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Robert Fishko, *Director*

PABLO PICASSO

(1881-1973)

Femme Au Fauteuil No 4, 1949

(January 3)

lithograph on Arches vellum with Arches watermark

27 7/8 x 20 1/2 inches (image)

30 x 22 1/4 inches (sheet)

From the Edition of 50, of the fifth (final) state

Signed by the artist in pencil lower right "Picasso"

Numbered lower left "47/50"

Printed by Mourlot, 1949

(Bloch 0588) (Mourlot 137) (Reuße 423)



Provenance

The Artist

Private Collection, New York

Selected Literature

Bloch, Georges. *Pablo Picasso Volume I: Catalogue of the Printed Graphic Work 1904-1967*, Berne: Kornfeld and Klipstein, 1971, no. 588, p. 143, Illustrated.

Wye, Deborah. *A Picasso Portfolio: Prints from the Museum of Modern Art*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010, no. 115, p. 147, Illustrated.

Note

In August 1948 Picasso left for Poland with Paul Éluard to attend the World Congress of Intellectuals. Greeted with great enthusiasm as the guest of honor at the event in Wrocław, he also spent two weeks visiting Warsaw and Krakow. During this journey, which he enjoyed very much and for which he had taken an airplane for the first time, Picasso

bought an elaborately embroidered leather and sheep's wool coat as a gift for his lover and muse at the time, the French artist Françoise Gilot. Their passionate and stormy relationship had begun in 1944, and shortly thereafter in 1945 Picasso returned to lithography with a new and fruitful collaboration with Fernand Mourlot and the master lithographers at his workshop in Paris.

In November that year, Françoise posed in the Polish coat, sitting on an antique armchair in the artist's studio. She became the subject of the series *Femme au Fauteuil* (*Woman in Armchair*), a highpoint of Picasso's lithographic oeuvre. The formal pose of the sitter recalls the ancestral portraits of classical Chinese and Renaissance portraiture. Over many states and versions, Picasso altered the style of the image from realism to abstraction, while maintaining the distinct references to 16th century painting, especially that of German Renaissance painter Lucas Cranach II.

The original intention was to produce a complex five-color lithograph, but it turned out to be a failed experiment. Instead of abandoning the project, Picasso worked on the five zinc plates as distinct images, each printed in a single color. Most of the lithographs realized with Mourlot were printed in black only, but in a nuanced range of tones from deep black to light grey and of remarkable luminosity. According to Henri Deschamps, contributor to the Reusse catalogue raisonné of lithographs by Pablo Picasso and the color printer in Mourlot's team, garlic was added to the ink to create a particular sheen and saturation.

This bold impression is from the fifth and final state of Picasso's ambitious masterpiece of lithography. The graphic drama of the composition that expresses Françoise's freshness and commanding vitality is presented to its fullest effect in this impression thanks to the astonishing rich blacks and clarity of definition achieved in the printing.

Fernand Mourlot once remarked that Picasso worked "without cease, inventing the most extravagant processes, surmounting the difficulties with brio under the dumfounded stare of the workmen who had never seen such technical cheek in the service of such bold invention. Picasso looked, listened, did the opposite of what he learned, and it worked."