

CHRISTIE'S

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SETTLEMENT SALE: PEETER SION, *VANITAS WITH AN HOURGLASS AND SKULL*

Proceeds going to the Sam Bernhard Levie heir will fund ongoing educational work regarding the Holocaust

Being offered in the Paris Old Master Paintings live auction 17 November



Peeter Sion (1620-1695), *Vanitas with an hourglass and skull*, estimate €6,000-8,000

Paris – The Old Master Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures auction taking place on 17 November will include Peeter Sion's *Vanitas with an hourglass and skull*, which was part of the collection of Sam Bernhard Levie (1887-1943), a Jewish textile dealer from Amsterdam. It was among a group of pictures by Dutch and Italian masters that Levie was forced to sell shortly after the outbreak of the war, when anti-Semitic measures began to oppress the Dutch Jewish community. Deported with his wife Sara de Zwarte (1899-1943) to the Sobibor extermination camp in Poland, the couple subsequently died on 28 May 1943.

In accordance with Levie's will, dated 1940, the couple's estate passed to Dr. Albert Heppner (1900-1945), a collector, friend and art historian who went into hiding in 1942 and died in 1945. It was not until 1950 that his widow, Irene Marianne Krämer (1904-1951), became aware of the will when she visited her notary, who, coincidentally, was the same one used by Levie. A year later the rights to Sam Bernhard Levie's property passed to her son, Max Amichai Heppner, an author now based in the United States whose books include *I Live in a Chickenhouse*, a remarkable memoir about his years spent in hiding with his parents on a farm in occupied Holland. Furthermore, Max actively teaches children about the Holocaust and the funds he receives from the sale of this painting will be used to help finance his teachings.

James Palmer, the Founder of Mondex Corporation, which represents Max Heppner, the heir of Sam Levie said: "Each restitution is important in bringing some degree of justice to those families who were despoiled of their property during the Holocaust. In this instance it is even more special as Mr. Levie's heir, who is a Holocaust survivor himself, actively

teaches students in the United States about this historic period and I am confident that the proceeds of this upcoming auction will help him continue to do so. All of us at Mondex are very pleased and proud to have found an amicable solution with the help of Christie's and the innocent possessor of this beautiful painting."

To date only three of Levie's paintings sold under duress have been recovered, the present *Vanitas with an hourglass and skull* being the latest. The first two paintings were repatriated to the Netherlands shortly after the war but were only returned to the rightful heir in March 2014. The recent agreement to sell this painting by Peeter Sion (ca. 1620-1695), was made possible with the collaboration and assistance of Christie's, the owner of the painting and Mondex Corporation on behalf of Mr. Max Amichai Heppner, and is a way to do justice to the life of Sam Bernhard Levie.

Richard Aronowitz, Global Head of Restitution at Christie's, said: *"I am delighted that diligent research by my colleagues in the Restitution department uncovered the fact that this fascinating vanitas still-life was sold under duress by Sam Bernhard Levie after the Nazi occupation of Holland. The success of our research relies not only on our own expertise, but on the heirs of pre-war Jewish collectors and their representatives making the details of still-missing works and of family cases accessible to us. As the wealth of publicly-available data concerning 1933-1945 losses continues to grow, so do our chances of identifying works that are still being searched for. I would like to celebrate the exemplary willingness of the current owner of the painting to enter into a settlement with Max Amichai Heppner, the sole heir of Sam Bernhard Levie."*

Exhibition	Paris	15-17 November
Auction	Paris	17 November

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About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business. Renowned and trusted for its expert live and online auctions, as well as its bespoke private sales, Christie's offers a full portfolio of global services to its clients, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's has a physical presence in 46 countries, throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, with flagship international sales hubs in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. It also is the only international auction house authorized to hold sales in mainland China (Shanghai).

Christie's auctions span more than 80 art and luxury categories, at price points ranging from \$200 to over \$100 million. In recent years, Christie's has achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction (Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*, 2017), for a 20th century artwork (Andy Warhol's *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*, 2022) and for a work by a living artist (Jeff Koons' *Rabbit*, 2019). Christie's is also recognised as a reference for prestigious single owner collections, having auctioned 8 of the 10 most important collections in history.

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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 and are reported net of applicable fees.

