

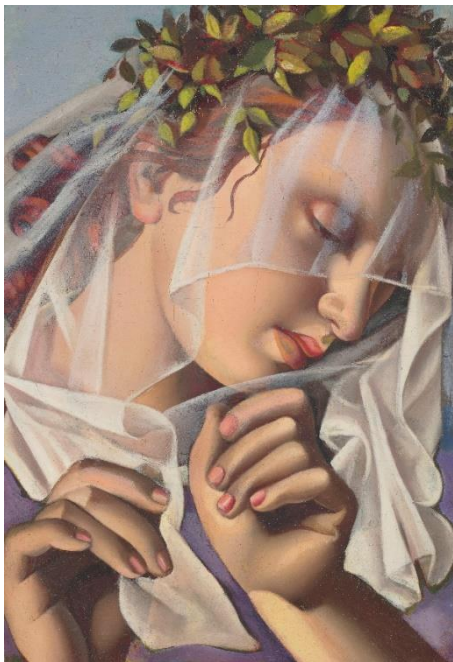
CHRISTIE'S

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DIALOGUES: MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART

ONLINE-ONLY FROM 26 JUNE TO 14 JULY 2020

PART OF THE AUCTION PROGRAMME TO
ACCOMPANY
ONE: A GLOBAL SALE OF THE 20TH CENTURY



Tamara de Lempicka, *La couronne de fleurs II* (c. 1932/c. 1950, estimate: £300,000-500,000),
Glenn Ligon *Figure #96* (2011, estimate: £280,000-350,000) and Peter Blake *The National Gallery Madonna*
(1994-2000, estimate: £120,000-180,000)

London – As part of the expanded online programme to accompany *ONE: A Global Sale of the 20th Century*, Christie's presents [*Dialogues: Modern & Contemporary Art*](#), an online auction running from 26 June to 14 July 2020, featuring painting, sculpture, works on paper and photography. Constructivism, Fauvism, Art Brut, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop: the past century of Western art has been a period of vast change. As artists responded to events happening around them and the evolution of artistic practice, they also engaged with the work of other artists past and present. *Dialogues: Modern & Contemporary Art* highlights a selection of these conversations. Some dialogues are formal, as in the sharp, flat hues of Walter Dexel's Constructivism and Josef Albers' post-Bauhaus *Homage to the Square: Oracle* (1961, estimate: £220,000-320,000). Others are more visceral: an early work, *Kallmünz – Regentag* (1903, estimate: £150,000-200,000) by Wassily Kandinsky, from before his own revolutionary

turn to abstraction, emits a sunny energy that echoes in Jack Butler Yeats' bright, fluid *California* (1937, estimate: £500,000-800,000). Jean Dubuffet's Art Brut figures share the totemic power of sculptures by Eduardo Paolozzi and Henri Laurens. Tamara de Lempicka's glamorous portrait, once owned by Madonna, *La couronne de fleurs II* (c.1932/c.1950, estimate: £300,000-500,000) was reworked by the artist to reflect changing ideas of beauty, while a pair of bright, elegant 2018 portraits by Ghana-born painter Amoako Boafo take up an Expressionist approach to celebrate what he has called 'new ways to approach blackness.' Illuminating recurring themes, shared techniques and evolving genres from the start of the modern era to the present day, *Dialogues* locates each artwork as part of a rich, densely interwoven fabric of creative endeavour.

Painted *circa* 1932, and reworked some 20 years later, *La couronne de fleurs II* encapsulates Tamara de Lempicka's unique form of portraiture. Begun *circa* 1932, as the Polish-born artist reached the height of her fame both as an artist and as a prominent figure within the dazzling, riotous world of the *années folles*, this intimate portrait exemplifies the classicised modernism that came to define the artist's style. Here, the model is adorned with a wreath crown ostensibly made of myrtle leaves, the signature headdress of Aphrodite, goddess of love and desire. This wreath sits atop a gossamer thin veil that delicately drapes across the figure's eyes and luscious red curls. Lempicka displays her mastery in the otherworldly translucence of this fabric, which cascades around the model's head and softens the architectural lines of her volumetric form. While these classical motifs bestow upon the model a timeless beauty, the composition and style remain radically modern. The artist's novel decision to tightly crop the sides heightens the intimacy of our encounter with the sitter, caught in a moment of introspection or perhaps sensuous rapture, as her half-closed eyes suggest.

A bold collision of past and present, *The National Gallery Madonna* (1994-2000, estimate: £120,000-180,000) is a compelling postmodern painting by Peter Blake. In September 1994, Blake took up a residency as Associate Artist at London's National Gallery. Tasked with responding to works in the collection, he worked in the gallery's basement studio, fired with inspiration from the Old Masters around him. At four feet in height, *The National Gallery Madonna* is among the largest paintings he produced. It is based on Bartolomeo Montagna's *The Virgin and Child* (1485-87). Rather than slavishly copying the original, Blake has reinvented the painting in his own distinctively crisp, Pop-inflected style. The rich fabrics and softly-lit skin of his subjects are alive with tactile realism and he has transposed his medieval Madonna into the interior of the National Gallery itself. The view behind her looks out onto Trafalgar Square, complete with Nelson's Column, Big Ben and distinctly contemporary cars and buses. He has also switched the Virgin's face for that of Cecilia Chancellor, a prominent fashion model in the 1990s. Elsewhere in his 'National Gallery' works, Blake took Renaissance Virgins to Venice Beach, and depicted a gang of Venuses by Cranach, Botticelli, Velázquez and others frolicking in a landscape derived from Constable. Playing directly with the London context of its creation, *The National Gallery Madonna* is a more focused and intimate reflection on Blake's relationship with his artistic forebears, and a joyful example of the constant dialogue with art history and popular culture that continues to inform his practice. '

Figure #96 (2011, estimate: £280,000-350,000) is a beautiful and haunting example of Glenn Ligon's 'Figure' series: an iconic group of coal-dust silkscreens in which the artist takes his appropriated text paintings into the realm of total abstraction. Overlaid and abraded, Ligon's carbonised writing cascades down the 1.5-metre canvas, coalescing into a black, sparkling mass. Words and letters melt into a chorus of illegible, flickering marks, their sense obscure and their status uncertain. In places the silkscreen's golden background tears through the dark curtain of script, echoing the ripped posters of Paris's mid-century affichistes as much as the craggy Abstract Expressionist paintings of Clyfford Still. Ligon composes and decomposes words into a dramatic, dazzling picture, creating an ambiguous, richly textured vision of meaning and its dissolution. The 'Figure' of Ligon's title might be seen to refer to a pictorial pattern, motif or diagram; it might equally designate a human form. Indeed, as is typical of Ligon's work, the 'Figure' series is directly concerned with the presentation of the self through text and image. These works are part of his ongoing formal engagement with James Baldwin's 1953 essay 'Stranger in the Village'. Sharing his identity as a gay, black man, Baldwin is a key literary touchstone for Ligon.

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