

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 24 APRIL 2015

AMRITA SHER-GIL AT THE AGE OF 18



**UNDISCOVERED SELF-PORTRAIT BY INDIA'S MOST VALUABLE
NATIONAL ART TREASURE ARTIST TO COME TO AUCTION**

FIRST PAINTING BY THE ARTIST TO BE OFFERED IN LONDON

London /Mumbai – on 10th of June Christie's London will offer a 1931 self-portrait by Amrita Sher-Gil, depicting one of India's most important modern artists at the age of 18, recognised today as pioneer of Indian modernism. This is the first painting by the artist ever to be offered in London, and one of only eight canvases by Sher-Gil to be offered at auction globally. Works by the artist are defined as 'National Art Treasures' by the Indian Government and deemed of such national importance to Indian culture that they are non-exportable if sourced in India, and when sold in India, must remain in the country. Therefore it is very rare that important paintings by Sher-Gil are offered outside of India. This self-portrait will be offered in the annual South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art Sale at Christie's King Street on 10th of June with a pre-sale estimate of £1.0-1.8 million.

This self-portrait from 1931 is one of Sher-Gil's undiscovered paintings, never before seen or exhibited publicly. It has remained in France from the time it was painted, and is making its maiden voyage across the Atlantic this summer, first to New York, where it will be on view at Christie's, and then to London for its sale preview and auction.

In 1931 Sher-Gil was briefly engaged to Yusuf Ali Khan, while rumor had it that she was also having an affair with her first cousin Victor Egan. Sher-Gil painted portraits of these two men in 1931, both gazing introspectively into the distance, contemplating perhaps their own fate in the hands of this femme fatale. Sher-Gil's own portrait is also painted in the same year. Together, these paintings form a triangle between three lovers, placing them in conversation — each avoiding the gaze of the viewer, withholding a secret only the three seem to be privy to.

This self-portrait is the only one known in profile, among the artist's 19 previously documented self-portraits. Here, the artist is in complete profile and avoiding any direct interaction with the viewer. However, the composition diagonally cuts through the canvas with the torso almost leaping out of the canvas onto the viewer. The golden bowl sitting empty between her and the viewer reflects the emotional emptiness that she may have experienced as an 18-year-old, torn between the various loves of her life.

Biographical notes:

Amrita Sher-Gil was a pioneer in the history of modern Indian art, and in the 28 years of her brief life was a revolution personified. Born in Budapest in 1913 to a Hungarian mother and Indian father, Sher-Gil was a tour de force in the landscape of Modernism in British India. Living between India, Hungary and France, Sher-Gil painted the life of people and her surroundings with an intensity that remains unparalleled in modern Indian art. Her talent for the arts was discovered very early on, and in 1929 at the age of 16 she moved to Paris to study with Lucien Simon at the prestigious École Nationale des Beaux-Arts. The bohemian lifestyle in Paris invigorated Sher-Gil's desire to paint, which she did with conviction and maturity rarely seen in a 16-year-old. The power of her portraits won her election as an associate of the Grand Salon, a rare honour at the time for a young, foreign artist in Paris. Her self-portraits are painted with an intensity that is almost hypnotic, drawing the viewer into the innermost psyche of the artist, where one discovers a sea of melancholy.

Celebrating her achievements and contribution to modern Indian art of 172 documented works, the Indian Government recognised her as a National Treasure artist in 1972. The majority of her works are in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi. It is truly a privilege to discover a painting by Sher-Gil, which was previously unknown to her collectors and admirers, and to offer it the world stage it deserves.

PRESS CONTACT: Alexandra Kindermann | +41 79 1014196 | akindermann@christies.com

Visit Christie's Website at www.christies.com

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:



Auction at Christie's London, King Street:
South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art
10 June 2015 at 2.30pm

Viewing at Christie's London:

Friday 5 June 9.00am-4.30pm
Saturday 6 June 2.00-5.00pm
Sunday 7 June 2.00-5.00pm
Monday 8 June 9.00am-4.30pm
Tuesday June 9.00am-8.00pm

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 and the latest additions 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 Beijing, 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.*

###