

an ever diminishing supply of utopias to nourish it on the way but not for this reason any less hopeful. *The Grotesque Factor* analyses the mindset used by artists to portray a private or public world which they do not like.

In one way or another, and with a greater or lesser degree of social acceptance, in 19th century France this interest in social failure, in what lay outside the prevailing order and in emphasising hypocrisy or prejudice resulted in a school of satirists that undertook a superb exercise of political and social critique. With the dawn of the dazzling and paradoxical 20th century their banner was taken up by Picasso's set in Montmartre, by Tristan Tzara's Dadaists in Zurich and by the Berliners from Dix to Schwitters, politicised by World War I.

A century later it is interesting to appreciate that this 'after-taste' for the grotesque would never entirely disappear once it had become a recognised mode and a visually necessary condition for understanding and undertaking artistic activity. It has thus been assimilated and accepted by the creative community as a way of offering a critical representation of the private or the public, evident here in works by seemingly very different contemporary artists such as Franz West, Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall and Bill Viola.



**René Magritte (1898–1967)**  
*High Society*, 1965–66  
Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm  
Colección Telefónica

#### OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm  
Friday to Saturday, 10 am to 9 pm  
Sunday and public holidays, 10 am to 8 pm  
24 and 31 December, 10 am to 3 pm  
Closed on Monday, 25 December and 1 January

#### ADMISSION FEES

Permanent collection: 6 euros  
Temporary exhibition: 4.5 euros  
Combined ticket: 9 euros  
Ticket sales cease 30 minutes before closing time

#### REDUCED FEES (50 %)

Visitors over 65  
Students under 26 with valid identification  
Groups of 20 people (by appointment)

#### FREE ADMISSION

Unemployed registered at SEPE  
Youths aged 18 and younger children (under 13 accompanied by an adult)  
Holders of EURO<  
Students of the Universidad de Málaga with valid identification  
ICOM members  
On Sundays between 6 pm and 8 pm  
October 27th, Anniversary of the Museo Picasso Málaga

#### ADVANCED TICKET SALES

Tickets may be bought in advance by calling (34) 902 360 295 or online at [www.uniticket.es](http://www.uniticket.es). Advance tickets are retrieved on the day of visit at the Museum's ticket desk, upon compulsory presentation of a credit card and a valid identity card or passport. The Museum and Unicaja decline any liability in the event of loss or theft of tickets. Tickets once bought may not be cancelled, replaced or refunded

Guided visits to the exhibition *The Grotesque Factor* in Spanish every Thursday at 6 pm. For other guided visits, please contact: [educacion@mpicassom.org](mailto:educacion@mpicassom.org)

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#### Cover (detail):

**Honoré Daumier (1808–79)**  
*The Past, the Present and the Future in La Caricature*, no. 166  
Paris, 1834. Lithograph, 21.4 x 19.6 cm  
Bibliothèque nationale de France



*Le passé. Le présent. L'avenir.*

museo **PICASSO** Málaga

**The Grotesque Factor**

22.10.2012 - 10.02.2013

museo **PICASSO** Málaga





**Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)**  
*Two Grotesque Profiles Confronted, 1485–90*  
 Pen and ink with wash, 16 x 14 cm  
 The Royal Collection

This exhibition *The Grotesque Factor* brings together works created over the past 500 years by more than 74 European and American artists. It aims to offer a survey of the complexity within the variety of interpretations of what is known in artistic and aesthetic terms as 'the grotesque'. As such, the exhibition intends to emphasise the semantic and cultural ambiguity of the works of art analysed and to reveal their heterogeneous nature, involving abrupt changes of register between scorn and compassion, laughter and tears, empathy and ridicule, and fear and tenderness. Overall, it is both the rejection and acceptance of what we are.

The grotesque is the name given to these realms of modern sensibility. It is popularly thought to have come to light in the mid 15th century under the floors of Rome with the discovery of the decoration on the painted walls of the Domus Aurea built by Emperor Nero in the 1st century AD. These walls were decorated with images of weightless, hybrid creatures and fantastical architectural compositions. Taking its starting point from this discovery, over the following centuries the allusions to the Pompeian style spread throughout Europe.

First manifesting itself as a decorative mode, the grotesque in art gradually expanded its meanings and came to take its place as a modern cultural term for iconographical description and interpretation in the Romantic era. It is located outside the dichotomous realm of beauty and ugliness, concepts which, like the one in question here, also arose in relation to political and social criteria as well as aesthetic



**Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761–1845)**  
*A Gathering of Thirty-five Expressive Heads, c. 1823–28*  
 Oil on paper mounted on wood, 19 x 25 cm  
 MUBa Eugène Leroy Tourcoing

ones. Ugliness is insufficiency in relation to beauty. Here lies the core of the grotesque, the opposite of which is grace in the sense of a factor and not a virtue or inherent defect: a temporal consequence rather than an intention or characteristic that endures over time. In order for clumsiness to provoke jest it has to stumble or blunder. It is thus the result that is important; the work rather than its creator's intention. These works allude to the ornamental, the comical or the degraded.

In the present day the habitual way of understanding 'the grotesque' is still different with regard to northern and southern European art and has even given rise to heated debate among professionals. What is acceptable in one place is not in another: the importance and influence of George Grosz in Germany, for example, contrasts with that of Honoré Daumier in France, while the symbolic weight of Goya in Spain differs from that of Hogarth in Great Britain. It is the context that determines the different modes of 'behaviour'.

These differences can be explained by the fact that grotesque as a category in art has experienced a varied and complex evolution, encouraging subjective interpretations. Appreciation of popular culture gave rise to a conviction that ordinary people's sentiments did not necessarily have to be totally ignored. The result was the emergence of an artist such as Hogarth, who frequented aristocratic salons, and of various generations of outstanding caricaturists who offered a critical chronicle of British society inspired by Hogarth's legacy. These artists looked for direct emotions and vivid characters



**Thomas Schütte (b. 1954)**  
*Old Friends, 1992 (copies of 1993)*  
 12 colour photographs, 86.8 x 71.8 cm (each)  
 Landesbank Baden-Württemberg Collections

in the coarse, damp world of taverns and the mean, lamp-lit, nocturnal alleyways of the new and growing industrial cities. Goya for his part visited Spain's terrible mental asylums, in a country where the Enlightenment was never particularly favoured. Francis Bacon created an entire lifestyle out of transgressing conventions, creating a unique type of painting by delving fearlessly and intensely into the dark side of excess.

What, then, is the grotesque in art? Described on some occasions as exaggerated, on others as distorted or as close to satire or even to incongruity, the realm of the grotesque encompasses a field of flexible, still open knowledge and offers many doors onto as yet undiscovered mysteries and untold jokes, as J. J. Grandville aptly related in *Scenes from the Private and Public Life of Animals*, or Rodolphe Bresdin masterfully disguised in his print *The Good Samaritan*.

How can the final verdict be delivered in order to encompass the moment of death in a single description or definitive image? Where will we encounter the ultimate portrait of human stupidity? What subject should be chosen in order to rage against a social ill? Neither plague nor war, neither madness nor stupidity have succeeded in doing away with a European culture that – as this exhibition sets out to show – has been able over the past 500 years to construct endless critical spaces from which to abandon what had become culturally stale and to deploy the force of its marginal position to fix its sights on a new dawn, possibly with