

# CHRISTIE'S

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## EXCEPTIONAL WORKS ON PAPER COLLECTION TO BE OFFERED IN DEDICATED SALE, 1 MARCH 2021

- *A Family Collection: Works on Paper, Van Gogh to Freud* to be presented in New York in a dedicated sale preceding the Modern British Art Evening Sale in London on 1 March 2021
- Featuring exceptional works on paper, the collection is highlighted by Van Gogh's *La Mousmé* (\$7,000,000-10,000,000), René Magritte's *Journal intime* (\$2,500,000-3,500,000) and Lucian Freud's *Self-portrait* (\$1,800,000-2,500,000)
- The auction forms a key part of Christie's Spring Season of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art Sales, London and New York, March 2021



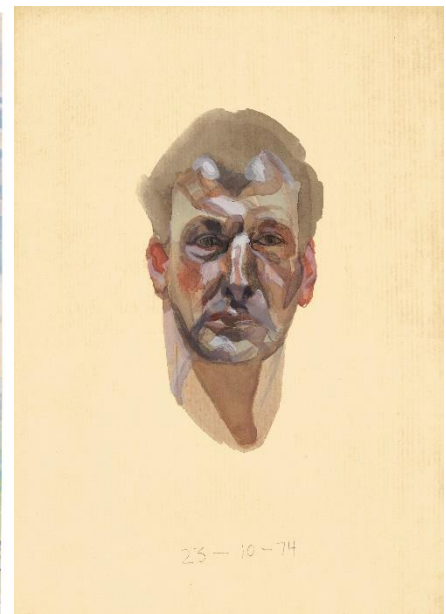
Vincent van Gogh, *La Mousmé*, reed pen and brown ink over pencil on paper, 31.3 x 23.9 cm, executed in Arles *circa* 31 July - 3 August 1888, estimate: \$7,000,000-10,000,000

**London and New York** – Christie's will offer *A Family Collection: Works on Paper, Van Gogh to Freud* as a standalone sale dedicated to exceptional works on paper from a single collection, presented in New York preceding the Modern British Art Evening Sale in London on 1 March 2021. The group is highlighted by Vincent van Gogh's *La Mousmé* (executed in Arles *circa* 31 July - 3 August 1888, estimate: \$7,000,000-10,000,000), one of the finest works on paper of the artist's career, René Magritte's *Journal intime* (executed *circa* 1954, estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000), a scene depicting two of Magritte's iconic bowler-hatted men turned to stone, and a rare *Self-portrait* by Lucian Freud (executed in 1974, estimate: \$1,800,000-2,500,000), which was recently included in the Royal Academy's major exhibition *Lucian Freud: Self Portraits* (2019-20). *A Family Collection: Works on Paper, Van Gogh to Freud* also includes seminal pieces by Henry Moore, Georges Seurat, and Augustus John, all of which are testament to an unerring eye whose passion for exquisite works on paper resulted in the pursuit of the best pieces across categories. A key focus was exceptional condition, which together with the rarity of the artworks discovered, came to define the founding ethos of this private family collection.

**Giovanna Bertazzoni, Vice Chairman, 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Christie's:** "Christie's is thrilled to launch the 20<sup>th</sup> Century season of Spring sales in London and New York with a collection of exquisite works on paper put together by an exceptional eye. The works offered in the dedicated sale on 1 March 2021 range from the masterfully executed *La Mousmé* by Vincent van Gogh to the intimate *Self-portrait* by Lucian Freud. Henry Moore's dramatically sculptural *Two Sleepers in the Underground* is presented alongside Seurat's rare and atmospheric landscape, conjured magically on paper by the artist's uniquely mastered *Conté crayon*. What unites all of these works on paper is the lifelong passion of this collector who strove to seek out these treasures – the intimate art form that represents the unfettered first idea of the genius. The rarity and condition of these works is incomparable and the auction will provide insight into the connoisseurship of this family collection. For decades, at Christie's we have championed works on paper and dedicated specialised auctions to this vibrant and exciting segment of the market. It is with great pride that we offer *A Family Collection: Works on Paper, Van Gogh to Freud* as a key element of our 20<sup>th</sup> Century Spring season."

*La Mousmé* (executed in Arles circa 31 July - 3 August 1888, estimate: \$7,000,000-10,000,000, *illustrated page one*) belongs to a small group of radical reed pen drawings that Vincent van Gogh created in Arles during the course of the summer of 1888. Technically innovative with an astonishingly perceptive range of strokes, lines, and dots that dance upon the surface of the paper, this work shows Van Gogh's innate ability at capturing the very essence of his subject; the pure, delicate youth and beauty of his model rendered ethereal and timeless. It was sent by Van Gogh to his friend John Russell immediately after its execution, alongside other major pen and ink drawings, including *Le Zouave* (Guggenheim Collection, New York) and *Joseph Roulin* (Collection of the J. Paul Getty, Los Angeles). It was preceded by a closely related oil, *La Mousmé* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), which was inspired by a popular novel of the time, Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème*. A work of exquisite quality, *La Mousmé* brings together the artist's passion for Japan, his masterful draughtsmanship, as well as his obsession for portraiture, all of which defined his art of this period.

René Magritte's *Journal intime* (executed circa 1954, estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000, *illustrated below, left*) presents a startling scene in which two bowler-hatted men are turned to stone, their forms blending into the stark rocky outcrop on which they stand. Petrification had begun to appear in Magritte's art around 1950-51 as traditional still-life subjects, landscapes and figures were suddenly transformed entirely into stone. For the artist, subjecting familiar objects and characters to such unexpected, strange transformations was an essential tool in his quest to jolt viewers from their passive acceptance of reality. The largely monochrome palette required to achieve the stone-like effect echoes the highly skilled *grisaille* technique made fashionable during the Renaissance, and subsequently adopted by artists such as Andrea Mantegna, Pieter Breugel, Jan van Eyck, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.



René Magritte, *Journal intime*, gouache on paper, 29.8 x 40.6cm, executed circa 1954, estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000 and  
Lucian Freud, *Self-portrait*, gouache, watercolour and pencil on paper, 33 x 24.1cm,  
executed on 23 October 1974, estimate: \$1,800,000-2,500,000

*Self-Portrait* by Lucian Freud was painted in a single day in 1974 (estimate: \$1,800,000,000-2,500,000, *illustrated above, right*) and is as rare in medium – an unusual example of gouache and watercolour on paper – as it is sublime in execution. Freud reveals himself as no less a master of subtle, diaphanous pigment than of the thick, granular impasto for which he is best known. Glassy planes of colour model his flesh with incandescent

presence, mapping the strike of light on his forehead and nose. The work's coral pinks, sepia strokes and slick flashes of white come together with concentrated velocity, echoing the turbulent portrait-heads of Freud's close friend Francis Bacon. Lines and shadows chart the wear of middle-age: the 1970s was a time of sharp self-scrutiny for Freud, whose father had died at the start of the decade, and who, at 51 years old, had received his first major retrospective at London's Hayward Gallery earlier in 1974. As with Freud's other self-portraits, which are relatively scarce in his *oeuvre*, it crystallises a rare moment of looking both outwards and inwards.

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