

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER PICASSO'S CONSUMMATE PORTRAIT OF DORA MAAR



Pablo Picasso, *Femme assise, robe bleue*, oil on canvas, Painted on 25 October 1939. (Estimate: \$35,000,000-50,000,000)

New York - On May 15, Christie's will offer *Femme assise, robe bleue* by Pablo Picasso as a highlight of its Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale in New York (Estimate: \$35,000,000-50,000,000). Painted on 25 October 1939, *Femme assise, robe bleue* is a searing portrait of Picasso's lover, Dora Maar. Painted on the artist's birthday just after the beginning of the World War II, the work is filled with the unique character, distortions and tension that mark Picasso's greatest portraits of Dora; at the same time, there is a tender sensuality present in the organic, curvaceous forms of the face which provides some insight into their relationship. This picture was formerly owned by G. David Thompson, to whom the great curator and art historian Alfred H. Barr, Jr. referred as, 'one of the great collectors of the art of our time.' (A.H. Barr, Jr., 'Foreword', auction catalogue, Parke-Bernet, New York, 1966, n.p.).

Jessica Fertig, Senior Vice President, Head of Evening Sale, Impressionist and Modern Art Americas, "Femme assise, robe bleue is an extraordinary portrait of Picasso's great Muse and love, Dora Maar. It exhibits all of the most exhilarating qualities that Dora brought out in Picasso's work: the striking palette, ornate

headwear, and remarkable complexity conveyed by Dora's distorted features. The rich, thick swirls of oil depicting the mass of her hair (which Picasso was mesmerised by) and the shapes of her hat convey the impetus and passion at the core of this portrait. We are bringing Femme assise, robe bleue to the market at a time when the demand for Picasso's portraits of one of his greatest subjects, Dora Maar, is at an all-time high. The canvas is a powerful example of Picasso's creative imagination and the passion which Dora inspired in him."

Francis Outred, Chairman and Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art, EMERI continued: "Femme assise, robe bleue is a timeless icon of artist and muse which speaks to collectors across the centuries and continents. Coming from a major European collection, the picture holds within it an incredible story. It originally belonged to Picasso's dealer, Paul Rosenberg but was confiscated in 1940 soon after its creation. Later in the War it was intended to be transported to Germany but was famously intercepted and captured by members of the French Resistance, an event immortalised, albeit in fictional form, in the 1966 movie *The Train*, starring Burt Lancaster and Jeanne Moreau. In real life, one of the people who helped to sabotage the National Socialists' attempt to remove countless artworks from France towards the end of the war was in fact Alexandre Rosenberg. The son of Paul Rosenberg, he had enlisted with the Free French Forces after the invasion of France in 1940. The painting was subsequently owned by the Pittsburgh steel magnate and legendary collector, George David Thompson, from whose collection many works now grace the walls of museums in the United States and Europe. We fully expect the romance and power of this painting and its remarkable story to capture the hearts and minds of our global collectors of masterpieces from Old Masters to Contemporary, this May."

Dora Maar was one of Picasso's most important Muses. His affair with Dora came in the latter years of his relationship with Marie-Thérèse Walter. Marie-Thérèse had been young, blond and athletic, with a sunny disposition and a sweet character; Picasso's time with her had resulted in flowing, sensual images. Dora was a marked contrast, as is demonstrated by *Femme assise, robe bleue*: a complex, troubled character, intellectual and creative, a photographer and an artist in her own right. She was a sparring partner for Picasso, a challenging voice, having already been an established figure in Surreal circles by the time the pair were introduced.

Picasso often presented Dora with her signature hats that she often sported, a quality that distinguishes her among Picasso's muses at first glance. Certainly in *Femme assise, robe bleue* the hat is present and correct, a striped purple confection with what appears to be a green feather or foliage of some sort. These hats often add a playful air to Picasso's paintings of Dora. They also serve as a counterbalance to the severity with which he presented her features, as is the case in the shifting, vulnerable flesh of *Femme assise, robe bleue*. Some critics have linked the pictures of Dora specifically to tension caused by the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. However, it appears that Picasso, whose paintings often functioned as a barometer for his own state of mind, had found a Muse who was perfectly suited to his tense depictions of that period. It was both Dora's personality and a wider sense of unease at the situation in the world that Picasso managed to express in these bracing paintings.

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Auction:

Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale
May 15, 2017

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in 2016 that totalled £4 billion / \$5.4 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour.

Christie's offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai.

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