

# PABLO PICASSO

La Comédie Humaine Lithographs

1 April 2020

Eames Fine Art

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**Document:** Pablo Picasso | La Comédie Humaine Lithographs  
**Date:** 1 April 2020  
**Notes:** Dimensions given are for paper size in mm  
Prices are quoted unframed unless stated and include ARR and VAT where applicable

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## LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE LITHOGRAPHS | INTRODUCTION

Picasso was a long-time admirer of the work of Honoré de Balzac, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century French realist playwright and novelist. He referenced the author's works on numerous occasions throughout his career, and at one point even rented the apartment in Paris that was the setting of the writer's 1845 novel *The Unknown Masterpiece*.

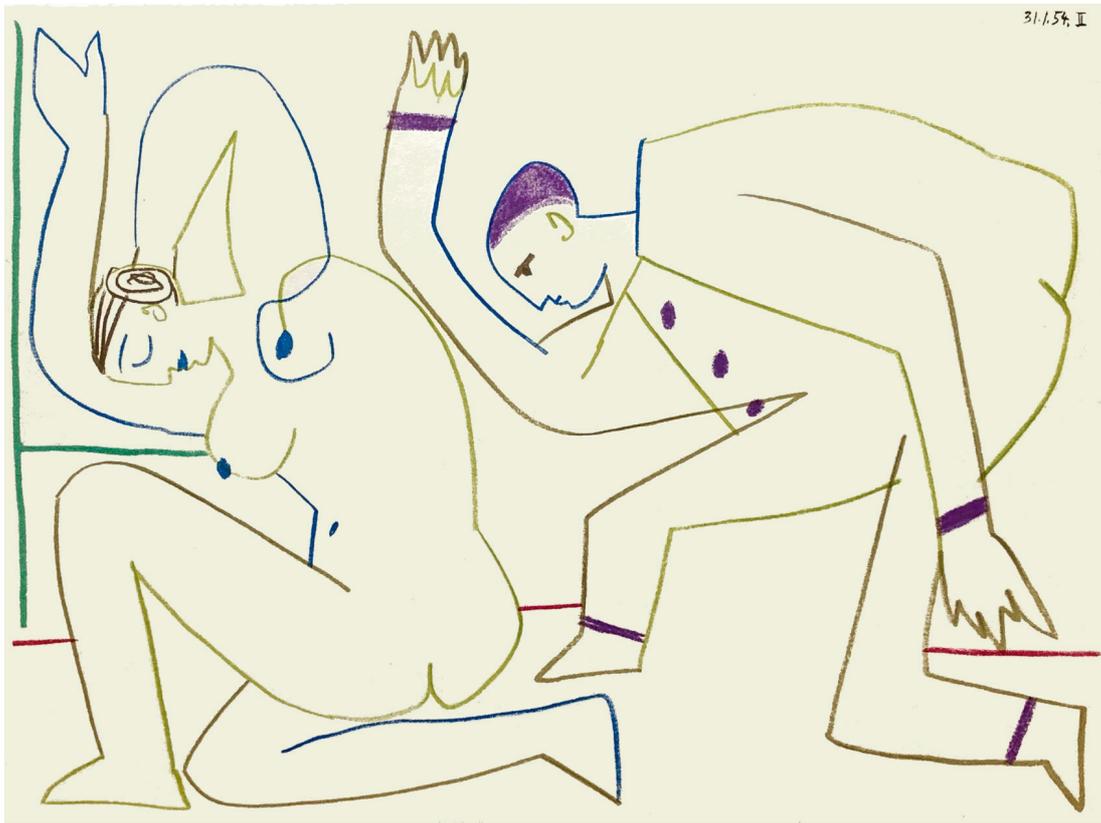
In 1954, aware of the artist's interest in Balzac, the publisher Tériade commissioned Picasso to create a series of illustrations depicting scenes from the writer's greatest work, *La Comédie Humaine*. A monumental collection of 137 interlinked short stories, novels and essays, *La Comédie Humaine* depicts life in the Bourbon Restoration period after the French Revolution and addresses themes such as money, power, social success, maternity, paternity and women, society and sex. The stories take place in a variety of locations, but some characters are interlinked and feature in more than one story. Tériade dedicated an entire issue of his revue magazine, *Verve* to Picasso's response to this work.

Picasso created a suite of 180 drawings and a set of twelve colour lithographs after works in coloured crayon to interpret the stories of *La Comédie Humaine*. For the printing, Picasso employed the expertise of the renowned lithography studio Atelier Mourlot in Paris, where the prints were made under the artist's direction in a limited edition of 1,500. It was a painstaking process with new blocks prepared by hand for each colour of the vibrant drawings, yet the lithographs have a wonderfully spontaneous quality despite the technical labour that went into their making.

With her distinct 'Greek' profile and long hair swept back, the model depicted in *La Comédie Humaine* bears a striking resemblance to Jacqueline Roque whom Picasso met in December 1953. Jacqueline who would later become the artist's wife and his final muse, possessed what Picasso celebrated as a sphinx-like presence and physique and the strength of the rapport between them is translated by the artist in these drawings with a tenderness that is at the same time both chaste and seductive. A thematic analysis of the series not only shows how central the subject of artist and model was within the 'Human Comedy' staged by Picasso, but also how Picasso was able to link the theme specifically to a questioning of old age and his own late-career concerns. In her book, *The Artist, His Model, Her Image, His Gaze: Picasso's Pursuit of the Model*, Karen L. Kleinfelder observes that *La Comédie Humaine* appears to be a parody of Picasso's magisterial *Vollard Suite* of etchings from 1933, in which the artist is cast as a classical sculptor at the height of his powers only to find twenty years later that the idealised artist-god has shrunk in stature and shows his age in all too human terms. Kleinfelder concludes her comments thus: 'It is this adoption of parody in both his style and his personal point of view that marks *La Comédie Humaine* as the true beginning of Picasso's late period where he starts to confront both his own myth and historical identity. Within these bitter-sweet drawings, Picasso self-consciously thematises the issue of an artist's late style and begins in the process to confront both his own myth and historical identity, though always in masked terms'.

We are pleased to present here all twelve lithographs on wove paper from *Verve* volume 29/30 from 1954. They are all untitled but dated in the image and unsigned as issued. Despite their age, the paper is in excellent condition and the colours remain crisp and vivid.

Grace Hailstone



**La Comédie Humaine 31.1.54 II**

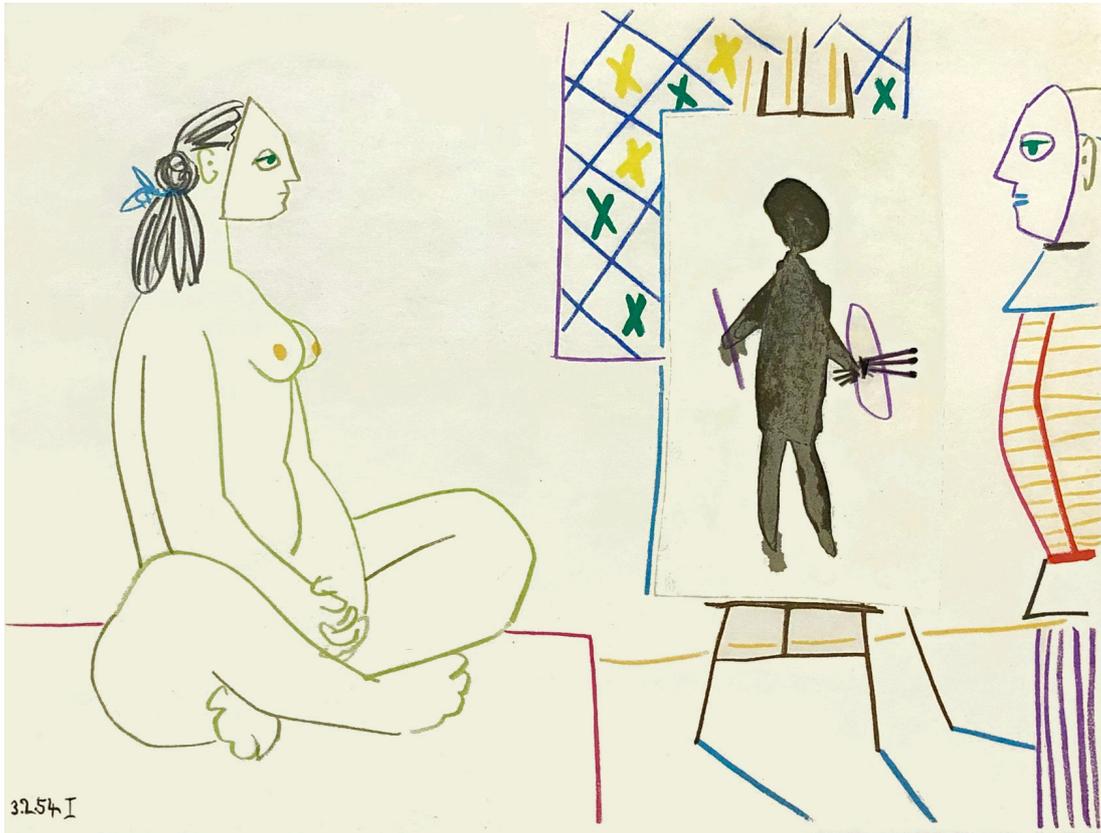
Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £550



32.54 I

**La Comédie Humaine 3.2.54 I**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £650



**La Comédie Humaine 31.2.54 II**

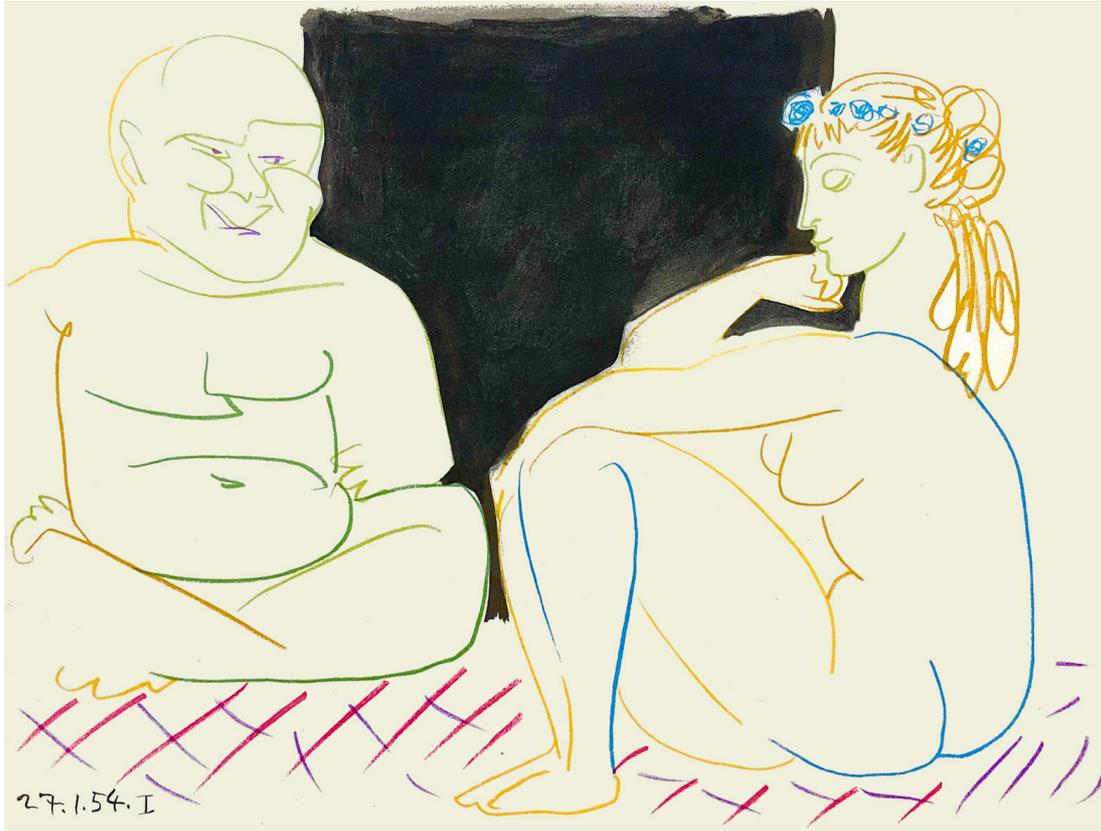
Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £650



**Comédie Humaine 27.1.54 I**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £550



**Comédie Humaine 27.1.54 XIV**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £550



**Comédie Humaine 29.1.54 III**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £550



**Comédie Humaine 29.1.54 V**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £550



**Comédie Humaine 30.1.54 III**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £650



**Comédie Humaine 31.1.54 VII**

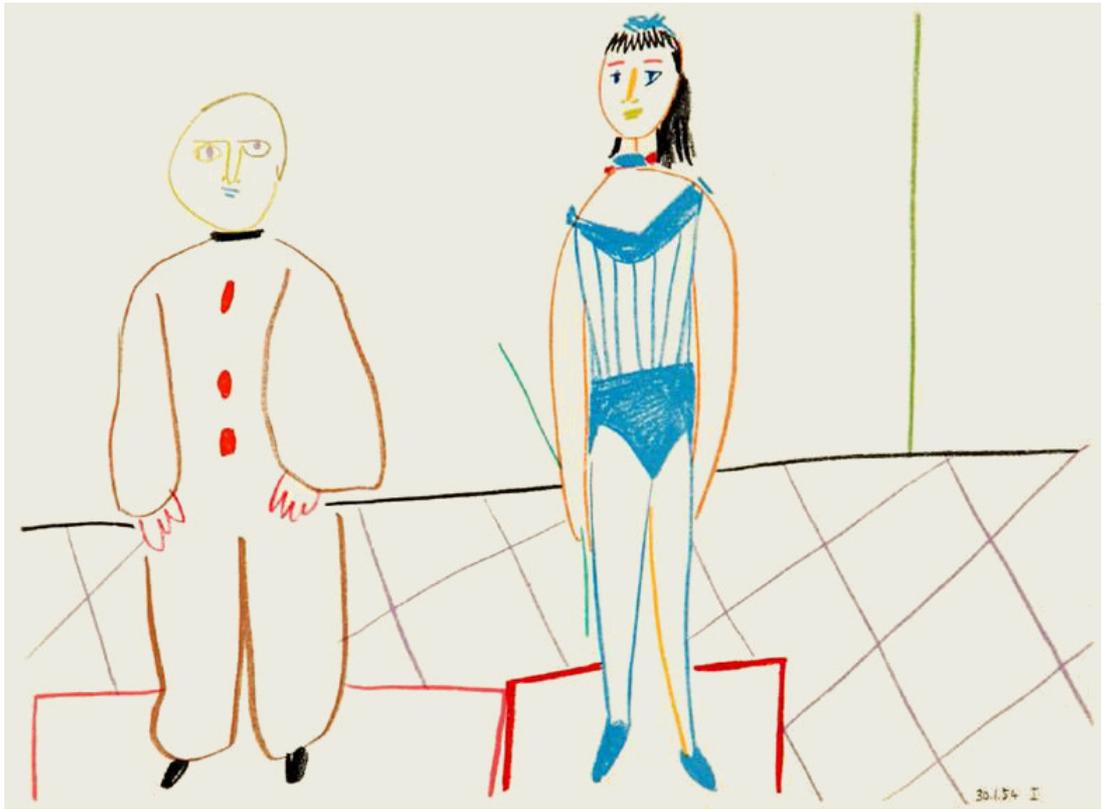
Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £650



**Comédie Humaine 30.1.54 I**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £550



**Comédie Humaine 30.1.54 II**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £650



**Comédie Humaine 1.2.54 I**

Date: 1954

Lithograph | Unsigned

Paper size: 355 x 265 mm

Image size: 320 x 240 mm

Price: £700

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