

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE
GAGOSIAN GALLERY
17-19 DAVIES STREET
LONDON W1K 3DE
GALLERY HOURS:

T. 020.7493.3020
F. 020.7493.3025
Tue – Fri 11:00am– 7:00pm; Sat 12:00pm – 5:00pm



PABLO PICASSO *La Minotauromachie: All VIII States*

Wednesday, 21 June – Friday, 4 August 2006

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of Pablo Picasso's seminal print *La Minotauromachie* (1935), to inaugurate the new gallery in Davies Street, London. This exhibition will present the only complete set in existence of all eight states of the famous etching, including the final, seventh state, printed in colour. Derived from the drawing of the same name from 1934, *La Minotauromachie* is often cited as one of the most important prints of the twentieth century.

Throughout his life, Picasso restlessly explored the medium of the print, employing many techniques, including lithography, linocut, etching, drypoint, and monotype. This particular series exploits the technique of etching, by which the primary graphic image is burned onto a copper plate with acid. Using a burin, the small chisel used for *intaglio*, together with a scraping tool, Picasso then worked intensively through eight separate states, wresting a vibrant allegory of destruction and creativity from his chosen medium. In each individual print or state, the artist's thinking and making can be traced in the evolution of a single, complex image.

In *La Minotauromachie* Picasso casts the traditional relationship between an artist and his model as a compelling theatrical scene of *eros* and *thanatos*. In this provocative image, charged with the artist's private mythology, the Minotaur, half-man half-beast, is placed in the context of a bullfight. To the right of the scene, the huge creature gestures towards a young girl at the left, with a candle held aloft in one hand and a bunch of flowers in the other. Between their frozen confrontation, a wounded, bare-breasted female picador (with the unmistakable face of Marie-Therese) lies flung over a frightened, lacerated horse in full stride. Three attendant figures—two girls holding doves in a tower above and a bearded Christ-like figure (with the face of Picasso) on a ladder—observe the drama unfolding.

Combining Picasso's central themes of the Minotaur, the bullfight, the Crucifixion, love, death, destruction and creativity, *La Minotauromachie* prefigures his epic political work *Guernica* (1937), painted in response to the Spanish Civil War and the ensuing tyranny of Fascism. This cataclysmic political period mirrored the tumultuous state of the artist's amorous life, when his marriage to Olga Khoklova was coming to an end and his young lover, Marie-Therese Walter, was expecting their child.

Pablo Picasso was born in Malaga, Spain in 1881 and died in France in 1973. Upcoming exhibitions of his work include *Picasso: Tradition and the Avant-Garde* at the Museo Nacional Del Prado and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2006); and *Picasso and American Art* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006/2007), traveling to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and then to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2007).

For further information, please contact Georgina Cohen on 020 7841 9960.

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