

ART AS A WAY OF SPREADING IDEAS: *GUERNICA* BY PICASSO

The Bull: Metamorphosis and Symbolism

Situated in the top left corner of *Guernica*, the large black and white bull serves as a symbol of the Nationalists.

Picasso's drafts show that the bull changed immensely. It started with cartoon-like innocence (Figure 1). Then, the bull's facial expression became more aggressive and threatening (Figure 2). Two more drafts show a dramatic change in that the bull's face became very human-like (Figures 3-4). Finally, in a later draft the bull has a less human but more menacing face (Figure 5). By the final product, the bull's face ended up being beastly, strong, and intimidating. This change is indicative of the careful planning that Picasso went through in order to portray each aspect of the painting in a certain way. The final result of the menacing appearance reinforces the interpretation as the bull being representative of Nationalist Spain.

In addition to being powerful and dangerous beasts, bulls are also iconic creatures of Spain. In the painting the bull appears healthy and looking away from the scene. This connects the bull with the way that the Nationalists attempted to cover up their involvement in the civilian atrocities of the Spanish Civil War. One interpretation outlined by Vicente Marrero states that "the bull signifies the cruelty and brutality which overshadow our time" (qtd. in Gottlieb 106). The contrast between the seemingly healthy bull and the death and devastation of the other figures clearly indicates a sympathetic feeling towards the victims and animosity towards the Nationalists.

Therefore, due to its inherent pacifist perspective, the painting can be seen as an "instrument" of peace. This serves a direct parallel to a quote in which Picasso described painting as "an instrument of war." Picasso was aware of the statement that his painting was making to advocate for peace and shows his disillusionment with violence.

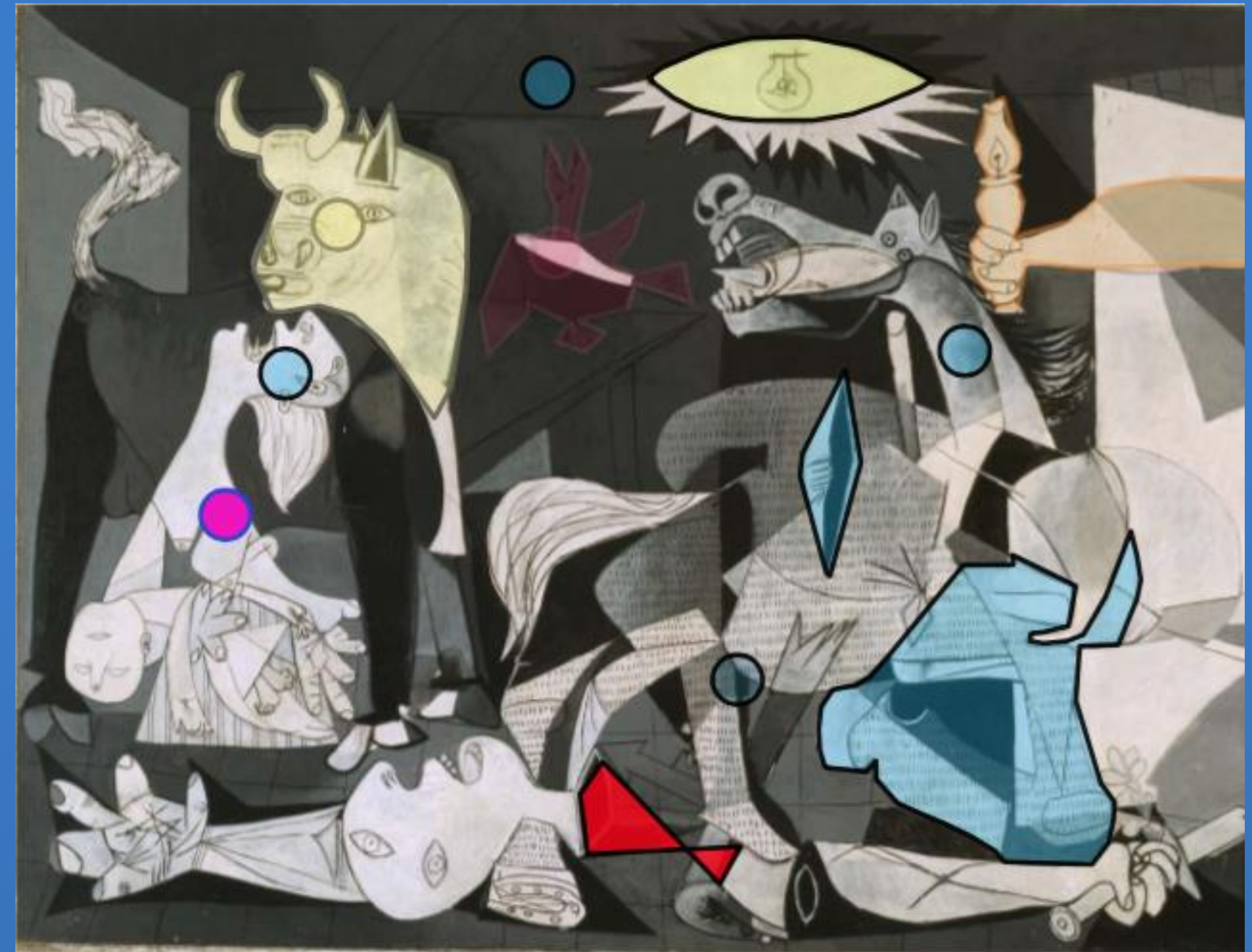


Figure 1 courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia



Figure 3 courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia



Figure 2 courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

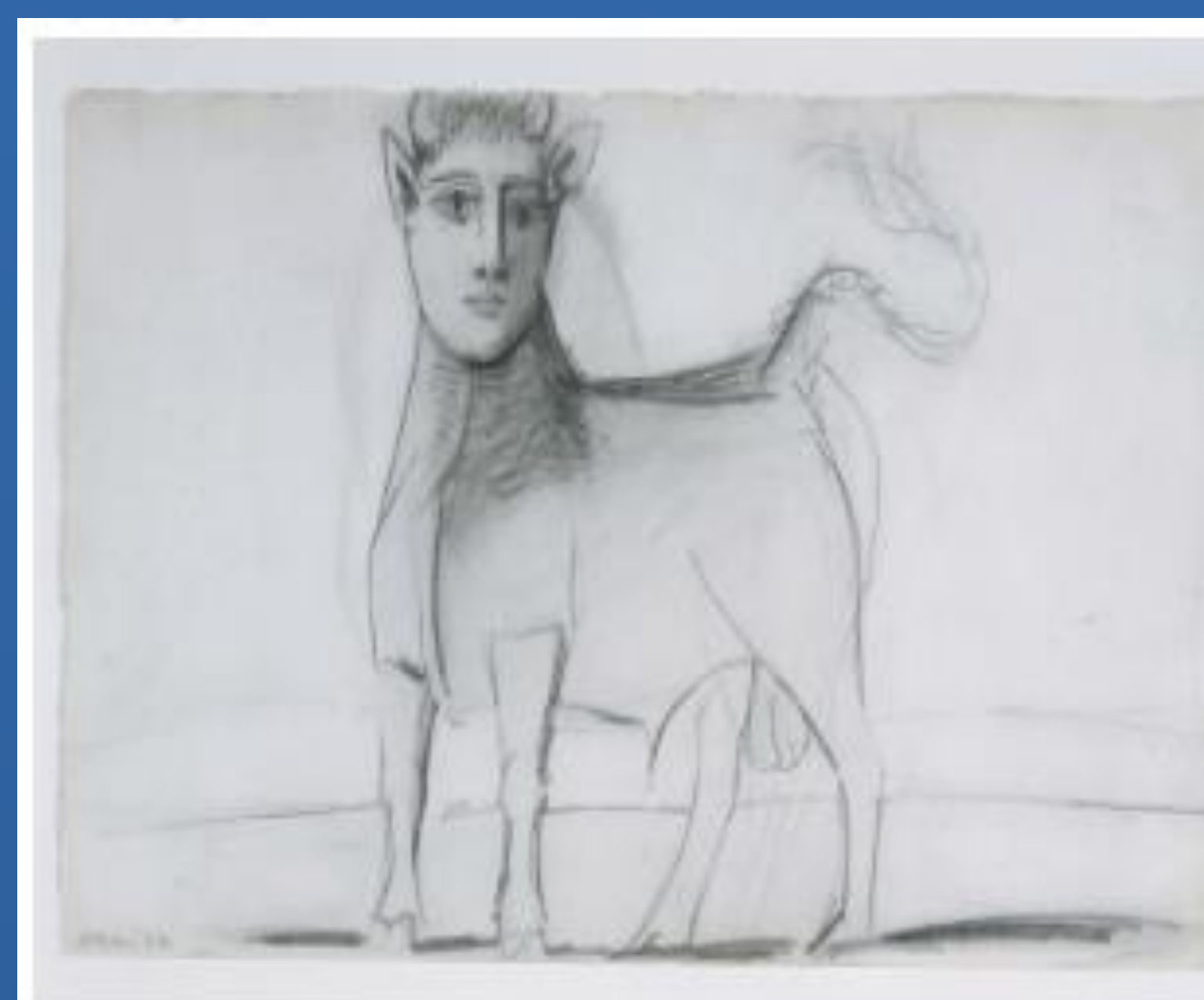
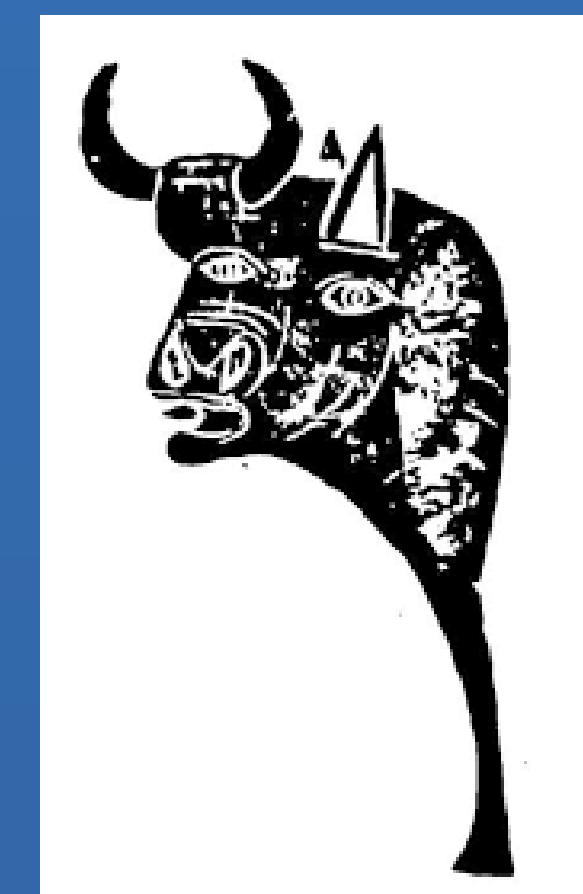


Figure 4 courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

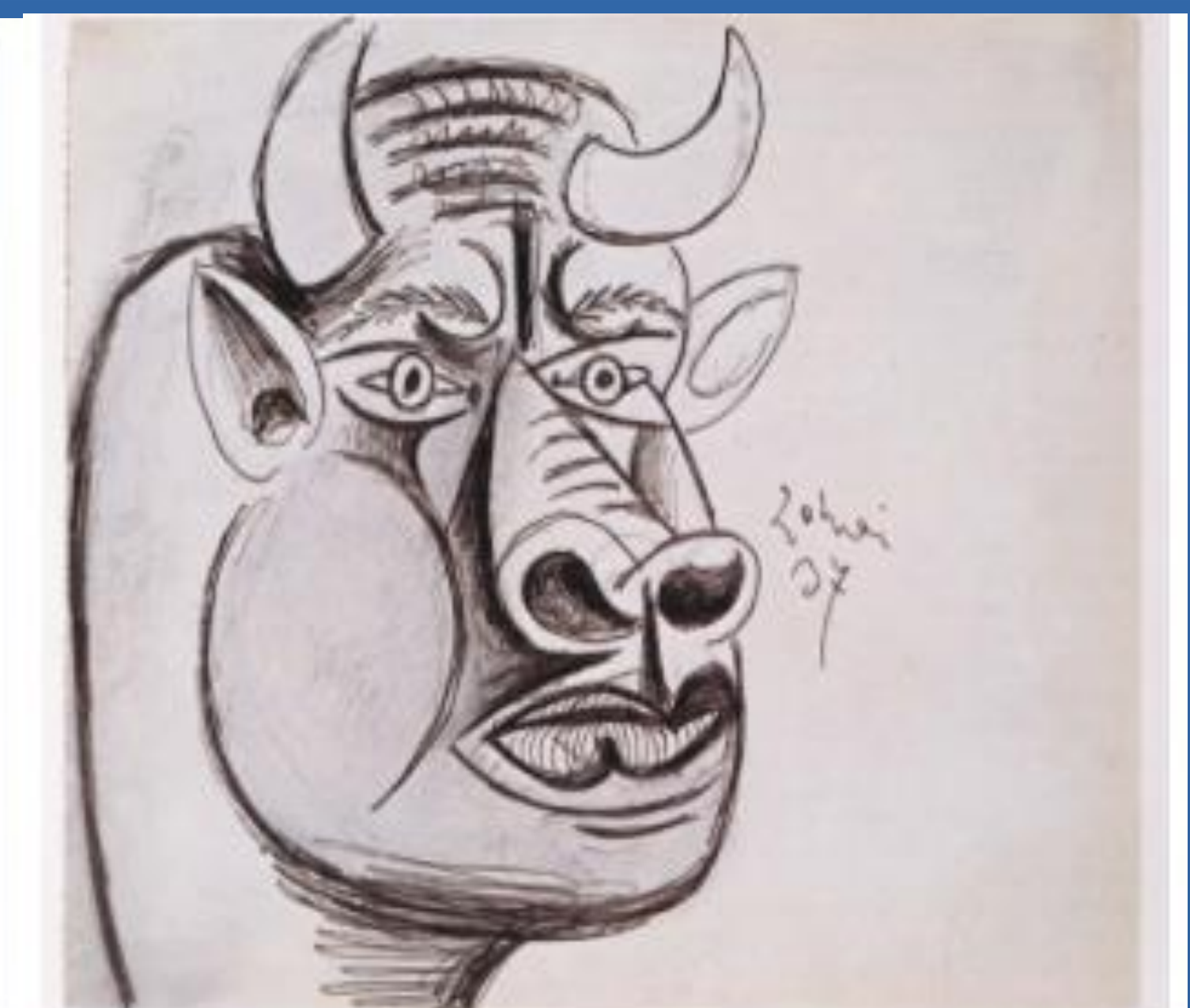


Figure 5 courtesy of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia