



CHRISTIE'S

MEDIA ALERT | LONDON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'IL POEMA DELLA VECCHIAIA' A REDISCOVERED MASTERPIECE OF 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN ART BY ANGELO MORBELLI



Angelo Morbelli (Italian, 1854-1919)
Vecchie Calzette
1903, oil on canvas
61.6 x 99.7 cm
Estimate: £200,000-300,000

London - Christie's is pleased to offer a rediscovered masterpiece of 19th century European Art, by a pioneer of Italian Divisionism, the Italian artist Angelo Morbelli. Entitled *Vecchie Calzette*, the present painting will be offered in London on 13 December, as part of our 19th Century European Art auction during Classic week (estimate: £200,000 – 300,000, *illustrated above*). This work is one of the 6 canvases from the series entitled *Il Poema della Vecchiaia*. Recently rediscovered in a South American collection, it was last seen on the market in 1906. The series was presented at the Venice Biennale in 1903 where it received a lot of attention and the present painting won a gold medal in Munich at the *Internationalen Kunstausstellung* in 1905.

The other works of the series include *Il Natale dei Rimasti* (currently residing at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Venezia), *Siesta Invernale* (Pinacoteca Civica di Alessandria), *I due inverni* (Pinacoteca Civica di Alessandria), *Sedia vuota*, and *Mi ricordo quand'ero fanciulla* (Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Tortona), all of which present a deep reflection on death and the vanity of life. Painted by the artist in 1903 at the Pio Albergo Trivulzio, retirement home and hospital in Milan, Morbelli spent most of his time observing elderly people living there and catching glimpses of their lives. The artist relied a lot on the photographs he took to capture moments and expressions of these people. Above all, Morbelli captured the light, which has always been considered the main protagonist in his works.

Morbelli is largely considered by art historians as a painter of light. The artist was one of the six leading exponents of Italian Divisionism together with Vittore Grubicy de Dragon, Giovanni Segantini, Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo, Gaetano Previati and Emilio Longoni. Despite the often cited parallels with French Neo-Impressionism, in particular with Pointillism, Divisionism developed in Milan quite independently. Divisionism is characterized by a meticulous study of the optical effects and the luminosity of colour on canvas itself, which has a profoundly textural element due to the technique used. Thus, when touches of paint are applied side by side to the canvas 'divisionistically' as pure unmixed colour, the colours achieve greater luminosity and brilliance in the eye of the spectator. This movement, which bears strong symbolist connotations, can also be seen as socially charged, as its 'members' believed in artistic creation as a way to reach social improvement and redemption. All these elements together laid the foundations for the birth of Futurism.