


**Pablo PICASSO (Malaga 1881 - Mougins 1973)**

**Embracing Couple (Couple enlacé) III**

Circa: 1.1.59

Pen and brown ink on a page from a large sketchbook.

Dated and numbered *1.1.59* / *111* at the upper left.

Numbered *331* and *5790* on the verso.

370 x 270 mm. (14 1/2 x 10 5/8 in.)

This drawing is likely to have come from one of two spiral-bound sketchbooks used by Picasso in 1958 and 1959. As the scholar Brigitte Léal has noted, 'sketchbooks form an integral part of the whole of Picasso's creative activity', and some 175 sketchbooks by the artist are known or recorded, dating between 1894 and 1967. The earliest known example dates from when the artist was thirteen years old, and he continued the practice of using sketchbooks throughout almost the whole of his career. He often carried a small notebook in his pocket for making quick sketches, while larger sketchbooks or notebooks were used in the studio. While several of Picasso's carnets have survived - notably twenty-nine examples today in the collection of the Musée Picasso in Paris – many other sketchbooks have been broken up, while others are known only from a handful of individual pages.

Drawn on the 1st of January 1959, this large sheet was Picasso's third drawing of the New Year. The previous drawing executed by the artist that day was a closely related composition of a dancing or embracing couple, and shared the same provenance as the present sheet until it was sold at auction in 2017. Both drawings come from one of the few late sketchbooks by Picasso. While the last two

decades of his career were a time of great productivity for Picasso, not many sketchbooks are known from this fecund period. With the exception of 1962, when the artist filled eight sketchbooks with drawings inspired by Edouard Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe and Jacques-Louis David's Rape of the Sabines, only eight other sketchbooks are known from the final decade and a half of his career, before his last known carnet of 1967. As Léal has written of Picasso's late sketchbooks, 'The carnets are no longer places for preparatory studies for the paintings, which they accompany rather than precede, but supports for exercises combining relaxation…and discipline…, dominated by the theme of the nude, a pretext for variations on the arabesque, which appears clearly, through these final notebooks, as the formal link connecting him to the heritage of Delacroix, Ingres and Manet.'

The artist's son Claude has written of Picasso's sketchbooks, that 'They are, from one page to the next, an adventure – a diary of the painter...They are the notes working up to something or bouncing off something else, perhaps a sculpture onto a painting and back. The pages of the notebooks are the sketches for paintings but they are also often the afterwords. Sometimes they stand as elaborate works on their own. Picasso's notebooks are stepping-stones to trampolines for somersaults.'

The present sheet was until recently in the collection of the artist's granddaughter Marina Ruiz Picasso (b.1951), the only daughter of Picasso's eldest son Paulo. Though her relationships with both her father and grandfather were troubled, she was the only legitimate grandchild of the artist alive at the time of his death in 1973, and therefore received the second-largest inheritance, after that of Picasso's second wife Jacqueline. As Picasso's biographer John Richardson has noted, Marina Picasso 'differs from the artist's other five heirs in that she has made a point of exhibiting as much as possible of her magnificent collection in a succession of traveling exhibitions…for students of modern art in cities which have never seen a Picasso retrospective, these exhibitions have been a revelation.' This drawing from Marina Picasso's collection, however, appears not to have previously been exhibited.

A photo-certificate from Claude Picasso, dated 12 November 2019, accompanies the present sheet.

**Artist description:**

'I do not know if I am a great painter, but I am a great draughtsman.' (Picasso to Max Jacob).