

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 10 2022

PABLO PICASSO'S FIRST CUBIST SCULPTURE, *TÊTE DE FEMME (FERNANDE)*, WILL HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK 20TH CENTURY EVENING SALE



Property of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, sold to benefit the Acquisition Fund

Pablo Picasso
Tête de femme (Fernande)
Conceived in 1909
Estimate on request

New York – Christie's is pleased to announce Pablo Picasso's *Tête de femme (Fernande)*, the first major sculpture of the artist's career as a leading highlight of the 20th Century Art Evening Sale taking place this May at Rockefeller Center in New York City (estimate on request; in the region of \$30,000,000). One of two casts of the work owned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Tête de femme (Fernande)* has been deaccessioned by the Museum; proceeds from the sale will be solely dedicated to future acquisitions for the Museum's collection.

Marc Porter, Chairman, Christie's Americas, remarks: “*It is a true privilege for us to partner with The Metropolitan Museum of Art on the sale of Picasso’s seminal sculpture Tête de femme (Fernande) to benefit future acquisitions for the Museum’s collection. Created in 1909, this three-dimensional bronze bust, inspired by the artist’s first muse Fernande Olivier, is a rare example, representing an absolutely crucial moment in the development of Picasso’s artistic practice, Cubism, and the art historical canon at large. We are honored to offer this work in our 20th Century Evening Sale this spring.*”

Max Carter, Head of Christie’s Impressionist and Modern Art Department, remarks: “*Tête de femme (Fernande) is Cubism’s definitive early sculpture. Its revolutionary architectural faceting, which Picasso sliced and sharpened after modeling in clay, suggests Vesalius as much as it does Frank Gehry. To offer this extraordinarily rich, beautiful cast on behalf of The Metropolitan Museum of Art is the ultimate honor.*”

Tête de femme (Fernande) stands as an icon of twentieth-century art. Executed in clay in 1909, the sculpture marks the culmination of an important series of painted studies of Fernande Olivier, the artist’s first great love. The work represents a pivotal moment in the development of Cubism, the radical movement that overturned centuries-old traditions of artmaking, entirely reshaping the development of modern art. With *Tête de femme (Fernande)*, Picasso’s intense explorations into the nature of pictorial representation were synthesized into three-dimensional form. This concept opened the door to a host of new possibilities not just in the medium of sculpture, but of art itself, paving the way for many of the developments that would follow throughout the twentieth century.

Taking the distinctive features of his muse, in *Tête de femme (Fernande)* Picasso reimagined her head and face with a new language of faceted forms. Constructed with a combination of fragmented geometric and organically-shaped planes, the work is filled with a sense of rhythmic dynamism. Harnessing immaterial concepts of light and space, Picasso created a work that is both a figurative portrayal of a woman’s head, while at the same time, an almost abstract configuration of forms that reflect the light with a constant evanescence.

Tête de femme (Fernande) was born from an intense period of creative production that Picasso enjoyed over the summer of 1909. Together with Fernande, the artist traveled to the rural Catalan village Horta de Ebro (now known as Horta de Sant Joan) in June, embarking on a period now recognized to be critical in the evolution of his art and Cubism as a whole. Worlds apart from Paris, Horta and its topography played a role in inspiring and informing the development of a new revolutionary formal language.

There are around 20 known casts of Picasso’s *Tête de femme (Fernande)*, the majority of which are in public institutions including the Musée National Picasso, Paris; National Gallery, Prague; The Art Institute of Chicago; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Kunsthaus Zürich; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York and Portland Art Museum, Oregon. Five of the nine casts from the later edition are also located in public institutions, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles Museum of Art; Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena; Stiftung Kulturbesitz, Berlin and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid. The plasters are at the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas and on long-term loan at the Tate, London.

Tête de femme (Fernande) will be on view along with selected highlights from the 20th Century / 21st Century Evening Sales in Hong Kong and London before returning to New York, where it will be on exhibition at Christie’s New York ahead of the sale in May.

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