

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE - PARIS – 05 APRIL 2022 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CHRISTIE'S PRESENTS A REDISCOVERED DRAWING BY MICHELANGELO

TO BE OFFERED ON 18 MAY 2022 IN PARIS



**Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564)**

*A nude young man (after Masaccio) surrounded by two figures*

Pen and two shades of brown ink, 13 x 7 7/8 in.

Estimate on request

**Paris** – Christie's is honoured to announce the sale of a previously unknown drawing by Michelangelo, *A nude young man (after Masaccio) surrounded by two figures*, executed early in his career. This exceptionally rare work, one of the very few drawings by Michelangelo still in private hands, will be auctioned on 18 May during the Paris sale *Maîtres anciens et du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Tableaux, dessins, sculptures (Old Masters and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures)*. It will be offered with an estimate on request; in the region of €30 million.

Coming to the market from a private French collection, the work was designated a French National Treasure, originally preventing its export from the country for a period of thirty months. The French Government recently removed this designation and has granted its export licence, enabling the drawing to be offered without any restriction to collectors worldwide. Prior to its sale in Paris, Michelangelo's drawing is scheduled to be exhibited in Hong Kong and New York.

The drawing was first recognised as the work of Michelangelo in 2019 by Furio Rinaldi, then a specialist in Christie's department of Old Master Drawings. Paul Joannides, Emeritus Professor of Art History at Cambridge University and author of the complete catalogues of drawings by Michelangelo and his school in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the Musée du Louvre, later was able to study the original, and supports the attribution. Sold in 1907 at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris as a work of the school of Michelangelo, the drawing escaped the attention of all scholars until its recent rediscovery.

A work by the young Michelangelo in Florence dating to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, this drawing is probably the earliest surviving nude study by the artist. The central figure of the work reproduces the shivering man depicted in the *Baptism of the Neophytes*, one of the famous frescoes from the Santa Maria del Carmine Church in Florence by the early Italian Renaissance master Masaccio (1401-1428).

Several other studies by Michelangelo after Masaccio are known, including a drawing at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich and one at the Albertina in Vienna, as well as a drawing after a fresco by Giotto at the Louvre.

Using two shades of brown ink, Michelangelo makes Masaccio's figure his own by enhancing the man's musculature and creating a more powerful and robust figure that presages his most famous representations of the human body, such as his monumental marble *David* at the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence and his two *Slaves* at the Louvre. In a quite different, more energetic style, Michelangelo later added two figures behind the shivering man, unrelated to Masaccio's original composition.

The sale of this large and well-preserved drawing takes its place among the ranks of other major works on paper offered at auction by Christie's, including Raphael's *Head of a Muse*, sold in London for more than £29 million (\$38 million) in December 2009; Leonardo da Vinci's exquisite *Head of a bear*, which achieved almost £9 million (\$11,8 million) in 2021; and a rare nude male study by Michelangelo, which sold in London on July 4 2000 for more than £8 million (\$12 million), setting the world auction record for a work by the artist.

**Cécile Verdier, Chairman, Christie's France:** *"Everyone at Christie's involved in this sale is deeply honoured by the opportunity to present a work of this magnitude. A major discovery in the History of Art, the sale of this drawing is also a momentous event for the art market."*

**Stijn Alsteens, International Head of Department - Old Master Drawings:** *"Not since the discovery in 2001 of a drawing by Michelangelo at Castle Howard, now at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, has a previously unknown drawing of greater beauty and importance by one of the major figures in art history re-emerged at auction. The drawing is one of the best of fewer than ten works on paper by Michelangelo still in private hands, and will become a touchstone for every discussion of the early part of the artist's long career. It is with great pride that we bring this drawing, now fully recognised as a work by Michelangelo, to the market after its last appearance more than a century ago. I also want to acknowledge and express my thanks to Furio Rinaldi, former Christie's Old Master Drawings specialist, and now curator of drawings and prints at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, who was the first to suggest the attribution, which has now been unanimously accepted."*

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*Images on demand*

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