



Pablo Picasso, *Weeping Woman*, 1937, oil on canvas, 59.7 x 48.9 cm, Tate, London

Weeping Women

A Madonna, her face devastated by weeping—the exact opposite of any by Raphael—that is how Dora Maar, one of Picasso’s lovers and the only intellectual among them, saw herself painted again and again. Her death at eighty-nine, in 1997, was as discreet as her life. Perhaps the muffled echoes of her sobs would be inaudible to us had not Picasso insisted on portraying her with her face deformed by convulsive weeping. He met her in January 1936 at the Café des Deux Magots in Paris, and was fascinated to observe that, as she listened to him, Maar entertained herself by stabbing a knife between the open fingers of her lace-gloved hand.

Not all women know how to weep like Maar, the mysterious Surrealist of the inconsolable lament. As a Spaniard, Picasso was surely able to see in her the icon of the Virgin Mary in her manifestation as the Mater Dolorosa, represented with seven daggers in her heart and known in Spain as the Virgen de la Soledad, the Virgin of Solitude. Baudelaire dedicated one of his poems in his *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857; *Flowers of Evil*) to a Madonna, subtitling it: “Votive offering in the Spanish taste.” The poem dwells on the process of decking out the sobbing Virgin, ending with the remorseful “black voluptuousness” of the seven deadly sins and thrusting seven well-sharpened daggers into the “deepest part of her love.” Can there be anyone who has not seen moving icons of this Mater Dolorosa in Western art? And can anyone deny the primacy of the Spaniards and the Neapolitans when it comes to the artistic representation of the abysmal depths of this lament? One unforgettable example was painted by the Spaniard Ribera in Naples during the 1630s (*Mater Dolorosa*, 1638, Staatliche Museen Kassel). And in another artistic sphere, there is the musical masterpiece *Stabat Mater* (1736), commissioned by the brotherhood of Santa Maria dei Sette Dolori and composed on his deathbed by the Neapolitan Giovanni Battista Pergolesi.



Julio González, *The Montserrat*, ca. 1936–37, wrought and welded iron, 165 x 47 x 47 cm, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Long before the spread of Christianity, Mediterranean culture was saturated with matriarchal symbols. One of the most atavistic matriarchal functions is to weep for the dead. Professional mourners, a chorus of women, keep open the floodgates of grief; it makes perfect sense that those who bring children into the world with pain should bid farewell to them with loud lamentation. What Christianity contributed was a sense of the intimacy and loneliness of maternal grief. This finds full expression in the Virgin of Solitude, which in southern Spain was to become a key icon regularly carried in processions during Holy Week celebrations. Cults of the Virgin spread widely throughout Spain during the Counter-Reformation, and—in kinship with profane myth—retained their relevance outside strictly religious beliefs. It is rare to find a seventeenth-century Spanish painter who did not take on the Virgin of Solitude, the Pietà, or other images of matriarchal tears, including devotional ones of saints or hermits, whose tears became personally emblematic. The strength of this archetype persisted in modern and contemporary Spanish art, transmitting its holy strength to secularized settings. Julio González's *Montserrat* works are a case in point, but so too are the crying women of Picasso, the starting point of all our observations. The Virgin of Montserrat is the patron of Catalonia, the region where González was born, while the Virgin of Solitude is a central cult in Andalusia, where Picasso grew up. To use Baudelaire's words, each of



Pedro de Mena, *Mater Dolorosa*, ca. 1658–70, polychromed wood, 66 x 61 x 30 cm, Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla

these works is a “votive offering in the Spanish taste,” expressing grief but also linking it to despair and rage. These faces deformed by convulsive weeping do not speak of a woman's patient resignation to the bitter destiny of loss; they curse that fate. This is, in my view, the difference between female iconography in Spain and the theatrical genre that took hold in eighteenth-century France under the expressive name of *comédie larmoyante*, or tearful comedy, and alluded to the force of sentiment but did so in the much more elastic realm of amorous intrigue. The Mater Dolorosa, the Virgin of Solitude, is no randomly dissipated image, but is tragically centered on the one essential erotic relationship, the bonding of mother and son, in which maternal grief is channeled vertically upward from the foot of the sacrifice. F. C. S.

LUIS TRISTÁN DE ESCAMILLA (ca. 1585/1590–1624)

Santa Llorosa, 1616

Oil on canvas, 42 x 40 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

PROVENANCE: Parroquia de San Benito Abad; Yepes (Toledo), Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, since 1937.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Sánchez Cantón 1948, pp. 63, 139; Lafuente Ferrari 1953, p. 229; Jacob 1961, vol. 1, pp. 143–44 and vol. 2, p. 344, no. 3n; Jacob 1967, p. 125; Angulo-Pérez Sánchez 1972, pp. 144–45; Toledo 1982, no. 190; Marías, 1989, p. 510; Ayala Mallory 1991, p. 61; Pérez Sánchez 1992, pp. 128–29; Pérez Sánchez Navarrete, 2001, pp. 74, 88, 204, no. 22.

The bust shown here belongs, like *Santa Monica* (1616, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid), to the group of canvases commissioned from Luis Tristán on May 5, 1615, for the great altar at the parish church of Yepes. *Santa Magdalene* and *Santa Monica* are smaller works, as are six other half-length figures of male and female saints painted by Tristán.¹ The canvas exhibited here has been replaced in the altarpiece by its copy.

Sabine Jacob contends that the image of *Santa Llorosa* reveals Tristán's formal knowledge of Titian's representations of the *Mater Dolorosa* (ca. 1555), kept at the Spanish Royal Collections (now the Museo Nacional del Prado). The highly finished technique and light tonalities evoke, according to Jacob, the manner and style of Juan Bautista Mayno. Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, however, associates the iconography and formal qualities of the half-length saint with works by Guido Reni.

Like *Santa Monica*, *Santa Llorosa* has no attributes that might aid in her identification; she is simply portrayed as a "weeping woman." In a 1939 exhibition at the Prado, this figure was first titled *Santa Llorosa*; later Diego Ángulo Iñiguez and Alonso E. Perez Sánchez labeled it *Saint Magdalene*, with a question mark; and Sabine Jacob titled it *Widow Saint*. The saint holds a handkerchief painted in the manner of Tristán's master, El Greco, with abundant white paste. Only the youthful and noble countenance of the young saint make possible its identification as Magdalene, who lifts her gaze up to scenes with Christ and weeps for the Passion. Placed at the same height as *Santa Monica*, *Santa Llorosa* occupied the extreme opposite location in the altarpiece, on the right band, which explains why she faces left. A. R.

¹ All of the works in the series were brought to the Prado in 1936, having been damaged during the Spanish Civil War. They were restored and returned to the altar at Yepes in 1942, after they were exhibited at the Prado in 1939. The Prado kept the originals of *Santa Llorosa* and *Santa Monica*, installing copies at the church that were made in its own restoration workshop. Tristán's *Saint Sebastian* was lost and has currently been replaced by a partial copy of the Saint Sebastian from Sodoma, a work kept at the Galleria Nazionale di Brera in Milan.



JOSÉ DE RIBERA (1591–1652)

Saint Mary of Egypt, 1651

Oil on canvas, 88 x 71 cm

Signed and dated: Jusepe de Ribera español / F 1651

Museo Civico Gaetano Filangieri, Naples

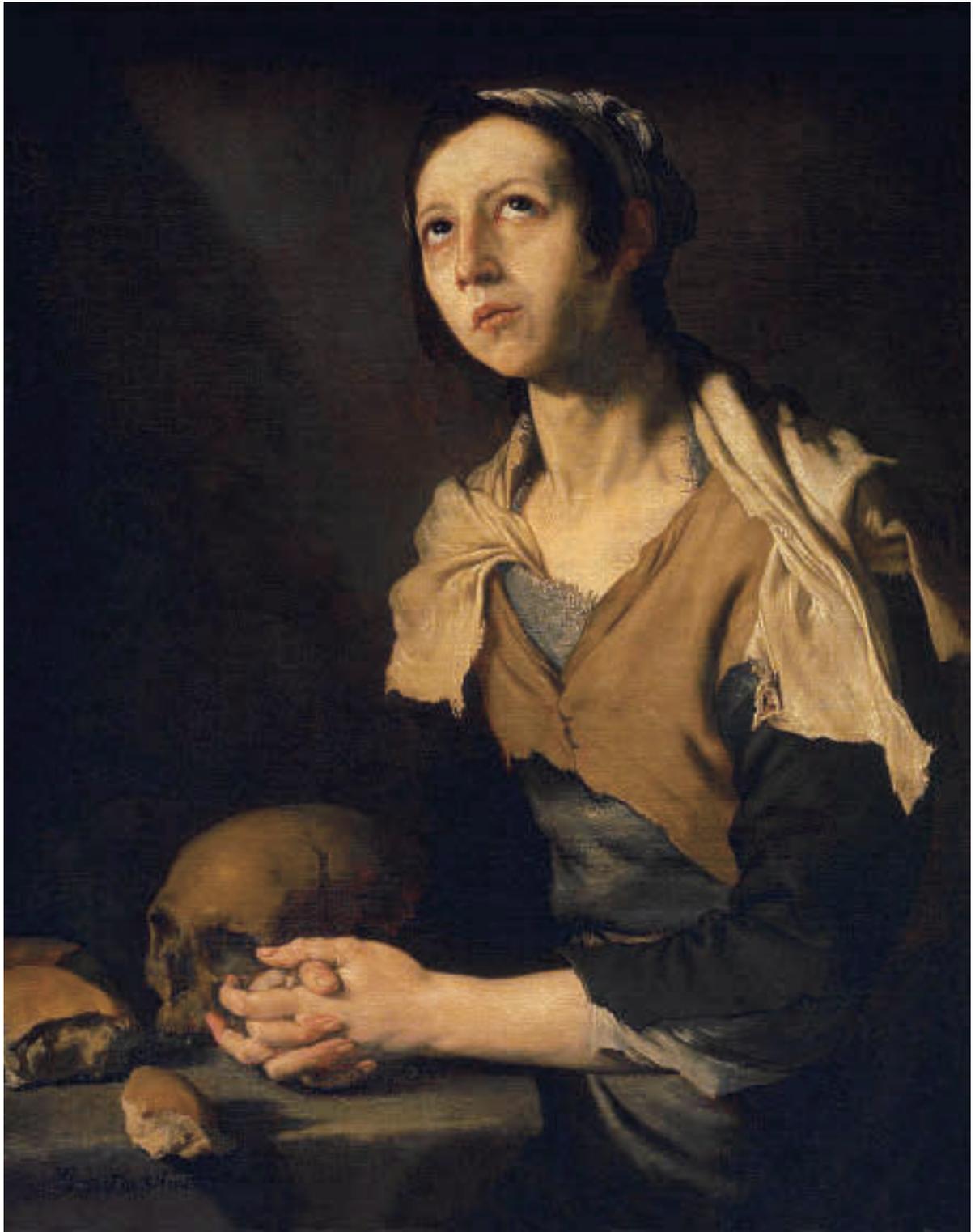
PROVENANCE: Duque de Miranda Collection, Naples.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Trapier 1952, p. 217; Gaya Nuño 1958, no. 2409; Felton 1971, pp. 321–23, no. AIII; Spinosa 1978, no. 206; Fort Worth 1982, pp. 230–32; Benito Doménech 1991, pp. 178–79; Madrid 1992B, no. 125; New York 1992, pp. 158–59; Scholz-Hänsel 2000, pp. 90–91; Spinosa 2003, A304.

Saint Mary of Egypt had reputedly been a courtesan for seventeen years before she traveled to Jerusalem and converted to Christianity. At that point she promised before an image of the Virgin to live the rest of her life in penitence and retired to the Transjordanian Desert. For forty-seven years thereafter she punished herself by severe abstinence, eating only three loaves of bread during the entire period. Bread became the frequent attribute of the saint, whose corpse was buried by three lions.

Ribera represented the hermit Saint Mary on several occasions, although he used very different human models in each case. In 1641, for example, he depicted the saint as an old woman (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid). For the canvas in Naples (of which there are two replicas),¹ however, he chose a beautiful young woman, identified by some scholars as the artist's daughter. In this canvas, which he completed only a few weeks before his death, Ribera shows the saint in a rather different light, omitting the harsher effects of penitence. Although he portrays the pain and suffering of a lifetime of renunciation, these have not yet left a mark on the saint's body. Her countenance expresses softer emotions: with teary eyes she lifts her gaze to heaven, where a diffuse light descends to emphasize her figure against a dark background. Immersed in meditation, the saint rests on a stone bench that displays the standard *vanitas* motif of the skull as well as the bread. Of the three loaves that Saint Mary of Egypt bought with money given her by a charitable stranger, only two remain. A. R.

¹ The replicas are in the collections of the Muzeul National de Arta al României, Bucharest, and the Convento de San Giuseppe dei Cappuccini, Bologna.



BARTOLOMÉ ESTEBAN MURILLO (1617–1682)*Our Lady of Sorrows*, ca. 1660

Oil on canvas, 163 x 105 cm
 Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville

PROVENANCE: José María Guerediain, Irún; Guildhall, London, 1901; Gaston Linden, 1907; acquired by the Marquis de Larios, 1913; donation by the Marchioness Widow de Larios to the Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes, Seville, 1949.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Angulo 1981, vol. 1, p. 426 and vol. 2, no. 259; Valdivieso 1982, pp. 52–53; Ayala Mallory 1983, p. 46; Valdivieso 1993, pp. 182.

It is difficult to interpret the iconography of this Virgin, shown here full-length, alone, and without attributes in the manner of the Virgin of Solitude. Her posture suggests the suffering Mother of God on the way to Calvary or beside the cross after the death of Christ, much like a Virgin of Pity, but shown seeking solace from heaven without the body of Christ. The painting was probably paired with an *Ecce Homo*, the usual pendant of the afflicted *Our Lady of Sorrows* who suffers because of her son's flagellation, and the theme of several canvases by Murillo.¹ (The iconography of *Our Lady of Sorrows*, first introduced in the medieval period, can also be found in Andalusian sculpture.²) The pairing of these two themes was appropriate to a Counter-Reformation ideology that encouraged the use of images to convey the mother's sorrow at her son's punishment while stimulating the emotions and religious fervor of the viewer through the senses. This magnificent *Our Lady of Sorrows* is Murillo's profound representation of the feelings of the Virgin as a sublime Redeemer. The painter heightens the dramatic quality of the image by setting the Virgin in semidarkness and bathing her beautiful form in warm light. Murillo's refined modeling of the Virgin's hands and face, conveying her intense pain as she pleads to heaven, is the most exceptional element of the painting. The facial structure of the Virgin is comparable to that of the figure in the *Immaculate Conception of El Escorial* (ca. 1660, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid),³ suggesting a similar date for the canvas here. A. R.

¹ Angulo Íñiguez points, albeit hesitantly, to the full-length *Ecce Homo* in the Diputación de Murcia (before 1660) as a possible companion to this Seville version of *Our Lady of Sorrows*. Diego Angulo Íñiguez, *Murillo* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1981), vol. 1, p. 426.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 424–25. The author mentions the work of Pedro de Mena and José de Mora.

³ The title refers to its original provenance in the Casa del Príncipe at El Escorial.



CLAUDIO COELLO (1642–1693)

The Penitent Magdalene, ca. 1665–70

Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 51.8 cm

Musée Thomas-Henry, Cherbourg-Octeville

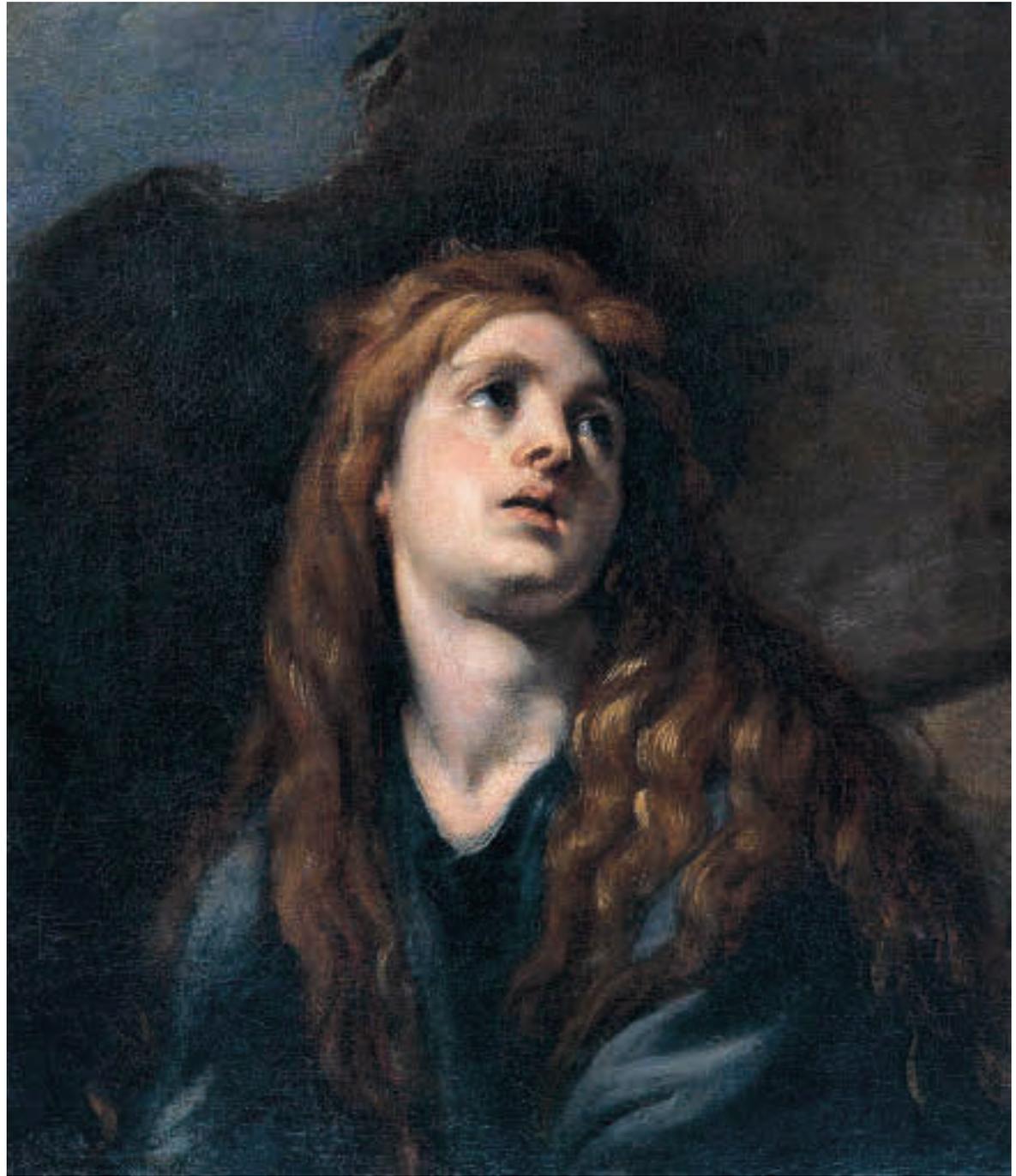
PROVENANCE: Collection of Thomas-Henry, Cherbourg; given to the city of Cherbourg, 1835.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Cherbourg 1835, p. 16, no. 32; Harris 1963, p. 322; Paris 1963, pp. 135–36, no. 44;

Baticle 1964A, p. 296; Sullivan 1986, p. 114, no. P14.

In portraying Mary Magdalene with her characteristic long, loose hair, Coello alludes to the episode in the house of Simon, where she implores Jesus's forgiveness, bathing his feet in her tears, drying them with her hair, and later anointing them with perfume. According to the legend, after the ascension of Christ, Mary Magdalene became dedicated to converting pagans. During the last thirty years of her life, she retired in penitence to the holy grotto, the Sainte Baume. Her penitence was a popular theme in the seventeenth century, especially after the Counter-Reformation, which favored representations of penitent saints and their mystical ecstasies. The traditional iconography of Mary Magdalene shows her covered only by her hair. Coello, however, drapes her in a simple tunic. She is shown lifting her head to the sky as if hearing celestial choirs. According to hagiographic tradition, angels abducted the penitent saint seven times a day in order to transport her to paradise and bring her back to earth.

The attribution of this small painting to Coello has been maintained since it was first catalogued at the Musée Thomas-Henry in 1835. Scholars, however, frequently remark upon the technical and stylistic proximity to the works of painters older than Coello, such as Mateo Cerezo (1637–1666) or Francisco Rizzi (1614–1685). Nevertheless, the head of the saint is closer to figures in the work of Van Dyck or Rubens, which Coello had studied in the originals as well as through engravings. A. R.



PABLO PICASSO (1881–1973)*Weeping Woman I*, Paris, June 26, 1937

Graphite, color crayon, and oil on canvas, 55 x 46.3 cm
 Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

PROVENANCE: Given by the artist to the Spanish Republic, 1937; extended loan to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1939–81; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 1981–92; transferred to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1992.

SELECTED REFERENCES: Zervos 1932–78, vol. 9, 54; Alix 1993, p. 77, no. 52; Calvo Serraller 1999, p. 81.

On June 7, 1937, Picasso completed *Guernica* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid), a painting that had been commissioned by the government of the Republic for the Spanish pavilion at the International Exhibition in Paris. It memorializes one of the most dramatic events in the Spanish Civil War: the aerial bombardment of a small Basque village by the German Condor Legion on April 26, 1937. After finishing the mural, Picasso did not abandon its subject matter: on June 26, he painted the *Weeping Woman I*. This is one of the first works registered in the painter's catalogue raisonnée as an independent work completed after *Guernica*. It is nonetheless a “Guernica postscript,” a variation on the theme elaborated in *Guernica*: the weeping woman, a leit-motif centered on female desperation.¹ Mothers with dead sons and women screaming or wiping their tears with a handkerchief are the topic of a substantial number of drawings, engravings, and mixed-media works completed by the artists between June and October 1937. The head shown here, with its lightbulb-like eyes, tears in the shape of pearls that hang from a thread, and stylized hair, is, for example, a variation of the horrifying terror-stricken scream from the head that looks up at the sky, and whose painful expression Picasso stresses with a color bar. It is likely that Picasso had found inspiration for these heads in Dora Maar. According to Françoise Gilot's description, Dora was a nervous, anxious, and tormented woman who represented the “mourning woman” par excellence in Picasso's eyes.² A. R.

¹ Alfred H. Barr, *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), pp. 205–06.

² Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 241.

