

# CHRISTIE'S

THE ART PEOPLE

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**Rare & Important Works with Impeccable Provenance**

**By**

**BELLOTTO, RUBENS, GAINSBOROUGH, GUARDI &  
BREUGHEL THE YOUNGER**

**Including Property from The Alfred Beit Foundation**

**Lead Christie's Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale,  
London, 9 July 2015**



**London** – Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* in London on Thursday 9 July will offer an exceptional selection of pictures from private collections, with emphasis on rarity, importance and provenance. Many of the highlights in the sale have not been seen on the market for generations. The sale is led by a masterpiece by Bernardo Bellotto (1721-1780), *Dresden from the right bank of the Elbe above the Augustus Bridge*, one of the last great views of the city by this artist still remaining in private hands (estimate: £8-12 million, *illustrated above*). The sale also includes six carefully selected paintings from The Alfred Beit Foundation with two superb panels by Rubens - *Head of a bearded man* (estimate: £2-3 million), and *Venus and Jupiter* (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million); and one of the greatest *Kermesse* scenes by David Teniers the Younger (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million). Other sale highlights are a portrait of *Sir Richard Brooke, 5th Bt.* by Thomas Gainsborough, which has never been on the market before (estimate: £2-3 million); the most important oil by Richard Parkes Bonington to come to the market in a generation, *A coastal landscape with fisherfolk* (estimate: £2-3 million); four major works by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, featuring one of his rarest and most original compositions, *The Kermesse of Saint George* (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million); and seven Dutch paintings from the Cunningham collection, led by an exquisite *Still-Life* by Jan Davidsz. de Heem (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million). Other notable works which are at auction for the first time include: *Christ on the Cross* by El Greco and studio (estimate: £1-1.5 million), *Hermes entertained by Calypso* by Jacob Jordaens (estimate: £600,000 - 800,000), *Ruins of the old church at Muiderberg* by Jacob van Ruisdael (estimate: £500,000-800,000), and a sublime, signed view of Venice by Francesco Guardi *The Grand Canal, Venice, with San Simeone Piccolo* (estimate: £1-1.5 million). A re-discovered panel by Jean-Antoine Watteau, *La Lorgneuse*, previously believed to be lost, will also be offered (estimate: £300,000-500,000). This auction, together with the *Day Sale* on 10 July and the

*Old Master & British Drawings & Watercolours* sale on 7 July, are all part of *London Art Week 2015* (3 to 10 July), which highlights the exceptional riches and unparalleled expertise available within Mayfair and St. James's.

Celebrating the contemporary art of the past, the wealth of classical works at Christie's from 7 to 10 July represent excellence and technical brilliance. They will be offered across the sales of *Old Master & British Paintings, Drawings & Watercolours*, *The Exceptional Sale*, the *Taste of the Royal Court: Important French Furniture and Works of Art from a Private Collection* sale, and *The Collection of a Distinguished Swiss Gentleman*. Together, the week of sales at Christie's presents works by many of the most revered artists and craftsmen in history, who have stood the test of time and were ground-breaking and innovative in their day.

### BERNARDO BELLOTTO

*Dresden from the right bank of the Elbe above the Augustus Bridge* is a masterpiece of Bernardo Bellotto's full maturity (estimate: £8-12 million, *illustrated page 1*). An artist of precocious talent, Bellotto emerged from the shadow of his uncle, Canaletto, to become one of the most skilful view painters of his time. His renditions of Dresden, Vienna, Munich and Warsaw were the defining records of four of the major capitals of northern Europe in the mid-eighteenth century and have a distinguished place in the development of European topographical painting. Bellotto's early renown led to him being called to Dresden in 1747 to work for Friedrich-August II, Elector of Saxony, where he undertook a series of views of the city during the height of its powers, in the mid-eighteenth century.

This picture, one of the most remarkable views by the artist to appear on the market in recent times, is a variant of the very first view of Dresden that Bellotto executed for the Elector. It acted as a great showcase for his talent, exemplifying a method based on the highest levels of exactitude and topographical accuracy. Offered from the Property of a Private European Collector, the painting depicts some of the greatest civic and religious buildings that made up the so-called *Brühl'sche Terrasse* that ran along the Elbe at the time, with the domed Frauenkirche rising up to the left, next to the Brühl Library and the Fürstenburg Palace. The promenade was devastated during the Second World War, but has largely been rebuilt. Painted in *circa* 1751-53, this view of Dresden is distinguished from Bellotto's two earlier pictures of the same subject in its atmospheric tone, cooler palette and the wonderful reflections in the river. It is a picture of outstanding refinement and precision, without any loss of spontaneity, presenting one of Europe's great cities in all its splendour.

### THE ALFRED BEIT FOUNDATION



A group of six Old Master paintings from The Alfred Beit Foundation is led by two magnificent works on panel by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, *Head of a bearded man* (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated left*) and *Venus and Jupiter* (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million) and also includes a masterpiece by David Teniers II, one of the finest works by the artist still in private hands. The works are being sold by the foundation in order to set up an endowment fund to safeguard the long term future of Russborough, one of the greatest Georgian houses in Ireland, built almost 300 years ago, which was gifted by the Beit family to The Alfred Beit Foundation in 1976. In 1986, Sir Alfred and Lady Clementine Beit gifted many of the most celebrated pictures from the Beit Collection to the National Gallery of Ireland, which included masterpieces by Vermeer, Gabriel Metsu, Jacob van Ruisdael, Goya and Gainsborough amongst others. This donation transformed the Gallery's collection of Old Master Paintings and a wing of the Gallery was fittingly named 'The Beit Wing' in recognition of this remarkable gift. *Please click [here](#) for the separate press release.*

## THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH



Only seen in public on one previous occasion, when it was exhibited in 1876, the *Portrait of Sir Richard Brooke, 5th Bt.* (1753-1795) by Thomas Gainsborough, R.A. (1727-1788) has descended through the family of the sitter to the present owner (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated left*). The picture will be included in Hugh Belsey's forthcoming *catalogue raisonné* of Gainsborough's portraits, having never previously been published in any of the monographs written on the artist. Sir Richard is understood to have commissioned the work shortly after he inherited the title and family estates in Cheshire from his father in July 1781. Refined and elegant, the portrait is a superb example of Gainsborough's bravura draughtsmanship, and presents Sir Richard as the epitome of the sophisticated country gentleman.

## RICHARD PARKES BONINGTON

Constituting the grandest statement in oil by Richard Parkes Bonington to appear at auction in a generation, and one of the last on this scale to remain in private hands, *A coastal landscape with fisherfolk, a beached boat beyond* was painted at the height of the artist's career (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated right*). It displays Bonington's virtuoso handling of the brush and the subtle observation of light and atmosphere that he had first mastered as a watercolourist. The picture belongs to a group of coastal scenes that were celebrated during Bonington's lifetime and have captivated artists and



collectors ever since. These are considered to be among the most beautiful of the romantic period and led Edith Wharton, the American novelist, to write in 1910 that 'surely he was the Keats of painting.' The picture reveals the undeniable influence of Turner, whose landscapes Bonington would have seen on his trip from Paris to London in 1825. The following year, 1826, in which the present picture is thought to have been executed, was a key date in Bonington's tragically short career, marking his debut, to great acclaim, at the British Institution in London; his works were soon much in demand from many of the great Whig patrons of the day, including John Russell, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne, and Robert, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Grosvenor. This picture was acquired by Henry Wellesley (1773-1847), later Lord Cowley, the younger brother of Arthur Wellesley, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wellington, who served as ambassador at Paris.

## PROPERTY FROM THE CUNNINGHAM COLLECTION



The superb collection of Dutch and Flemish Old Master Paintings formed by Philip Tracy Cunningham and his wife Lizanne is a remarkable testimony to their passion for the arts and for the Dutch Golden Age in particular. The pictures being offered exemplify the Cunningham's keen appreciation for condition and quality. Following three lots from the collection which were sold at Christie's New York in June, the London sale will offer seven stellar Dutch paintings that have been on view at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. for the past fifteen years. The group



is led by an exquisite still-life by Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1684), *Grapes, peaches, blackberries, oysters, hazelnuts, and wine in façon-de-Venise glasses on a partially draped stone ledge with a snail, butterfly, and a bee* (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million, *illustrated page 4*). The other works include a beautifully preserved example of Willem van de Velde II's treatments of atmospheric *Calms* (estimate: £600-800,000), *The Wedding Dance* by Pieter Brueghel II, and cabinet pictures by Dirck van Delen, Jan van Goyen and Nicolaes Berchem.

#### GUARDI – A NEW ADDITION TO HIS OEUVRE

*The Grand Canal, Venice, with San Simeone Piccolo* by Francesco Guardi (estimate: £1-1.5 million, *illustrated right*). Previously unrecorded, this exquisite canvas is an important discovery, exemplifying the captivating, atmospheric qualities for which Francesco Guardi is most renowned. It has been in the possession of the present European family for more than a century and is signed prominently on the left. Datable to the 1770s, the picture is a work of Guardi's full maturity, when his mastery of *vedute* painting in Venice was unrivalled. The view is taken from a bustling stretch of the Grand Canal, near to the church of the Scalzi, then the main route into the city from the mainland. Though the present-day scene is somewhat changed, the vibrancy of Guardi's view is immediately recognisable. He renders the tranquil, shimmering beauty of the city with an incomparable touch, a superb addition to the *oeuvre* of one of the greatest of view painters.



#### FOUR MAJOR WORKS BY PIETER BRUEGHEL THE YOUNGER



The sale presents an exceptional selection of four major works by Pieter Brueghel the Younger. *The Kermesse of Saint George* (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million, *illustrated left*) is one of his rarest and most original inventions, entirely independent from any of his father's works and more accomplished than any of his other original compositions. Including this picture, only four securely autograph versions are known. Georges Marlier, the pioneering Brueghel scholar, dated the picture to before 1626-28. He praised it for brilliantly affirming the younger Brueghel's personality, calling it 'one hundred percent "Breughelian"', not only for the dramatic rhythms that pervade it, but also in the stylisation of the figures and in the colour harmonies. While maintaining the continuity of Pieter the Elder's art through these themes, his son Pieter gives rein to his own particular vigour, his own taste for anecdote and his own mastery of his profession that is equal to those of the greatest artists.'



From a European Private Collection, *The Birdtrap* (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated left*) is a superbly preserved example, painted on a single panel, of what is arguably the Brueghel dynasty's most iconic invention, and one of the most enduringly popular images in Western art. *The Birdtrap* is a composition of distinctive poetic beauty: in a hilly landscape, blanketed with snow, a merry band of country folk are skating, curling, playing skittles and hockey on a frozen river, in apparently carefree fashion. Yet there are hidden perils, serving as pertinent reminders of the precariousness and transience of life itself: the fishing hole in the centre

of the frozen river is a sign of the dangers that lurk beneath the light-hearted pleasures of the Flemish winter; and to the right of the composition birds surround the eponymous trap, seemingly oblivious to its imminent threat. In this remarkable work, executed with poise and great delicacy, Brueghel delivers a message of lasting poignancy about the fickleness and uncertainty of life.



The other works include *The Wedding Feast*, which is offered from the property of a European Family (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million, *illustrated left*). The *Wedding Feast* is not only one of the most iconic images in the Brueghel canon, it is one of the most famous banquet scenes in the history of Western art by virtue of the prototype, the masterpiece by Pieter Brueghel the Elder now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The picture offered for sale is one of only four recorded autograph versions by Brueghel the Younger and this will be the first to come to the market since the late 1970s. And the final picture by Brueghel the Younger comes from The Cunningham Collection, *The Outdoor Wedding Dance*, dated 1621 (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million, *illustrated right*).

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**PRESS CONTACT: Hannah Schweiger | +44 (0) 207 389 2964 | [hschweiger@christies.com](mailto:hschweiger@christies.com)**

#### **Notes to Editors:**

##### **About London Art Week**

London Art Week 2015 will take place from 3 to 10 July celebrating the exceptional riches and unparalleled expertise available within the galleries of Mayfair and St. James's. With over 40 leading art galleries and three auction houses, including a selection of international galleries, the event will unveil new discoveries and showcase an impressive array of paintings, drawings, sculpture, and works of art, from antiquity to the 20th century. *For more information contact Matthew Paton/ [info@patonarts.com](mailto:info@patonarts.com) / +44 (0)7711 112425*

##### **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion).

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, New Delhi, Mumbai and Dubai.

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*