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PABLO PICASSO'S *LA LAMPE* WILL HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S EVENING SALE OF IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN ART



PABLO PICASSO, *La Lampe*, oil on canvas, Painted in Boisgeloup, 21 January-8 June 1931
\$25,000,000-35,000,000

‘The Lamp implies that although Olga was chatelaine of Boisgeloup, Marie-Thérèse, wreathed in tendrils of philodendron, was queen of the sculpture studio’ —John Richardson

New York – Christie’s will offer Pablo Picasso’s *La Lampe*, 1931 (\$25-35 million) as a central highlight of its Evening Sale of Impressionist and Modern Art on 11 November in New York. The golden light from the lamp’s scarlet flame bares a closely guarded secret, known in early 1931 to only a few of Pablo Picasso’s closest friends and his trusted chauffeur. Disenchanted with his wife Olga, indeed, having fallen far out of love from her and the haute bourgeois life-style that she relished, Picasso had been clandestinely seeing, for more than four and a half years, a lovely blonde mistress 28 years his junior. *La Lampe* shines on the image of Marie-Thérèse Walter, whom Picasso showcased here—in a large, elaborately orchestrated painting, as today one may instantly recognize her—for the first time.

Max Carter, Head of Department, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie’s New York, remarked: “During the early 1930s, Picasso’s towering achievements as both painter and sculptor arguably reached their greatest height and in *La Lampe* we have one of their most vital and outstanding expressions.”

Tan Bo, Director, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's Beijing, continued: "With *La Lampe* touring to Hong Kong from October 22nd-25th, this masterpiece will once again be on view to the public in Asia after 37 years, where it has not been seen since its first appearance at the Picasso Intime exhibition in Hong Kong and Seibu in 1981."

Picasso painted in *La Lampe* the pinnacle of Marie-Thérèse, transforming her sweet, compliant nature and striking physicality into the image of a goddess, his idolized muse, in the form of a head modeled in lily-white plaster, appropriately textured in thickly impastoed oil paint, with the lamp's yellow light doubling as her distinctive blonde hair. This head and bust rest upon a cloth-covered wooden table, which mimics the appearance of a dark dress with a leaf-form collar showing a tasteful hint of décolletage. The artist depicted Marie-Thérèse's profile, dominated by her Grecian nose, firmly contoured chin, and modish carré plongeant hair style, from a half-dozen such volumetric heads and reliefs, which he began modeling in the spring of 1931.

La Lampe was shown in Picasso's celebrated retrospective at the Grande Salle of the Galeries Georges Petit, together with fourteen of the 1932 paintings that featured Marie-Thérèse, including *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust, Le Rêve*, and *Jeune fille devant un miroir*. One may presume that by this time Olga was aware her husband had taken a lover; after viewing the 1932 show, she might more clearly but distressfully imagine the young Woman's appearance, and even recognize her, if perchance they crossed paths.

With the addition of two hundred watercolors, drawings, and prints, the Galeries Georges Petit exhibition moved largely intact in September to the Kunsthaus Zürich, thus allowing this venue the honor of having mounted Picasso's first museum retrospective. Wilhelm Hartmann, the Kunsthaus director, installed the works in a chronological presentation, making it a model for all future comprehensive Picasso shows. *La Lampe* and *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust*, together with other recent Marie-Thérèse paintings seen in Paris, also traveled to Zürich. The exhibition was a success, and had to be extended another two weeks to accommodate the record attendance.

Nearly fifty years later, *La Lampe* again featured as one of the highlights of Picasso's landmark retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1980.

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