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Robert Fishko, *Director*

PABLO PICASSO

(1881-1973)

L'Italienne (d'après le tableau de Victor Orsel),

1953 (January 18, Paris)

lithograph printed on Arches wove paper

17 1/2 x 15 inches (image)

25 1/8 x 19 1/2 inches (sheet)

One of 5 proofs, of the first (of two) states

Printed in reverse upper right: "18.1.53"

Printed by Mourlot

(Bloch 0740.1) (Mourlot 238.1) (Reusse 623)



Provenance

The Artist

Private collection, New York, NY

Selected Literature

Bloch, Georges. *Pablo Picasso: Volume I, Catalogue of the Printed Graphic Work 1904-1967*, Berne: Editions Kornfeld and Klipstein, 1971, no. 740, pp. 166-167, Illustrated.

Reusse, Felix, *Pablo Picasso Lithographs*, Graphikmuseum Pablo Picasso, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2000, p. 232, Illustrated.

Mourlot, Fernand, *Picasso Lithographs*, Boston Book and Art Publisher, Boston, 1970, p. 201, no. 238, Illustrated.

Note

Fernand Mourlot, the famous Paris-based printer of Picasso's lithographs and author of *Picasso Lithographs* (1970), described the story of the genesis of *L'Italienne (d'après le tableau de Victor Orsel)*:

According to Mourlot, Picasso came into the print shop, individually greeted everyone there and, in the corner of the studio, discovered zinc plates which were to be ground down. Picasso liked one of them which was not of use to the printers: a halftone photolithograph for the poster "La peinture lyonnaise" at l'Orangerie des Tuileries in November 1948. Mourlot recalled that Picasso was very happy about finding the zinc plate, took it with him, altered it and brought it back to them the very next day.

The painting whose reproduction was on the zinc plate was created by the French painter Victor Orsel (1795, Oullins/Lyon – 1850, Paris) who lived in Rome in the 1820s and worked in the circle of the Nazarenes. He portrayed the young Italian Vittoria Caldoni in traditional clothing. She was the favorite model of the Roman artists' colony and was eternalized in a great number of paintings and busts by various artists.

Overnight, Picasso reworked the zinc plate, applying his graffiti with a thick tusche ink to the contours of the face, bonnet, and shawl, thereby simplifying and substantially deindividualizing the portrait. At the same time, Picasso emphasized the eyes and mouth, providing the unembellished, girlish face of the original with a glamorous appearance through his "make-up." Surrounding the image, Picasso added a playful cast from his typical Arcadian pictorial world – a female nude, Pan playing a flute, and Bacchus with a grapevine garland, definitively transforming the underlying work into a work uniquely his own.

This impression is one of 5 proofs of the first state, inscribed by Picasso in reverse on the plate with the January date: "18.1.53".