



Marc

# CHAGALL

A vision in my dream

OPERA GALLERY

# Marc CHAGALL

## A vision in my dream

Blue donkeys, fish playing, nymphs, goats, lovers, musicians and acrobats...  
Opera Gallery invites you to enter into the exotic and dreamy world of Marc Chagall.

The Russian born French based artist is one of the most prolific and successful artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Considered to be a pioneer of modernism and a critical member of the Avant-garde, Chagall's breadth of work spans virtually every artistic medium including paints, prints, stained glass, tapestries, illustrations, ceramics and stage sets.

We are delighted to play host to such an important and outstanding collection especially in Hong Kong where so rarely you have the chance to view this caliber of works and artist.

The exhibition features Chagall's most prominent works exhibited in the region since 1994 showcasing over 70 pieces including original works on canvas, drawings and limited edition works. Drawing his inspiration from reality, dreams and culture, Chagall flirted with Fauvism, Cubism and Surrealism yet was a follower of no one movement. Separated by the unconventional world with his distinctive iconography, his hybrids and fantasy animals, his acrobats, musicians and lovers, sometimes lit by the moon, sometimes by the sun, turned him with no doubt into a timeless legend.

Marc Chagall died in 1985 at the age of 97. The last survivor of the first generation of European moderns, Chagall's unconventional world is timeless.

Chosen as an associated project with Le French May Arts Festival supported by the Consulate General of France in Hong Kong and Macau the exhibition celebrates an exceptional timing of arts and culture blossoming in Hong Kong.

We are proud to present the show in our new flagship gallery on 52 Wyndham Street and look forward to welcoming you into Chagall's enchanting and dreamy world.

Shirley Yablonsky  
Director  
Opera Gallery Hong Kong

Gilles Dyan  
Chairman  
Opera Gallery Group

OPERA GALLERY



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FRENCH  
MAY  
法國  
五月

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Le French May 2013 is opening under the theme of the 1920's with 28 exhibitions of modern and contemporary art. I am very proud to have the *Marc Chagall, A vision in my dream* exhibition by Opera Gallery as part of it, highlighting the major role of the artist in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century artistic scene.

Chagall is the perfect illustration of the role France played in the artistic revolution and birth of modern art in the 1920's. Russian by birth, Chagall decided to settle in France where he developed his very personal style under the influence of other great painters, musicians and poets. He died there as a French artist and citizen. Just like many other figures of the time, such as Picasso for example, Modigliani, he elected Paris his hometown, nurturing his work with the different ideas and trends that were experimented by artists and philosophers coming from all over the world.

It is my pleasure to see the growing interest of Hong Kong for modern art, and I am proud, after the success of the exhibition *Picasso - Masterpieces* from Musée National Picasso Paris of Le French May 2012, to give another opportunity to explore this period, and give to the public more keys to understand this turning point for art.

In this regard, I am happy to see the presence of French galleries in Hong Kong, and their participation to the city's establishment as a major cultural hub in Asia. With their support, Le French May is able to present a selection of outstanding exhibitions, both indoor and outdoor. I am looking forward to this great show and invite you to discover the fascinating and significant universe of Marc Chagall.

**Arnaud Barthélémy**  
Consul General of France in Hong Kong & Macau



## Marc CHAGALL

was born under the name Moshe Segall in 1887 in Vitebsk, Russia (today's Belarus). He comes from a very devout Hassidic-Jewish family. He grew up with a humble background with his father working for a fishmonger. He however, had a happy childhood with a large family of nine children. He was his mother's first and favourite son, and the first years of his life were influenced by his trips to his grandfather's farm, Jewish customs and Russian folklore. He also played the violin, which was a traditional musical instrument of the Russian-Jewish culture.

All the memories from his childhood and teenage years became strong recurring themes in his work.

At 20, he moved to Saint Petersburg where he took painting lessons with Nicolas Roerich and Leon Bakst, with whom he asserted his colourist talents. He became interested in the pioneer painters of Paris such as Cézanne, Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec or Matisse.

In 1910, a patron sent him to Paris for a short stay. He settled there for a year and later rented a studio at La Ruche which he shared with Modigliani and Soutine. He met Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars and Fernand Léger with whom he became friend.

In 1914, he went back to Vitebsk and the war forced him to stay in Russia. He relocated back there until 1922. He founded a museum and an art school and created theatre settings. In 1915, he married Bella Rosenfeld. Their daughter, Ida Chagall, was born in 1916.

The couple moved to Berlin in 1922 and Chagall produced his first etchings published by Cassirer (Illustrations of his autobiography *My Life*, 1922). Soon after he received a telegram from his friend Blaise Cendrars saying "Come back, you are famous and Vollard is waiting for you" (Ambroise Vollard was one of the most important art dealers).

In 1923, he moved his family back to Paris, "his second Vitebsk". Chagall set up a new studio and became acquainted with Sonia and Robert Delaunay, Louis Marcoussis and Juan Gris. He became a French citizen in 1937. During this whole period, Chagall travelled a lot throughout France, Europe and the Middle East.

Upon Vollard's request he made several series of illustrations: *Dead Souls* by Gogol, *Fables* by La Fontaine and the Holy Bible.

The war forced him and his family to flee to New York in 1941 where he stayed until 1948. Whilst in America, he designed several ballet settings and costumes, the death of his beloved wife Bella in 1944 affected him deeply and caused him to stop painting for several months. He then met Virginia Haggard, with whom he had a son David, born in 1946.



The MoMA put together a retrospective of his work in 1946 and a series of solo exhibitions were organized throughout Europe in 1947 (Paris, Amsterdam, Bern, Zurich).

When he came back to France in 1948, he was famous worldwide. He settled in Vence, South of France, met Picasso, and Aimé Maeght became his dealer. He started using a wider range of techniques: engraving, mosaic, stained glass, murals, ceramics... He was commissioned to create several big projects and the retrospectives of his work are numerous.

He marries Valentina Brodsky in 1952.

When he was 65, the publisher Tériade asked him to illustrate with lithographies the work of Longus *Daphnis et Chloé*. The ever detailed and involved Marc Chagall decided to travel to Greece for inspiration and made several gouache and pastel preparatory works. The work was published in 1961, illustrated by 42 original lithographies.

His work was exhibited at the Louvre Museum just before the inauguration of the Marc Chagall Museum in Nice in 1973.

Marc Chagall died in Saint-Paul-de-Vence on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1985 at the age of 97.

Marc Chagall lived through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century creating an art which never went with the flow of Modern Art.

He considered his painting unrealistic and illogical. However his very distinctive iconography with his hybrids and fantasy animals, his acrobats, musicians and lovers sometimes lit by the moon, sometimes by the sun will inhabit our collective memory. He drew his inspiration from reality, his dreams, his culture and the Holy Bible.

Chagall's art is a clever mix of visible and invisible, of folklore and legends, of metaphors and symbols. It is an art which is timeless and singular.

**Roi David sur fond rose, 1963**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower left corner)

Oil and India ink on canvas

24 x 16 cm – 9.4 x 6.3 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

During World War II, as a result of the Nazi occupation of France, in 1941 the Chagalls were forced to leave Paris, making their way to the United States which they made their home. However, after Bella's death, bereaved and depressed Chagall returned to Europe and settled in Provence in 1949. At this point he met Virginia Haggard, with whom he had a son David, and in order to make money he began accepting theatrical commissions. He also began to work in sculpture, ceramics and stained glass.

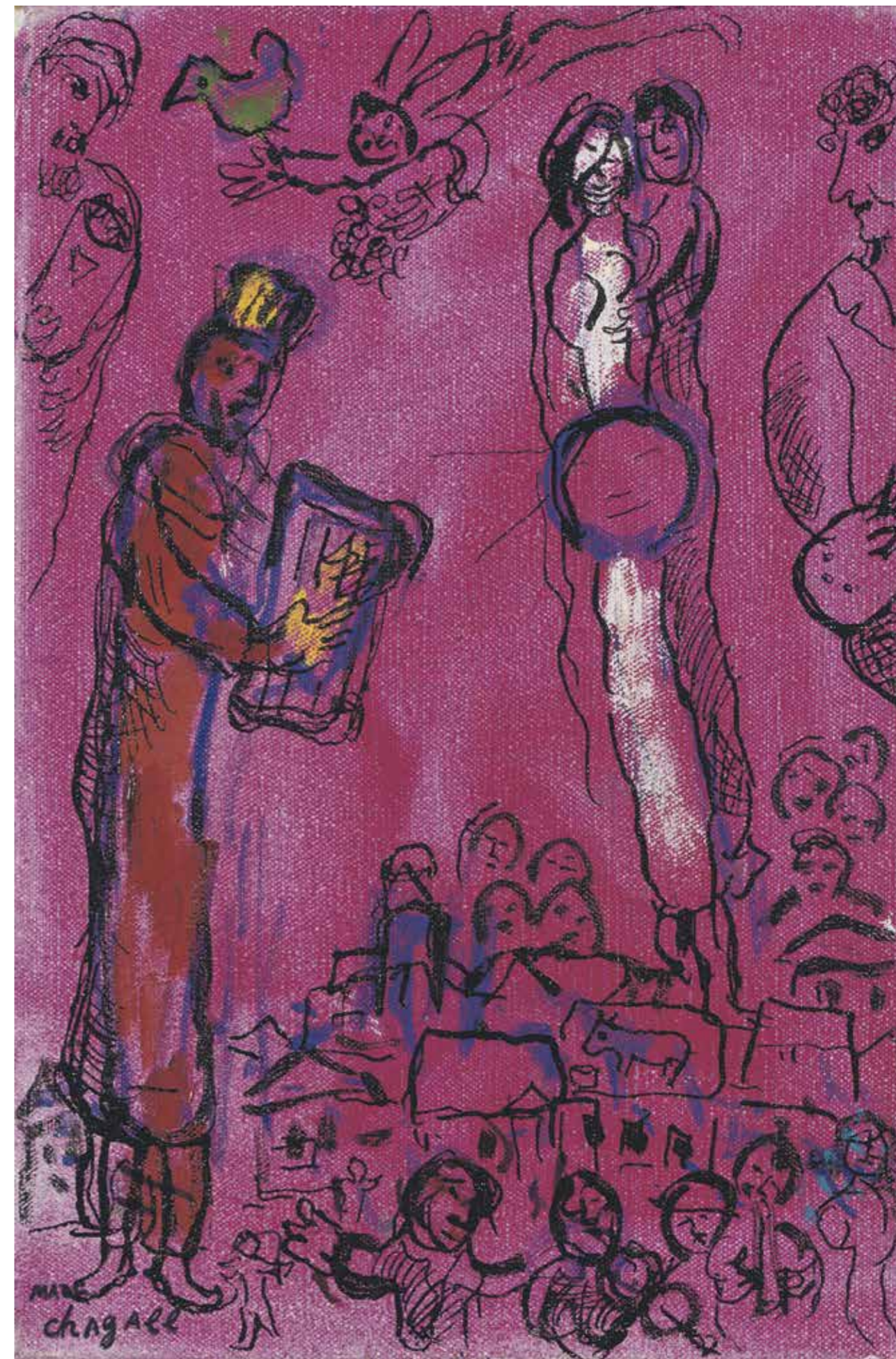
Remarrying in 1952 to Valentina Brodsky he travelled extensively to Greece and Israel and in 1960 he created the series of stained glass windows for the synagogue of the Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital in Jerusalem depicting Jacob's blessings to his sons, the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

*Roi David sur fond rose* is a product of this period of Chagall's life.

The main subject of King David, playing his lyre, overseeing the tribes and cities of the Kingdom of Israel is symptomatic of Chagall's deep sense of identification with the whole of Jewish history. "All the time I was working I felt my father and my mother were looking over my shoulder, and behind them were Jews, millions of other vanished Jews of yesterday and a thousand years ago".

The embracing couple may be a reference to Bathsheba and Uriah and the birth of David's child from Bathsheba. The linear, simplified, two-dimensional quality of the painting reflects his work with stained glass at this time; similarly the very translucent effect of the brushwork.

The sinuous figures are typical of his work of this period, it has been suggested that having rediscovered the joy of living, post-bereavement, he expressed this with a free and vibrant use of colour and greater lightness and movement within the composition. Marc Chagall was a man of many parts, some conflicting. A Russian-Jew with French nationality, whose work quotes Christian iconography, a dreamer whose work touches on the harsh realities of war and persecution, an avant-garde artist yet unallied to any one particular movement.



### Le Pont Neuf, 1953–1954

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)

Oil on canvas

40,9 x 32,9 cm – 16.1 x 12.9 in.

#### Provenance

The artist's estate

Private collection

Acquired from the above (Nov. 1999)

Sale: Christie's, New York, May 10, 2007, lot 298

Private collection, New York

#### Certificate

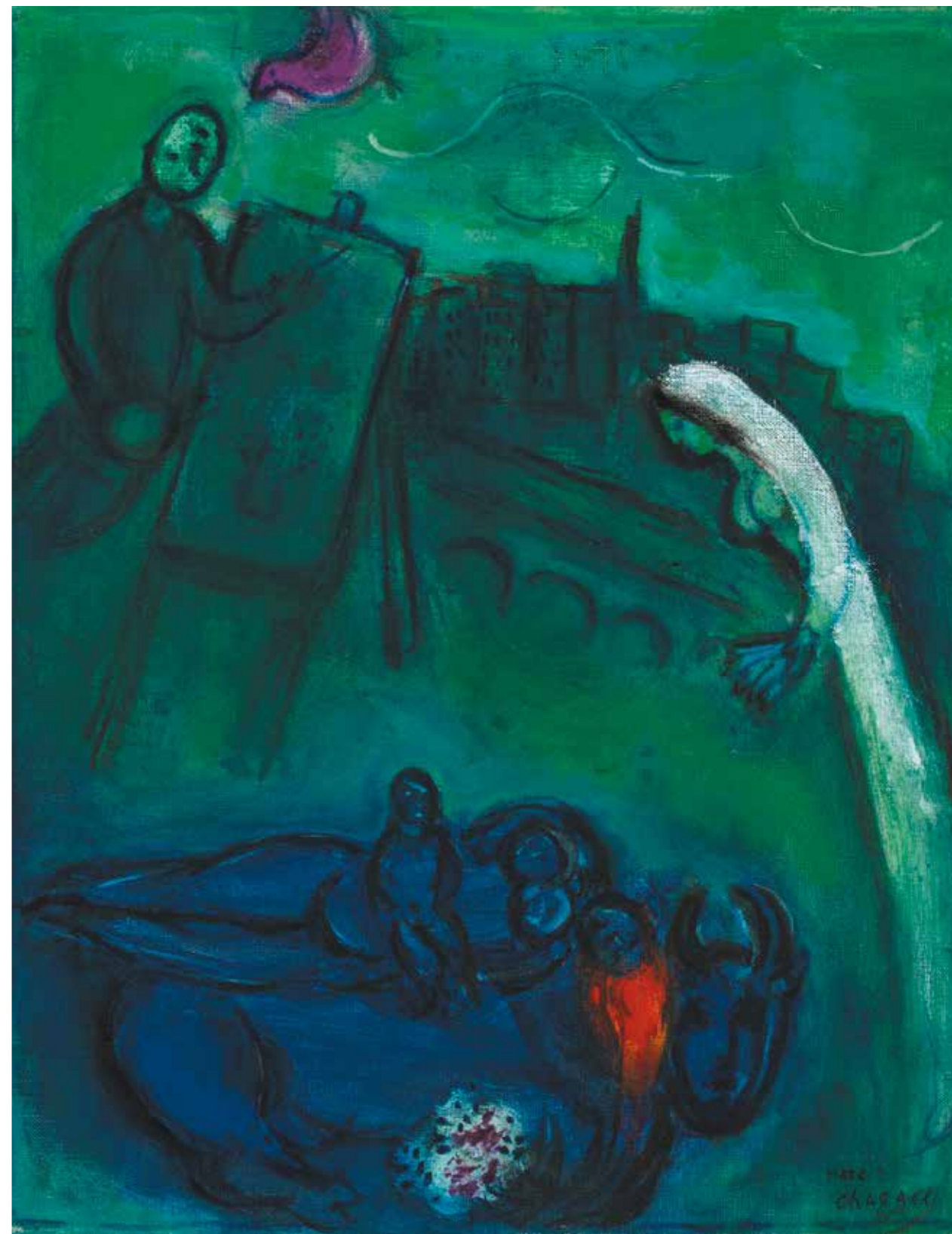
The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

#### Public notes

*Le Pont Neuf* is part of a series of paintings dedicated to Paris that Marc Chagall planned in 1952, partly basing them on sketches he made during his stay in the city in 1946. Choosing the Pont Neuf as its central motif, the composition develops around it in a series of visions and symbols. On the left, a painter, with his head upside down, is standing in front of his easel while a purple bird peeps over to glimpse at the canvas. A bride, perhaps the model, or maybe just an imaginary muse bows to the artist, a bouquet of flowers in her hands. Below, a woman with flaming red hair and her baby are carried away on the back of a blue ox. Overlying his own pantheon of characters and creatures upon the Parisian cityscape, *Le Pont Neuf* evokes interweaved themes: artistic creation, marital devotion, fecundity and birth. Around the city of Paris, art, love and life dance in a circle.

In 1954, twenty-nine paintings from the series were exhibited in Paris at the Galerie Maeght. The project spurred an unprecedented numbers of preparatory drawings and also engendered two groups of lithographs: one inspired by the sketches, published in *Verve* in 1952; the other produced from the paintings, published in *Derrière le Miroir* in 1954. This wealth of works underlines Chagall's strong connection with the Parisian universe in those years: "Paris is a picture already painted", he wrote (Marc Chagall, quoted in Franz Meyer, *Marc Chagall, Life and Work*, New York, 1963, p. 529). The subject introduced a new painterly experience to his works, expanding colours into overlapping fields. In *Le Pont Neuf*, the landscape and the figures emerge from a zone of open green as symphonies of memories inspired by the tonality.

Besides his native town Vitebsk, no other city received so much attention in Chagall's oeuvre as Paris. Vitebsk having been destroyed during the Second World War, Chagall seems to present Paris as the new space where the artist's inner reality can survive. After having been abruptly left by his lover Virginia – who ran away with their son David – in 1952 Chagall married 'Vava' (Valentine Brodsky). The wedding brought Chagall the serenity he needed to work, embracing new ambitious projects. While the 1950s saw Chagall working on large-scale murals, mosaics and stained glasses, *Le Pont Neuf* and the Paris series reaffirmed the intimate world of personal visions, symbols and love that characterise Chagall's pictorial universe.



**Dos à dos, 1984**

Signed 'Chagall' (lower centre); countersigned 'Chagall' (on the reverse)

Oil on canvas

130 x 89 cm – 51.2 x 35 in.

**Provenance**

Estate of Chagall, Paris

Private collection, Connecticut

Private collection, Chicago

**Exhibited**

Paris, Fondation Maeght, Marc Chagall, *Rétrospective de l'œuvre peint*, July

7 – Oct. 15, 1984, No. 82, ill. in colour p. 153

London, Royal Academy of Arts, *Chagall*, Jan. 11 – March 31, 1985, No. 125, ill. in colour pp. 246–247

Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Chagall*, May 12 – July 7, 1985, No. 125, ill. in colour pp. 246–247

Tokyo, Mitsukoshi, Ltd., *Chagall*, July – Sept. 2006, No. 1, ill. in colour pp. 14–15

**Literature**

Fondation Maeght, Marc Chagall, *Rétrospective de l'œuvre peint*, Paris, 1984, No. 82, ill. in colour p. 153

Royal Academy of Arts, *Chagall*, London, 1985, No. 125, ill. in colour pp. 246–247

Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Chagall*, Philadelphia, 1985, No. 125, ill. in colour pp. 246–247

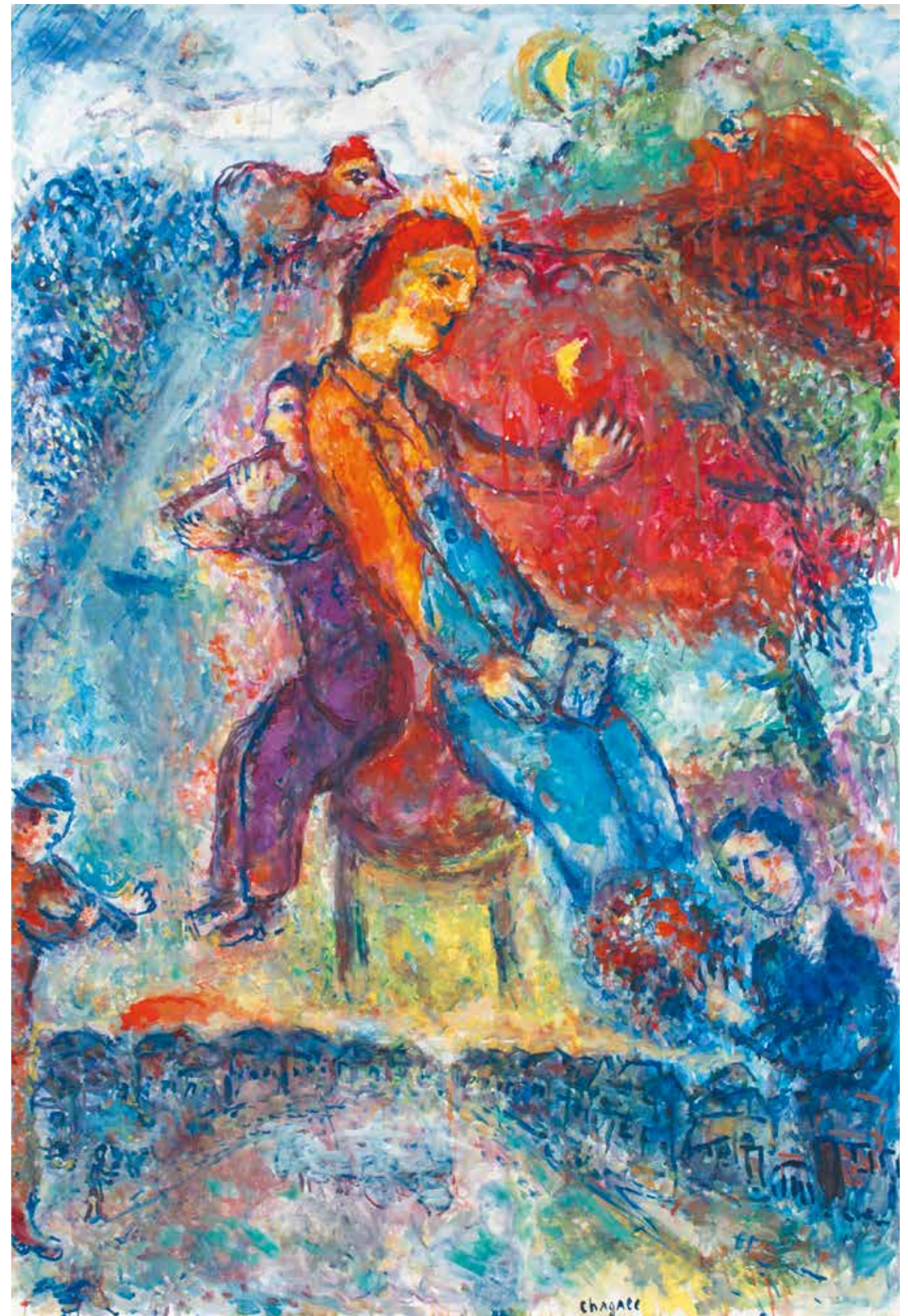
**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

In 1977 Chagall was awarded the highest decoration that the French State can bestow: during a luncheon at the Elysée, the President pinned to the artist's lapel the decoration of the "Légion d'Honneur". Here, in an astonishing display of paintwork, Chagall has imagined himself perched on a stool in a magic pathway which is at the same time some wide river and sky of the street below: on the right, an official-looking figure offers a bouquet. The more one looks, the more remarkable the composition becomes, with the strange juxtaposition of the central pair on their stool and the landscape, like some optical illusion, changing from one shape to another according to the way it is seen. But the most amazing feature of the canvas is the web of colour made up of a mosaic of brushstrokes on which are superimposed short black lines, which turn into houses or a bridge or a bird in the sky. Yet in some places the artist has spurned these details, and obliterated them with additional colour (for there seems to be a horse and cart on the roadway in the foreground now covered by white marks). In other places he has used only the brush to suggest some shadowy or angel, to be seen emerging from the welter of coloured marks.

The sheer enjoyment of painting and the complete freedom with which Chagall disposes the colour expresses his joy. For while the great patch of red-coloured light which surrounds his left hand brings the scene forward, when the eye travels downward and sees the street receding into the background, it is led to believe that all this is going on in a mysterious realm of the sky. The pictorial devices evocative of pointillism, which Chagall had used for his circus arena scenes of the years before, have here been freed into a conglomeration of colour and brushwork. This is an act of bravado on the part of the old master, whose mind and hand preserve the freshness of the youths accompany him so poignantly on their pipes. (Susan Compton, *Chagall*, Royal Academy of Art, London 1985, p. 246)



**L'Âne bleu, circa 1978**

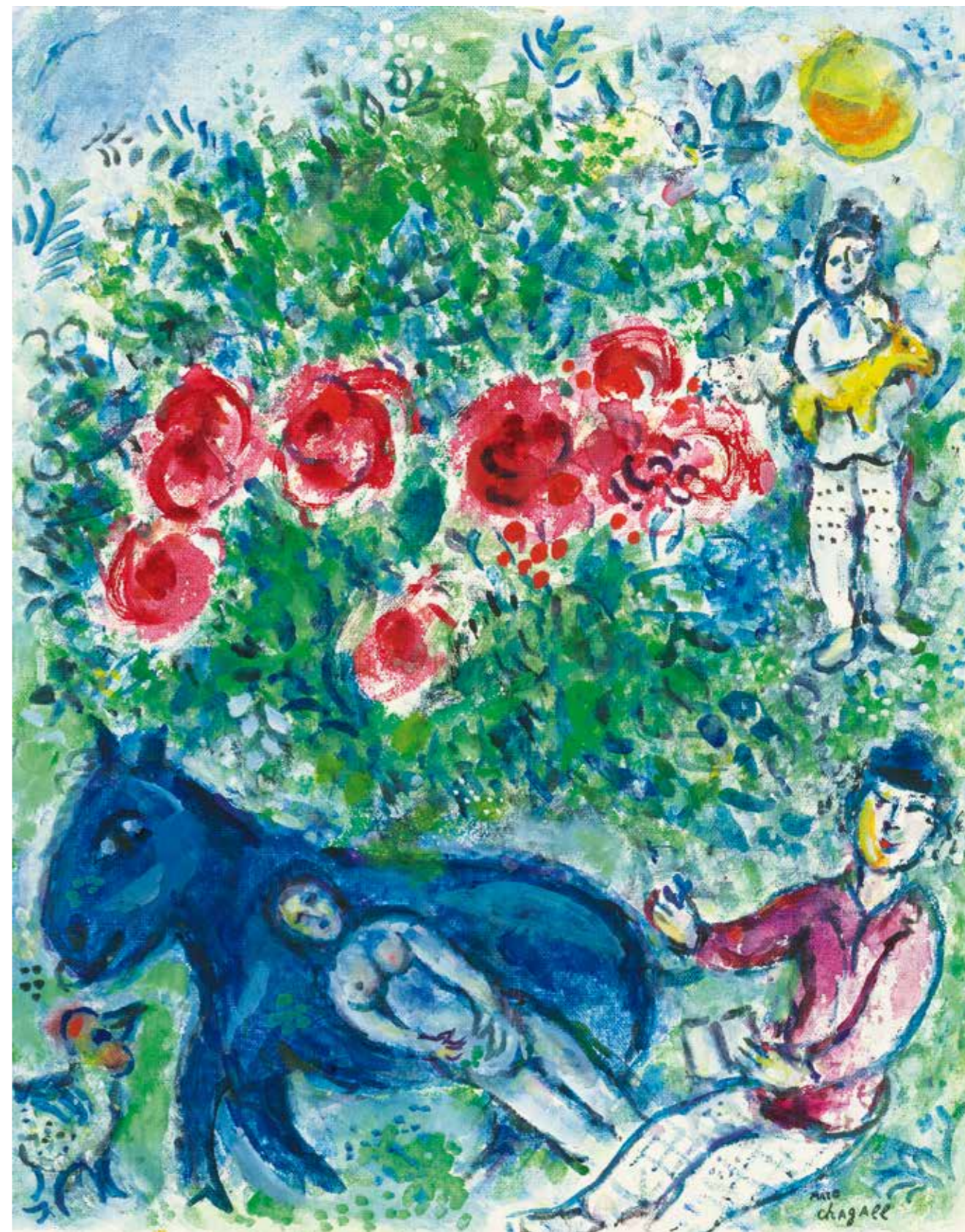
Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)  
Oil, acrylic, tempera, pen and ink on canvas board  
40,8 x 32,8 cm - 16.1 x 12.9 in.

**Provenance**

Marisa Del Re Gallery, Inc., New York  
Private collection, East Coast, USA, (acquired from the above, 1994)

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Corbeille de fruits, 1980**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)  
Gouache, watercolour and coloured crayon on paper  
37,5 x 50 cm – 14.8 x 19.7 in.

**Provenance**

Estate of the artist  
Private collection, Long Island

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

*Corbeille de Fruits* is a later work by Chagall, a wonderful example of the artist's oeuvre. Chagall's adept use of colour to create a vivid atmosphere based on his own personal vision is apparent here. The overarching tone that characterizes this work is a vibrant blue; the whites of the blossoms on the table, and the oranges and yellows of the fruit in the basket seem to jump out against it, while the greens of the lovers on the right-hand side and the vase work in harmony with the blue. The combination of thick gouache with the delicate nature of watercolour creates depth and texture. Chagall utilizes many of the symbols that show up in his work repeatedly. Directly next to the embracing couple is a rooster, a symbol of fertility often painted with lovers as it is in this case. The man puts his hand to the woman's bosom, another symbol of fertility. The theme of fecundity is echoed in the ripe fruits and blooming flowers that serve as the central focal point. In the background, depicted in a white that mixes with the blue of the surroundings, is a goat, the symbol for the Jewish Day of Atonement. This is a feast when the sins of the people were once symbolically expiated by tying a red ribbon (representative of the sins) around the neck of a goat and casting him out into the wilderness to die. The goat is also representative of Chagall's rural upbringing in his Russian village of Vitebsk, and Chagall most likely uses the symbol with both ideas in mind.





**Le Clown violoniste et l'âne rouge, 1971**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)

Oil on canvas

55 x 38 cm – 21.6 x 15 in.

**Provenance**

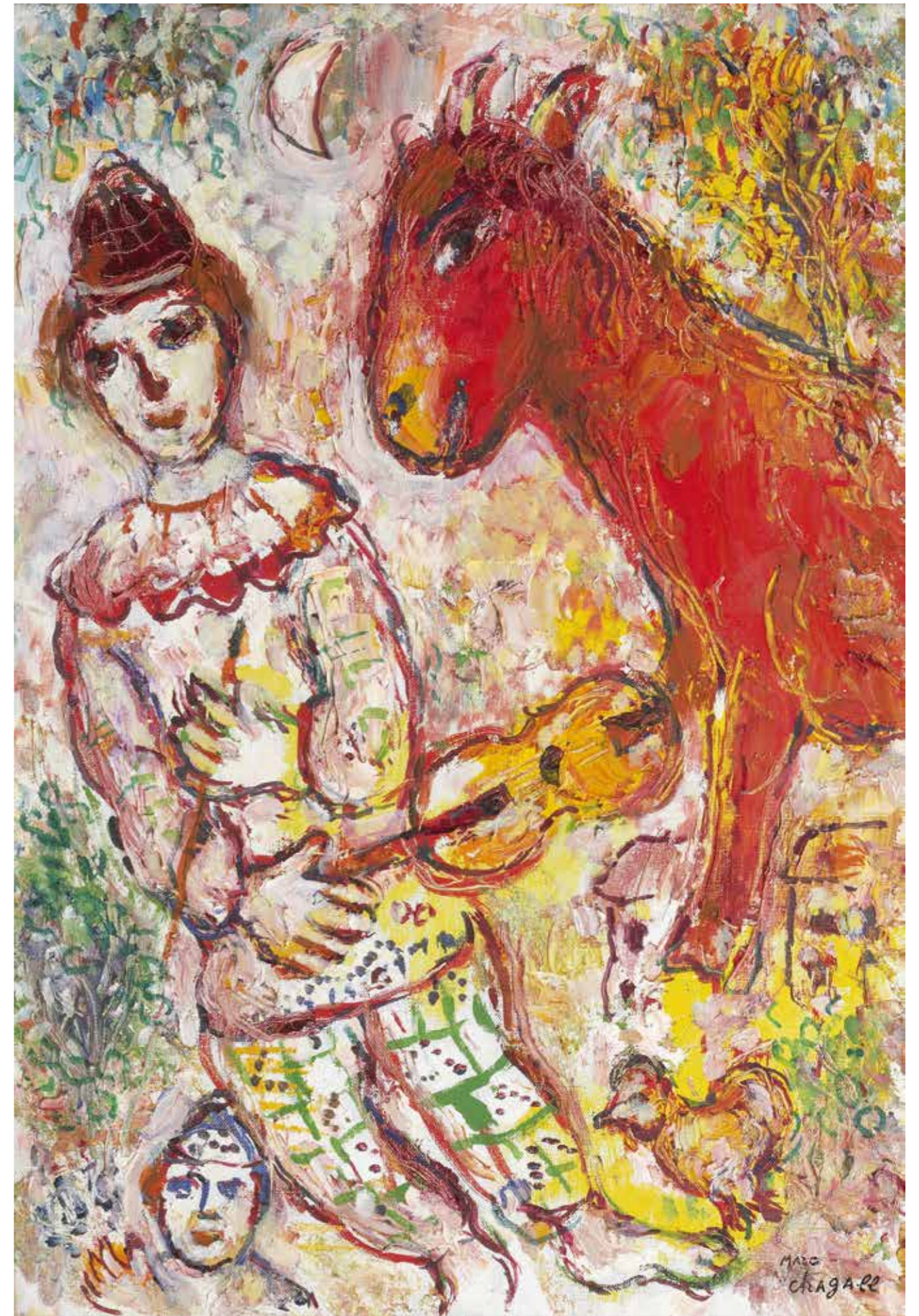
Ida Chagall estate

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

"These clowns, bareback riders and acrobats have made themselves at home in my visions. Why? Why am I so touched by their make-up and their grimaces? With them I can move toward new horizons. Lured by their colours and make-up, I dream of painting new psychic distortions."  
Marc Chagall in Chagall – Le Cirque, 1981



**En fuite avec la Thora, circa 1981**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)  
India ink, wash, watercolour and crayon on paper  
48 x 54,4 cm – 18.9 x 21.4 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, France

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Le Cirque, 1979–1981**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)

Oil on canvas

92 x 73 cm – 36.2 x 28.7 in.

**Provenance**

Ida Chagall, Paris

Acquired as a gift from the above (1990)

Israel Museum collection, Jerusalem

Private collection

**Exhibited**Palm Beach, Wally Findlay Galleries, Chagall and the Circle of Jewish Painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Dec. 2012 – Jan. 2013, ill. pp. 10–11**Public notes**

Chagall found endless pleasure in depicting the visual splendour of the circus. Throughout his career he drew great creative energy from watching the event, and some of his most important canvases are fantastic depictions that exaggerate the pageantry of the performance.

"It's a magic world, the circus", Chagall once wrote, "an age-old game that is danced, and in which tears and smiles, the play of arms and legs take the form of great art... The circus is the performance that seems to me the most tragic. Throughout the centuries, it has been man's most piercing cry in his search for entertainment and joy. It often takes the form of lofty poetry. I seem to see a Don Quixote in search of an ideal, like that marvellous clown who wept and dreamed of human love."

Although this picture is mostly populated by circus performers, these characters had many levels of significance for the artist. To him, they represented the many faces of man's emotional character, both fun-loving and tragic. He once wrote, "I have always considered the clowns, acrobats, and actors as being tragically human who, for me, would resemble characters from certain religious paintings. And even today, when I paint a Crucifixion or another religious painting, I experience again almost the same sensations that I felt while painting circus people, and yet there is nothing literary in these paintings, and it is very difficult to explain why I find a psycho-plastic resemblance between the two kinds of composition".

Chagall's fascination with the circus dates back to his childhood in Vitebsk and his years in Paris when he frequently attended the circus with Ambroise Vollard. As Venturi explains, "the importance of the circus motif in modern French literature and painting is well-known; in painting it suffices to recall the names of Seurat and Rouault. As always, Chagall's images of circus people [...] are at once burlesque and tender. Their perspective of sentiment, their fantastic forms, suggest that the painter is amusing himself in a freer mood than usual; and the result is eloquent of the unmistakable purity flowing from Chagall's heart. These circus scenes are mature realizations of earlier dreams" (Lionello Venturi, Marc Chagall, New York, 1945, p. 39).



**Fleurs et corbeille de fruits, 1949**

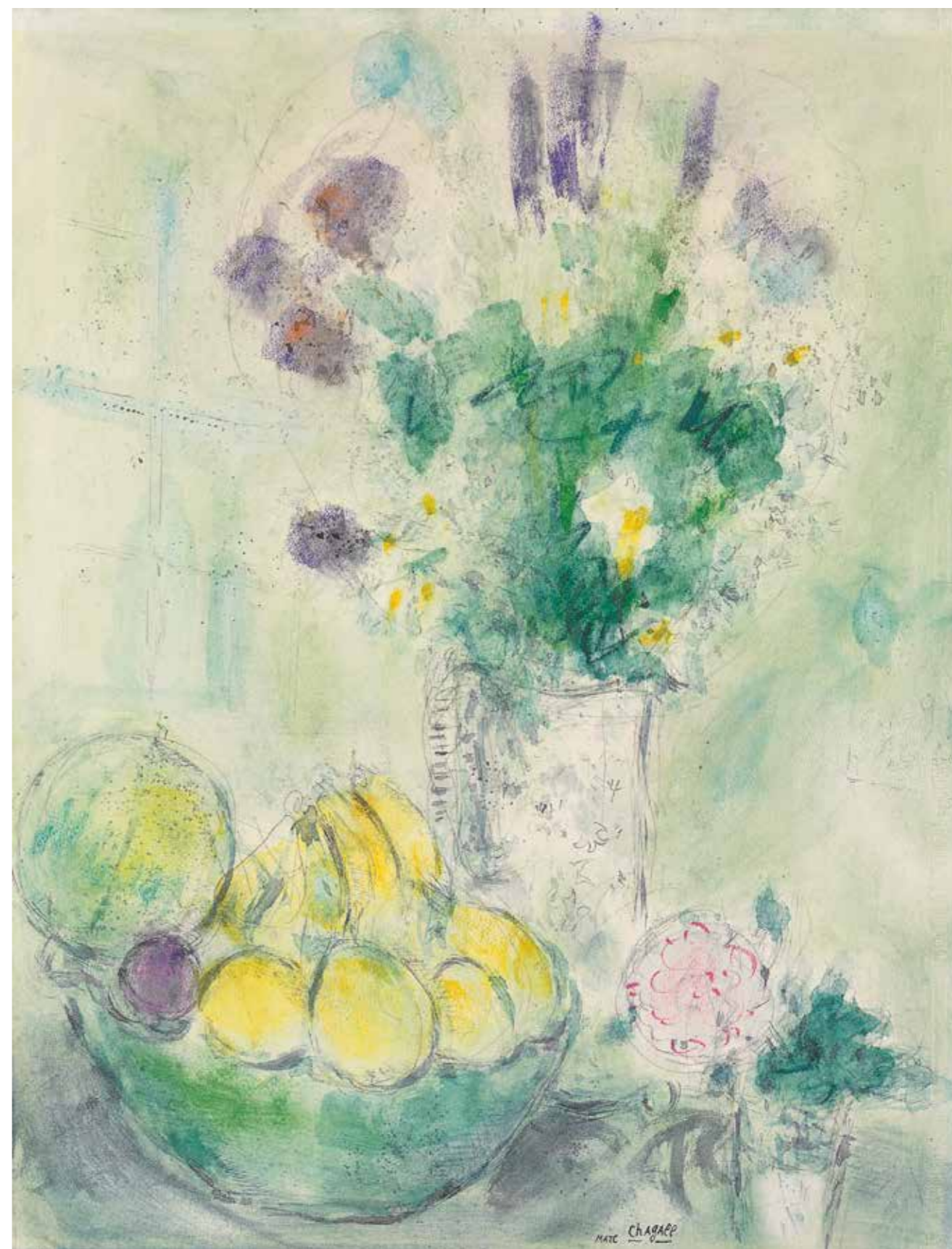
Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower centre)  
Watercolour, pastel and pencil on paper  
65 x 50,5 cm – 25.6 x 19.9 in.

**Provenance**

Ruth O'Hara Gallery, New York  
Private collection (acquired from the above)

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Le Roi David, 1963**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)  
Oil and India ink on canvas  
24 x 14 cm – 9.4 x 5.5 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, Germany  
Beck & Eggeling, Düsseldorf  
Private collection, Monaco

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**La Fiancée rêvant, 1952**

Signed 'Chagall Marc' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

56,5 x 52,2 cm – 22.2 x 20.5 in.

**Provenance**

Galerie Rosengart, Lucerne

Galerie Beyeler, Basel

Anon. sale: Christie's, New York, Nov. 8, 1995, lot 291

Private collection, East Coast (acquired from above)

**Literature**

Franz Meyer, Marc Chagall, Life and Work, Harry. N. Abrams, New York, 1963, No. 880, ill.

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

The central characters in many of Chagall's paintings are lovers or newlyweds, people caught up in the early excitement of love, who have abandoned themselves to love, and have completely surrendered themselves unto each other. For Chagall and his first wife Bella, who were married in 1915 and lived together for almost three decades, this experience of love took a shared intensity that appeared to never falter or fade. It came as a devastating blow to Chagall when Bella suffered an early and unnecessary death from a viral infection in 1944, while they were living in upstate New York during the Second World War. Penicillin could have saved her, but this new drug had been set aside solely for military use. Chagall's adoration for Bella grew even greater following her passing, and he continued to celebrate her impact on his life in many paintings. He had an extended liaison during the late 1940s and early 1950s with Virginia Haggard McNeil and fathered a son by her. He married again in 1952, this time to Valentine ("Vava") Brodsky, after a courtship that lasted only a few months. The pleasant reality of daily domestic intimacy, however, could never upstage the power of the mythic eternal moment that Chagall had created around the memory of Bella, or diminish those feelings now permanently fixed within the artist's mind, the central vault in the great storehouse of his boundless imagination. In the present painting, executed the year of his marriage to Vava but short of a decade after Bella's death, Chagall reverentially depicts his beloved, unmarked by death or the passing of time, betrothed again, floating in a heavenly moonlit blue sky. As Sidney Alexander has written: "Chagall and Bella remained lovers, though married; monogamous but not monotonous; lovers to the end, in a story so felicitous as to offer little drama to the biographer or novelist. Out of this domestic Eden, lived and remembered, poured an endless series of painted epithalamia: Bella as goddess; Bella as Venus; Bella as Bathsheba; Bella as the Shulamite of the Song of Songs; Bella as bride in her sperm-sputting gown, a sex comet; Bella as a white wish of rocket soaring toward the moon. Even after her death (when he was living with Virginia), whenever he painted a bride it was Bella; whenever he painted a bridal veil it referred to Bella" (Sidney Alexander, Marc Chagall, A Biography, New York, 1978, p. 82).



**À l'atelier, circa 1980**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower left corner)

Gouache, watercolour, pastel, coloured pencil, brush and ink on Japanese paper  
65 x 45,5 cm – 25.6 x 17.9 in.

**Provenance**

Estate of the artist  
Private collection, California

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Autour du couple, 1975-1978**

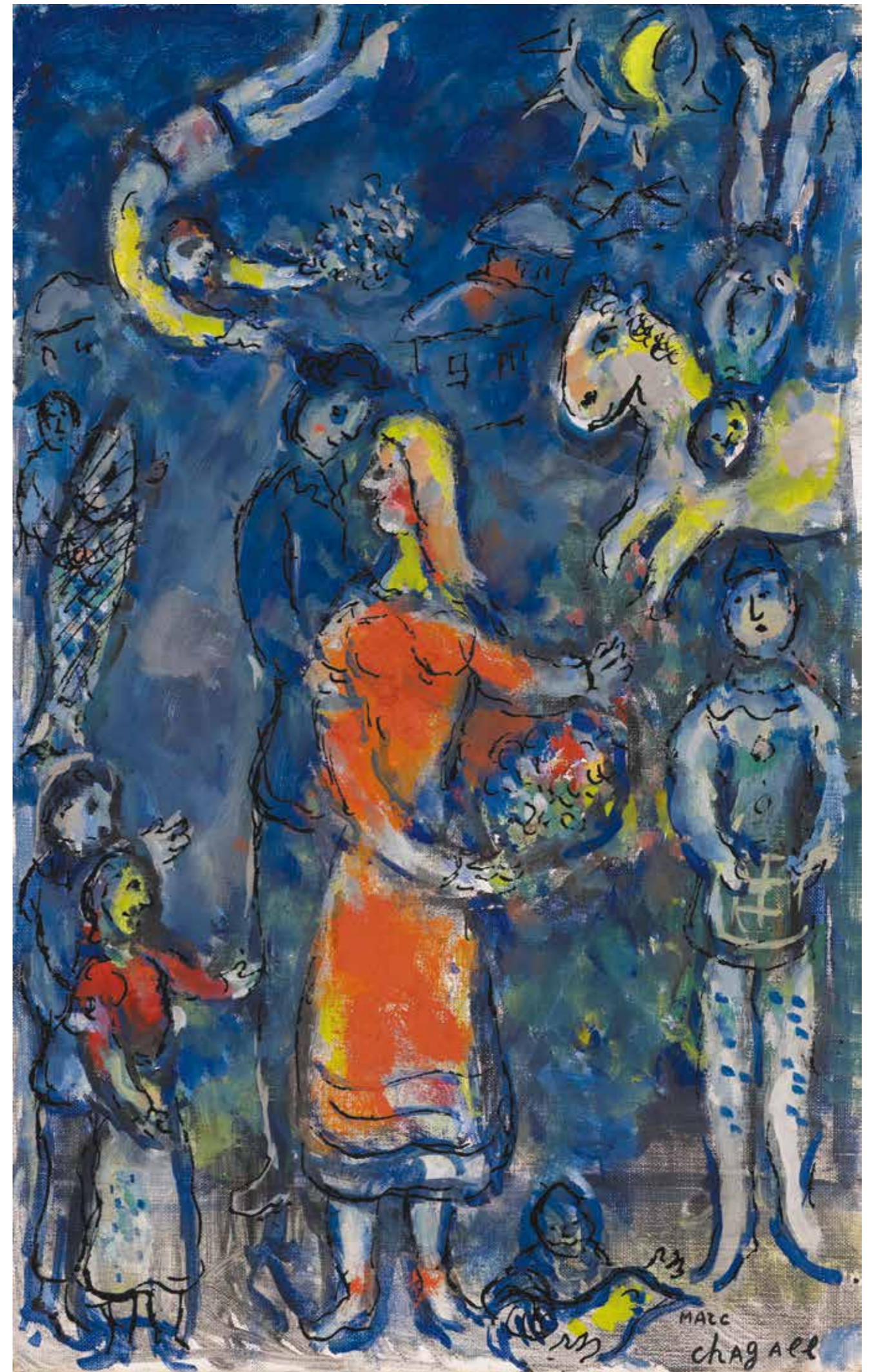
Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)  
Oil, pen and ink on canvas  
35 x 21,8 cm – 13.8 x 8.6 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, Europe  
Acquired from the above by the previous owner

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work





**Les Amoureux au carré vert, circa 1970–1975**

Signed 'Chagall Marc' (lower left corner)

Oil on canvas

60 x 73 cm – 23.6 x 28.7 in.

**Provenance**

Ida Chagall

Private collection, Paris

**Exhibited**

Taipei, Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall, 1993

Beijing, Fine Art House of China, 1994

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

*Les Amoureux au carré vert* is an iconographical rendering of domestic life, the artist's tranquil disposition, and the beauty that he found in his surroundings. The work offers insight into his personal history by including Chagall's favorite themes: his native village of Vitebsk represented in the foreground of the composition, an embracing couple, a disembodied character who is perhaps a reference to the artist himself, and a floating bouquet which adds to the general sense of mysticism and allegory that characterized much of Chagall's best work.

The young lovers who appear in the dark green area of the composition are a subject featured throughout Chagall's oeuvre. They are among the most important and symbolic of the cast of characters that appear in his paintings. Sometimes they are the focal point of a composition, depicted on their wedding day, for example, and dressed in the finery of a young bride and groom; in other examples they appear as allegorical figures of love and devotion within the larger context of a landscape, as seen in the present work. Always laden with an air of mysticism, these pictures were often references to Chagall's own personal life and his relationship with his first wife, Bella, who died shortly after the Second World War. In the years that followed Bella's death, Chagall became even more devoted to this theme, as it preserved for him the memory of his late wife. The lovers of these pictures from the 1950s and 1960s are achingly passionate, often locked in a seamless embrace or twirling through space for all eternity.

Chagall painted this work at a time when he was enjoying much international success and recognition. He was finally settling into his own celebrity, and the pictures that he completed during this period are coloured with the great sense of contentment that he felt during these later years of his life. Susan Compton writes about these later paintings that, "Above all, the oils of this period convey the artist's sheer enjoyment of painting. In his own works he may sum up the positive characteristic of this long period of active tranquility. Love of all the world is the most important thing, and liberty. When you love liberty, you love love" (Susan Compton, *Chagall*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1985, p. 223).



### Le Coq rouge et le peintre, circa 1982

Signed 'Chagall' (lower right corner); countersigned and inscribed 'Marc Chagall TEMPERA' (on the reverse)  
 Tempera, gouache, pen and coloured inks on masonite  
 65 x 40,3 cm – 25.6 x 15.9 in.

#### Provenance

Estate of the artist  
 Odakyu Department Store, Tokyo  
 Acquired from the above by the present owner (1989)

#### Certificate

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

#### Public notes

The coq, or rooster, occupies a position in Chagall's personal mythology similar to that of the Minotaur in Picasso's private symbolism. In both cases the artist has projected himself into non-human form, and in this process has transformed the designated creature into a personal avatar, which the artist is then free to use as a surrogate in his paintings. For each artist the respective animal is an acknowledged symbol of virility, and by extension, an appropriate representative of the artist's creative abilities.

While Picasso's Minotaur is drawn from classical mythology, and possesses a terrifying aspect that stems from both its appearance and the legend surrounding it, Chagall's rooster has far more humble origins and its familiar domesticated character inspires more congeniality than awe. "The fowl yard, too, has its place in Chagall's recollections of his childhood. That is why poultry are always part of the Russian scenes painted during his first Paris period. In the twenties impressions of French farmyards and work on [La Fontaine's] *Fables* lend the motif a new topicality" (Franz Meyer, Marc Chagall, New York, 1964, p. 381).

Chagall had previously identified more closely with four-legged farm animals, such as the donkey or the goat, but by the late 1920s the rooster had assumed a dominant position in Chagall's bestiary.

"As a symbol, the cock has an entirely different and far stranger nature than the quadrupeds, which, despite their four feet, are more closely related to man. For thousands of years it has played a part in religious rites as the embodiment of the forces of sun and fire. This symbolic meaning still lingers on in Chagall's work, where the cock represents elementary spiritual power" (*ibid.*, pp. 380–381).

In *Le Coq rouge et le peintre* Chagall is represented not only as the central figure of the oversized rooster but also as the artist at his easel, painting a lively bouquet of flowers. His fantastical imagery is set against a vibrant blue midnight sky, further demonstrating that while Chagall had always considered himself primarily a colourist, but it was not until the later stages of his life that his colour achieved its full radiance and plenitude in his work.



**Le Roi David, 1948–1949**

Signed 'Chagall Marc' (lower left)

Watercolour, brush, gray wash and India ink over charcoal on paper  
51 x 35,6 cm – 20.1 x 14 in.

**Provenance**

Fairweather Hardin Gallery, Chicago

Private collection (acquired from the above, *circa* 1955)

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

There is a pencil study on the reverse of the present work depicting a village procession.



**Scène de cirque**

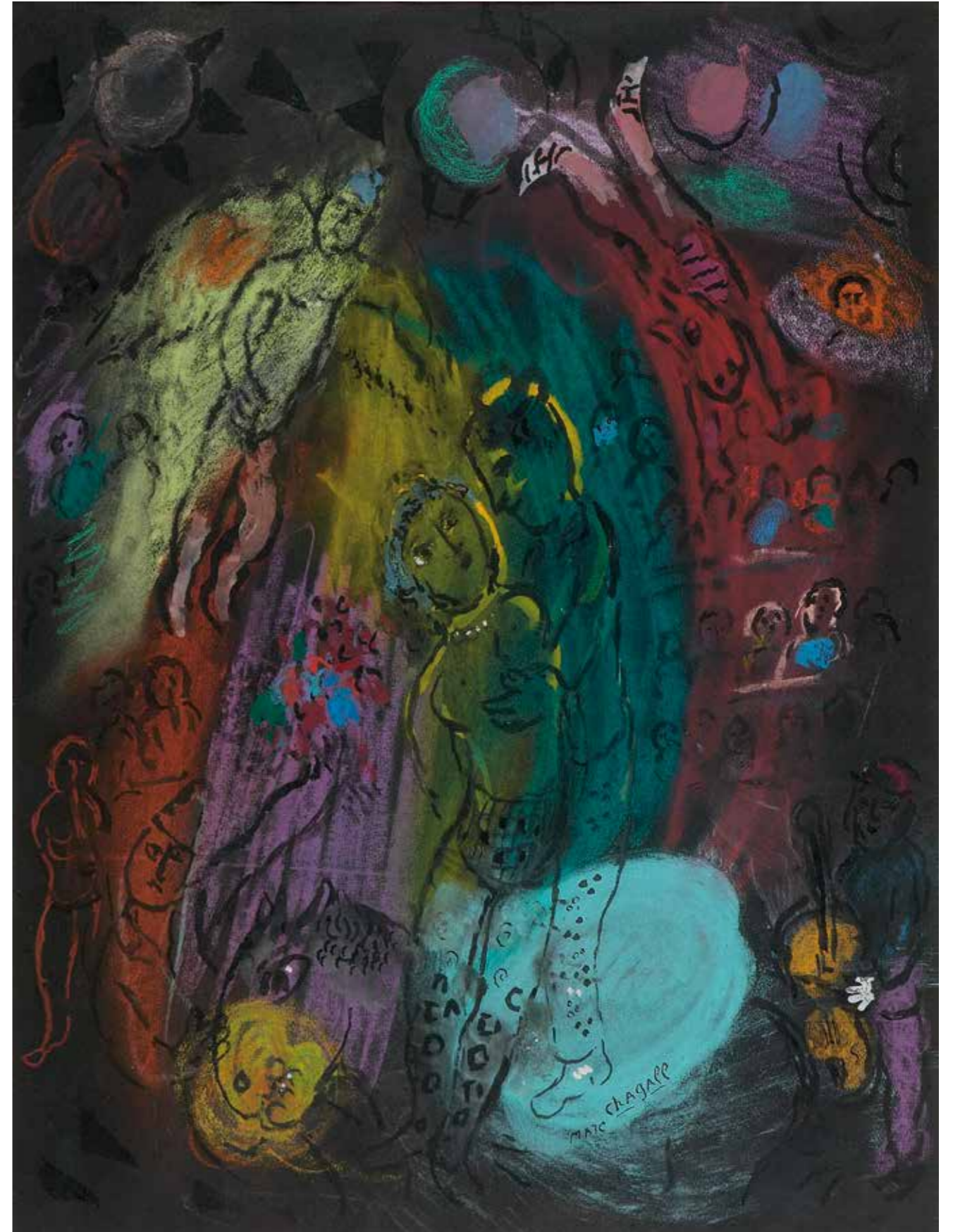
Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right)  
Pastel and gouache on paper laid on canvas  
65 x 52 cm – 25.6 x 20.5 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, Milan

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Bouquet aux cerises, 1956**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right)

Gouache on paper

75 x 49,5 cm – 29.5 x 19.5 in.

**Provenance**

Aimé Maeght, Paris

Leon Amiel, Paris

Thomas P. Wallace, New York

Hugh Williamson, III, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Private collection (1989)

**Certificate**

Valentina Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work in a letter

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

A plate signed litograph of this image exists and the edition is sold out

**Public notes**

The theme of flowers had long fascinated Chagall since the early 1920s.

The artist was first struck by the charm of flowers in Toulon in 1924,

and he later claimed that he had not known of flowers in Russia and

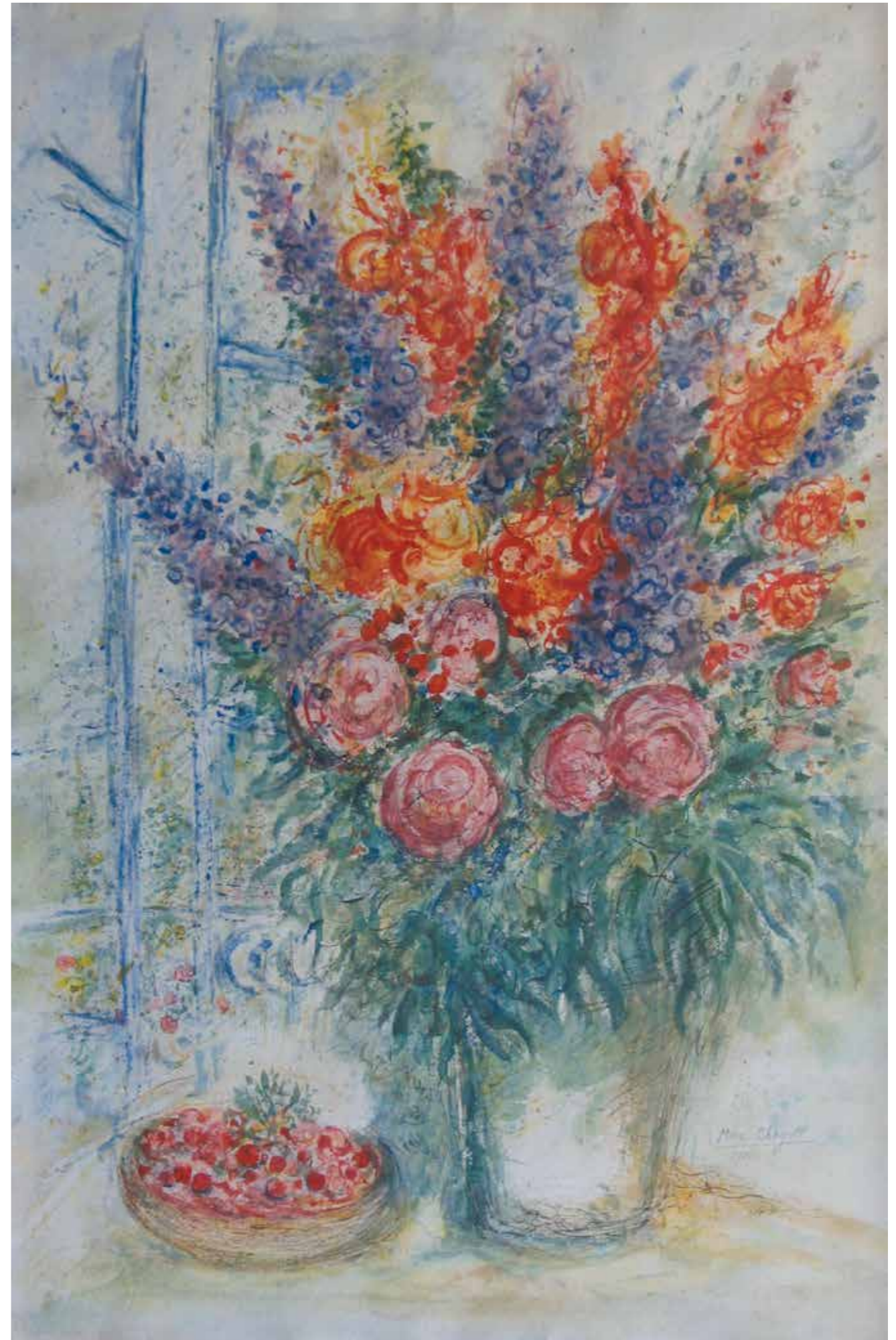
they therefore came to represent France for him. In Chagall's universe,

flowers come to stand as a romantic extension to the symbolic

vocabulary of the paintings depicting himself with his beloved wife Bella,

and had quickly become a ubiquitous theme in Chagall's art.

The recurring themes of flowers and fruits also carry the meaning of life, growth and the cyclical nature of existence in the oeuvre of the artist.



**Soleil au-dessus de Vence, circa 1964**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner); stamped 'Estate of Marc Chagall' (on the reverse)

Oil on canvas and cardboard

51 x 41 cm – 20 x 16.1 in.

**Provenance**

The artist's estate

Private collection, Switzerland

Private collection, Europe

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

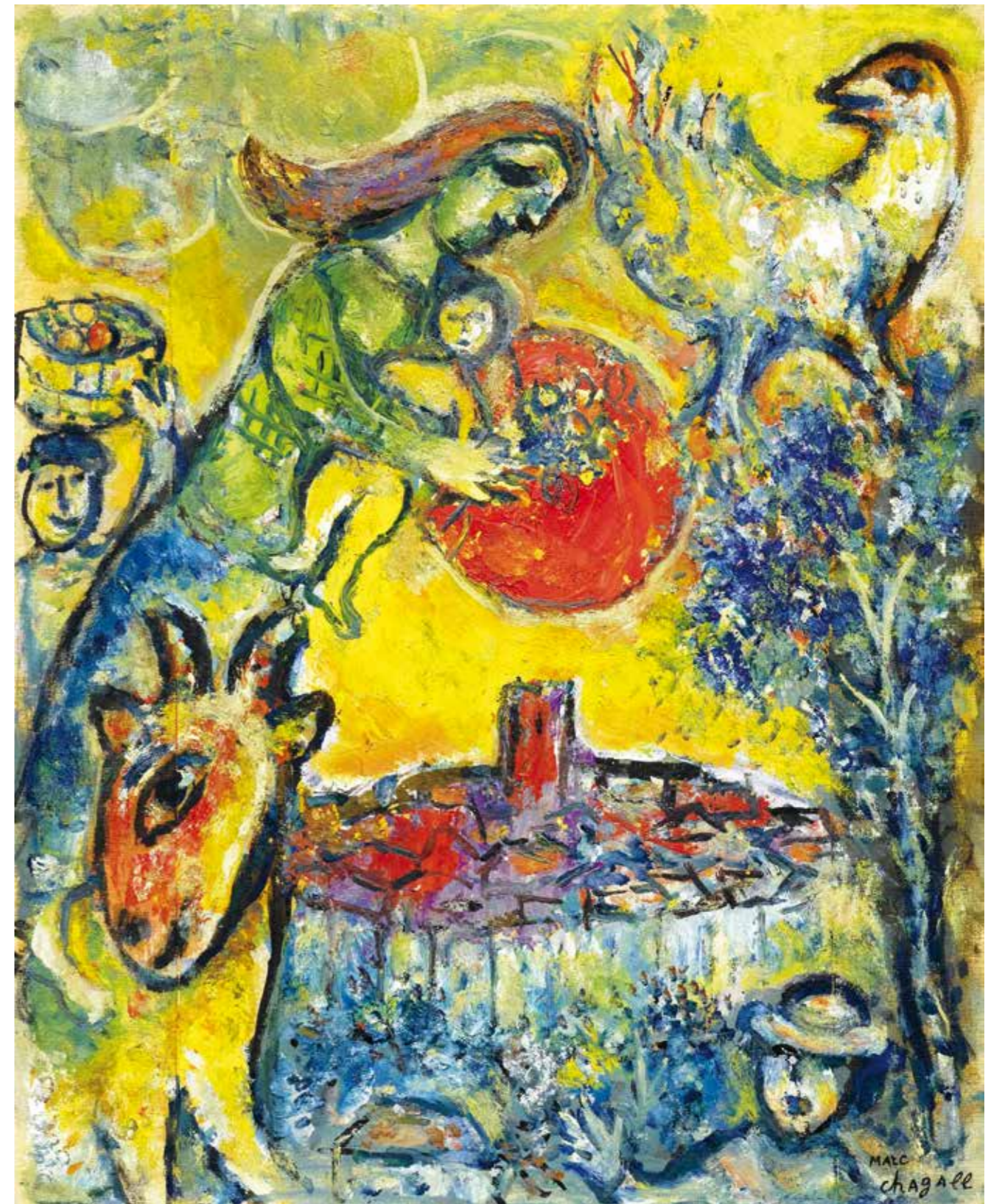
**Public notes**

"Throughout his life certain themes recur in the work of Chagall; the circus, lovers and peasants, take their place beside more sombre scenes of suffering and death..." (Susan Compton, *Themes in the Work of Chagall*, in *Chagall*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1985, p. 14). The couple or the bride flying above the town is one of these themes, which in the *Soleil au-dessus de Vence* from 1964 are accompanied with the familiar popular symbols of the red sun, the donkey, the cock and the peasant bringing his offering.

This work is an exquisite example from the artist's later work after his move to south France in 1950, when he bought a house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. "Chagall's new sojourn in the south exerted a decisive influence on his art. The light, the vegetation, the rhythm of life all contributed to the rise of a more relaxed, airy, sensuous style in which the magic of colour dominates more and more with the passing of years" (Franz Meyer, *Marc Chagall, Life and Work*, New York, 1964, p. 519).

In this painting the red and blue colours enliven the village houses of Vence bathed in an intense yellow summer light. The daring and bold palette infuses the town with vibrancy typical of works from these years and particularly of those showing lovers or people close to the artist. The different themes of the painting combine in a fantastic invention which is stylistically compartmentalized – the bride and child positioned with the red sun at the centre above the town plane, divide the cock above a tree right and the peasant and donkey left into two separated sections. This compartmentalized composition as Mrs. Compton pointed out, is characteristic of Russian icons, "allowing the religious artist to include events, irrespective of a particular time or place, in scenes distributed over his picture surface in a unity of space in an allegorical sequence" (Susan Compton, *ibid.*). The allegorical meaning is a simple one and is set by the red sun placed behind the bride and child which according to common credence symbolizes the strength of love and its revitalizing force.

The lovers theme which is constantly presented to the viewer in Chagall's particular Russian idiom, is here reinterpreted, the village of Vitebsk is exchanged with that of Vence but the main motives of the original village remain – cock, donkey and peasant bringing his offering. The artists strong bond to his wife Bella and their only child is reinstated through the new intense colour and symbolic combination. This is possible because "the themes in Chagall's art are timeless, not confined to a single epoch of history, but reminding man of the continuity in time" (Susan Compton, *ibid.*).  
O. Migdal



### Les Amoureux au-dessus de Paris, 1974

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower left); countersigned 'Chagall Marc' (on the reverse)  
Oil, tempera, ink and pastel on canvas  
50 x 63 cm – 19.7 x 24.8 in.

#### Provenance

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (acquired directly from the artist)  
Daniel Malingue, Paris  
Mr. Jones Bergamin (sale: Sotheby's, New York, May 18, 1990, lot 440)  
The Seibu Department Store, Tokyo  
Sale: Christie's, New York, Nov. 9, 1999, lot 354  
Irving Galleries, Palm Beach  
Acquired from the above

#### Certificate

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

#### Public notes

*Les Amoureux au-dessus de Paris* is a remarkable example of some of Chagall's most celebrated artistic elements. Dominated by the two vibrant blocks of his signature blue and red, it is a heady celebration of the vitality of romantic love. "That he is a Russian may account for his surprising Byzantine colour", the art historian and curator Katherine Kuh once remarked, "but scarcely explains his indifference to normal laws of gravity" (Katharine Kuh, *The Pleasure of Chagall's Paintings*, in Jacob Baal-Teshuva, *Chagall: A Retrospective*, New York, 1995, p. 149). Here Chagall invites us to share in his extraordinary vision, to step into his distinctive dreamscape, to a world where embracing lovers and goats flying over the Eiffel Tower goes unquestioned. As well as being a delightful depiction of romance between a couple, this work is also evidence of the heartfelt affection he felt for his adopted city Paris, that famous 'city of love' whose landmarks feature so frequently in his later work. *Les Amoureux au-dessus de Paris* is a visual feast of colour and form as well as being a love letter to his second wife Vava, whom he married in 1952. It is testament to the artist's sincere and enduring obsession with love as a source of inspiration and to the fact that "the themes in Chagall's art are timeless, not confined to a single epoch of history, but reminding man of the continuity of life for generation after generation, since the earliest days of recorded time" (Susan Compton, *Chagall*, London, 1985, p. 14).



**Autoportrait, personages, 1914–1917**

Signed and dated 'Chagall 1914-17' (lower left corner)

Pen and ink on paper

17 x 13,5 cm – 6.7 x 5.3 in.

**Provenance**

David McNeil (the artist's son), Paris, by descent from the artist (No. D 882)

Acquired from the above (1987)

**Exhibited**

Milan, Studio Marconi, Marc Chagall, Disegni inediti dalla Russia a Parigi, May – July 1988; this exhibition later travelled to Turin, Galleria della Sindone, Palazzo Reale, Dec. 1990 – March 1991; Catania, Monastero dei Benedettini, Oct. – Nov. 1994; Meina, Museo e centro studi per il disegno, June – Aug. 1996

Hannover, Sprengel Museum, Marc Chagall, Himmel und Erde, Dec. 1996 – Feb. 1997

Darmstadt, Institut Mathildenhöhe, Marc Chagall, Von Russland nach Paris, Zeichnungen 1906–1967, Dec. 1997 – Jan. 1998

Abbazia Olivetana, Fondazione Ambrosetti, Marc Chagall, Il messaggio biblico, May – July 1998

Klagenfurt, Stadtgalerie, Marc Chagall, Feb. – May 2000, ill. p. 40

Florida, Boca Raton Museum of Art, Chagall, Jan. – March 2002

**Literature**

Vasiliy Rakin, Chagall: Disegni inediti dalla Russia a Parigi, Fabbri, Milan, 1989, p. 66, ill. p. 67

**Certificate**

David McNeil has confirmed the authenticity of this work

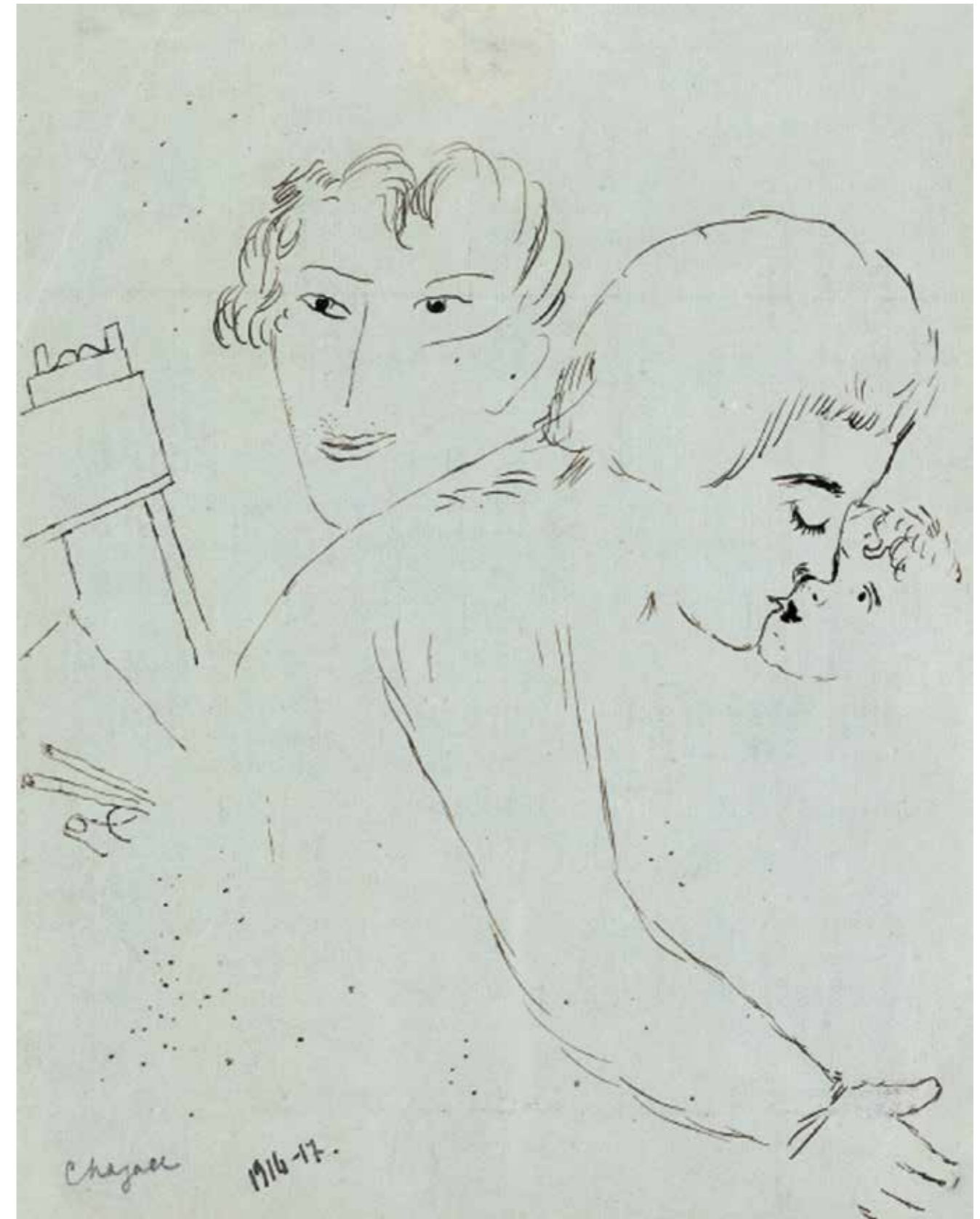
**Public notes**

When Chagall returned to Russia following his time in Paris, he found his beloved Bella whom he had been separated from during those formative years. On 25 July 1915, Bella Rosenfeld and Marc Chagall were married and a year later the young woman gave birth to their daughter Idotchka, or Ida.

By that time, the Chagalls had moved to St. Petersburg, where they stayed until autumn 1917. Through Bella's brother, Yakov Rosenfeld, Chagall was employed in the department of public relations at the Central Bureau for War Economy. This drew him closer to the intellectual circles and to Russian poets, such as Alexander Blok, Sergei Jessenin and Boris Pasternak. Chagall also regularly displayed at Dobycina's Gallery and he participated in several group exhibitions in Moscow.

The tenderness between Bella and her baby Ida is striking in the present drawing. Here Chagall represents himself as an artist with his paintbrushes and easel, confident in his career, but he also shows how he assumes his new role as a father, overlooking his wife and daughter.

Stylistically, the purity of line is closely related to his early Parisian drawings and especially to those of the 1920s.





**Étude pour Le Champs de Mars ou Les Arums au compotier, 1954–1955**

Signed and dated 'Chagall Marc 1954-5' (lower centre)

Watercolour and pastel on paper laid down on canvas

65 x 50,2 cm – 25.6 x 19.8 in.

**Provenance**

Herman C. Goldsmith, New York

Acquired from the above by the late owner (Sept. 1955)

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

First explored by Chagall in the early 1920s as a romantic extension to the symbolic vocabulary of the paintings depicting himself with his beloved wife Bella, the vase of flowers became a perennial theme in Chagall's art. "It was in Toulon in 1924, Chagall recalls, that the charm of French flowers first struck him. He claims he had not known bouquets of flowers in Russia or at least they were not so common as in France... He said that when he painted a bouquet it was as if he was painting a landscape. It represented France to him. But the discovery was also a logical one in the light of the change taking place in his vision and pictorial interests. Flowers, especially mixed bouquets of tiny blossoms, offer a variety of delicate colour combinations and a fund of texture contrasts which were beginning to hold Chagall's attention more and more" (James Johnson Sweeney, Marc Chagall, New York, 1946, p. 56).

In the present work dating from 1954–1955, Chagall has surrounded a bouquet of white arum lilies with a halo of blue, as if the flowers themselves are emanating the deep blue of the night sky. The ethereal, dreamlike feeling exuded by the work is underscored by the rich blue tonality Chagall favored during this period. "The eternal, transcendental blue reveals man's eternal longing for peace, security, eternity. It proceeds to the metaphysical realm where faith endows images with redeeming power" (Roland Doschka, Marc Chagall zum 11. Geburtstag, exh. cat., Stadthalle Balinger, 1986, p. 40).

Although Chagall insisted throughout his career that it was not his intention to create paintings which were symbolic in nature, the autobiographical lexicon inherent in his works is hard to ignore. Following Bella's untimely death in 1944, poignant images of her would continue to appear in Chagall's paintings and gouaches, serving as imagined reunions between the two lovers. This sensibility is apparent on the left of the composition where lovers are depicted floating above a shtetl. These characters, beautifully rendered, are a thinly veiled reference to the painter's affection for his late wife and fervent belief that their bond would be eternal.



**Le Couple allongé, 1982**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower left corner)

Tempera on masonite

27 x 35,1 cm – 10.6 x 13.8 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, USA

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Clowns et écuyère, circa 1965**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower centre)

Oil on canvas

41 x 33 cm – 16.1 x 13 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, France

Acquired from the above by the present owner

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

*Clowns et écuyère* is a quintessential example of Chagall's mastery in assembling an array of surreal and folkloric images in a dense and colourful composition and features an array of the most iconic elements of his pictorial iconography: the clown-musician, the horse and the rooster. Each figure is masterfully rendered through a matrix of intense colour and spatial experimentation that characterizes Chagall's most successful works, reflecting his own very personal delight in the act of artistic creation.

As Susan Compton remarked in the catalogue of the Royal Academy Chagall retrospective: "Throughout his life certain themes recur in the work of Chagall [...] for the themes in Chagall's art are timeless, not confined to a single epoch of history, but reminding man of the continuity of life for generation after generation, since the earliest days of recorded time" (Susan Compton, Chagall, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1985, p. 14). The magic of the circus and its performers is one of the most dominant and celebrated of Chagall's artistic themes: his first encounters as a child in Vitebsk provided a lifetime's worth of inspiration, and the present work is testament to this enduring fascination.



**L'Inspiré, 1963**

Signed 'MC' (lower left corner)  
India ink, wash, pastel and coloured pencil on paper  
32,4 x 25 cm – 12.8 x 9.8 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, New York

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Portrait de jeune fille, circa 1927**

Signed 'Chagall' (lower right corner)

Pen and ink on paper

27 x 20,5 cm – 10.6 x 8.1 in.

**Provenance**

David McNeil (the artist's son), Paris, by descent from the artist (No. D 1549)

Acquired from the above (1987)

**Exhibited**

Milan, Studio Marconi, Marc Chagall, Disegni inediti dalla Russia a Parigi, May – July 1988; this exhibition later travelled to Turin, Galleria della Sindone, Palazzo Reale, Dec. 1990 – March 1991; Catania, Monastero dei Benedettini, Oct. – Nov. 1994; Meina, Museo e centro studi per il disegno, June – Aug. 1996

Hannover, Sprengel Museum, Marc Chagall, Himmel und Erde, Dec. 1996 – Feb. 1997

Darmstadt, Institut Mathildenhöhe, Marc Chagall, Von Russland nach Paris, Zeichnungen 1906–1967, Dec. 1997 – Jan. 1998

Abbazia Olivetana, Fondazione Ambrosetti, Marc Chagall, Il messaggio biblico, May – July 1998

Klagenfurt, Stadtgalerie, Marc Chagall, Feb. – May 2000, ill. p. 50

Florida, Boca Raton Museum of Art, Chagall, Jan. – March 2002

**Literature**

Werner Haftmann, Chagall, Gouachen, Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Cologne, 1975, ill. pl. 35

Vasilij Rakitin, Chagall: Disegni inediti dalla Russia a Parigi, Fabbri, Milan, 1989, p. 114, ill. p. 115

**Certificate**

David McNeil has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

According to Rakitin, this portrait is one of the finest examples of Chagall's late 1920s pen and ink drawings. Possibly executed in 1927, the slightly caricaturist and dramatic aspect of the female sitter echo the projects on which Chagall was working at the time, particularly his illustrations for the Cirque Vollard and for the *Fables* by La Fontaine. Chagall gives a comical touch to the woman posing, placing her between the human and the animal world, with her scale-like dress and her undefined arms and hands.



**Après la naissance, circa 1975**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)  
 Oil on cardboard laid down on canvas  
 41 x 33 cm – 16.1 x 13 in.

**Provenance**

Private collection, Europe

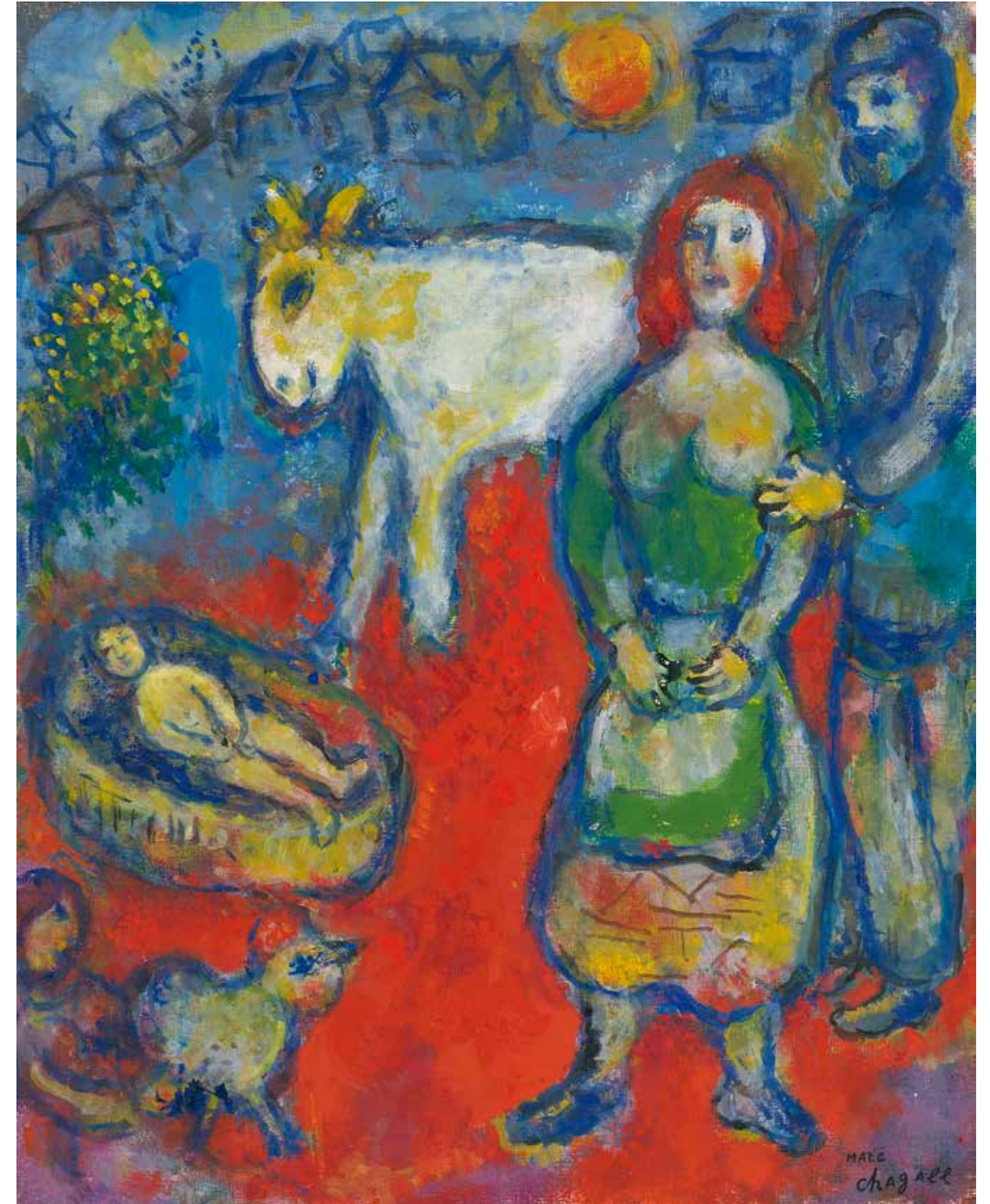
**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

*Après la naissance* prominently displays several themes that are characteristic to Chagall's oeuvre and radiates with biographical significance. Returning to his hometown of Vitebsk in 1973 for the first time in over fifty years no doubt stirred strong emotions in Chagall, who spoke of the unusual circumstances surrounding his birth: "just at the moment of my birth in a little cottage near the road on the outskirts of Vitebsk, a great fire broke out behind a prison. The town was in flames" (Charles Sorlier, ed., *Chagall by Chagall*, New York, 1979, p.28). The energetic colour in *Après la naissance* reveals the strong emotion the artist felt for his homeland.

As Werner Haftmann of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin writes, "Chagall does not analyse objects, he analyses memories. [Chagall] has said, 'my pictures are painted collections of inner images which possess me'" (Werner Haftmann, *Marc Chagall*, New York, 1972, p. 18). In the present work, Chagall's collections of memories are articulated through some of his most cherished visual motifs. Chagall unites his trope of two lovers, the calf, the rooster, and the distant village in a single, vibrant composition. Pairs of lovers are featured throughout Chagall's oeuvre and are among the most important and symbolic cast of characters that appear in his paintings. The calf and the rooster, placed against the backdrop of a small town, recall the Russian countryside and Chagall's hometown of Vitebsk. The piece speaks to Chagall's nostalgia for his hometown and provides a lively example of Chagall's most well-known and beloved themes.



### Le Christ en jaune, 1941

Signed 'Chagall' (lower left corner)  
Gouache, pastel and pen on paper  
27,8 x 32,4 cm – 10.9 x 12.8 in.

#### Provenance

A.L. Berliner, New York (by 1963)  
James Wise, New York  
Galerie Berggruen & Cie., Paris  
Private collection, New York

#### Literature

Franz Meyer, Marc Chagall, Life and Work, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1963, p. 757, No. 696, ill. p. 678

#### Certificate

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

#### Public notes

One of the most important themes that comprise the body of work of Chagall is the Christ – a subject that captured his interest since he undertook the illustration of the Bible in 1930, which also prompted him to journey to the Holy Land. For Chagall, the figure of Christ allows for the conversion of the Old Testament themes into a more universal figure pertaining to the whole Christian church. The Christ is for the artist not the Son of God, but the King of the Jews, the martyr. He is the symbol of universal suffering, and contrary to the paintings contemporary to the artist's time on the same subject, the paintings of Chagall expresses not a sacred hope, but an agonizing tragedy of history. The artist's predilection and appropriation of such theme finds its resonance in the political climate in Europe at the time, with the alarming warning of the approach of the war and the tragic destiny of the world of the Jews.

The present work is commenced between Chagall's two other prominent works on the Christ, *La Crucifixion blanche*, 1938 and *La Crucifixion en jaune*, 1942–43. As compared to the other two works, this painting takes on a simpler composition, but certain motifs recur, such as the village on fire, the boat which possibly symbolizes deliverance, and the man with a bag on his back, an important symbolic figure in Chagall's works which represents the prophet Elijah, who comes uninvited in disguise for those who is in need of his favour. Another explanation of this mysterious figure derives from the Yiddish expression "he walks over the city", describing a beggar that goes from door to door begging, which comes to represent the persecution, discrimination and restrictions that Jewish people face in eastern Europe. Yet to Chagall, the figure always seems closer to Elijah in a saving role than one of despair.



**Flours dans un vase à carreaux, 1949**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner)

Oil on canvas

50,8 x 40,5 cm – 20 x 15.9 in.

**Provenance**

Goldschmidt collection, New York

Sale: Parke Bernet Galleries, New York, March 16, 1950, lot 60

Alberto Perreno, New York

Sale: Parke Bernet Galleries, New York, Jan. 10, 1952, lot 81

Anne Burnett Tandy, Fort Worth

Sale: Sotheby's Parke Bernet, New York, Nov. 5, 1981, lot 221

Acquired at the above sale by the late owners

The Walter and Phyllis Shorenstein collection

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

Chagall often embellished the margins of his floral still lives with Lilliputian people and fantastic creatures. In the present painting, however, the miniature lovers are the artist's primary subject, and although they inhabit the lower left corner only, the great burst of flowers appears to emanate from them, amplifying their presence, giving rise to an ecstatic expression of their love and joy. Young lovers, the affianced pair, the bride and groom, or the newlywed couple, can be counted as the most frequent subject in Chagall's paintings, attesting to the wealth of traditions and customs pertaining to marriage as the central event in Jewish socio-religious life. Regarding the red rooster which frequently accompanies them, Franz Meyer has noted that "there was a time at Jewish weddings when a cock and a hen were often carried before the bride and groom" (Chagall: Life and Work, New York, 1963, p. 452).

The all-pervasive blue tonality, which would become characteristic of Chagall's Mediterranean pictures, and the open space behind the table-top, with a rising crescent moon, suggests that the artist painted *Flours dans un vase à carreaux* during one of these initial sojourns in the Midi. In 1950 Chagall acquired Les Collines, a hillside house with surrounding property along the road between Saint-Jeannet and Vence, and made it his permanent home.

Chagall continued to paint Bella as the eternal bride, goddess and muse in his pictures, and during the seven years he lived with Virginia he often mingled the images of Bella and Virginia, who represented in his imagination the spiritual and sensual aspects of love. Chagall normally indicated Bella's identity by means of her black hair; here the colour of the woman's hair is lighter in tone, perhaps indicating that it is Virginia's presence he is evoking in this instance.





**Deux ânes verts, 1980**

Signed 'Marc Chagall' (lower right corner); countersigned and dated 'Marc Chagall 1980' (on the reverse)

Oil on canvas

100 x 81 cm – 39.4 x 31.9 in.

**Provenance**

Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York

Acquired by the previous owner (2008)

**Exhibited**

New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, Marc Chagall, *Le Cirque*, Paintings 1969–80, 1981, No. 14, ill.

Palm Beach, Wally Findlay Galleries, *Chagall and the Circle of Jewish Painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Dec. 2012 – Jan. 2013, ill. pp. 8–9

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

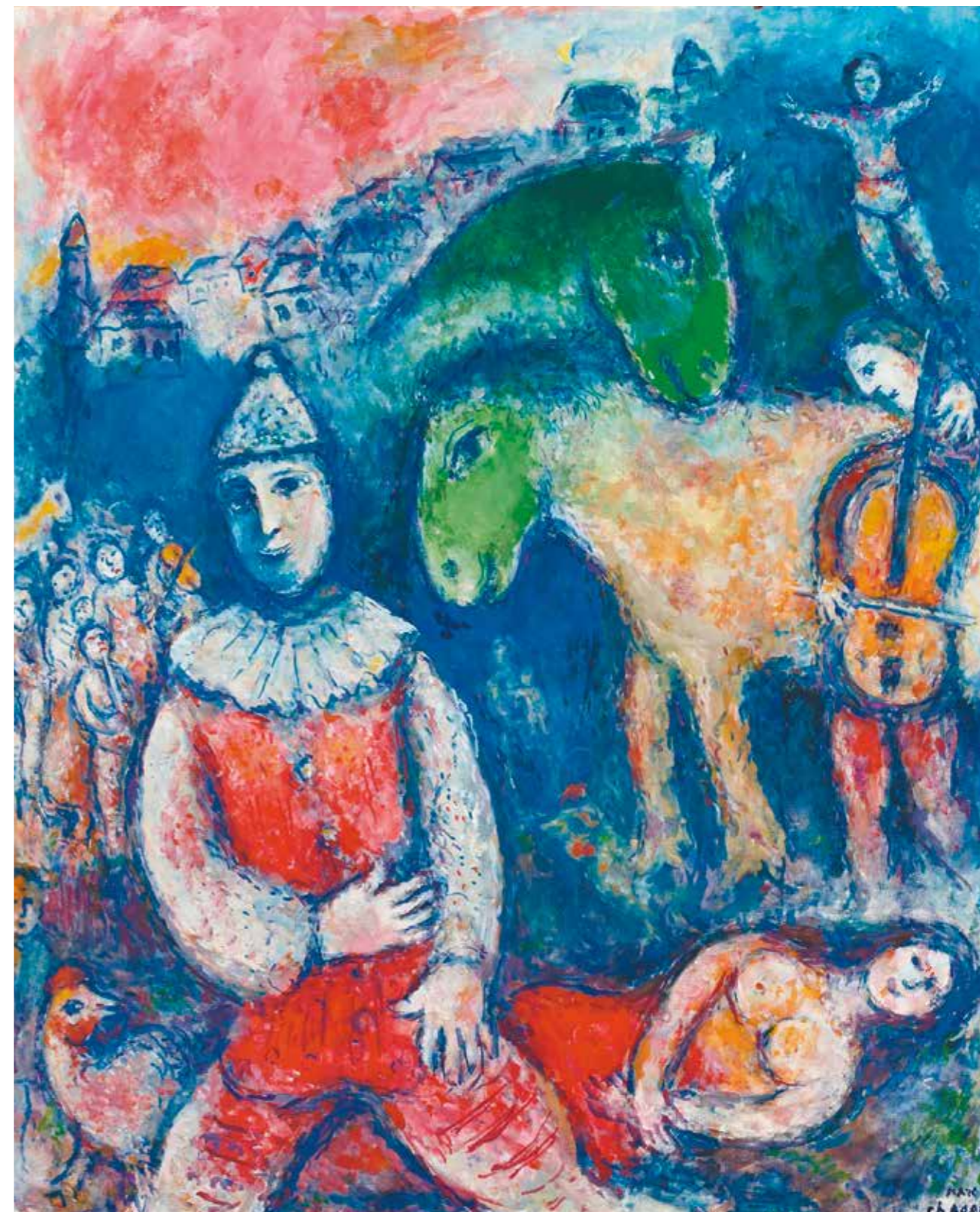
**Public notes**

The world of the circus is a favourite theme in Marc Chagall's painting. The acrobats and tumblers of his childhood and the shows he went to later at the Cirque d'Hiver with art dealer Ambroise Vollard inspired many of his works. "Throughout the centuries it has been man's most piercing cry in his search for entertainment and joy. It often takes the form of lofty poetry", the artist would comment in the lithographic collection *Le Cirque*, published by Triade in 1967.

In *Deux ânes verts*, the clown to the left in the foreground of the composition, the two donkeys in the centre, the recumbent nude and the musician to the right are arranged in an unusual encounter, creating a condensed image of society, confined in a space of multiple perspectives.

The theme of the circus remains omnipresent in works dating from the last five years of the artist's life, during which he would also produce many lithographs on this theme. In this late production there are certainly a number of variations on familiar themes which are formal exercises for the painter, but there is also a new use of colour with very dark or very pale compositions, combining a particular taste – a nude, a donkey, a clown and a musician. It is impossible in this painting not to glimpse a memory, a resurgence of the "Russian" Chagall.

Who better than Chagall to suggest the world of the circus as somewhere capable of transforming an adult into a child by suspending the laws of gravity? The artist gives himself a freedom which does not comply with any formal rules. Indifferent to fashion, Marc Chagall structures his pictorial universe to reflect his emotions, alternately combining joy and melancholy: "I have always considered the clowns, acrobats and actors as being tragically human who, for me, would resemble characters from certain religious paintings. And even today, when I paint a Crucifixion or other religious painting, I feel almost the same sensations that I felt while painting circus people, and yet there is nothing literary in these paintings and it is very difficult to explain why I find a psycho-plastic resemblance between the two kinds of composition." (quoted in Marc Chagall, *Le Cirque*, Paintings 1969–80, Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, 1981).



**Samson et Delilah (Le Miroir), circa 1911–1912**

Signed 'Chagall Paris' (lower right corner)

Watercolour on paper

27 x 20,5 cm – 10.6 x 8.1 in.

**Provenance**

Galerie Fletchtheim, Berlin

The Art Institute, Chicago (acquired from the above, 1930)

Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison

Los Angeles County Museum (gifted from the above, 1931)

Sale: Sotheby's Parke Bernet, Los Angeles, Nov. 9, 1977, lot 450

Ida Chagall

Private collection (acquired from the above, 1980)

Sale: Sotheby's, London, April 5, 1989, lot 322

**Exhibited**

Chicago, The Art Institute, The Twentieth International Exhibition of Watercolours, 1941, No. 127

Pasadena Art Museum, 1957

Tokyo, National Museum of Western Art; Kyoto, Municipal Museum of Art;

Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Marc Chagall, 1963–1964, No. 130

Toulouse, Musée de Toulouse, Chagall et le Théâtre, 1967

**Literature**

Los Angeles Museum Art News, Dec. 1931, ill. p. 3

Franz Meyer, Marc Chagall, Life and Work, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1963, No. 55, ill.

**Certificate**

The Comité Marc Chagall has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Public notes**

"I wanted to dream up some vacation just to be able to visit home.

All those thoughts and ideas about returning home were cut off by the Louvre.

Wandering about the round hall of Veronese and below, in the hall of

Manet, Delacroix, Courbet, Millet – I wanted nothing more."

Marc Chagall quoted in Benjamin and Barbara Harshav, Marc Chagall and His Times, p. 142.

This charming gouache was painted *circa* 1911–12, just as Chagall was settling into Paris. What drew the twenty-three year old to the metropolitan centre was artistic promise; what kept him there, according to his own diary, was his discovery of the Louvre, especially a burgeoning respect for the works of Paolo Veronese. The present work is a variant of a composition by Veronese in the Prado, Madrid, entitled *Venus and Adonis*. Venus, her legs cloaked in blue fabric, sits under a tree holding a red-backed mirror while Adonis sleeps on her knees, her lefthand tenderly caressing his head. Seated in a verdant landscape, Eros and two sight hounds cavort at her feet. Chagall has simplified the composition here by magnifying the two figures such that they fill the picture plane and eliminating the mythological context. Chagall could have been exposed to this composition in many ways, such as prints or reproduction by other artists.

Love, whether mythological or earthly, was never far from Chagall's mind, and his fiancée played a central role in his art; he had met Bella Rosenfeld in Vitebsk in 1910 before journeying to Paris and returned to Russia to marry her in 1914.



Selected lithographs by Marc Chagall

## Daphnis et Chloé

The intrigue behind *Daphnis et Chloé* is the work of the Greek novelist and romancer Longus and dates back to circa the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD. It mainly tells the story of the sentimental journey of its two protagonists, Daphnis and Chloé. The boy and girl are abandoned at birth and brought up by animals, then discovered by shepherds on the Isle of Lesbos who decide to raise them as their own children. Daphnis becomes a goatherd while Chloé becomes a shepherdess. They fall in love but their innocence (as well as several twists in the story's plot) prevents them from actually showing their feelings. At the end of the story, Daphnis and Chloé find their respective birth parents and are able to get married without any conflicts or fears of misalliance.

Written in a very poetic style, the story is steeped in the simplicity of life when lived close to nature and the rhythm of the seasons. The story is about the process of learning how to be happy, how to love and about the joy one can feel by simply and spontaneously imitating Mother Nature's daily performance.

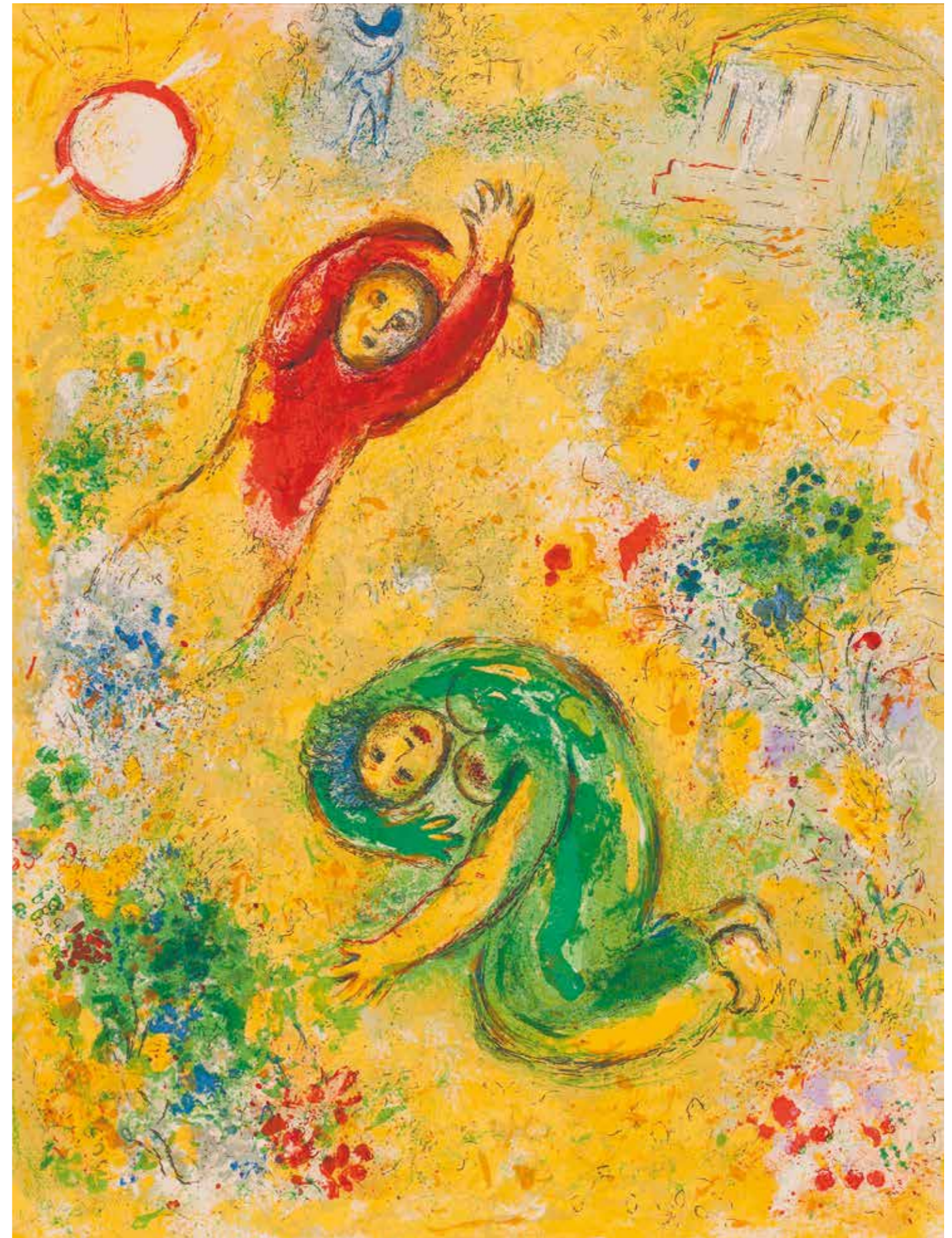
In 1959, Chagall immersed himself in the Greek novelist's work. The famous publisher, Tériade, commissioned the artist to illustrate Longus' work with original lithographs. Chagall accepted, travelling to Greece twice to plunge himself into the atmosphere that gave birth to the idyll between Daphnis and Chloé. He came back with numerous sketches, notes and aquarelles that he used to produce the 42 lithographs compiling the series. Chagall played with colours that were sometimes soft and warmly delicate, sometimes strikingly primary and filled with passion, sometimes somber and wounded. His palette of colours evolves to the beat of the adventures experienced by the protagonists.

Tériade finally published Chagall's illustrated work of *Daphnis et Chloé* in 1961 as a limited edition of 250.

**Les Fleurs saccagées, 1961**  
Coloured lithograph, edition 98 of 250  
42 x 32 cm – 16.5 x 12.6 in.

### Literature

Fernand Mourlot, Chagall Lithographe II 1957 – 1962,  
André Sauret, Paris, 1961, No. 342, ill. p. 159

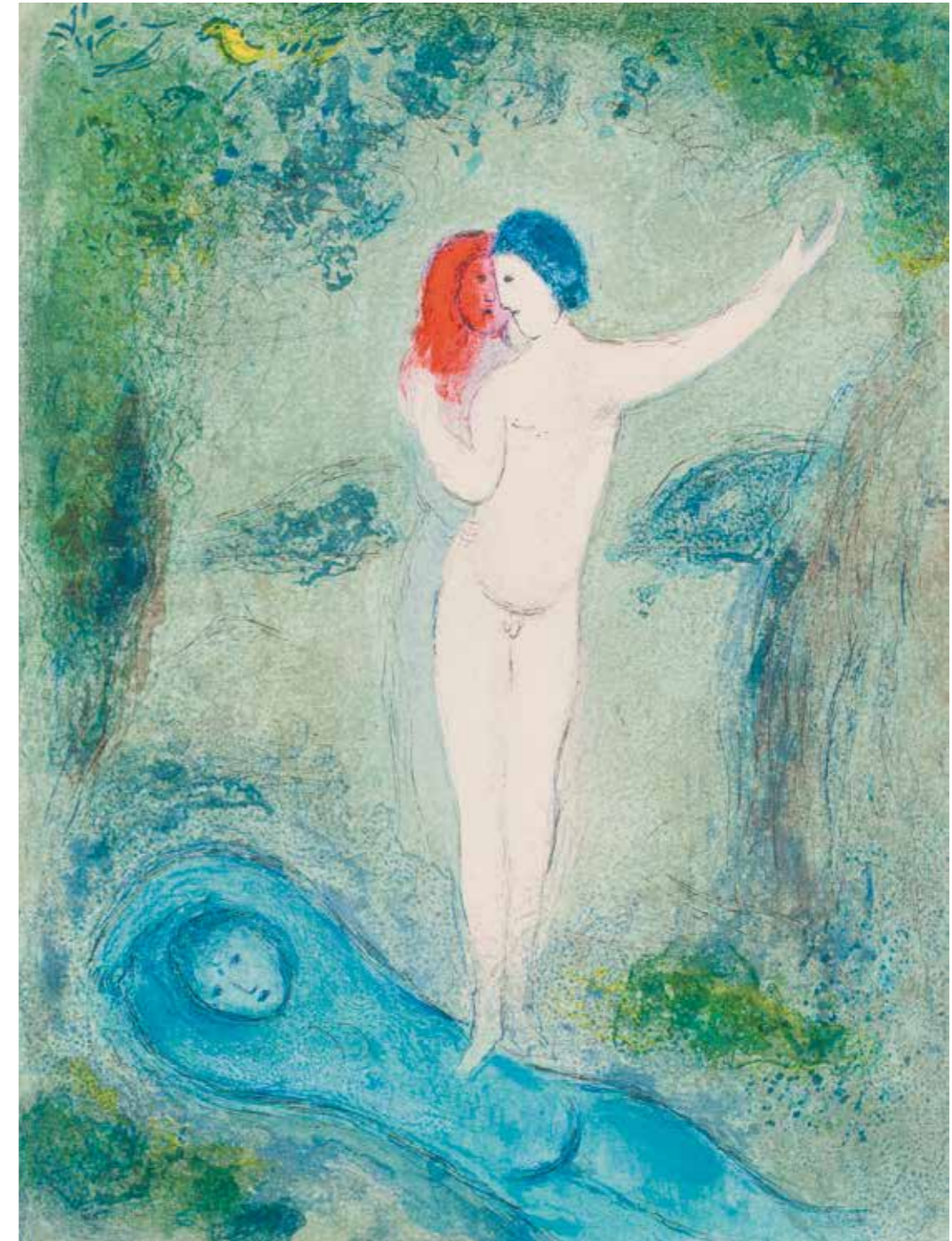


**Mégaclès reconnaît sa fille  
pendant le festin, 1961**

Coloured lithograph, edition 98 of 250  
42 x 64 cm – 16.5 x 25.2 in.

**Literature**

Fernand Mourlot, Chagall Lithographe II 1957 – 1962,  
André Sauret, Paris, 1961, No. 347, ill. p. 161



**Le Baiser de Chloé, 1961**

Coloured lithograph, edition 98 of 250  
42 x 32 cm – 16.5 x 12.6 in.

**Literature**

Fernand Mourlot, Chagall Lithographe II 1957 – 1962,  
André Sauret, Paris, 1961, No. 316, ill. p. 141

**La Chasse aux oiseaux, 1961**

Coloured lithograph, edition 98 of 250  
42 x 64 cm – 16.5 x 25.2 in.

**Literature**

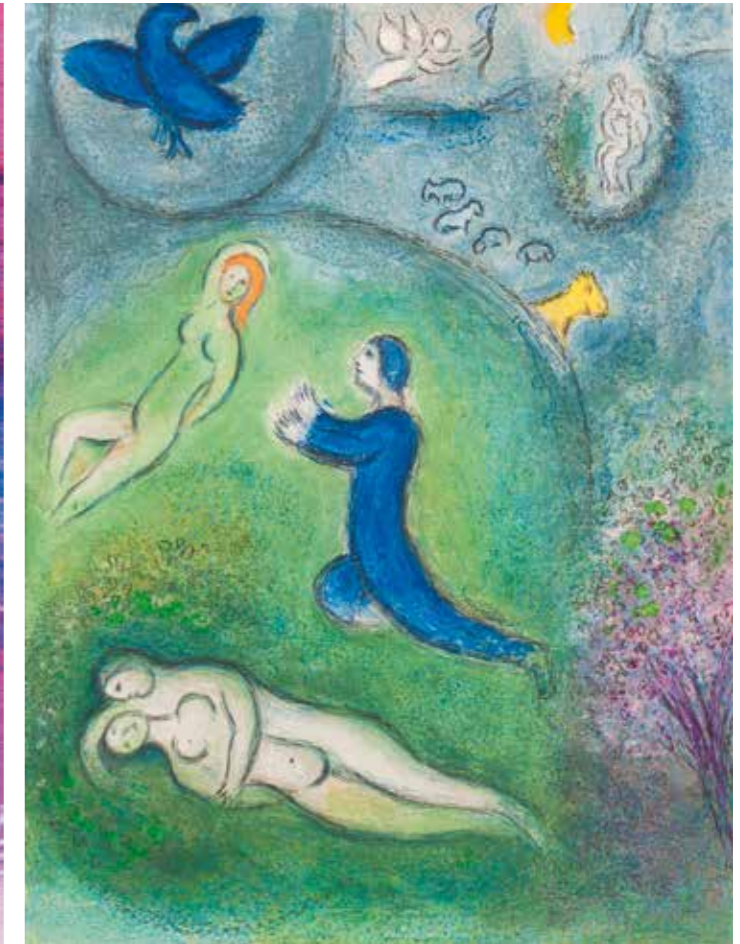
Fernand Mourlot, Chagall Lithographe II 1957 – 1962,  
André Sauret, Paris, 1961, No. 329, ill. p. 149



**Songe de Lamon et de Dryas, 1961**  
Coloured lithograph, edition 98 of 250  
42 x 32 cm – 16.5 x 12.6 in.

**Literature**

Fernand Mourlot, Chagall Lithographe II  
1957 – 1962, André Sauret, Paris, 1961,  
No. 311, ill. p. 137



**Daphnis et Lycénion, 1961**  
Coloured lithograph, edition 98 of 250  
42 x 32 cm – 16.5 x 12.6 in.

**Literature**

Fernand Mourlot, Chagall Lithographe II  
1957 – 1962, André Sauret, Paris, 1961,  
No. 336, ill. p. 155

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