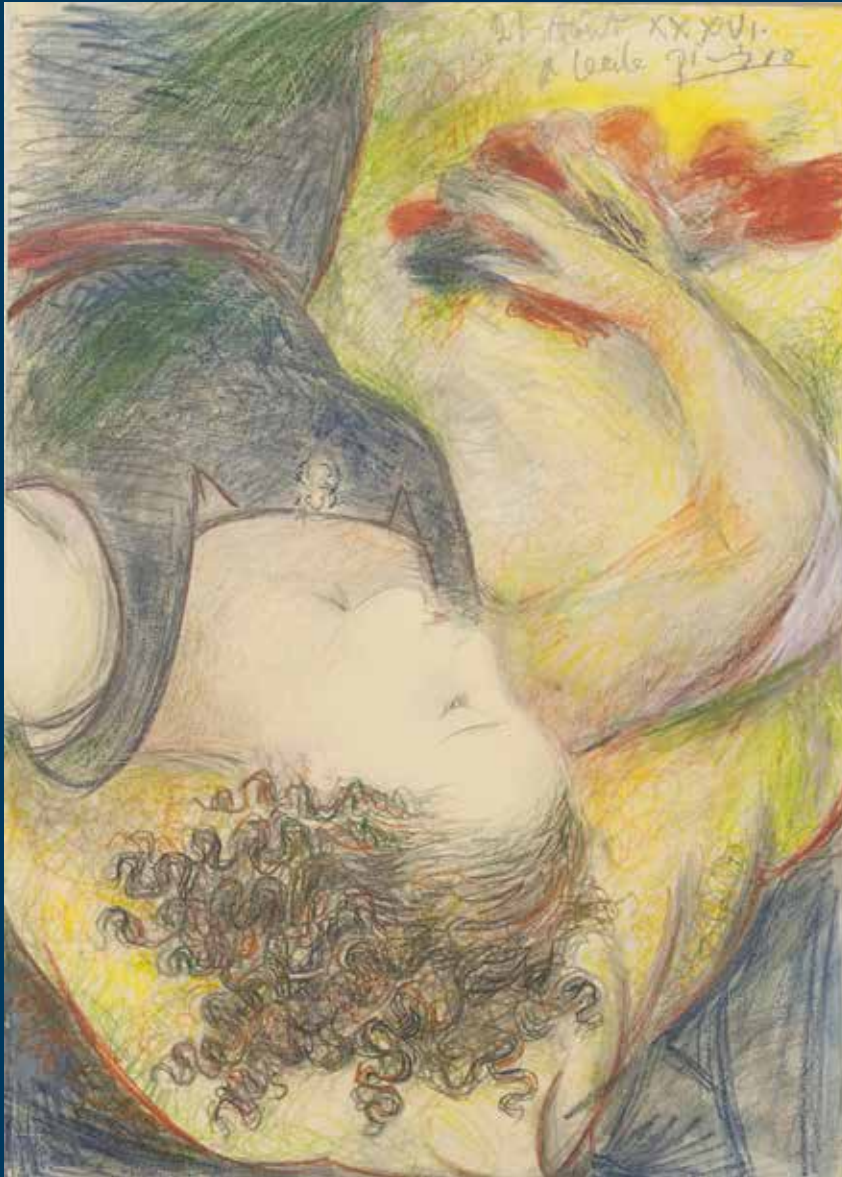


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PABLO PICASSO (1881 – 1973)

PORTRAIT DE MADEMOISELLE C.E. (CÉCILE ELUARD), 1936

Signed, dated and dedicated upper right *21 Août XXXVI / à Cécile / Picasso*

Pencil, coloured crayons and scraper on paper

36.8 x 26.8 cm. (14½ x 10½ in.)

PROVENANCE

Cécile Eluard, a gift from the artist.

Mme. Denise Weil Scheler (1912 – 1988), purchased from the above; and by descent.

Private Collection, Switzerland, acquired in 2006.

LITERATURE

P. Eluard, *A Pablo Picasso*, Geneva, 1947, p. 152 (illus.)

R.D. Valette, ed., *P. Eluard: Le Poète et son Ombre*, Paris, 1963 (illus. p. 145).

R.D. Valette, *Eluard: Livre d'identité*, Paris, 1967 (illus. p. 152).





### A PABLO PICASSO

Une foule de portraits  
 L'un est dédain l'autre est conquête  
 Un autre eau claire et clapotante  
 Un autre cloche de rosée  
 Le plus subtil est un fantôme  
 Il va à terre et flatte ses semblables

Voici les portraits d'une amie  
 Cachant le lait de sa poitrine  
 Sous une étoffe éblouissante  
 Face au cadran de son visage  
 Un pauvre petit soleil tremble  
 Tendre miroir

Miroir de toute vérité  
 De toute fenêtre au matin  
 Pour une danse ancienne et bleue  
 Au bord de deux yeux innocents  
 Portraits sensibles et confiants  
 En bonne logique amoureux.



This poem appeared opposite an illustration of Picasso's charming drawing of Cécile Eluard in her father's 1947 text *A Pablo Picasso* (fig. 1). Cécile was the daughter of the French Surrealist poet Paul Eluard (1895 – 1952) and his first wife Gala (b. Elena Ivanovna Diakonova in 1894, d. 1982), who subsequently married Salvador Dalí. Paul and Gala met at the Swiss Sanatorium in Clavadel, near Davos. Their relationship was relatively open, and Eluard appeared to tolerate her brief liaisons with Max Ernst and Dalí in 1929, before the couple legally separated in 1932. Eluard then married the French artist's model and performer Nusch (Maria Benz, 1906 – 1946) in 1934 (fig. 2).

Paul Eluard was one of the most important figures of the Parisian *avant-garde*. He was a poet and an intellectual, and together with André Breton and Louis Aragon he was a co-founder of the Surrealist movement. Eluard joined the French Communists in 1927 but was later expelled in 1933, although he maintained his high-profile support for the Republican cause in Spain. Eluard and Picasso first became close in 1933 when they worked together on the inaugural issue of *Minotaure*, a Surrealist publication that appeared between 1933 and 1939.

The two men spent a great deal of time together in 1936, the year this drawing was made. On 8<sup>th</sup> January Picasso made a portrait drawing of Eluard (fig. 3, Z.VIII,273; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Saint-Denis) and in June Picasso and Eluard collaborated on a series of illustrations for Eluard's poem *Grand Air* for *Les Yeux Fertiles*. Eluard shared Picasso's distress at the outbreak of Civil War in Spain on 18<sup>th</sup> July. In early August, Eluard, together with Nusch and Cécile, left Paris for a holiday in the South of France. They stayed at the Hôtel Vaste Horizon in the foothills of Mougins,

FIG. 1: P. Eluard, *A Pablo Picasso*, Geneva, 1947, pp. 152-54 (illus.)



FIG. 2: Paul and Nusch Eluard

FIG. 3: P. Picasso, *Portrait de Paul Éluard*, 8 January 1936, pencil on paper, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Saint-Denis

as did Roland and Valentine Penrose, René Char, Yvonne and Christian Zervos and Man Ray. Picasso came too, at Eluard's recommendation, and soon Dora Maar – Picasso's new companion, who was already in St. Tropez – arrived as well. The lively group was documented in photographs taken by Dora Maar and by Man Ray (see A. Baldassari, *Picasso, Life with Dora Maar, Love and War, 1935 – 1945*, Paris, 2006, p. 196).

Cécile was born on 11 May 1918 and thus would have been 18 years old in August 1936 when Picasso drew her portrait. Although she is now 97, Cécile still recalls the days she posed for this portrait, lying on a divan in the artist's studio and clutching a scarf. Her riot of curls – which clearly fascinated Picasso – were a nod to fashion, with the naturally straight-haired Cécile setting it in rollers each night. (Nusch, who also appears in contemporary photographs with curls, evidently relied on the same trick.) The viewpoint, recumbent pose and Cécile's closed eyes all echo a series of photographs by Man Ray of the group of friends sunbathing on the beach, and these parallels are surely no coincidence (figs. 4-6). In one such image, Picasso stands above Cecile looking down at her, while in another, he can be seen draping a strand of seaweed across her chest like a necklace. This is suggested in the drawing by the crumpled red form of the scarf she holds.

This outstanding drawing is extremely rare for its elaborate technique, which employs a broad spectrum of coloured crayons. In this respect it resembles the iconic drawing *Dora et le Minotaure* (fig. 7; Z.VIII,296; Musée Picasso, Paris), executed just fourteen days later, and indeed Dora's reclining pose at the centre of the composition is similar to that of Cécile in our drawing. There is, however, a marked difference in mood between the two drawings. Picasso's portrait of Cécile Eluard is one of great tenderness and lyricism, while *Dora et le Minotaure* is a highly sexualised image of Picasso's





FIGS. 4-6: Picasso, Nusch and Cecile Éluard on the beach, Juans-les-Pins, summer 1936, photographs by Man Ray

lover. Despite his fondness for young women, Picasso felt paternal towards Cécile, the daughter of his good friend, and his affection for her is wholly evident in this drawing.

Cécile Eluard remained close to Picasso as is documented by the Brassai photograph of the group posed in Picasso's Paris studio in June 1944 to commemorate the reading of Picasso's theatrical joke *Le Désir attrapé par la queue* (fig. 8). In her later reminiscences, Cécile recalled Picasso's visits with great fondness: "He never got old. I never felt the 40-odd years between us. We would go and have a swim in Vallauris, I would come and visit him whenever I liked in his studio in rue des Grands Augustins in Paris. He would show me his little sculptures made of bric-a-brac. He was so alive, so earthy, so absolutely not abstract!"

This painting belonged, after Cécile herself, to Denise Scheler (née Weil), who along with her husband Lucien (1902 – 1999) was a good friend of the Eluard family. Lucien was an antiquarian book dealer and in 1932 he established the Librairie Thomas-Scheler in Saint Germain des Prés. He was a friend of Picasso's and close to a number of Surrealist poets, and even published his own poetry under a pseudonym. During the war, from October 1942 until August 1944, the Eluards sought refuge with the Schelers. Following Paul's death in 1952, Lucien, who had served as his editor, wrote prefaces for a number of his works.



FIG. 7: Picasso, *Dora et le Minotaure* (*Dora and the Minotaur*), Mougins, 5 Sept. 1936, india ink, coloured pencils and scrapers on paper, 40.5 x 72 cm., Musée Picasso, Paris





FIG. 9: Paul and Cécile Eluard, 1937, photograph by Man Ray



FIG. 8: Picasso's Paris studio, June 1944 after a reading of Picasso's play *El deseo pillado por la cola* (*Desire Caught by the Tail*). Standing L-R: Jacques Lacan, Cécile Éluard, Pierre Reverdy, Louise Leiris, Pablo Picasso, Zanie de Campan, Valentine Hugo, Simone de Beauvoir, Brassä. Seated L-R: Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Michel Leiris, Jean Aubier; photograph by Brassä.





FIG. 9: Picasso, Hôtel Vaste  
Horizon, Mougins, August 1937,  
photograph by Lee Miller



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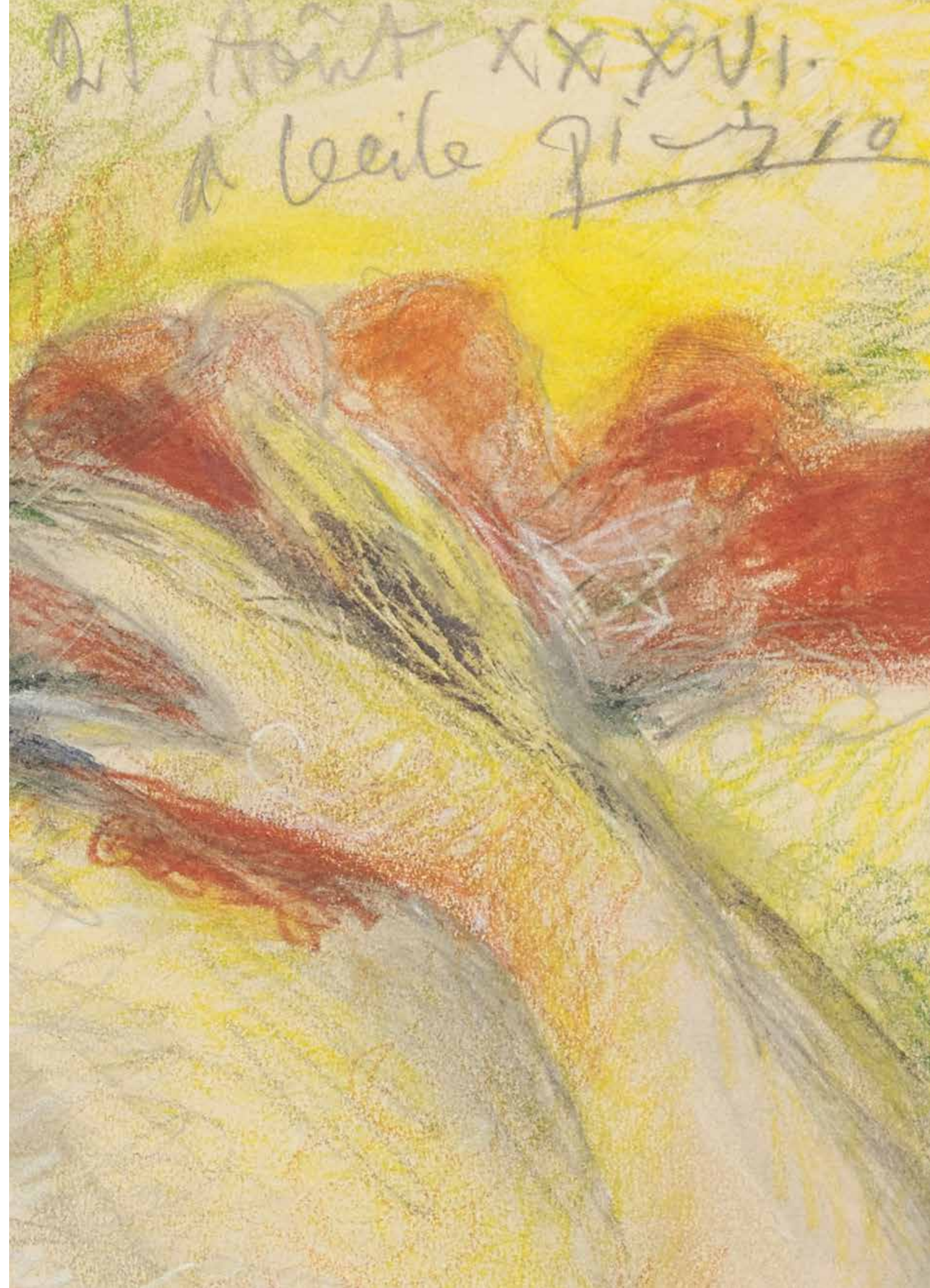
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