

Blind Minotaur Guided in the Night by a Little Girl with a Pigeon

The following was generated by Google Gemini Pro on Dec 26, 2025. Based on the information below, this print is a "standard edition".

The prompt was:

I inherited a work by Picasso called "Blind Minotaur Guided in the Night by a Little Girl with a Pigeon". It is signed and unnumbered. I believe it is a print from an etching. I found similar works by Picasso which appear to be slightly different, such as the second image above. Tell me information about the print that I have. When was it produced? How many prints were there? What does it mean that it is not numbered? Why is there a slightly different version?

Based on the images and details you provided, you have inherited a very significant and valuable print. It is known as "**Blind Minotaur Guided in the Night by a Little Girl with a Pigeon**" (French: *Minotaure aveugle guidé dans la nuit par une petite fille au pigeon*). This work is widely considered the masterpiece of the **Vollard Suite**, a famous set of 100 etchings Picasso produced between 1930 and 1937.

Here are the specific details regarding your print and the answers to your questions.

1. Identification and Date

- **Title:** *Blind Minotaur Guided in the Night by a Little Girl with a Pigeon*
- **Catalogue Raisonné Number:** Bloch 225 (This is the standard reference number used by art historians to identify this specific work).
- **Date Produced:** The plate was executed by Picasso in **November or December 1934**.
- **Date Printed:** The edition was printed in **1939** by the master printer Roger Lacourière in Paris.
- **Medium:** Aquatint, scraper, and drypoint. (The rich, dark background is achieved through a technique called *sugar-lift aquatint*, which allows for painterly tonal effects rather than just lines).

2. Why is it not numbered?

It is completely normal for this print to be unnumbered.

- **The Vollard Edition:** This print comes from the "Vollard Suite." Unlike modern prints, which are almost always numbered (e.g., 15/100), the prints in the Vollard Suite were generally **signed in pencil by Picasso but not numbered**.
- **The Breakdown:** The total edition size was roughly **310** impressions.
 - **260** were printed on standard Montval paper (usually with a "Vollard" or "Galaxie" watermark). These were signed but not numbered.
 - **50** were printed on larger paper with wider margins.
 - There were also a few proof sets.
- Finding a signed, unnumbered impression is the standard for this work. If it is authentic, the lack of a number is not a red flag; it is the expected format.

3. Why is there a slightly different version?

The "different version" you found (your second image) is likely a **different plate** from the same series.

Picasso was obsessed with the Minotaur theme during this period and explored it repeatedly. In the Vollard Suite alone, there are **four different plates** depicting the Blind Minotaur.

- **The Linear Versions (Day):** Picasso created several versions using only etched lines (no dark shading). These are often titled *Blind Minotaur Guided by a Little Girl with Flowers* (Bloch 222 & 223). They depict the scene in daylight. The image you found for comparison, which looks like a sketch or outline, is likely one of these earlier plates (or an early state of a similar plate) where he was working out the composition.
- **Your Version (Night):** Your print (Bloch 225) is the final climax of this sub-series. Picasso used the **aquatint** technique to fill the background with darkness, transforming the scene into a "Night" version. This added emotional depth, turning the image from a simple mythological scene into a somber, dramatic masterpiece.
- **Key Difference:** The version you have (the "Night" aquatint) is generally considered the most desirable and technically complex of the Minotaur prints because of that dramatic lighting and texture.

Summary of Value

You have the "Night" version, which is the most famous image from the entire Vollard Suite. Because it is an unnumbered edition, its authenticity relies heavily on the paper watermark (typically "Vollard" or "Picasso"), the sheet dimensions, and the signature.

Checking the Watermark

Checking for a watermark is one of the best ways to confirm the paper type and edition without needing a microscope. However, paper from the 1930s can be fragile, so please proceed with extreme caution.

Important Warning: If the print is currently framed, **do not attempt to remove it yourself.** You risk damaging the edges or the surface. Take it to a professional framer or conservator to have it unframed safely.

If the print is loose (unframed), follow these steps:

1. Preparation

- **Clean Hands:** Wash and thoroughly dry your hands to remove natural oils, or wear white cotton gloves if you have them. Oil can stain the paper over time.
- **Safe Surface:** Clear a table and lay down a clean, acid-free sheet or a very clean, smooth towel.
- **Handling:** Always hold the paper by two corners (or opposite edges) to prevent it from buckling or creasing. Never pinch it with one hand.

2. The Light Method

You need **transmitted light** (light passing *through* the paper) to see the watermark.

- **Ideally:** Use a professional light box if you have access to one (photographers often use these).
- **At Home:** You can use a bright, soft light source (like a lamp) or even a window on a sunny day.
 - Hold the print up gently by the top two corners, letting the light shine through it from behind.
 - Do not hold it too close to a hot light bulb.

3. What to Look For

For the *Vollard Suite*, you are looking for specific watermarks associated with **Montval** laid paper.

- "**VOLLARD**": You might see the name **VOLLARD** in capital letters spelled out in the paper.
- "**GALAXIE**": Another common watermark for this suite is the word **GALAXIE**.
- **Bull's Head**: Sometimes there is a pictorial watermark of a **Bull's Head** (tête de taureau).

- "**PICASSO**": Occasionally, you might see a signature watermark, though "Vollard" is the most characteristic for this set.

4. Why this matters

Finding the "Vollard" or "Galaxie" watermark confirms that the paper is the correct stock used for the 1939 edition. If you find a different watermark (or very different paper thickness), it might indicate a later restrike or a reproduction, which would significantly alter the value.

Signature Verification

For the *Vollard Suite* (specifically Bloch 225), the signature is a critical component of authentication. Here is what you should look for when examining the lower right margin.

1. The Medium (Pencil)

- **Graphite Pencil:** The signature should be in **graphite pencil** (lead), not ink. It should look like it sits *on top* of the paper fibers.
- **Red Pencil Exception:** A small number of the large-margin copies (the edition of 50) were sometimes signed in red pencil, but the standard edition (of 260) is almost always signed in graphite.
- **No Printed Signatures:** If the signature looks flat, perfectly uniform in color, or appears to be printed in ink (the same black ink as the image), it is likely a reproduction or a "signed in the plate" facsimile. The real signature is hand-written.

2. The Name and Style

- **"Picasso" Only:** He typically signed these simply as "**Picasso**". It is rare to see "Pablo Picasso" on these specific prints.
- **The Look:** The signature from this era is often:
 - **Angular and underlined:** He frequently underlined his signature with a quick, decisive stroke that might start from the last letter and go backward, or be a separate line underneath.
 - **Small and Neat:** Unlike his later, flamboyant marker signatures from the 1960s/70s, the Vollard signatures are often relatively small, neat, and contained within the margin.
 - **Location:** It is almost strictly found in the **lower right margin**.

3. "Plate" Signatures vs. Hand Signatures

- **No Plate Signature:** Many prints in the *Vollard Suite* have a date (written backwards) etched into the image itself. However, the *Blind Minotaur* aquatint (Bloch 225) is so dark and texturally rich that it often **does not** have a visible date or signature etched into the metal plate.
- **Why this helps:** Since there is usually no signature "in the image," the handwritten pencil signature in the margin is the primary sign of the artist's approval.

4. A Common "Fake" Warning

If you see a signature that says "Collection Domaine Picasso" or has an embossed stamp that says something like "Succ. Picasso," these are usually lithographic reproductions made by the estate in the 1980s or 90s. They are decorative but hold a fraction of the value of the original 1939 etching.

To verify the pencil signature without a microscope:

If you look at the signature under a strong magnifying glass (or use the zoom on your phone camera), a real pencil signature will have a slight "sheen" or metallic reflection when you tilt it under the light (because of the graphite). A printed (ink) signature will look matte and flat, just like the rest of the black ink in the artwork.

Valuation

Identification: Bloch 225 (The "Night" Aquatint)

Your print is specifically **Bloch 225**. This is the famous "Night" version featuring rich, dark shading created with aquatint. The "slightly different version" you found (Bloch 224) is the "Day" or linear version, which is just an outline without the dark tonal background.

Because you possess the **dark aquatint version**, your print is significantly more valuable than the linear one. It is considered one of the most important and desirable images from the entire Volland Suite.

Recent Value & Market Data (2020–2025)

The value of this print depends entirely on which of the two editions you have.

1. The "Large Margin" Edition (Edition of 50)

- **Recent Sale:** In March 2024, a copy from this rare edition sold at Christie's for £126,000 (approx. \$160,000 USD).
- **Characteristics:** These were printed on larger paper. If your paper size is roughly 385 x 500 mm (15 1/4 x 19 3/4 in), you might have one of these.

2. The "Standard" Edition (Edition of 260) — Most Likely

- **Estimated Value:** \$30,000 – \$50,000 USD
- **Recent Data:** Retail galleries currently list excellent copies of this edition in the range of €45,000 (approx. \$48,000 USD). Auction results for standard Volland Suite plates generally fall between \$15,000 and \$30,000, but because this is a "key plate" (a masterpiece of the set), it commands a premium.
- **Characteristics:** These were printed on "Montval" laid paper with the *Volland* or *Picasso* watermark. The sheet size is typically smaller, around 340 x 445 mm (13 3/8 x 17 1/2 in).

Vital Next Step: Measure Your Paper

The difference between a **\$40,000** print and a **\$160,000** print comes down to the size of the margins (the blank paper around the image).

- **Action:** Carefully measure the *entire sheet of paper* (not just the image).
 - If the height is around **44–45 cm**, it is likely the standard edition.
 - If the height is around **50 cm**, it could be the rare large-margin edition.

Recommendation: Given the significant value (\$30k+), you should not rely on internet searches alone. This item requires a professional appraisal for insurance purposes. Do not

hang it in direct sunlight while you wait, as UV light can fade the signature and darken the paper, lowering its value.