



PABLO PICASSO

Tête de femme sur fond jaune

July 18, 1934

Oil on canvas

25 9/16 x 18 1/8 inches (65 x 46 cm)

Inscribed and dated *Boisgeloup 18 juillet XXXIV* (upper left)









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PROVENANCE:

Estate of the Artist

Private Collection, Paris (acquired by descent, until 2013)

Gagosian, New York

Private Collection

Private Collection (acquired from the above)

EXHIBITED:

New York, Gagosian, *Picasso and Marie-Thérèse: L'amour fou*, April–July 2011, pp. 206–07 (illustrated in color).

Geneva, Gagosian, *Pablo Picasso*, November 2012–February 2013.

NOTE:

You have an interesting face. I would like to do a portrait of you. I feel we are going to do great things together.

—Pablo Picasso to Marie-Thérèse Walter

These now infamous lines were Picasso's introduction to Marie-Thérèse Walter, the young, golden haired woman he met one fateful January day outside the Galeries Lafayette in Paris in 1927. It was love at first sight. They were instantly enraptured, and so began one of the most passionate relationships of Picasso's life. With her youthful innocence, luminous vitality, and statuesque form, Marie-Thérèse would become one of the artist's greatest muses; her presence, image, and the desire she aroused in him inspiring an ecstatic outpouring of works.

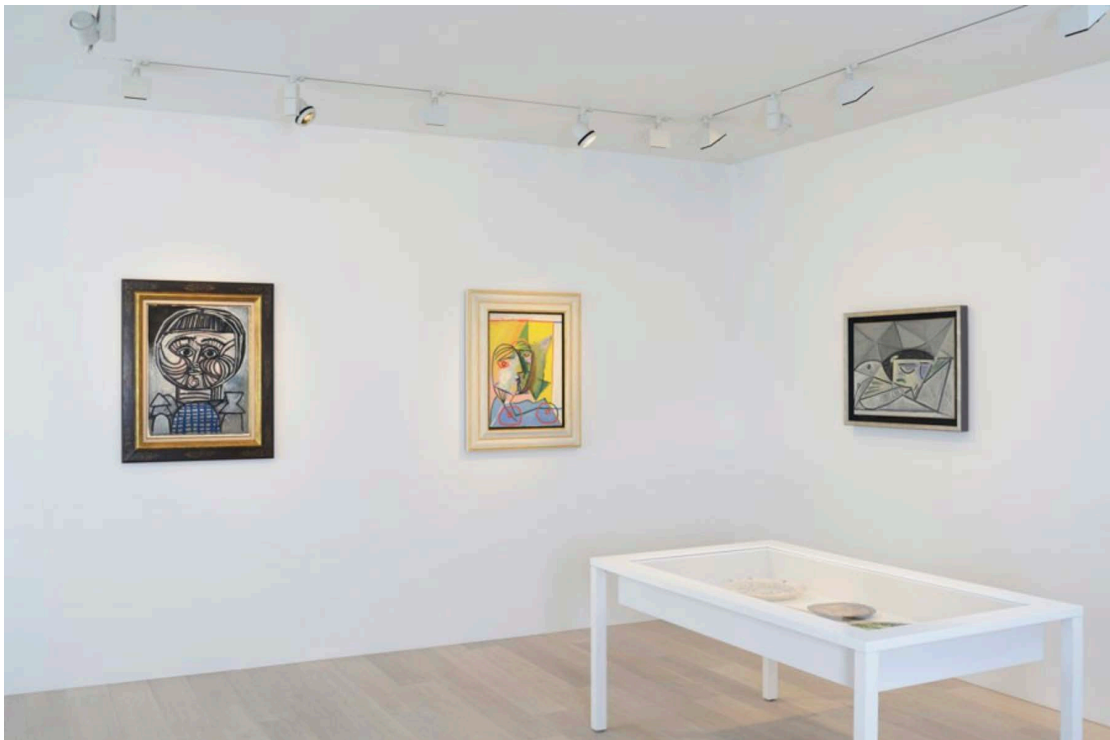
Tête de femme sur fond jaune is one such painting. Radiating bright summer light and saturated with the vibrant palette that has come to define Picasso's depictions of Marie-Thérèse, this portrait was painted on July 18, 1934 in Boisgeloup, the artist's picturesque château in rural Gisors, northwest of Paris. Here, Picasso has described the unmistakable features of Marie-Thérèse—her classical profile, wide-eyed gaze, and voluptuous body—with his own language of linear signs. So well did he know her form by this point that he could reproduce it like a cartographer, mapping the rise and fall of her visage and bust, the shape of her eyes, and the pout of her lips, with a few, assured outlines.

By this time, Marie-Thérèse had been a constant yet clandestine presence in the artist's life for over seven years, offering him an untroubled, escapist idyll away from the realities and ever-growing pressures of his public life. When he painted *Tête de femme sur fond jaune*, Marie-Thérèse's reign in Picasso's art was at its peak. This prolific year of artistic production was also the last that the pair would spend in more or less uninterrupted bliss. The year 1935 would see the birth of their baby Maya, as well as the artist's official legal separation from his wife Olga,

part of which entailed handing the château at Boisgeloup over to her. War was looming, and it was not long before he met Dora Maar, whose presence both in Picasso's life and art would vie with that of Marie-Thérèse and their daughter. Within this context therefore *Tête de femme sur fond jaune* is one of the last portraits of Marie-Thérèse from this early, golden period; a radiant, intimate, and pictorially experimental depiction of his adored lover.

Here, Picasso portrays Marie-Thérèse's face with an increasingly simplified cubist construction of interlocking, flattened planes of color and linear patterns, leaving just the expressive outline of her face. As if seated in front of an open window, light and color now surround and radiate from within her—a "languorous sun worshipper in thrall to her sun god of a lover," as Picasso's biographer John Richardson has described. At the center of this radical composition lies a burst of rich, gestural impastoed paint, turning her cheek into a cloud of pale hues. As if a spontaneous outpouring of emotion, these strokes reflect the heady combination of love, lust, and anguish that drove Picasso's art during this consequential summer of 1934.

This work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed by Claude Ruiz-Picasso, dated April 8, 2014, stating that the painting is recorded in the inventory of the artist's estate as no. 12691.



Installation view of *Tête de femme sur fond jaune* (1934) in Pablo Picasso