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Robert Fishko, *Director*

**PABLO PICASSO**  
(1881-1973)

*La Minotauromachie*, 1935  
etching and drypoint printed on Montval paper  
19 13/16 x 27 1/8 inches (image)  
22 5/16 x 30 5/8 inches (sheet)  
One of 23 unsigned artist proofs, of the  
seventh (final state)  
Inscribed verso "200019" (the Picasso estate)

Printed by Lacourière

[Bloch 0288] [Baer 573 VII.B.c5]



**Provenance**

The Artist and His Estate  
Collection of Marina Picasso  
Jan Krugier, Geneva  
Private Collection, Germany

**Selected Literature**

Bloch, Georges. *Pablo Picasso: Volume I, Catalogue of the Printed Graphic Work 1904-1967*, Berne: Editions Kornfeld and Klipstein, 1971, no. 288, pp. 87-88, Illustrated.

Baer, Brigitte. *Picasso, Peintre-Graveur Tome III: Catalogue Raisonné de L'oeuvre Gravé et des Monotypes, 1935-1945*, Berne: Editions Kornfeld, 1986, no. 573, pp. 16-27, Illustrated.

Wye, Deborah. *A Picasso Portfolio: Prints from the Museum of Modern Art*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010, no. 35, p. 59, Illustrated.

Palau i Fabre, Josep and Julià Guillamon. *Picasso: From the Minotaur to Guernica (1927-1939)*, Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2011, no. 712-718, 723, pp. 218-221, Illustrated.

## Note

In his impressive monograph on the artist, Catalan poet and author Josep Palau i Fabre describes how one day, in April 1933, Picasso “interrupted the charming series of etchings representing various aspects of his relationship with sculpture and his model to draw five plates portraying the figure of the Minotaur in a frankly aggressive attitude.” Picasso had recently been commissioned by the publisher Skira to complete a series of artworks for the first issue of the journal *Minotaure*, for which Surrealist André Breton was to write the lead article. Palau i Fabre emphasizes that such a “bellicose” nature was not innately within Picasso, but was instead his response to Surrealism, which was “combative and even openly provocative” in the moment. Palau i Fabre continues that Picasso “realized that he had just created a personage” and “understood that [it] could become exactly what he was looking for, his *alter ego*.”<sup>1</sup>

Picasso embarked upon the twentieth-century masterwork, *La Minotauremachie*, in Paris on Saturday, March 23, 1935, working with the printer Roger Lacourière, who had initiated Picasso into many new techniques. The title “Minotauremachie” is a word invented by Picasso to blend “minotaur” with “tauromachy” (“bull fight”). 1935 was a year of personal upheaval for the Artist, with the tense environment of escalating fascism in Europe and abroad, and his wife Olga leaving with their son Paulo upon learning that Marie-Thérèse was with child. Indeed, the disturbing and violent scene in *La Minotauremachie* is prophetic of the Spanish Civil War, which began in 1936, in the months following its completion. Remarkably for the artist whose creative output was famously prolific, *La Minotauremachie* was the only graphic work Picasso created that year. Evolving through seven states, the work represents a groundbreaking achievement in Picasso’s career, the complicated composition demanding the artist’s focus for his vision to be satisfied to his exacting standards.

In *La Minotauremachie*, the looming figure of the Minotaur is omnipresent, occupying the right half of the composition. He appears wounded, possibly blinded, his left arm clutching at his chest as he reaches out with his right to feel his way. A terrified mare, disemboweled by the Minotaur’s horns, carries away a female picador\* upon her back. It is the profile of Marie-Thérèse, with her estoque\*\* poised high in the air, who lays with eyes closed and *traje de luces\*\*\** torn to reveal her breasts. A man, father figure or Christ perhaps, looks back upon the scene as he escapes on a ladder, as do two women who watch the spectacle from a high window, interpreted to be the sisters of Marie-Thérèse. To the left, Marie-Thérèse again appears as a young schoolgirl with a candle in her hand, “illuminating the scene,” a motif Picasso first explored in July 1934, described by Palau i Fabre as “she who is the victim is at the same time the consoling angel.”<sup>2</sup>

From the seventh and final state, this exceptional impression is one of twenty-three kept by Picasso throughout his lifetime. It was later inherited by his granddaughter Marina Picasso, daughter of Paulo, for her personal collection. It is not known the exact length of time that elapsed from the completion of the first state to the last, however the impressive size of *La Minotauremachie*, and multiple phases, would have demanded much time and attention from the Artist. It is widely considered to be one of the most important graphic works of the twentieth century and the pinnacle of Picasso’s printmaking oeuvre.

<sup>1</sup> Palau i Fabre, *Picasso: From the Minotaur to Guernica (1927-1939)*, 2011, pp.144-5

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.198

\* A “picador” is a bullfighter on horseback who pricks the bull with a lance to both goad and weaken it.

\*\* An “estoque” is a matador’s sword with a flat blade curved at the tip.

\*\* The “traje de luces” is the traditional clothing that Spanish bullfighters wear in the ring.