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## Newly discovered Cubist painting sheds light on friendship between Picasso and Rivera

A work by Rivera in Picasso's personal collection suggests that the tale of the two artists' falling-out has been exaggerated

by [JORI FINKEL](#) | 8 December 2016



Diego Rivera's Cubist composition *Still-Life with Bottle of Anis and Inkwell* (1914-15) is at the centre of a show at Lacma (© Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust/ARS, New York, 2016; photo © FABAMarc Damage; courtesy of LACMA)

Most art historians have dismissed the friendship between Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera as terribly short-lived. According to an account of their first meeting in Rivera's autobiography, the Mexican artist went to Picasso's studio in 1914 "all keyed up", with feelings "like those of a good Christian who expects to meet Our Lord, Jesus Christ". But before long, the crisis of faith occurred, with Rivera accusing Picasso of lifting elements from his masterpiece *Zapatista Landscape* (1915), and no shortage of egotism on both sides fuelling the falling out.

An exhibition that opened at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Lacma) this week, *Picasso and Rivera: Conversations Across Time* (until 7 May 2017), complicates this story. The show's main focus is on each artist's interest in antiquity, whether Greco-Roman sculpture or Pre-Columbian art. But the sub-plot is the relationship between the two artistic giants, which curators claim was deeper and longer-lasting than had been previously understood.

Most notably, the curators are showing a painting by Rivera, never before exhibited or published, that Picasso kept in his personal collection until his death: *Cubist Composition (Still-Life with Bottle of Anis and Inkwell)* (1914-15). The exhibition's co-curator Diana Magaloni learned of the existence of the painting from Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, the artist's grandson and the painting's current owner, during Lacma's 50th anniversary gala in early 2015.

"The fact that Picasso had this painting in his collection for all of these years made us want to do more research on their friendship, and we discovered that they continued to be friends in later years," Magaloni says. Still, there is not much to go on. She does not know whether the painting was bought by Picasso directly from Rivera or through Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, their mutual dealer, or offered as a gift. But she found a couple of letters written in 1949 and 1957 that reflect an enduring relationship between the two artists.

The painting speaks volumes about the influence of Picasso on Rivera, who was five years his junior. The classic-seeming Cubist painting shows a large bottle of Anis in a table-top setting that resembles Picasso's collages from the time, complete with a *trompe l'oeil* effect of fake wood grain. The canvas also incorporates real sand, a material with which Picasso and Georges Braque were already experimenting.

Still, the curator says, the painting has a flair that is all Rivera. "The realism of the *trompe l'oeil* is masterful, and the colour is much more brilliant than anything Picasso or Braque would have done."