

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

THINKING ITALIAN EVENING AUCTION

4 OCTOBER 2019



Alberto Burri, *Sacco* (1953, estimate: £3,000,000-5,000,000)

London – Christie's [Thinking Italian Evening Auction](#) will take place during Frieze Week on 4 October 2019 and directly follows the *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*. The auction will be led by Alberto Burri's *Sacco* (1953, estimate: £3,000,000-5,000,000), a rare, early example of the artist's famed *Sacchi*, the iconic series that he began in 1950 and by an early steel work by Lucio Fontana that encapsulates the artist's exploration of space, *Concetto spaziale* (1954, Estimate on Request). 'Art for Future, Selected Works from the UniCredit Group' will be presented across both evening auctions with Enrico Castellani and Giuseppe Gallo starring in *Thinking Italian*. Mario Schifano's oeuvre during the

1960s was defined by the artist's experimentation as he sought to carve out his indefatigable style. This decade of his career is represented by *Non misterioso* ('Not mysterious') (1961, estimate: £300,000-500,000) and *Paesaggio anemico III* (1965, estimate: £350,000-500,000). There will be 33 works included in *Thinking Italian*, which will all be on view in London from 27 September to 4 October 2019.

Mariolina Bassetti, Chairman, Post-War and Contemporary Art, Continental Europe stated: "*We are thrilled to present the third edition of Thinking Italian, after 12 years of The Italian Sale, our international series of sales that focus on Italian Masterpieces throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Artists in Italy pushed the boundaries of representation and continued to pioneer new techniques and styles, something that had far reaching impact throughout the international art scene. Showcasing these works during London's Frieze Week provides a truly global platform, and we are honoured to be the only auction house with a sale dedicated to Italian art that provides this focus.*"

Alberto Burri

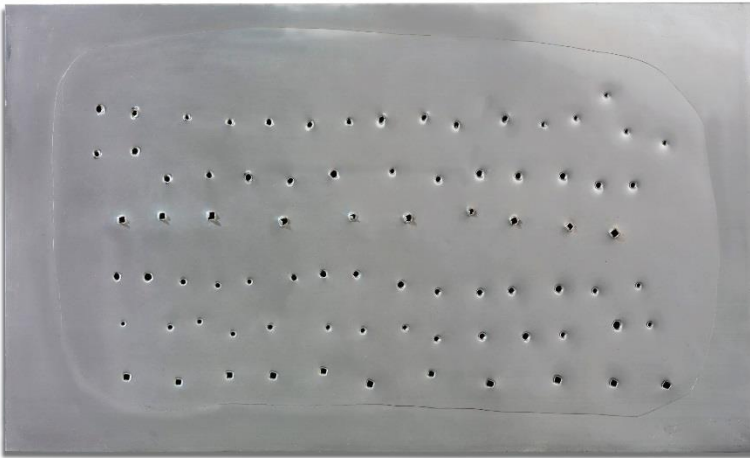
At once otherworldly and yet insistently earthbound, Alberto Burri's *Sacco* comprises a ground-breaking combination of burlap sacking and pigment. The painting is one of the first to include gold leaf in its composition; this opulent material, redolent with symbolic meaning, creates a rich visual contrast with the textured sacking. Held in the legendary collection of cosmetics magnate, Helena Rubinstein, the work was included in her international 1953 exhibition, *Twenty Imaginary Views of the American Scene by Twenty Young Italian Artists*. She asked artists to share what America represented to them and Burri titled the work *Jazz* for the exhibition. *Sacco* can therefore be seen to embody the artist's impression of America in the years immediately following the war, offering a fascinating and rarely seen glimpse into the artist's mind in his seminal early years as an artist.

[Art for Future | Selected Works from the UniCredit Group](#)

UniCredit has appointed Christie's to manage the sale of its artworks from Austria, Germany and Italy. The proceeds will be primarily used to support the further roll-out of the group's Social Impact Banking initiatives. The remaining balance will be dedicated to other relevant projects, including the support of young artists. The artworks will be offered at various Christie's international salerooms across a range of marquee week sales in 2019 and 2020, with the first pieces being auctioned in London on 4 and 5 October as part of the *Post-War & Contemporary Evening* and *Day Auctions* alongside *Thinking Italian*, taking place during Frieze Week.

A highlight of the UniCredit group offered in *Thinking Italian* is Enrico Castellani's *Superficie bianca* (1989, estimate: £250,000-350,000). Conceived as a meditation on the play of light and shadow, between positive and negative depth, it is an elegant example of the continuing evolution of the artist's pictorial practice through the 1980s. Constructed using the innovative technique which had dominated Castellani's oeuvre for almost three decades, the empty monochrome surface of the canvas is transformed by the addition of a carefully arranged series of nails that alternately push against and punctuate the material, generating a complex pattern of peaks and troughs that catch and absorb the light that falls on its surface. In this treatment of the canvas, Castellani sought to subvert the traditional illusory quality of the painted picture, instead creating an autonomous, seemingly authorless composition, devoid of narrative, mimesis and the gestural mark of the author. This is presented alongside *Untitled* by Giuseppe Gallo (2002, estimate: £25,000-35,000). Gallo's work is characterised by the artist's desire to demonstrate the relationship between nature and art.

Lucio Fontana



A dazzling, cosmic vision of light and movement, Lucio Fontana's *Concetto spaziale* (illustrated left) is among the earliest metal *buchi* of this kind, a rare and important work that encapsulates the spirit of discovery and restless exploration that defines the artist's ground-breaking career. Here, the luminous steel surface is punctured with rows of the artist's signature holes or *buchi* that follow a loosely horizontal formation, all enclosed

by a mysterious single line incised into the ever-changing reflective surface. Traversing almost the entire length of the canvas, the elegant, irrevocable cut of *Concetto spaziale, Attesa* (1964, estimate: £700,000-1,000,000) offers a wealth of visual interpretations. Revealing a slim sliver of darkness, the incision provides a portal to another realm, an unknowable, indefinite and perhaps infinite spatial domain, a fourth dimension. Both violent and peaceful, destructive and creative, literal and conceptual this gesture saw Lucio Fontana achieve his artistic aims.

Mario Schifano

Monumental and immersive, *Non misterioso* ('Not mysterious') is one of Mario Schifano's *Monocromi*, the breakthrough series that not only established his reputation as one of the most important artists of 1960s Italy, but also helped redefine the role of painting in the post-war era. With this series, Schifano used industrial materials – enamel paint and parcel paper – to create large-scale abstract works with a vital, impulsive speed, leaving visible the drips, brushwork and marks of their creation. Constructed with distinct planes of boldly flattened colour, *Paesaggio anemico III* (illustrated right) is a large and quintessential example



of the so-called *Paesaggi anemici* or 'Anaemic landscapes' that he pioneered in the mid-1960s. Painted across two canvases, Schifano has deconstructed a depiction of the landscape, distilling the scene into three flattened bands of colour, which are interspersed with geometric forms.

Giorgio Morandi



Giorgio Morandi's *Natura morta* (1946, estimate: £400,000-600,000, *illustrated left*) encapsulates the artist's ability at transforming a group of quotidian objects and vessels into a near-abstract composition of luminous colour and floating form. With rich, luxurious strokes of paint, Morandi has depicted four pieces – the small striped ball in the foreground one of his favourite protagonists – upon a pale table top, positioning them at eye level so that we the

viewer are engaged in an intimate dialogue with these everyday objects.

The [Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Auction](#), taking place on 5 October 2019, will feature a dedicated section to *Thinking Italian*. These works will be shown alongside the *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction* from 27 September to 4 October 2019.

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Notes to Editors

To complement Christie's *Thinking Italian Evening Auction* and *Thinking Italian Design* sales, Christie's Education is pleased to offer a course titled [An Introduction to Italian Modern Art and Design](#) taking place on 3-4 October. This two-day programme discusses how Italy became a leading influence on the post-war scene and reveals the iconic objects and the artists and designers behind them, including Gio Ponti, Carlo Mollino and Ettore Sottsass. An essential part of this course is a handling session with Christie's specialists, as well as with a curator at the V&A Museum.

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had auction sales in the first half of 2019 that totalled £2.2 billion / \$2.8 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie's offers around 350 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.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

**Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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