

Media release

Basel, November 7, 2023

Picasso on Paper The Baumgartner Gift in the Context of the Collection

November 7, 2023–February 18, 2024, Kunstmuseum Basel | Hauptbau, cabinets

Curator: Amanda Kopp

In 2020, the physicians and art collectors E. Regula and Hans Rudolf Baumgartner of Arlesheim gave a gouache and a lithograph by Pablo Picasso and four drawings by Miriam Cahn to the Kunstmuseum Basel's Kupferstichkabinett (Department of Prints and Drawings). An exhibition in the graphic-art cabinets now showcases the two Picassos from this generous gift. They are embedded in a selection of prints by the Spanish artist from the Kupferstichkabinett's holdings to illustrate the web of interrelations connecting them to other treasures in Picasso's oeuvre and the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, the public art collection of Basel.

The gouache, which dates from 1943, shows two portraits, which Picasso combined on the front and back of a single sheet. The double-sided painting is held by a mount that can be rotated in its frame: in the blink of an eye, the portrait of a youth is transformed into one of a bearded old man. The execution of the latter, in swift and sparing hatched and curled brushstrokes, brings the figure of the Minotaur to mind. This hybrid creature between bull and man, with which Picasso identified on multiple occasions, originated in Greek myth. The contrast between youth and old age and the motif of the transformation appear in a number of Picasso's works, including in several prints that have long been in the Kupferstichkabinett. They treat themes such as Ovid's Metamorphoses and gather mythological figures like the faun or the abovementioned Minotaur.

The lithograph gifted to the museum likewise presents the portrait of a young man, who bears a distinct resemblance to the youthful head in the gouache. It was created in November 1945 and marks the beginning of a period during which Picasso devoted considerable creative energy to this technique. The Kupferstichkabinett already has a number of lithographs by Picasso in a variety of styles. The exhibition now unites several portraits from this collection with the Baumgartners' gifts.

Imagery and information on the exhibition

www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media

Media contact

Karen N. Gerig, Tel. +41 61 206 62 80, karen.gerig@bs.ch