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PRESS RELEASE | LONDON | 3 JUNE 2015 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Transcending Time & Place: From the Natural World to the Sensual & the Dreamlike In

CHRISTIE'S IMPRESSIONIST & MODERN ART EVENING SALE, 23 June 2015



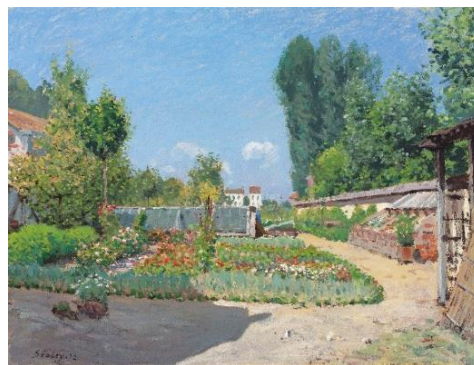
London – Building on the impressive New York May auction results for the category, Christie's *Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale* in London on 23 June will present the market with a further array of 52 highly covetable works to inspire collectors worldwide. Building on the deep international bidding also witnessed in the strong February London sales, this auction meets current tastes and demand with a curated group of captivating works full of passion and vitality by the trailblazers of late 19th and 20th century art, from Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Alfred Sisley and Auguste Rodin to Marc Chagall, Kees van Dongen, Franz Marc, Paul Signac, René Magritte and Joan Miró. Comprising many key works dating from critical points in the oeuvres of the respective artists, estimates range from £250,000 up to £9 million. Select highlights from the sale will go on view for the first time between 12 and 16 June during Christie's free five-day public exhibition '*Christie's Curates: Past Perfect/Future Present*', a celebration of creativity which launches the summer season.

Jay Vincze, International Director and Head of the Impressionist & Modern Art Department, Christie's London: "*Christie's established the highest total ever achieved in one week for the Impressionist & Modern category in the hugely successful May New York sales. We are pleased to build on this success by offering today's informed and intelligent collectors a diverse and dynamic group of important works, to meet the current market's eclectic collecting tastes. For the second year, the Evening Sale leads a week of 'Impressionist & Modern Art' and '20th century Modern British & Irish Art' auctions at Christie's London, including the highly anticipated Picasso Ceramics auction.*"

Offered from a Private European Collection, *Iris mauves*, 1914-1917, by **Claude Monet** (1840-1926) dates from the artist's first concerted campaign of work on the most ambitious undertaking of his career: the *Grandes decorations* (estimate: £6-9 million, *illustrated page 1*). An ensemble of twenty-two mural-sized canvases totalling

more than ninety metres in length, Monet completed the group just months before he passed away, donating them to the French state (Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris). The *Grandes decorations* were the culmination of a complex series of around two hundred and fifty canvases that constitute some of the most innovative and influential works of his entire oeuvre. One of just twenty views that Monet painted of irises on the banks of the lily pond, *Iris mauves* boasts the same monumental scale and free, daring handling as the final murals and may well have been conceived as part of the decorative ensemble, which underwent repeated revisions during the decade that Monet worked on it.

A painting rarely seen within **Alfred Sisley's** (1839-1899) oeuvre, *Le potager*, has resided in just two private collections since it was painted in 1872 (estimate: £1.5-2 million, *illustrated right*). Unseen in public for over half a century, it is coming to auction for the first time in over 80 years having passed by descent from the present owner's grandfather. Sisley's depictions of the rural, French countryside occupy an important position in the early development of Impressionism and *Le potager* dates from a decisive year in his career during which he left Paris and his Impressionist style emerged. At the beginning of the 1870s, Sisley, along with Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Camille Pissarro, was drawn to the small riverside towns and villages of the Île-de-France, finding a wealth of inspiration in the meeting of open, unspoiled nature, and increasingly cultivated and inhabited land. With bright, harmonious colour, varied brushstrokes and bold contrasts of light and shade, *Le potager* demonstrates the new artistic vocabulary that Sisley and his Impressionist colleagues employed, imbuing their paintings with an innovative vitality and spontaneity, characteristics that became the abiding principles of the Impressionist movement.



Painted on 14 December 1969, *Tête* by **Pablo Picasso** (1881-1973) depicts a youthful masculine portrait – an alter ego of the artist's late work (estimate: £4.8-6.5 million, *illustrated left*). His costume places him back in the 17th century, among Picasso's mousquetaires, inspired by his idols Rubens, Rembrandt and Van Dyck, although his floppy straw hat recalls the portraits of Picasso's admired predecessor Vincent van Gogh. Under the title *Buste d'homme*, this work was included in the last major lifetime exhibition of Picasso's work, held in May-October 1970 at the Palais des Papes in Avignon. The artist was nearing his 90th birthday, and was still painting non-stop. This show, often referred to as Avignon I, was devoted entirely to his recent work, comprising 167 oils and 45 drawings he had done between the beginning of January 1969 and the end of January 1970. The paintings in both this and a later Avignon exhibition are the final fruit of Picasso's ongoing dialogues with past masters.

Painted from 1959 to 1960, *Bouquet près de la fenêtre* by **Marc Chagall** (1887-1985) has been identified as one of the finest flower paintings of this period by the author of the artist's definitive biography and catalogue raisonné, Franz Meyer (estimate: £2.5 – 3.5 million, *illustrated page 1*). Acquired by the family of the present owner 35 years ago from Galerie Maeght in Paris, this monumental work presents the themes that dominated Marc Chagall's painting throughout his career: romance, memory and nostalgia. Filled with light and colour, *Bouquet près de la fenêtre* reflects the peaceful Mediterranean idyll that was Chagall's life at this time. Chagall had first introduced floral still-lives in his paintings in the mid-1920s, having returned to France from his native Russia in 1923. He developed a new feeling for nature, and was particularly enchanted by flowers as the embodiment of the French landscape. Flowers also served as a potent symbol of love in Chagall's work; the present work celebrates his love for Valentina or 'Vava' Brodsky, his second wife and last great love. Arranged like fragments

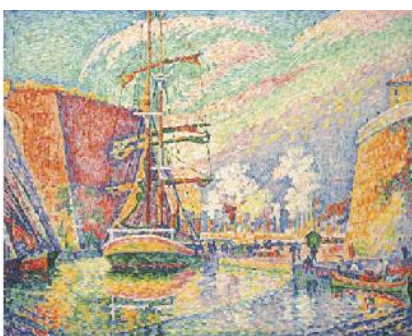
of a dream, the various motifs of *Bouquet près de la fenêtre* appear as figments of Chagall's imagination, memories from the artist's past, and images of his present life, creating a new, fantastical reality.

Anita en almée by **Kees van Dongen** (1877-1968), painted in 1908, is a highly charged, sensuous celebration of the Parisian demi-monde in the first decade of the 20th century, with echoes of French Orientalist painting (estimate: £4-7 million, *illustrated page 1*). The artist's subjects in the years before the First World War confront, provoke, titillate and lure the viewer into their space. No other modern painter in Paris at the time made his pictures as heatedly and blatantly sexual as Van Dongen, who executed his sensational subjects in a riot of violent colours. A self-taught artist, Van Dongen independently arrived at Fauvism in 1905. He stirred up a volatile mixture of strident colour and vigorously rendered painterly forms and unlike other painters of the Fauve circle, he unabashedly indulged his taste for the demi-monde of Montmartre.

Appearing at auction for the very first time and dating from 1911, the year when **Franz Marc** (1880-1916) truly articulated his artistic vision, *Gemsen* encapsulates the ideas and stylistic tendencies that were at the very core of the artist's aesthetic endeavours (estimate: £1.8-2.5 million, *illustrated right*). Marc sought to create an image of the world in harmony, as a holistic and abstract spiritual entity. This approach led to increasingly abstracted elements in Marc's art, starting from 1911 when he founded Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) with Kandinsky. Not only



are the geometric shapes of the mountains in the present work abstract, but crucially also the colours – the green chamois, blue mountains, purple clouds. Blue held a particularly strong meaning to Marc, with blue mountains often appearing in his work as symbols of his spiritual aspirations. Coming from a distinguished private collection, this work presents collectors with the unique opportunity to purchase a piece by Franz Marc from what was arguably the most formative year of his career. Christie's set the world record price for a work on paper by the artist in the February 2015 London Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale when *Springendes Pferd*, 1913, by Franz Marc (1880-1916) sold for £2,546,500 against an estimate of £1.5 to £2 million, far surpassing the previous record of £936,500 which was set in 1997.



With a kaleidoscopic array of vibrant colour, *Marseille, le port*, 1934, by **Paul Signac** (1863-1935) is an exuberant painting that bursts with radiant light and movement (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated left*). Depicting one of Signac's favourite subjects, a maritime scene, this painting captures the bustling port of Marseille. Signac depicted the harbours of France with an unfaltering enthusiasm in the later phase of his career, a pursuit that enabled him to combine his two greatest passions: painting and sailing. A keen yachtsman, Signac savoured the mix of boats, water and people that populated the ports of towns and cities from Saint-Tropez, to Venice and Constantinople. *Marseille, le port* is an exultant culmination of Signac's lifelong exploration into colour and composition.



Offered from a European Private Collection, *Le baiser*, circa 1957, a gouache on paper by **René Magritte** (1898-1967), presents one of Magritte's most poetic subjects: the *oiseau de ciel*, or 'Sky-Bird' (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million, *illustrated left*). This work presents the viewer with a rare and yet greatly celebrated motif that first entered his oeuvre in 1940 in *Le retour*, now in the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique. The 'Sky-Bird' would come to gain international recognition in part through the later adoption by the

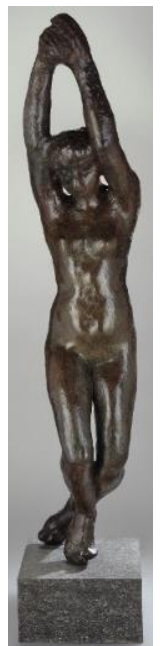
Belgian national air carrier, Sabena, of a variant of this theme. In the case of the Sabena image, entitled *L'oiseau de ciel* and painted in 1966, the silhouette of a bird was shown filled with a cloudy, day-lit sky against a dark background, whereas in *Le baiser*, created roughly a decade earlier, Magritte has shown the silhouette as a pool of star-speckled night sky against the backdrop of day, with the sea and a beach underneath.

Le baiser, circa 1957, is one of four works by Magritte in the sale, which also includes *La grande marée*, circa 1957 (estimate: £600,000 – 900,000) and *Le chant d'amour*, circa 1962 (estimate: £300,000-500,000) which are both offered from a distinguished private Belgian Collection, as well as *L'art de la conversation*, 1955, which is being sold from a private American Collection (estimate: £300,000-500,000). The market for works by Magritte is particularly strong with Christie's selling all nine examples offered last February in London, which constituted the most extraordinary and extensive selection of works by the artist to come to the market since the landmark Harry Torczyner sale in 1998 at Christie's New York.



La tige de la fleur rouge pousse vers la lune (The Stem of the Red Flower Grows Toward the Moon) by Joan Miró (1893-1983) was painted in 1952, a pivotal year in the artist's oeuvre when he created some of his most revolutionary and acclaimed pictures (estimate: £3.5-4.5 million, *illustrated left*). Miró has combined his elegant, often delicate symbols and signs with a more brutal gestural quality that reflects the developments occurring in the avant-garde at the time, such as Abstract Expressionism, which Miró's works had helped to spur into existence. It was one of 60 paintings exhibited in New York at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1953. The exhibition catalogue's preface by James Johnson Sweeney focused largely on Miró's playfulness, which is demonstrated in the techniques used and the subject matter of this work. There is a primal energy that is perfectly suited to the seeming savagery of the main figure dominating the composition, which is rendered with incredible gusto. This period of Miró's work was very influential on artists such as Adolph Gottlieb and Jackson Pollock, whom Miró had met when he first travelled to the United States in 1947.

Almost two meters tall, *Aphrodite* by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) is the first bronze of the subject to have been cast in the present size; it is offered from The Musée Rodin, Paris (estimate: £600,000 – 800,000, *illustrated right*). The mould, lost and only rediscovered by the Musée Rodin in 2014, had been used by the artist, a century earlier, to create a large plaster cast of the subject for the actress and director of the Renaissance theatre Cora Laparcerie's 1914 staging of *Aphrodite*, a play adapted from a homonymous novel by Pierre Louÿs. Instead of sculpting a new work, Rodin searched his studio for a suitable previous model that, under a different title, could acquire a novel, unexpected meaning. The small nude he selected, conceived more than a decade earlier, was promptly enlarged twice by Henri Lebossé to a magnificent 77.1/2 in. (197 cm.) and finally cast in plaster, the same size as the present bronze. On the opening night of *Aphrodite*, the theatre curtains revealed Rodin's sculpture, adorned with flowers, its stark white silhouette 'dancing' against the contrasting backdrop of a black marble temple. George Grappe, a former curator of the Musée Rodin in Paris, believes that the model for *Aphrodite* was originally conceived by Rodin during his work on the *Porte de l'Enfer*, the monumental decorative door the artist was asked to produce in 1880 for a planned - though never realised - new Museum of Decorative Arts. Born as a damned soul and later redeemed as the goddess of love and chastity, *Aphrodite* constitutes a fascinating, ultimate testimony to the art of one of the greatest sculptors of the turn of the century. Cast in 2014, this work is the first and presently only extant example.



Notes to Editors:

Pre-sale estimates for Impressionist & Modern Art & offered in the June 2015 auctions:

<i>Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale</i>	23 June	£60,400,000	-	87,850,000
<i>Impressionist & Modern Art Works on Paper Sale</i>	24 June	£5,828,600	-	8,461,400
<i>Impressionist & Modern Art Day Sale</i>	24 June	£12,930,000	-	18,883,000
<i>Picasso Ceramics Sale, South Kensington</i>	25 June	£557,200	-	816,400
<i>Impressionist & Modern Art Sale South Kensington</i>	26 June	£1,180,700	-	1,695,800
		TOTAL	£80,896,500	- 117,706,600

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Images available on request

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion) in 2014, an increase of 20% on the previous year. Christie's has a global presence with 54 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Shanghai, New Delhi, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*