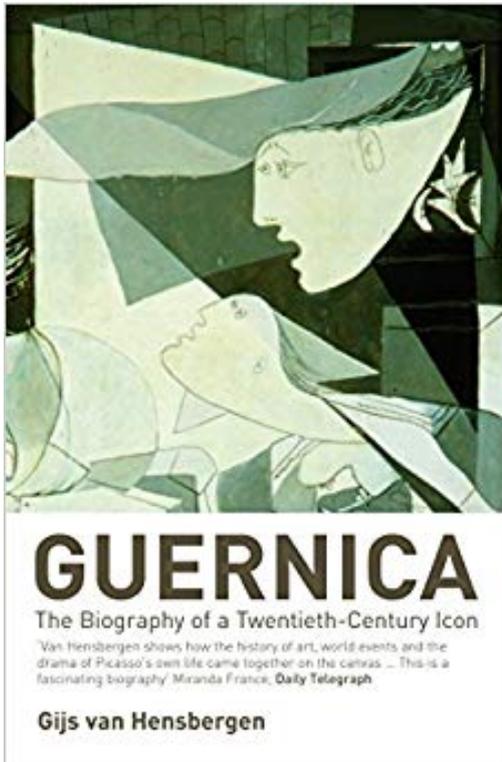


Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon *by* Gijs van Hensbergen



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Guernica relates the powerful story of Picasso's 1937 masterpiece, a painting that from its birth out of war and violence became known worldwide as a symbolic cry for peace. The acclaimed biographer of Gaudí traces the iconic painting's beginnings amid the Spanish Civil War through its use as a weapon in the propaganda battle against Fascism, through the years when it became the nucleus of the Museum of Modern Art's creation in New York, to its role as a symbol of reconciliation when it returned to Spain after the death of Franco, as democracy was reestablished.



Reviews of the *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon* *by* Gijs van Hensbergen

- WUNDERKIND

This an interesting informative book. It is well illustrated. I purchased it because I wanted to learn more about this great masterpiece. I was not disappointed; it answered many questions I had on the subject

- **Zorve**

To understand the making of this iconic painting, and the man who created it, one has to know the sociopolitical reality out of which it was born. The author painstakingly creates the grim realities of 1930s Spain and Europe, with the 'inevitable' rise of Fascism (based on choices made). That this painting still matters is underscored by world events today, but if we learn some of the lessons contained within this well written and researched book, the continued slaughter of our species on a large scale need not be inevitable.

- **Chinon**

Well laid-out discussion of the painting and its history. The depth of information is staggering, but this is a great reference for this very important work of art.

- **Nirn**

I bought this book for my wife, an art historian. She is very enthusiastic about it. Splendid research. The dust jacket unfolds into a handsome reproduction of the mural.

- **Yndanol**

Great book.

- **Marilbine**

A lot of dry and detailed information. Parts of book should be marked - " skip it". There was more information than what I wanted to know.

- **Uriel**

I found this book somewhat difficult to read, and had difficulty dealing with too much detail. It is good reading for an art historian.

Gijs van Hensbergen has contributed a fine volume to the libraries of books on the Atrocity of War, on the History of Spain under Franco's dictatorship, on the influence of Pablo Picasso on the development of the US as an art center after centuries of living in the shadow of Europe, of the Development of the very American art school of Abstract Expressionism, of the

rise and fall of Communism and its attendant 'McCarthy Era' of American isolationism, and ultimately of the journey of the infamous painting 'Guernica' from its creation in Paris to its world tour, its home in New York's Museum of Modern Art to its eventual return to the country that stimulated its creation - the Prado Museum in Madrid, Spain.

Long first sentence: long journey. The author of this fascinating book packs so much information into the well-illustrated story that 'Guernica' reads like a novel yet informs like a treatise. Initially painted by Picasso in 1937 in response to Franco's Nazi-assisted 'training lab' annihilation of the city of Gernika in the Basque region of Spain. 'Guernica' has become a symbol of the atrocity of war, the capability of man's inhumanity to man, and the global fear of self-destruction if we are not more in guardianship of the forces of war machines that continue to grind down the surface of this planet.

van Hensbergen writes so well that the amount of information contained in this readable tome never

overwhelms: it is just there as backup for every statement he makes. He firmly believes that 'Guernica' is the most important painting of the 20th Century, not only because of its critical breakthrough in the art world of the changes in representation (the Cubist movement), nor because of the rally against totalitarian force wherever it occurs (including the My-Lai atrocity with which the US bruised mankind in the Vietnam conflict, etc), but also because of the profound impact this painting had upon entering the USA, in easy access to the artists who responded to its power by developing the first truly original American art movement - Abstract Expressionism.

It is often said that the artist is the ultimate philosopher. Nowhere is this better stated than in this absorbing book about the power of a single painting on the course of history in the 20th Century. Highly recommended. Grady Harp, February 2005

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