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PIERRE BONNARD

1867 Fontenay-aux-Roses – Le Cannet 1947

Maison dans la cour

Colour Lithograph on wove Paper, from the Series: *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris*; 1899.
From the edition of 100.

Signed in pencil lower right: *PBonnard*; at the lower left corner inscribed: *pl. 4*.
34.5 x 25.5 cm (53.3 x 40 cm)

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Switzerland

LITERATURE: Francis Bouvet, *Pierre Bonnard. The complete graphic work*, no. 61 – Claude Roger-Marx, *Bonnard Lithographe*, Montecarlo, 1952, New York, 1981, no. 59

Bonnard worked for four years on the series of prints *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris*, which do not display a coherent style, but hang together loosely in terms of subject matter and execution.

During these years, he distanced himself from the distinctly modern and decorative style that characterized his early prints, and opted for a freer, more impressionistic manner that was better suited to his ambition to catch spontaneous impressions from a “mobile viewpoint”.

Bonnard found the poetry of the fleeting moment in Japanese woodcuts, which had already made such a great impression on him in 1890 during the large Japan exhibition in Paris. At that time he had mainly been influenced by the pictorial qualities of Japanese prints – their inventive use of colour and perspective, their feeling of flatness and their frequent use of the silhouette- but now he also drew inspiration from the Japanese view of the city and its street life. Thadée Natanson, editor of the art magazine *La revue blanche*, therefore compared the work of his friend to the prints of Utagawa Hiroshige [Fig.1, 2]. Both artists portrayed the city as though it were a theatre: its bridges and boulevards set the stage for the small anecdotal incidents that make a city so lively and attractive.¹

Bonnard evidently planned to include this wonderful print as the fourth plate of *Quelques aspects de la vie de Paris*, which would explain the inscription “*pl. 4*” on the print; after all, *Maison dans la cour* became the third plate in the series.

The lithograph shows a view from Bonnard’s apartment in Montmartre near the Place de Clichy.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Place Clichy marked the heart of Parisian bohemia. Located at the foot of Montmartre, the square was a hub for nightlife and progressive art, surrounded by cafés and studios - including Bonnard’s own, just around the corner in the rue de Douai. The artist was deeply attached to his neighbourhood during the 1890s, and regularly depicted the area in his prints and paintings.

¹ Fleur Roos Rosa de Carvalho, and Marije Vellekoop, *Printmaking in Paris. The Rage for prints at the fin de siècle*, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, 2012, p. 115

The window view was to become an increasingly prominent motif for Bonnard, but in this early work he chose only to imply its presence, allowing it to dictate the image's boundaries. His painting *Montmartre in the Rain*, dated 1897, in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, shows the same view from his window [Fig.3].



Fig.1: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Kinryusan Temple, Asakusa*
from the series: *One Hundred Famous views of Edo*
woodblock print, 1856.
35.9 x 24.4 cm.
Private collection



Fig.2: Utagawa Hiroshige, *View of Nihonbashi Ichome Street*
from the series: *One Hundred Famous views of Edo*
woodblock print, 1858.
36 x 24.3 cm.
Private collection

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Fig.3.: *Montmartre in the Rain*, 1897,
oil on paper, laid down on canvas.
69.9 x 95 cm.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Inv. no. s0515S2008)