

Miss Orovida Pissarro

'Miss Orovida Pissarro', 1956
by **Carel Victor Morlais Weight**
(1908-1997)

oil on canvas, 91.8 x 71.5 cm

A zoomable image of this painting is available on our website to use in the classroom with an interactive whiteboard or projector.

www.ashmolean.org/education/resources



Background information

The painting

In this portrait Orovida Pissarro is shown in the sitting room of her house in Redcliffe Gardens, London surrounded by her favourite things which have been carefully chosen to reflect her personality, her interests and her family history.

Orovida loved oriental art and this was reflected not only in her own work but also in the objects she chose to collect. This portrait of her is a striking likeness and is also very rich in its decorative content and its use of pattern. She is sitting in a traditional floral-covered armchair and is wearing a red, white and blue striped dress which accentuates her ample figure. The room is flooded with cool daylight which allows the contrasting patterns to stand out boldly.

Maybe because we are looking at Orovida almost eye-to-eye, we can engage with her directly. Her personality dominates the picture and she comes over as a forceful presence but nevertheless someone you would like to get to know. The portrait manages to be both a striking likeness and also expressive of her personality

The artist

Orovida Pissarro commissioned this portrait from Carel Weight in 1956. Weight remarked that Orovida was 'a very close friend, and a very sweet and wonderful person' and went on to comment on the importance of the setting saying, 'I see the subject primarily as an object, and I like all the bits and pieces around this central feature to relate to the sitter in a very intimate way. They are a vital extension of the life of the subject.'

This was actually the second portrait that Carel Weight painted of Orovida – the first was shown at the Royal Academy and when Orovida heard that the Tate Gallery wanted to buy it she asked Weight to paint a second version for the Ashmolean.



The historical context

Orovida Pissarro (1893-1968) was the daughter of the artist Lucien Pissarro and the grand-daughter of Camille Pissarro. She was an artist in her own right but throughout her life she was aware of the mixed blessing of having famous artists in the family.

In 1950 her mother Esther initiated the idea of gifting the Pissarro family archive to the Ashmolean museum and Orovida continued the development of this bequest after her mother's death. It included correspondence and drawings as well as paintings. This portrait was commissioned by Orovida from her friend Carel Weight to compliment this gift.

The open book placed on a small table in front of her has been identified by Colin Harrison of the Ashmolean as one of the two volumes of Lucien Pissarro's studio book included in the Pissarro Bequest.