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September 2, 2014

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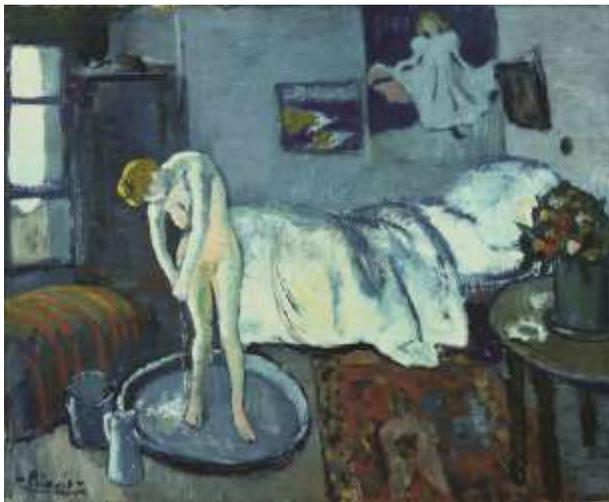
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**MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION BROADENS UNDERSTANDING OF PABLO PICASSO'S  
METHODS AND MATERIALS IN EARLY CAREER**

**Cornell University, National Gallery of Art, The Phillips Collection, and Winterthur  
Museum employ technical analysis in exploration of Picasso's masterwork *The Blue Room*.**

Washington, D.C.—In June, the image of an underpainting hidden beneath the surface of The Phillips Collection's *The Blue Room* (1901) by Pablo Picasso was publicized by the Associated Press to great international fanfare. Ongoing work to reveal details of the contemplative man painted in the hidden image—his facial features, dress and identity—has been part of a years-long collaboration between the Phillips, Cornell University, National Gallery of Art, and Winterthur Museum.



Pablo Picasso, *The Blue Room*, 1901. Oil on canvas, 19 7/8 x 24 1/4 in. Acquired 1927. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.  
© Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Driven by the Phillips, the research and technical analysis shared between these four exceptional institutions has also helped to yield a broader understanding of a 20th century master and his early artistic process. The technical details of this scientific analysis will be presented by Winterthur Museum's Dr. Jennifer Mass at the Synchrotron Radiation and Neutrons in Art and Archaeology Meeting (SR2A 2014) in Paris, September 9–12. The presentation will address the palette and painting methods Picasso used for the two works and the relationship between those palettes. The presentation will also explore the wealth of information acquired through the combination of the cross-section studies, molecular analyses, hyperspectral reflectance imaging, and XRF imaging.

The Phillips hopes that the collaborating institutions will continue their research efforts as the museum prepares for a 2017 exhibition that centers on *The Blue Room*, curated by Associate Curator for Research Dr. Susan Behrends Frank. Picasso scholar Marilyn McCully is collaborating on the concept of the exhibition, especially contributing to those aspects which relate to Picasso's artistic practice at this early point in his career.

### **THE BLUE ROOM—AN EARLY MASTERWORK**

Acquired by The Phillips Collection in 1928, *The Blue Room* is celebrated as one of Picasso's earliest masterworks. The painting holds a seminal position in Picasso's career, created at a time when the young artist was trying on different artistic personalities as a 19-year-old prodigy on his way to becoming an artistic titan of the 20th century. It is both summary painting and origin painting—situated at a critical juncture during Picasso's second trip to Paris, when he had assimilated the influences of the work of his French heroes and contemporaries into a single work that is wholly his own voice, reflecting on the art of his time. An iconic work that is one of the earliest Blue Period paintings, *The Blue Room* is both a synthesis of the bather and toilette themes laced with the symbolist overtones of the time and also the first manifestation of the model in the studio in Picasso's oeuvre, a subject that will obsess the artist throughout his life. It is also representative of a completely new experiment in picture-making for the young Picasso, where the space of the room is conceived as part of the narrative and variable perspectives are combined in new ways. Painted in the fall of 1901, *The Blue Room* is an historic masterwork essential to our understanding of Picasso's pictorial vision—a work that speaks essential truths about Picasso's art at the end of one century while looking forward to a new era.

### **COLLABORATIVE ANALYSIS**



Infrared of Pablo Picasso's *The Blue Room* (1901). © 2008 The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

The collaborative study of Picasso's *The Blue Room* has been ongoing for several decades. In 1979—and again in 1997—the National Gallery of Art's Senior Paintings Conservator Ann Hoenigswald investigated the painting knowing that it was one of many multi-layered works that the artist created.

The Phillips Collection's Associate Conservator Patricia Favero began studying *The Blue Room* in 2007. X-ray and infrared examinations carried out in the 1990s had hinted at another composition beneath the painting, but did not yield a clear image of the hidden work. Favero invited the National Gallery's Senior Imaging Scientist Dr. John Delaney to further examine *The Blue Room* with spectral imaging. Delaney had previously found that using selective portions of the near infrared provided good images of paintings hidden beneath some of Picasso's other Blue Period

works. After their consultation, Favero and Delaney applied similar imaging methods to *The Blue Room*—using the Phillips' infrared camera and a longwave-pass spectral filter—and obtained a clear image of the face and torso of a man underneath the painting. Delaney returned to the Phillips to continue imaging efforts in 2012, leveraging his recent developments in reflectance imaging spectroscopy and using the Gallery's one-of-kind multi- and hyperspectral imaging cameras to further examine the hidden portrait.

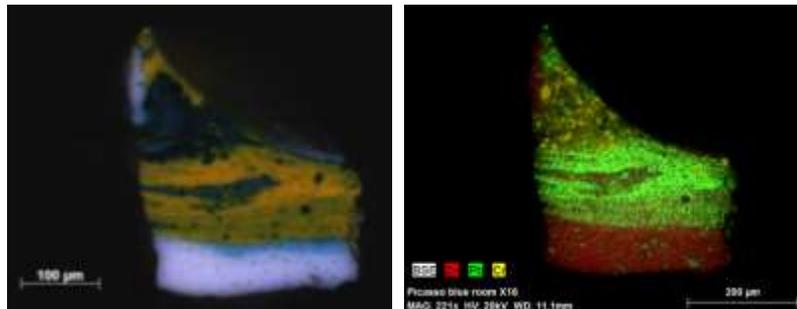


False color near infrared image obtained by hyperspectral imaging (960 to 1680 nm) highlighting Prussian Blue pigment distribution in orange. © 2014 National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

In the spring of 2012, Favero contacted Winterthur's Senior Conservation Scientist Dr. Jennifer Mass to

enlist her assistance with performing noninvasive X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis of *The Blue Room*. Mass and Favero then removed 12 tiny samples of paint from the canvas so that the buried pigments could be identified using molecular analysis techniques at Winterthur’s laboratory. These samples—the size of a typical period printed in *The New York Times*—were analyzed by Mass and undergraduate research assistant Alyssa Hull, a University of Delaware student who wrote her senior thesis on *The Blue Room*.

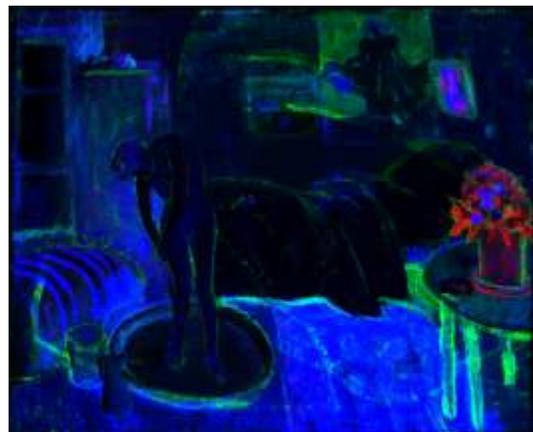
“We have to determine which pigments were used for the different parts of the composition to ultimately reproduce the painting in color,” Mass said. “An artist’s palette is built up by identifying the elements in the paint, which can then be matched with corresponding artists’ pigments.”



Left: Paint sample from Picasso’s *The Blue Room* (1901) showing how yellow, blue, and green paints were mixed while still wet to create a variegated effect. Right: X-ray map showing zinc, chromium, and lead-containing pigments. © 2014 Jennifer Mass, Winterthur Museum

Mass facilitated the art-meets-science collaboration by introducing Favero to Dr. Arthur Woll, a Cornell High Energy Synchrotron Source (CHESS) staff scientist with whom she had worked on previous painting scans. Woll and Favero coordinated bringing *The Blue Room* to Cornell University, where it was scanned with a XRF detector called Maia to supplement the infrared imaging that had originally revealed the hidden painting. Maia is an exceptionally fast X-ray detector that distinguishes spectral signatures of different elements, such as mercury, iron and cobalt, which can provide evidence of exactly which materials and subsequent colors artists used in their work. Maia is particularly ideal for scanning art, as it captures unprecedented spatial details very quickly, limiting risk of damage to delicate works.

“Infrared still gives the best fidelity images of this portrait, because it can see clean through many paints,” Woll said. “But the disadvantage is that there’s a fair amount of interpretation involved in knowing what’s creating the contrasts in the images. By giving scanners further clues about coloration, XRF can help match a concealed portrait with other Picasso works from the same period.”



X-ray fluorescence intensity map with chromium-containing pigments shown in red, iron-containing pigments shown in green, and mercury-containing pigments shown in blue. © 2014 Cornell High Energy Synchrotron Source, Ithaca, NY.

In addition to these various technical analyses, Favero spent numerous hours examining the painting in the Phillips’s conservation studio, seeking to understand Picasso’s process.

“The collaboration between the institutions and experts involved in this project has allowed us to make great strides in our understanding of *The Blue Room* and Picasso’s materials and methods for painting it and the hidden portrait,” Favero said. “In addition to identifying the man in the portrait, we want to determine the pigments in the hidden painting to get a better idea of what the composition may have looked like in color.”

### **FITTING THE PIECES TOGETHER**

On April 21, 2014, The Phillips Collection arranged an informal gathering of all the project participants to review the results of technical study that has been carried out thus far on *The Blue Room*. Each of the collaborating conservation scientists and their teams gave short presentations summarizing the results of their analyses. Their conversation revealed much about the early Blue Period work, including that the portrait, though unsigned, appears to be a completed picture. Further, the pigments used in both paintings are identical, increasing the likelihood that both were painted by Picasso’s hand.

The team found large areas of unmixed color and some evidence that Picasso mixed colors “wet-into-wet”—that is, wet paint blended directly on the canvas—in the hidden painting. Upper paint layers appear to be more deliberately mixed, and while there is some degree of “wet-into-wet” mixing in *The Blue Room*, it appears Picasso was doing more mixing of the paint on his palette before applying it to the canvas. Also, examination of the painting through the microscope and analysis of paint cross-sections found no obvious “picking up” of wet paint from the hidden painting, strongly suggesting the paint of the portrait was mostly dry when Picasso painted over it, possibly with as little as three or four months in between.

“Each analytical technique yielded excellent and illuminating new information about both Picasso’s early Blue Period masterpiece and the portrait underneath,” Favero said. “But it took collaboration of all parties to be able to draw additional, important conclusions about the picture”

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### **ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

The Phillips Collection is one of the world’s most distinguished collections of impressionist and modern American and European art. Stressing the continuity between art of the past and present, it offers a strikingly original and experimental approach to modern art by combining works of different nationalities and periods in displays that change frequently. The setting is similarly unconventional, featuring small rooms, a domestic scale, and a personal atmosphere. Artists represented in the collection include Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Claude Monet, Honoré Daumier, Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Mark Rothko, Milton Avery, Jacob Lawrence, and Richard Diebenkorn, among others. The Phillips Collection, America’s first museum of modern

art, has an active collecting program and regularly organizes acclaimed special exhibitions, many of which travel internationally. The Intersections series features projects by contemporary artists, responding to art and spaces in the museum. The Phillips also produces award-winning education programs for K–12 teachers and students, as well as for adults. The museum’s Center for the Study of Modern Art explores new ways of thinking about art and the nature of creativity, through artist visits and lectures, and provides a forum for scholars through courses, postdoctoral fellowships, and internships. Since 1941, the museum has hosted Sunday Concerts in its wood-paneled Music Room. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART**

The National Gallery of Art preserves, collects, exhibits, and fosters understanding of works of art at the highest possible museum and scholarly standards. Masterworks by the most renowned European and American artists await visitors to the National Gallery of Art, one of the world's preeminent art museums. The Gallery’s collection of some 130,000 paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture, medals, and decorative arts traces the development of Western art from the Middle Ages to the present. Open to the public free of charge, the Gallery was created for the people of the United States of America by a joint resolution of Congress accepting the gift of Andrew W. Mellon in 1937. Special programs for all ages engage visitors to the Gallery every day, while temporary exhibitions spanning the world and the history of art are presented year-round.

#### **ABOUT WINTERTHUR MUSEUM, GARDEN AND LIBRARY**

Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic gardens, and research library for the study of American art and material culture—offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year. General admission includes a tour of some of the most notable spaces in the 175-room house as well as access to the Winterthur Garden and Galleries, special exhibitions, a narrated tram tour (weather permitting), the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens, and the Enchanted Woods children’s garden. \$20 adults; \$18 for students and seniors; \$5 for ages 2–11. Tickets are valid for two consecutive days except for timed tickets to view Costumes of Downton Abbey; reservations for timed tickets must be made in advance of each visit to the exhibition. Museum hours are 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Tuesday–Sunday. Winterthur, located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1, is closed on Mondays (except during Yuletide), Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883, 302.888.4600, or TTY 302.888.4907, or visit [winterthur.org](http://winterthur.org).

#### **ABOUT CORNELL HIGH ENERGY SYNCHROTRON SOURCE (CHESS)**

The Cornell High Energy Synchrotron Source, or CHESS, is a high-intensity X-ray source supported by the National Science Foundation which provides our users state-of-the-art synchrotron radiation facilities for research in physics, chemistry, biology, and environmental and materials sciences. Located at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., CHESS encompasses a multifaceted research and development program with a wide spectrum of experimental groups from universities, national laboratories and industry.