ARE YOU ACQUAINTED WITH PICASSO?

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I ask my students the questions of this kind and show them a couple of paintings or sculptures by one or two artists at the beginning or during some of my presentations on probability theory or on mathematical methods of solving engineering problems, or on design of experiment. It is Picasso who is named in the title of this note because he is one of the most prominent and famous artists around the world, with thousands of works in different styles.

Durer, Modigliani (with more than four centuries between their self-portraits), Rembrandt, Botticelli, Serebryakova, Van Gogh and Hokusai, Qin Tianzhu and the ancient images of Nefertari, Kandinsky and others are in my list. As a rule, the answer is negative.

Do such inclusions make sense? The usefulness of injecting the works of art into mathematical and technological disciplines can be considered from the following points of view.

The first and the obvious one is that this could slightly open the door to the magical world of fine art.

From the 2nd point of view (from the higher level of consideration) this could be some impetus to expand the capabilities of seeing and feeling the nature and the whole world around. Works of art force us to focus, to think about the essence of phenomena and their connections. They help to see more, increasing the angle of vision and moving the horizons.

The next point is that even such small inclusions of fine art in lectures on non-humanitarian disciplines are related to two ways of knowing. These are the art and the science, as it is known. Mostly, they "live and work" in parallel. They have their own different languages. Perhaps, at some stage in the progress of civilization, they will merge into one language or both will develop, complementing each other.

Probably, there is also a plus in all this from a practical educational point of view. These unexpected pieces of art could set students up, to some extent, to meet something unexpected, interesting, new, now, at this or that specific lecture. The beautiful elegant distribution law of random variable, and the brilliant bending of a beam, and the enchanting test of the hypothesis about the equality of two means may turn out to be so interesting.

And as Picasso said, "Art is a lie that brings us closer to the truth".