objects to see and enjoy needed to be placed
in a way to pull attention through them all. Our attention is almost immediately pulled to the center, oddly, to the ball of the coconut tree almost as a target, and the leaves draw the eye to the pillars and archways that encircle the composition, gently touching each element and leading us toward the next.

In contrast, to Studio #1, in The Studio in ‘La Californie’ #2, the studio is filled with objects, texture, line, shape and a complicated spiral eye map, as if Picasso wanted to incorporate as many of Matisse’s responses as possible in this one studio composition. Ironically, the 1st and 2nd studio paintings, made five days apart, are both on the same size canvas, showing virtually the same view-- excessive black --and the figure is still on the right side of the painting. This time, Matisse’s decorative line and spiral composition are dominant.

D. Picasso, Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#3)

The third and fourth of this studio series are painted only two days apart and nearly sixteen months after Matisse’s death. The Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#3) (March 30, 1956, o/c, 44 7/8 x 57 ½ inches, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris) is larger, more rectangular and contains more color as a foreground to the monochromatic background. This studio appears lively, with finished and partially-finished paintings strewn around, along with a blank one. Light comes in through both windows and the palm tree stands out against the white. This particular Studio at ‘La Californie’ seems to show a second or connecting room, in memory of Matisse’s still life paintings.
This painting has obvious vertical divisions and seems to depict another view of the same studio. The window is altered, this time showing two palm trees. Perhaps one represents Matisse and the other Picasso. Not all of Matisse’s usual themes are included here, but definitely gives a nod of recognition to him. The unfinished canvas included with the completed ones shows that Picasso is moving along in his grief, but is not yet completely healed.

**E. Picasso, *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (4)**

In *The Studio at ‘La Californie’* (4), (April 2, 1956, o/c, 28 5/8 x 36 1/8 inches, Private Collection), the last of the series, Picasso seems to have come full circle from Studio #1. He repeats the warm monochromatic color scheme and even repeats the wiped out effect in the canvas, showing the faint impression of Mattise’s *Blue Nude*, where the white figure once was. The focal point is the center of the canvas with the carpet corner pointing to the canvas on the right, bringing the eye back up to the top of the canvas to the ornate arched window. The green plant is oddly omitted in this version, although the chair and window remain, but in a slightly varied form.

This painting, though more than half covered in black, nonetheless is filled with promise. This studio isn’t overly cluttered, isn’t filled with unused canvas and isn’t filled with too many overtly Matissian themes. This studio is a composition, purely “Picassian”, and is showing how he has passed through the period of mourning, but has shown his respect for his fellow art genius by including the image of Blue Nude where the figure of Matisse once stood.
Chapter Eleven

A. Summary

The remarkable relationship between Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse is perhaps the most noteworthy collaboration the twentieth-century art. Both geniuses in the field, they learned from, and improved upon, the art of each other in ways that may never have been possible had their personal paths never crossed. Whether drawn more to Picasso or Matisse, one must acknowledge the cooperation and mutual respect each artist had for the other. Seeing the related works side by side allows the viewer to appreciate the similarities and marvel at the stylistic differences. Their territories are uniquely distinguishable, and to mistake a Picasso for a Matisse is nearly impossible.

What began as personal dislike between the two, but maintained with mutual respect, turned into a beautiful mingling of talent and art enjoyable to all. The conversation between the two artists as demonstrated in these artistic exchanges is as dynamic as the artwork itself. The genius of each artist merged with the complex and charismatic personality of the other, creating dialogue worthy of study for years to come.

Through the language of art, Matisse and Picasso offer numerous perspectives on similar themes through the application of art elements and a vivid display of their cultural differences. The emergence of the other’s style within their own work created an interesting correlation, and created anticipation for the visual reply. They would explore each other’s territory and then retreat to their own.

By contrasting the cultural differences of two artists, teachers can encourage critical thinking, and the activity moves the student beyond simply memorizing facts.
With the advent of DBAE, the National Standards and State Guidelines, teachers are becoming increasingly more aware of the need to incorporate more than studio-based lessons (art production) in the classroom. Art education has moved past the teachings of Viktor Lowenfeld, to a higher level of Bloom’s Taxonomy--synthesizing and applying knowledge, learning and retaining more. When the four areas are introduced in an interesting and exciting way, as modeled in this study, students can get a better understanding of how and why the artists painted the way they did. By teaching artists’ backgrounds, cultural and personal differences, students can make their own interpretations and conclusions about the art. By comparing and analyzing similar and opposing styles, the lessons provide a visual link to how artists have borrowed from each other, thus showing the students how to apply their own thoughts and ideas.
Sketched after Alexandra Nechita’s *Clover Field*
(22 x 24 inches, Edition: 1999 signed & numbered,
65 Artist’s Proofs, 25 Printer’s Proofs)

“I always like painting wishes. I believe in dreams coming true.”
-- Alexandra
B. Further Study

This model for teaching art could lend itself to other comparative analyses of numerous themes between these two artists or other pairs of artists. This methodology promotes critical thinking as well as a lively way of combining the four areas of DBAE (perhaps even contrasting sculpture and painting of similar subjects).

Matisse and Picasso interacted and shared numerous themes for nearly sixty years. Their dialogue of art elements can be followed in still life as well as landscape, but it is most pronounced through the figurative work spanning 1926-1940. A direct look at any of these shared themes would be worthwhile, but an in-depth look into Picasso’s relationships with his female partners and with his mother, makes interesting reading, and provides a good base for understanding some of the visual images he created of the female figure.

Mary Mathews Gedo’s book, entitled Picasso: Art as Autobiography, goes into considerable detail on the type of women Picasso became involved with, as well as offering interpretations of his relationship with his mother and the jealousy he harbored toward his younger sister, after she apparently took his mother away from him. An abundance of information details Picasso’s personal life that enables us as art critics to better interpret his paintings. Some of the information involved would be inappropriate for primary or secondary school students, but makes for intriguing reading for the teacher or serious fan of Picasso’s art.

In the first years of my graduate work, I encountered a professor who introduced me to the similarities in Matisse and Picasso’s figurative work, particularly during the
latter part of their careers. This college course first ignited my genuine interest in the two painters. The *Sleeping Woman* series that I address in chapter five can be wonderfully elevated to a new level by including Picasso’s 1932 *The Dream* (o/c, Sally Ganz Collection) and *The Mirror* (Picasso, 1932, o/c, Private Collection).

In Picasso’s two works, he takes the sleeping woman theme one step further, using Freudian concepts of the “tug of war between conscious and subconscious—the overt and the oppressed” (Rubin 356). *The Dream* shows the figure apparently dreaming of sexual fantasies. This simplified and sexual woman is meant to carry the conversation to another level while prodding Matisse even further by adding the red armchair (as in *Odalisque with a Tambourine*, Matisse, 1926, o/c, The Museum of Modern Art, New York: The William S. Paley Collection). Picasso’s *Large Nude in a Red Armchair* (1929, o/c, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris) could easily be studied along side ‘*Odalisque’* in contrasting the styles of the same subject.

Study of Picasso’s *Portrait of Madame H.P.* could extend to several other seated figure works of his, including Matisse’s *Decorative Figure on an Ornamental Ground* (1925, o/c, Mus’ee National d’Art Modern, Paris) and Picasso’s *Seated Woman* (1953, o/c, The Saint Louis Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr.). The positioning of the figures is very similar, but the artistic styles and personalities quite obviously stand in marked contrast to each other.

Another possible context for studying Picasso would be to contrast him with child prodigy Alexandra Nechita, sometimes referred to as the “petite Picasso.” The fifteen-year-old Romanian (born August 27, 1985) was using pen and ink by age two,
watercolors by five and was seriously into oil and acrylics before she turned fifteen--
already having held an astonishing eight solo exhibits before her tenth birthday.

Her unique incorporation of numerous Picasso themes and styles could be motivational
for middle and high school students.

Andraea, Christopher. “Matisse and Picasso’s Gentle Rivalry.” Christian Science


Escholier, Raymond. Matisse: A Portrait of the Artist and the man. New York:


CONSULTED COLOR PLATES FROM:


*Still Life with a Plaster Bust*, Matisse (p12)

*Still Life: Bust, Bowl, and Palette*, Picasso (p13)
1932, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris.

*Still Life with Fruit Dish, Guitar, Plate and Apples*, Picasso (p203)
1946, Mus’ee Picasso, Antibes.

*Sketches after Picasso’s Still Life with Fruit Dish, Guitar, Plate and Apples*,
Matisse (p202)
1948, Private Collection.

*The Pineapple*, Matisse (p208)
1948, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Alex Hillman Family Foundation Collection.

*Large Red Interior*, Matisse (p209)

*Harmony in Yellow*, Matisse (p39)
1928, Private Collection.

*Woman with Yellow Hair*, Picasso (p138)

*The Dream*, Matisse (p139)
1940, Private Collection.

*Interior in Yellow and Blue*, Matisse (p227)
The Chinese Chest of Drawers, Picasso (p226)
    1953, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia; Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

Claude Drawing, Fancoise and Paloma, Picasso (p229)

Red Interior: Still Life on a Blue Table, Matisse (p205)
    1947, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf.

Interior with Egyptian Curtain, Matisse (p178)

The Green Rumanian Blouse, Matisse (p120)
    1939, Private Collection.

Child playing with a Toy Truck, Picasso (p228)
    1953, Mus’ee Picasso, Paris.

Woman in a Purple Robe with Ranunculi, Matisse (p124)

Woman Seated in a Garden, Picasso (p125)
    1938, Collection of Mrs. Daniel Saidenberg.
The Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#1), Picasso (p235)

The Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#2), Picasso (p234)
1955, Daros Collection, Switzerland.

The Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#3), Picasso (p238)

The Studio at ‘La Californie’ (#4), Picasso
1956, Private Collection.

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Seated Woman, Picasso (p336)

Seated Woman (close up), Picasso (p355)
1938, Zervos IX, 133, Collection of Ernst Beyeler, Basel.

Seated Woman (2), Picasso (p355)

Portrait of Madame H.P., Picasso (p378)

Sleeping Woman before Green Shutters, Picasso (p333)