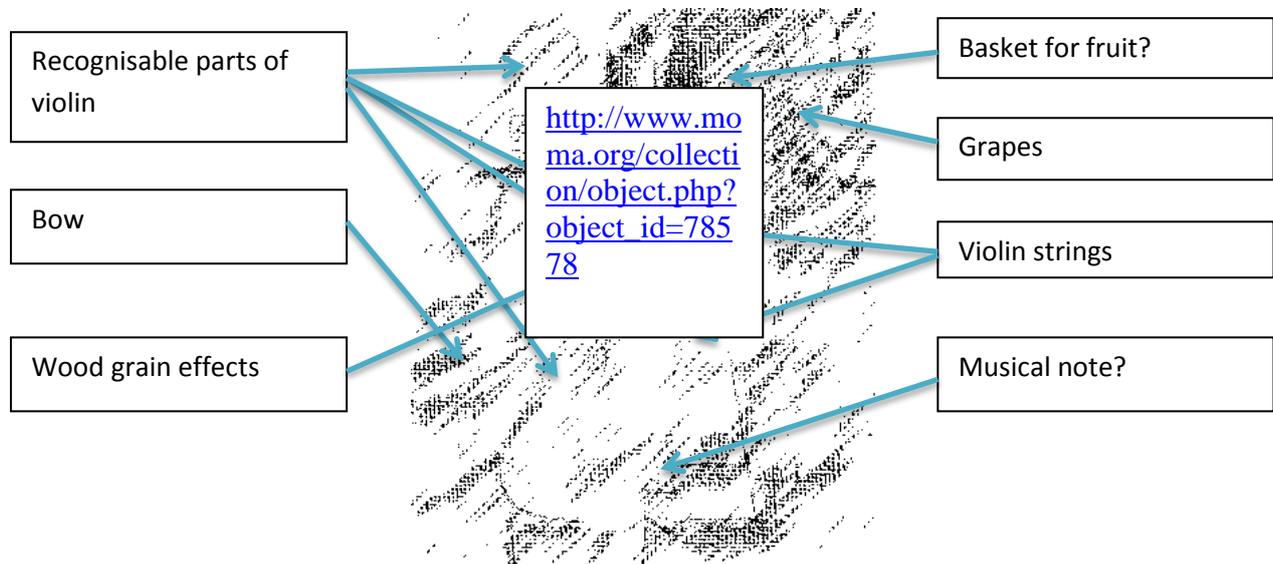


## Violin and Grapes by Pablo Picasso



*Oil on canvas, 1912, 61 x 50.8 cm, Museum of Modern Art New York*

*Photo removed for copyright purposes.*

- Not monotone, but not exactly colourful
- Recognisable parts of instrument
- No sense of perspective
- No recognisable background
- Fragmented appearance

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### Description

Parts of a violin are obvious in the painting, but it is not a simple representation of the subject. It appears as if the instrument has been broken into many pieces and rearranged on the canvas.

The use of colour in the painting is restricted. The grain of the wood in the violin has been represented by lines of a richer colour painted on to the base colour.

There is no recognisable background; all we can see in the painting are the parts of the violin and the grapes. The effect of this is to make the viewer concentrate on the subject of violin and grapes.

### Interpretation

HUGHES (1991 p20) describes how cubism was developed “to represent the fact that our knowledge of an object is made up of all possible views of it: top, sides, front, back” and represent this in one view.

I think that understanding this helps us to appreciate the painting, we are looking at the subject from different angles at the same time.

Earlier cubist paintings were more monochromatic, PENROSE (1991 p74) notes how in the course of 1912 “colour crept back into the monochrome field of high analytic cubism”. This can be seen in my chosen painting with the introduction of richer reddish hues.

I wanted to find out how the wood grain effect had been achieved in this painting. LEAL et al (2000 p160) explain that Braque “came up with the idea of using combs and varnish to imitate the veins of faux-bois” and Picasso followed suit. PENROSE (1991 p74) adds that “The addition of sand to paint, and the imitation of wood graining, created a textured and variegated surface”.

The brushwork is also of interest, it seems to be used to emphasise the geometrical nature of the representation. RICHARDSON (1996 p238) explains how some paintings “exhibit signs – brush strokes that go in contradictory directions, axial ambivalences – of having been worked on upside down, the right way up and sideways. This skews a viewer’s perceptions and heightens the ambivalence”.

## Evaluation

This is an interesting painting which demonstrates the development of cubism – the main elements of the subject are still recognisable (which would not be the case in later cubist paintings e.g. orphism) and the use of colour is starting to reappear.

But is the painting simply about a violin and some grapes? PENROSE (1991 p74) states that for Braque and Picasso “the incorporation of musical instruments was also a prime opportunity to indulge a taste they shared with Apollinaire for punning visual rhymes: between the guitar and a woman’s body or – when it is turned on end – a face”.

This concept of the painting being viewed on different planes is also picked up by RICHARDSON (1996 p238) who states that Picasso would tell one friend that a still-life should be viewed horizontally, then telling another that it should be vertical. In fact “that dichotomy was the point of the picture”.

As Florman from the Ohio State University states “Cubism was an art built out of, and sustained by, contradiction”.

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<http://nonsite.org/feature/different-facets-of-analytic-cubism>

## **Image Reference**

[http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=78578](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78578)