

Communiqué de presse Paris

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Pablo Picasso

Tête de femme et Femme assise, 1939

The most important portraits of the Dora Maar period
to be offered at auction in France since 1998

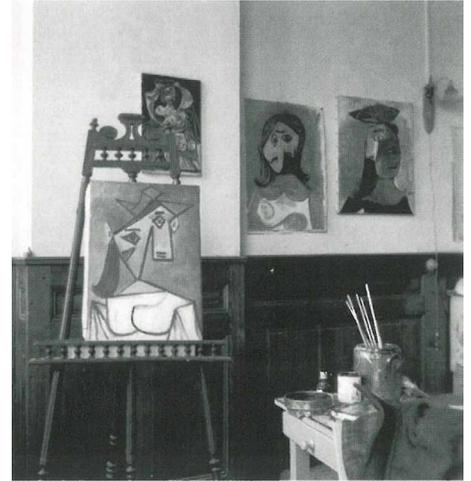
Paris, April 2012 - Pablo Picasso's *Tête de Femme* (1939-41) will be the highlight of the next sale of Impressionist & Modern Art at Sotheby's Paris on 30 May 2012. This portrait of Dora Maar, consigned from a private European collection, is appearing at auction for the first time (est. €3-5 M / \$4-6.6 M).

In the words of Thomas Bompard, Head of the Impressionist & Modern Art Department at Sotheby's France: "Dora Maar's importance in Picasso's life and work is legendary and hugely significant. His Dora Maar Period – lasting from their meeting in 1937 to their break-up at the end of World War II – accounts for six volumes of his catalogue raisonné! Yet no Picasso picture of Dora Maar has been seen at auction in Paris since the memorable sale of the Dora Maar Collection in October 1998. Sotheby's is therefore honoured to champion the Weeping Woman's colours in the city where her stormy love affair with Pablo Picasso first began: Paris!"

Tête de Femme

Picasso left Paris after war broke out in September 1939, and moved to the seaside resort of Royan with the two women who shared his life: Marie-Thérèse Walter lived in a villa and their daughter Maya, while Picasso and Dora Maar shared a hotel room. **It was in Royan that the two muses first met.**

Tête de Femme was painted on 17 October 1939, in Picasso's new studio in the Villa des Voiliers on the seafront. Like other portraits of Dora Maar painted in Royan, ***Tête de Femme* also integrates facial traits of Marie-Thérèse Walter as portrayed by Picasso throughout the 1930s.** The work juxtaposes soft, luminous tones in pink, yellow and blue (clear signs of the tenderness he still felt for his former blonde mistress) with the sombre colours, dramatic intensity and angular features of his new brunette, Dora.



As Robert Rosenblum put it in his catalogue note for the exhibition *Picasso et le Portrait* held at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1996-97 (p. 381), Picasso “objectified and simultaneously minimized the differences between his former and current lovers, placing them in the same physical and psychological mould, comparing... the beautiful blonde and the beautiful brunette, softness and sharpness, languidness and liveliness.... Whether inside or outside his studio, Picasso could admire his pantheon of goddesses and demons, venerate and compare them, and fuse them together so as to ultimately conquer them.”

Femme Assise

From the same European private collection comes Picasso's *Femme Assise*, the other star work at the Sotheby's May 30 sale in Paris. **Estimated at €2-4M (\$2.6-5.2 M), this was painted in Royan on 13 October 1939, just three days before *Tête de Femme*.** It shows a blonde female, probably Marie-Thérèse Walter, painted in curvy outlines. Yet the lozenge-shaped eyes, loose fitting black dress, and enthroned position in an armchair all evoke great portraits by Velazquez, combining a series of graphic symbols that are more associated with portrayals of Dora Maar.

Femme Assise is a work imbued with great visual elegance, evoking both the tumultuous co-existence of Picasso's two greatest muses and the uncertainty threatening Europe in autumn 1939. The painting's first owners were Picasso's close friends, the actor couple **Madeleine Renaud and Jean-Louis Barrault.**



Exposition at Sotheby's in Paris

Thursday 24 May 10am-6pm
Friday 25 May 10am-6pm
Saturday 26 May 10am-6pm
Monday 28 May 10am-6pm
Tuesday 29 May 10am-6pm