

# CHRISTIE'S

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## *Old Master & 19th Century Drawings*

SALE ON 22 MARCH AT 3PM | VIEWINGS FROM 17 TO 22 MARCH



Antoine-Ignace Melling, *Procession en l'honneur d'un mariage turc* - €200,000-400,000

Victor-Marie Hugo, *Souvenir château fantastique* - €40,000-60,000

Peter Paul Rubens, *Etude d'homme agenouille vu de profil* - €250,000-350,000

**Paris** – On the same day as the *Salon du Dessin* opens its doors on 22 March, Christie's Old Master & 19th Century Drawings department will present its annual sale of drawings spanning more than 400 years of European art, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Comprising nearly one hundred lots, with a global estimate around €1.3 million, the sale will feature a wide variety of works on paper from the French, Italian, Dutch and Flemish schools. Among the highlights of the sale are a rare and significant study by **Sir Peter Paul Rubens**, a set of four studies by **Fernand Khnopff** presented in the original frame designed by the artist, a delightful little drawing by **Victor Hugo** never seen on the market, an Orientalist watercolour by **Antoine-Ignace Melling** and a set of Italian drawings from a private European collection.

The auction of *Study of a Kneeling Man in Profile* by **Peter Paul Rubens** is sure to be **one of the highlights of the season** for collectors and enthusiasts. The artwork has a prestigious provenance, having remained in the de Clercq family since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has never been seen on the market since 1867 (estimate: €250,000-350,000). Drawings by Peter Paul Rubens, a prominent 17<sup>th</sup>-century painter, rarely appear for sale. In this delicate study, created using one of the artist's favourite techniques – black chalk accentuated

with white – the Flemish master draws inspiration from Carracci and other great Italian artists of the same period. This is a fine example of the Italian influence that remained with Rubens long after his return to Antwerp. Here, the black chalk allows the artist to use a palette of greys in half tones in an interplay of light and shadow. The extremely modern drape of the coat hugs a back whose curved, rounded outline reinforces the softness and humility in the model's posture. The movement of the face and the downward glance extend the outline of the garment while giving the drawing great harmony and strength.



The sale will also feature *Deux études pour un Sphinx* and *Deux études pour la Victoire* (€200,000-300,000), a set of four studies by Fernand Khnopff, one of the key figures of Belgian Symbolism (€200,000-300,000). These two pairs of drawings are emblematic of the artist's aesthetic, delivering mysterious portraits of women, the Sphinx Woman, Victoria and the Knight Woman, on slightly bluish paper. Presented in the original frame designed by the artist, like an imposing golden case echoing the icons of the Italian Renaissance, this ensemble contributed to the artist's revival by appearing in the retrospective at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1979 before

being exhibited again in 2004 at the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

The 19th-century drawings section will also include **a very fine late-career pastel by Jean-François Millet, *Paysage rural avec vache et moutons*** (€150,000-200,000). Towards the end of his career, the artist turned again to compositions of rural landscapes, inspired by his childhood in Normandy. Here, the subject is La Ferme du Lieu-Bailly, a farm in the hamlet of Gruchy near his home town of Gréville. The accuracy of the anatomy of the animals, as well as the proportions of the landscape, are seemingly effortlessly sketched. What is particularly unusual are the variety of colours employed, such as the luscious greens and the warm tonalities of the animals' coats, providing the depth of field and the narrative.

*Procession en l'Honneur d'un Mariage Turc* by **Antoine-Ignace Melling** was published in 1804 for Lacretelle's two-volume publication, *Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople et des Rives du Bosphore*. It has remained in the same family for over a century. The artwork, produced in graphite, watercolour and gouache, and embellished with gum Arabic, belonged to **Auguste Boppe** (1862-1921). He was a trained archivist and embassy counsellor in Constantinople and the author of *Peintres du Bosphore au XVIIIe Siècle*, published in 1911 (and republished with illustrations in 1989). The book introduced the Orientalist painters of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the public and remains a reference for art historians to this day. Estimated at €200,000-400,000, this **highly refined work, which highlights the colours of the Orient**, was exhibited in 1992 at the Carnavalet Museum (Paris) and at the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam) during the tour dedicated to the French artist, "Du Bosphore à la Seine, Antoine-Ignace Melling, artiste voyageur".

**New to the market, *Souvenir: Château Fantastique* by Victor Hugo.** A gift from the writer to his friend, the woman of letters and composer Louise Bertin (1805-1877), this drawing has remained in the same

family ever since. The work, enriched with touches of blue and red – rare colours in the artist’s graphic corpus – also features a variety of media: pen, brown ink, brown wash drawing, charcoal, watercolour, and gouache. This demonstrates the artist’s mastery of numerous techniques, as he liked to test, innovate with, and harmoniously mix the media he used. Estimated at €40,000-60,000, this drawing belongs to a series of “Souvenirs” produced by Hugo during his career - one of which, dated 1864, is conserved at the Maison Victor Hugo in Paris.

The sale will also feature a **private European collection of Italian drawings**. The set, collected between 1990 and 2000, consists of some fifteen drawings with estimates ranging from €2,000 to €15,000. A selection were displayed in Madrid (2022) and Lisbon (2000 and 2021) with the title *European Master Drawings from Portuguese Collections*. The exhibition was curated by Nicholas Turner, independent art historian and former Deputy Keeper in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. These drawings include a very fresh study *Le Combat des Quatre Éléments*, by Pietro Testa on blue paper from the 18<sup>th</sup> century **Pierre Crozat collection** and more recently that of **Alfred Normand** (1910-1993).

Finally, a selection of 18<sup>th</sup> century French drawings will include a set by **Charles-Joseph Natoire** (1700-1777) and **François Boucher** (1703-1770). **All of which are new to the market and belonged to the sculptor Carlo Marochetti** (1805-1867). The drawings, preserved by the artist’s descendants, have remained hidden from view and are a revelation for all lovers of French drawings. The artworks, with highly attractive estimates, will be auctioned at between €5,000 and €25,000.

		
<p>Jean-François Millet  <i>Paysage rural avec vache et moutons</i>,  Estimate : €150,000-200,000</p>	<p>Charles-Joseph Natoire  <i>Étude pour le portrait en pied du dauphin Louis</i>  Estimate : €15,000-25,000</p>	<p>Alexandre Benois  <i>Tsarskoe Selo. Tsarskoe Selo, L'Ermitage</i>  Estimate : €30,000-50,000</p>

#### PRACTICAL INFO

*Dessins anciens & du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* sale  
Wednesday 22 March 2023 at 3pm

Viewings from Friday 17 to Wednesday 22 March 2023



Open every day from 10am to 6pm, except Sunday 19 March from 2pm to 6pm and Wednesday 22 March from 10am to 12pm

**Christie's Paris: 9, Avenue Matignon - 75008 Paris**

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P1.: *Procession en l'honneur d'un mariage turc*, Antoine-Ignace Melling

P1.: *Souvenir: château fantastique*, Victor-Marie Hugo

P1.: *Study of a kneeling man in profile*, Sir Peter Paul Rubens

P2.: *Le combat des quatre éléments : Vulcan retenant Junon, Cybèle et une Source à terre (front); Esquisse d'une figure (back)*, Pietro Testa

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\* Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium.

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