

The Museo Reina Sofía shares the greatest online collection of material on Picasso's *Guernica*

<http://guernica.museoreinasofia.es>

- The support of **Telefónica** has enabled an innovative website to be launched – in both Spanish and English – with free access to over 2,000 archives related to Picasso's work, assembled in the collection *Rethinking Guernica. History and Conflict in the 20th Century*.
- Therefore, the Museo Reina Sofía becomes a global reference point in study of the painting and its eighty-year life-span via photographs, videos, news bulletins, newspapers, magazines, correspondence, catalogues, museum documents, posters, etc.
- Moreover, the Gigapixel section of the website possesses a powerful zoom to check, close-up, the smallest details on the canvas, representing, to date, the largest work to undergo these techniques and enabling an in-depth study of its working process and the state of conservation.

Following the comprehensive research stretching over a two-year period, the Museo Reina Sofía presents the documentary collection [*Rethinking Guernica. History and Conflict in the 20th Century*](#), which compiles over 2,000 archives – carefully selected out of the 6,000 available — related to the painting Pablo Ruiz Picasso produced for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair in 1937.



The implementation of this project sees the **Museo Reina Sofía** become a **global reference point** for the in-depth knowledge and discovery of details pertaining to the conception of *Guernica* across its eighty-year life-span, at once an artwork and symbol in constant renewal.

The patronage of **Telefónica** has enabled this free and open website to be created, granting the public the opportunity to gain access to all documentation, selected to ensure it can be easily and comprehensively consulted through different browsing options. This project has been developed by the Museo's **Collections, Conservation-Restoration and Virtual Programmes Departments**, and will culminate in the publication of a book in the coming months.

Conceived as an archive of archives, to be progressively enhanced on the website, researchers, students and the general public can access —through a **sophisticated search engine** and on **different devices** (PC, tablet, mobiles) — **60 different types of materials** (photographs, videos, news bulletins, newspapers, magazines, institutional and personal correspondence, exhibition catalogues, internal museum documents, posters, flyers, etc.), all related to *Guernica*.

This material hails from **120 public and private archives, libraries, museums, institutions and national and international agencies**, including, to name but a few, Musée Picasso (Paris), the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Roland Penrose Archive (Edinburgh), and the National History Archive (Madrid). In some instances, the system offers direct access to archives from institutions or museums, which is the case with the MoMA (New York) archive, for instance.

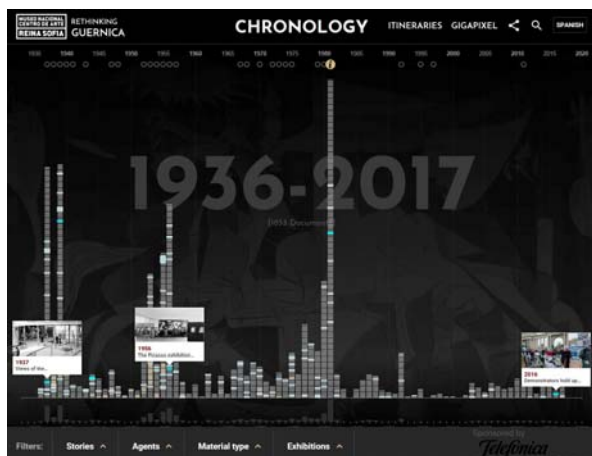
The website is divided into **three main sections**, whereby documents can also activate new searches or lead on to other areas and content. In the **Chronology** section, the dates recording the vicissitudes of *Guernica*'s existence — its creation against the backdrop of the Civil War, its journey of exile and its return to Spain, its transformation into an anti-war icon... — can be traced in a simple and visually attractive way via documents that have been generated over its entire life-span.

This content can also be browsed alongside the **touring exhibition area**, but with the addition of explanations placing the contexts and artistic and political debates surrounding the work, and allowing further insight into the role played by dozens of figures who have had a part to play in *Guernica* (critics, artists, historians, intellectuals and politicians, among others).

In the **Gigapixel** section, the picture can be visually explored, down to the finest details, through the conservation study conducted by the Museo Reina Sofía, applying cutting-edge technology and thousands of images taken by visible and ultraviolet light, infrared reflectography, and high-definition x-ray imaging.

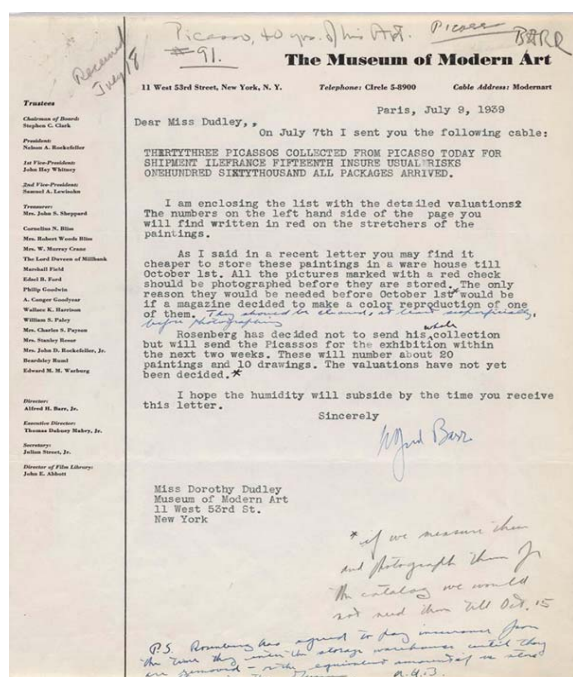
Chronology

This section features alternative forms of exploring documents through an interactive display, where users can find every document inside a particular time frame.



Spanish soil (negotiations, transport...).

This area provides an opportunity to access archives related to the **creation of the artwork** (the preparation, materials, composition, influences); its **historical context** (Picasso and the Spanish Civil War, the commission for the work, the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair, the critical reception at the time); **exile** (the work's travels around England, Brazil, Italy, Denmark, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium and the USA), and its **return to**



Carta de Alfred H. Barr Jr., director del Museum of Modern Art de Nueva York, que envía por correspondencia interna a Dorothy Dudley, jefa de Registro del museo, el listado de obras prestadas por Picasso para la exposición y los costes de los seguros. Añadido a mano, Guernica y los dibujos relacionados. Nueva York, 9 de julio de 1939
Museum of Modern Art Archives, Nueva York
© 2017. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

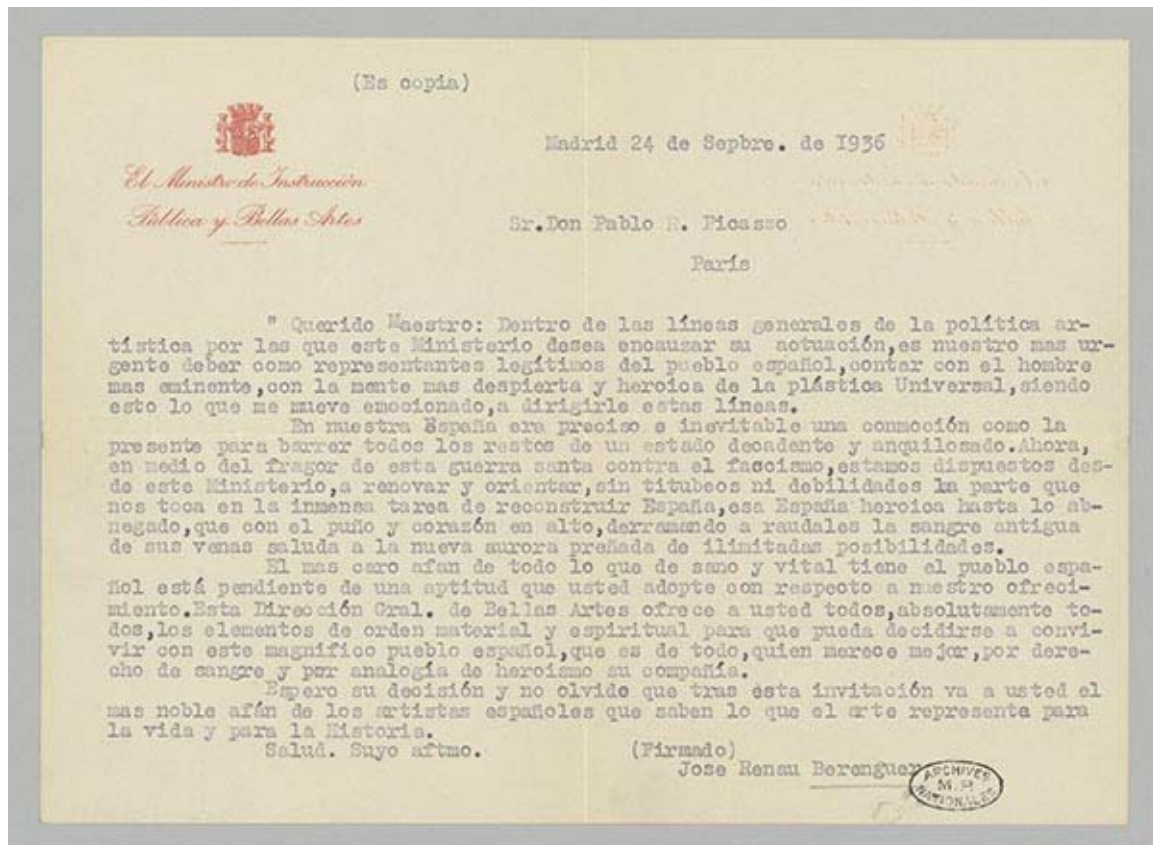
It must also be noted that between 1937 and 1992, the painting was shipped a total of 45 times to over 30 cities in Europe and the Americas, generating in turn a vast number of documents to research.

Many of the documents which can be reviewed on the website have not been previously included in critical or historiographical narratives, and therefore open the way to a more precise and critical consideration of the whys and wherefores, and the uses, promoted by each institution, and the interests and reasons for the work touring and being on display in different cities and countries.

The wealth of information available on the website also gives the public at large the chance to retrieve **different points of interests and unheard-of elements**, for instance the journey to Venezuela that was cut short in 1948 because of the coup d'état taking place in the country, or now-forgotten events such as the fire which occurred in 1958 at

MoMA, in New York, prompting the director of the Collections Department, Alfred H. Barr Jr., to send a telegram informing Pablo Picasso that none of his works had been damaged,

including *Guernica*. Or the valuation of the painting to the sum of four billion pesetas in 1981 after Banco Vitalicio assessed the travel insurance (valued at almost 5 million pesetas) to bring it back to Spain.



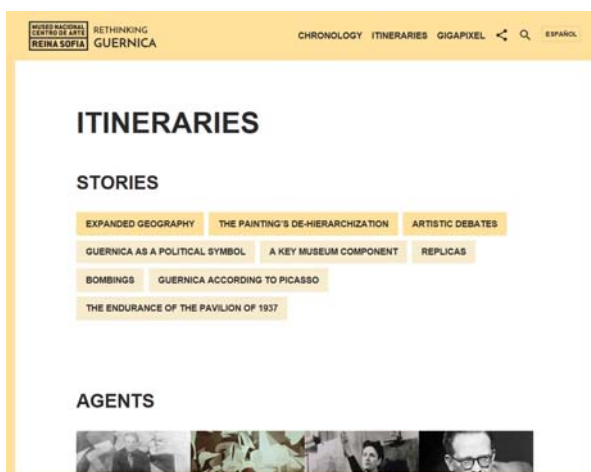
Carta de Josep Renau a Pablo Picasso. Madrid, 24 de septiembre de 1936
Correspondencia institucional. MPP-Fonds Picasso
Photo © RMN - Grans Palais (Musée Picasso de Paris) / image RMN-GP

Itineraries

Another aspect to feature on the website is the different touring exhibitions, thereby delving deeper into the documentary holdings, broadening the contexts surrounding *Guernica* and bringing viewers into contact with the leading figures involved.

This section dissects the different accounts referring to the debates generated over the years on the **artistic, symbolic and political values of *Guernica***.

Picasso painted *Guernica* against the backdrop of war, setting down a new pictorial language that would immediately be taken up as an image epitomising modernity, with the painting at the heart of debates on **abstraction and figuration, between interpretation and representation**, that began at the beginning of the 1940s in both the USA and Europe.



Media hora en el estudio de Picasso, artículo en Regards. 29 de julio de 1937
Georges Sadoul, «Une demi-heure dans l'atelier de Picasso», Regards, 29 de julio, 1937, p.8.
Musée National Picasso-Paris, Archives Privées de Pablo Picasso, Don Succession Picasso, 1992
Photo © RMN - Grans Palais (Musée Picasso de Paris) / image RMN-GP

The leading figures in these debates were artists, critics and historians who saw *Guernica* at the Paris World's Fair of 1937, or in the different international institutions which exhibited the work in the years that followed.

This section also addresses, among many other aspects, the works influence, international scope and artistic appropriations, the replicas and spontaneous and collective uses of it as a symbol of protest.

Information has also been compiled on the **political role of the painting**, and the website includes the archives related to the critical-political standpoints that sought to reduce *Guernica* to an iconographic reading. For instance, there is material related to the symposium organised in 1947 by Alfred H. Barr Jr., from New York's MoMA. Driven by the atmosphere surrounding the Cold War, Barr wanted to unpack the significance

of each figure represented in the painting in order to clarify its interpretation and neutralise its political-symbolic meaning, with the intention of leaving the painting explained and ultimately formulating one unique reading.

Gigapixel

The Gigapixel section of the website means the painting can be examined with a powerful zoom, providing a close-up of the smallest details on the canvas. This is the first time that a work the size of *Guernica* has undergone a similar process — such a detailed analysis — and enables its processes of creation, technical execution and state of conservation to be studied in depth.

This has all been made possible through the study using cutting-edge technology, carried out over the past few years by the Museo Reina Sofía's Restoration Department, with thousands of high-resolution images (captured with visible and ultraviolet light and infrared reflectography) taken of the paint layer via a robotic system with different sensors.



Likewise, previous works have also been digitalised and incorporated, for instance the complete x-ray of the painting, taken in 2006, and the studies of the back of the work.

Each study is made up of thousands of photographs which have become a static pyramid (made up of 12 levels of depth and reaching up to almost 9 million 256 x 256 pixel images, for instance the study in visible and ultraviolet light). The production of one of these pyramids requires 162 hours; in other words, seven days of processing, resulting in an image of 690,000 x 311,000 pixels (436 Gb) on the deepest layer, which can be zoomed in upon. This can all be viewed on a web browser, tablet or smartphone, enabling the painting to be observed in the kind of detail that the naked eye is unable to discern.

This project also offers the chance to simultaneously review the findings of the aforementioned technical studies (visible light, ultraviolet light, infrared reflectography and x-rays) georeferenced, and to zoom in on details of the work, thus enabling the viewer to see the technical details and alterations on the canvas, such as abrasions, craquelure, wax, cracks, marks, retouching and underlying brushstrokes, as well as other components identified in its state of conservation.

... And a publication on the work's travels



Vistas de la exposición Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Laurens en el Kunstnernes Hus de Oslo, Oslo, 1938
Fotografía de Olaf Vaering. MPP-Fonds Picasso
Olaf Vaering © RMN - Grands Palais (Musée Picasso de Paris) / image RMN-GP

In the coming months, a book assembling the different essays and vast documentation on the journey *Guernica* undertook until 1958, and until it definitively returned to Spain, will see the light of day. The analysis and assessment of this documentary ensemble will spotlight the most significant episodes related to the work from an artistic, museum-related, political and symbolic point of view. Furthermore, the book's point of departure will be from geographical, physical and non-physical places, from those places where the work has been on view or reproduced, where it has been recognised and celebrated as a universal anti-war icon and banner, called upon in the fight for general freedom and

further confirming its condition as an allegory.

Fact sheet on the website

- Document listing and content management with Drupal 8 open source CMS software
- Content indexing and searches with Solr 4
- Gigapixel visor zoom and document images with Leaflet

FTP DATE to download graphic and multimedia material

<ftp:museoreinasofia.es>

User: InformacionPrensa
Password: 751DWH573

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