

PICASSO

TIMOTHY HILTON

with 207 illustrations, 30 in color

© 1975



PRAEGER PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

to the sculpture. It has, as it were, is often referred to as 'drawing in of the thinness of the wires. In slightly unsatisfactory, because re. For as one examines these and two vectors, the ways that change. One enters on a miasmatic dissimilar from the way that one succession of viewing points in a s a common experience with this rder to capture more experiential ould be made. The sculpture's l, not floor-based. It is always and or podium, and Brassai n when it was in the stables at

Picasso's work of the late 1920s and ht be useful at this juncture. Apart he collaborated, he was perhaps l yet there is a huge gulf between has been suggested that the balls, rawings entitled *An Anatomy* are Giacometti like *Man and Woman*, *Object*, all of which were made y be so. It is also suggested that ves in part from Picasso's wire But in this area talk of reciprocal are large ones. Take the notion of to these two different works. The é. It had been employed by many of exciting interest. This had to be made out of smallish assembled are way of making bad art, the ressure towards the spectator. Just mmar and does not have a core, that hing living which is trapped for outside; it is a mere convenience for (Often, the Surrealists supplied this , rotting limbs, broken dolls, etc.)

Such notions about cages are deeply a part of our non-artistic cultural expectations, and Surrealist art blatantly exploited this. There are many other examples of Surrealist tactics of the same sort; the anti-tactile, the stinking, the physically painful, etc. Not many of them need to be mentioned here. It is simply worth saying that the imaginative poverty of Surrealism is more marked in its object-making than in its painting.

* The *Vollard Suite* as a whole has a fairly wry attitude towards the way that sculpture could be made, or had been made. Picasso, in the *Suite*, drew some imagined Surrealist sculptures, imagined in the sense that they were what other people, not he, might have made. There is something to be said about the way we imagine this work to have been constructed. The *Suite* looks at sculptural methods which were current in new art but which Picasso himself did not care to try out. For we must now add two more ways of making to the traditional distinctions in sculpture between carving and modelling. These are assembled sculpture and constructed sculpture. Though the two new modes will sometimes be indistinct, the major differences between them are clear. The methods of assemblage may be seen in the piece of work the nude model is gingerly examining in *Vollard Suite* No. 74 (4 May 1933); in Picasso's own *Construction with Glove (by the Sea)* of 1930; in Mirò's *objets poétiques*; and in any number of works by Dalí, Giacometti, Tanguy, Duchamp, Breton, Ernst, and all their progeny. Assembled sculpture differs from both carving and modelling in that it is a putting together of various different parts; but this does not make it facient in the sense described above. It very often uses found objects, things which had a previous life before their introduction into an art context, and these objects or materials are often juxtaposed in an uncommon, humorous or startling way. These materials are malleable, on the whole; they are wood, plaster, cloth, cardboard and the like, and the joinery is characteristically done by gumming and pinning. Assemblage is handleable in size, or its various elements are. When it is relatively large in size, that is because of an increased number of elements. This handleability leads often to a toy-like air (a large number of dolls and stuffed pets are used), and in the more aggressive pieces to an attack on what we normally find pleasantly tactile: Meret Oppenheim's fur-lined cup and saucer is the best example of this. Assemblage is never wholly abstract, not only because recognizable pieces of the real world are incorporated but

136
III



136 *Volland Suite*
No. 74 1933

because its whole function is as a malicious commentary on the things that we take for granted. Picasso's model reaches out to touch a sculpture which has been made in just this sort of way; it is replete with references to the 'art' of stuffed garments and the sort of anthropomorphic furniture which Giacometti made and which, on occasion, Picasso drew. But here again is a sort of art that Picasso did not wish, in reality, to fashion himself. There are two examples only of assemblage sculpture at this period. One is the *Construction with Glove* and the other is in the way that, perhaps only for the photographer Brassai's benefit (but one regretfully doubts this), he draped toys, rags, a doll and a cobbler's last over an iron figure in 1931.

A type of sculpture that does not appear in the *Volland Suite*, and which we now recognize to be the most important of all, is that which

Picasso made by open construction. This was an innovation, and one of those innovations in modern art that we recognize by its fuller developments in later artists. By constructed sculpture we mean that which is made from a neutral material, usually metal, which is welded together, or bolted, which depends on the putting together of discrete elements which had no prior significance. It is open, it is not dependent on a core, it is not dependent on human proportions, and it occupies space on its own terms. This type of sculpture may be figurative in some way, though that is a danger, and it may be representative; but it is not illustrative. It leaps away from the Cubist innovation of making still-life a sculptural subject by making the use of sculptural means into an abstract fact, an awkward addition to the world, with its own beauty. In constructive sculpture, the abstract formal qualities are the leading ones, whereas in assemblage the abstract qualities are the least important (so that it is essential to the functioning of an assemblage piece that one ignores the nullity of its composition). The best constructive sculpture is very frank about its construction, and is superbly without extra-artistic connotations. Picasso began to move into a situation where he was making sculpture of this sort around the end of the 1920s. The wire constructions anticipate constructed sculpture because of their openness, but the metal is not felt as having been worked – and the point of the wire seems to be not so much that the material is neutral as that it is immaterial; and so one wants to draw it in order to substantiate it.

At the time of the wire sculptures, Picasso had begun to see something of an old Spanish friend, the sculptor Julio González, slightly his elder. Like many Spanish sculptors, González was from a family of smiths. Picasso became interested in metalwork as a result of visiting his studio, and González showed him some techniques. The question of collaboration and influence is hard to determine. It is sometimes said that González was in some way responsible for the wire sculptures, but this can hardly be so. It does not take an expert knowledge of welding techniques to put wires together. At this stage, Picasso was primarily making use of the facilities in González's studio. His new interest in sculpture might also have been stimulated by Jacques Lipchitz rather than by González. Picasso visited Lipchitz in his studio, where he admired what he was doing. Lipchitz had been making transparent sculpture since 1925, as in his *Harlequins* and in