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PICASSO'S PORTRAIT OF DORA MAAR TO HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK EVENING SALE OF 20TH CENTURY ART



NEW YORK – On October 6, Christie's will offer Pablo Picasso's *Femme dans un fauteuil*, 1941 (estimate: \$20-30 million) as a leading highlight of its Evening Sale of 20th Century Art in New York. Sporting a white ruffled blouse and plaid blazer, with her hair elegantly coiffured and topped with a signature feathered hat, the stylish Parisienne pictured in *Femme dans un fauteuil* is the figure of Dora Maar, Picasso's great wartime paramour and muse. Painted on 19 June 1941, just over a year into the Nazi Occupation of Paris, this portrait forms part of an astonishing surge of artist creativity that began in May of that year. During this time, Picasso defied the ever-worsening and increasingly horrifying events that were unfolding in his adopted home, and turned inwards, painting the world of his studio and those who peopled it with an irrepressible energy.

Conor Jordan, Deputy Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, remarked: “As Paris entered its second year under German occupation, Picasso retreated his left-bank studio on the rue des Grands Augustins and executed a staggering sequence of paintings of his lover Dora Maar. By turns anguished and lyrical, aggressive and despondent, the works all share an urgency, making them as much expressions of Picasso’s state of mind as portraits of Dora. In the present *Femme assise*, sequestered in the cool light and pressing angles of the attic space, Dora is depicted on a grand scale as proud and unbending, an image of stately defiance, a modern Marianne.”

Here the radical Surrealist photographer, painter and intellectual is rendered on a monumental scale; her presence and image magisterial as she sits in a pose of cool insouciance, gazing out with her renowned dark-eyed stare to meet the eyes of her lover and artistic collaborator. From the *Weeping Woman* to the plethora of seated portraits, Picasso’s images of Maar are among the most powerful of his wartime work; the cataclysmic events of this epoch and the artist’s personal reaction to them etched onto the visage of his companion. At times haunting, arresting, adoring and reverential, the visual power of these portraits is due in part to the symbiotic creative relationship the pair shared: Maar was not simply an artist’s muse, but, as an artist herself, she was an active participant in their intense artistic dialogue.

Femme dans un fauteuil is one of a series of portraits of Maar from mid-1941, all of which show her attired in similar outfits of blue and adorned in a variety of her signature millinery creations— other examples now reside in museums including the Musée Picasso, Paris, Kunstmuseum Basel, and Neue Pinakothek, Munich. Maar herself documented the present work, photographing it alongside others in Picasso’s rue des Grands-Augustins studio.

In late 1945, *Femme dans un fauteuil* was included in a landmark exhibition, *Matisse-Picasso* held in London’s Victoria and Albert Museum—the first major British institution to hold an exhibition of the artist’s work and a joyful affirmation of the power of art and culture after the war.

Additional information on the October 6 Evening Sale of 20th Century Art may be found [here](#).

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