

IN MEMORY OF DOMINICK RODA

1968-1993

The Sounds of an Eternal Springtime

Girl Before a Mirror

The basic themes of Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror* are dark and serious, but the visual style is colorful and attractive. This seeming contradiction complements the subject of the work which, as a whole, deals with the paradoxical relationship between outward appearances and inward intentions.

The painting is vibrant. Colors, at or near full intensity, are placed beside their complements, thereby creating a visual "push and pull" of shape and form. Forms are used to draw the viewer's eye across the canvas. Circular arcs, repeated throughout the work, are counterbalanced by the cross-hatched, diagonal lines of the wallpaper. Picasso goes to great lengths to create a visual style full of vitality and grace.

However, the implications of the work are not as vibrant as its visual presentation. Picasso depicts a girl on the verge of discovering her own sexuality. The figure on the left is the actual girl. The head is a combination of a profile and a frontal view, which unite to produce a 3/4 view. Picasso uses this combination to capture the transition between girl and woman. The profile is painted in cool shades of pink, representing the innocence and naivete of the young girl. The frontal view is an impasto of yellow and red, symbolic of the girl's budding sexuality.

On the right of the canvas, Picasso paints the girl's mirror image. It is a device which allows us to peer into her soul as she contemplates the change in her sexuality. Here we see a figure much less assured than the one on the left. The head is shrouded in dark color, the chin is sunken, and the face is painted in bright shades of scarlet, as if the girl is shrinking in shame over the discovery of the sexual being within herself.

Picasso uses a vibrant visual style, in a work containing such serious subject matter, to mirror the content of the work. The painting's bright, graceful style masks the underlying meaning of the work, much like the girl's outward appearance of youth and innocence masks the inward feelings associated with a newfound sexuality.

Dominick Roda

6-23-92