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PABLO PICASSO'S *BAIGNEUSES, SIRÈNES, FEMME NUE ET MINOTAURE*

ONE: A GLOBAL SALE OF THE 20TH CENTURY
HONG KONG – PARIS – LONDON – NEW YORK

10 JULY 2020



Pablo Picasso, *Baigneuses, sirènes, femme nue et minotaure* (1937, estimate: \$6,000,000-9,000,000)

New York – As part of ONE: A Global Sale of the 20th Century, Pablo Picasso's *Baigneuses, sirènes, femme nue et minotaure* (1937, estimate: \$6,000,000-9,000,000) will be offered in the New York session. Here, Picasso depicts the projection of an inner self, in the form of the Minotaur, a character lifted directly from ancient mythology. In the late 1920s, Picasso's interest in Surrealism, especially through his close friendships with Paul Éluard and other poets in the vanguard of the movement, inspired him to take broad license with classical fables, to practice his own method of creative reconfiguration. The artist, moreover, had been writing poetry since April 1935, and, indeed, was at work during 6-19 March 1937 producing

a stream of verbal imagery, on 17 March, he wrote “desire so cramped in its prison explodes the eggshell of the sea and lights up the bars that confine it”. *Baigneuses, sirènes, femme nue et minotaure* represents an inventive pictorial narrative used to visualise this “exploding desire” in a free play of iconography that Lydia Gasman described as the artist’s “mythological syncretism, generally based on inversions, the conjunction of opposites, and the conflation of heterogenous elements”.

Olivier Camu, Deputy Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie’s: “*Baigneuses, sirènes, femme nue et minotaure* is a masterpiece of execution by Pablo Picasso and we are thrilled to offer this exquisite painting as part of *ONE: A Global Sale of the 20th Century*. It has never been offered at auction before, having remained in the family of the artist for over 80 years. Multiple meanings can be drawn from this powerful yet exquisite work in which Picasso depicts his magnificent mythological alter ego the Minotaure carrying and surrounded by his lovers.”

The Minotaur in *Baigneuses, sirènes, femme nue et minotaure* is Picasso’s melding of the original, monstrous, namesake creature with the hero Theseus. From *The Odyssey* the artist borrowed Homer’s sirens, fierce birds of prey with heads of beautiful women. Picasso’s Minotaur compositions of the 1930s are detailed, deeply pondered allegories of the artist’s life and loves, all the more enigmatic for the contending emotions that lie at their source. They may reflect on events that inspired them, or in some instances appear to anticipate things to come. The work includes multiple and simultaneous allegorical portraits of both Marie-Thérèse and Dora Maar and matters did in fact rise to a flash point between the two women during the summer of 1937, when they met face-to-face for the first time, in front of *Guernica*, newly completed and awaiting transport to the Spanish pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition Internationale. Picasso would go on to continue both relationships in parallel, each apart from the other; Dora became his new creative, public muse, while Marie-Thérèse remained his private mistress of home and family.

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