

CHRISTIE'S

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The Spectacle of Prints Christie's Print Sales, December 2014



London – Christie's is pleased to announce the sale of *Old Master Prints*, to take place on Wednesday, 3 December at King Street. Comprising 117 lots, the sale offers a remarkable array of rare works by the most acclaimed masters of printmaking, including Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt van Rijn, Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Francisco de Goya. In *Prints & Multiples* on Thursday, 4 December 2014, Christie's South Kensington will present important lithographs by the British war artists Paul Nash and Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson, as well as a great collection of linocuts by the artists of the Grosvenor School: Sybil Andrews, Claude Flight, Cyril Power, Ethel Spowers, Lill Tschudi and others. The two auctions provide opportunities for both new and established collectors to acquire important works by some of the most celebrated artists of their times, with estimates ranging from £500 to £300,000.

Exemplifying the quality of prints to be offered in the *Old Master Prints* sale is Rembrandt's *The presentation in the temple in the dark manner*, circa 1654 (estimate: £100,000 -150,000, *illustrated right*). This exquisite and extremely rare etching, from the important collections of Marsden Perry and Otto Gerstenberg, depicts the presentation of the Christ child in the temple, as related in the Gospel of Luke (2:22-39). It was a favoured subject of the artist: in the course of his career he created five different variations on the theme, three etchings and two paintings (Hamburger Kunsthalle and National Museum, Stockholm). In the present late etching Rembrandt diverted from convention by focusing almost entirely on



Simeon and the priest. Bright highlights illuminate the figures of these two old men in the twilight of the temple, while the Child's head is surrounded by a pale halo and Mary and Joseph almost disappear in the deep shadows to the left edge of the composition. The group of Simeon, the priest and the Child is further emphasised by the temple guardian towering above them. With the light flickering on his opulent garments, headgear and staff, he is arguably one of the most grandiose figures in all of Rembrandt's printed oeuvre.



Another example of dazzling chiaroscuro effects is Prince Rupert of the Rhine's large mezzotint *The Great Executioner with the head of Saint John the Baptist* of 1658 (estimate: £100,000–150,000, *illustrated left*), one of the great oddities in the history of printmaking. As a royal prince – he was born in 1619 in Prague to Elizabeth Stuart, the eldest daughter of James I of England, and Frederick V, Elector Palatine - Rupert was an unlikely artist and printmaker. A soldier for most of his life, he was however also the first great master of the mezzotint method. *The Great Executioner* is his stunning first attempt in the technique on a grand scale. Impressions of this print are of utmost rarity and none have been offered at auction for decades. The present fine impression is in impeccable condition and comes with a historical provenance: it is signed on the reverse by the famous Paris print dealer Pierre Mariette and dated 1664.

A broad selection of other rare and unusual works demonstrates the variety of the *Old Master Prints* category, ranging from the monumental and virtuoso *Feast of the Gods* by Diana Mantuana, *circa* 1575 (estimate: £15,000–25,000), one of the first female engravers and holders of a papal privilege; to a group of exceptionally fine *Views of Rome* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi; and a beautiful, early set of William Blake's *Book of Job*, 1823-25 (estimate: £30,000–50,000).

Highlights of the sale are two outstanding sets of prints by Francisco de Goya: *La Tauromaquia*, a series of 33 etchings with aquatint, completed in 1816 (estimate: £250,000-350,000, *one illustrated right*); and four lithographs known as *The Bulls of Bordeaux* of 1825 (estimate: £300,000-500,000, *one illustrated on page 1*). With *La Tauromaquia* Goya perfected his command of the aquatint technique to create a fascinating visual account of the history of the bullfight, from rural hunts to a professional spectacle in the arena. Towards the end of his life, he once more turned to the theme of

the bullfight. Never ceasing to experiment, this time he turned to lithography, a technique invented some twenty years earlier in Germany. Mainly used for commercial printing, Goya was one of the first artists to realise the true potential of the new technique: by drawing with a crayon directly onto the lithographic stone, composing the image and creating the printing matrix had become one single process. Without further complication, lithography allowed Goya to create lines and surfaces of infinite variety. Nowhere in Goya's printed oeuvre is his virtuoso draughtsmanship as apparent as in *The Bulls of Bordeaux* – his ability to create scenes bursting with life, movement and emotion, out of near-abstract marks of ink on blank paper.



Although amongst the earliest works of art in the medium, in their immediacy, spontaneity and understanding of the technique, *The Bulls of Bordeaux* are often considered the greatest lithographs ever made.

South Kensington

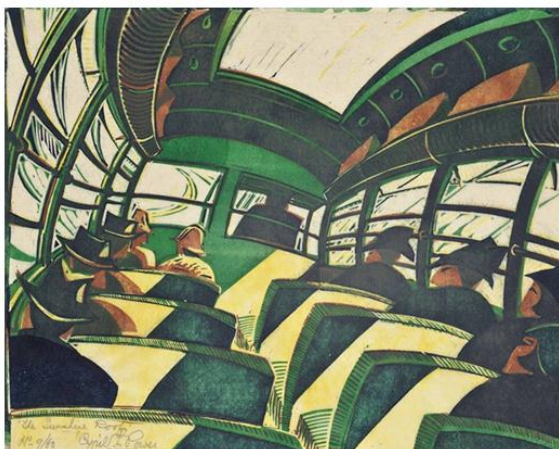
The South Kensington sale of *Prints & Multiples* on 4 December 2014 comprises almost 300 lots, and showcases a diverse range of artists and styles. Marking the centenary anniversary of World War I, the sale includes some of the most powerful representations of the battlefield, by Paul Nash and Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson. Their prints of the Western Front

helped to define our vision of the First World War and established both as great British artists. Nash's work titled *A Shell*

Bursting, Passchendaele (estimate: £40,000-60,000, *illustrated above*) denotes the devastating forces of modern warfare in an expressive and shocking way. By contrast, Nevinson portrays the bleakness and monotony of war and military life: in the rare lithograph *After a Push*, 1918 (estimate: £20,000-30,000), depicting an endless scene of shell craters and mud; and in *The Road from Arras to Bapaume* (estimate: £35,000-50,000, *illustrated left*), showing an army train travelling through a vast, empty landscape of fallen trees and trenches.



Another, more colourful aspect of the machine age was portrayed in the prints of the *Grosvenor School* artists, of which the sale includes an outstanding private collection. The school was founded in London in the mid-1920s by Claude Flight, who worked exclusively in the medium of linocut. By cutting curving lines and rhythmic patterns into the block and printing them in bold colours, Flight and his fellow 'Vorticists', as they came to be called, sought to create a heightened expression of the pace of city life, of the dynamism of modern transport and architecture. This is perfectly illustrated in Claude Flight's *Speed* (estimate:



£20,000–30,000, *illustrated right*) and Cyril Power's *The Sunshine Roof* (estimate: £25,000-35,000, *illustrated left*). The prints of the *Grosvenor School*, with Sybil Andrews's *Concert Hall* (estimate: £30,000-50,000, *illustrated on page one*) and the Australian Ethel Spowers's *The Gust of Wind* (estimate: £25,000-35,000) as prime examples, capture the spirit and the anxiety of a rapidly changing world in the 1920s to 1930s. Alongside these two exceptional collections of Modern British printmaking, the sale includes a dedicated section of Old Master Prints as well as works by Pablo Picasso, Joan Mirò, Marc Chagall, Bridget Riley, Victor Pasmore, Damien Hirst and many others.

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NOTES TO THE EDITORS:

PUBLIC EXHIBITION:

Friday, 28 December: 9am - 4:30pm
Saturday, 29 December: 10am - 5pm
Sunday, 30 December: 10am - 5pm
Monday, 1 December: 9am - 4:30pm
Tuesday, 2 December: 9am - 3:30pm

PUBLIC EXHIBITION:

Saturday, 29 December: 11am - 5pm
Sunday, 30 December: 11am - 5pm
Monday, 1 December: 9am - 7:30pm
Tuesday, 2 December: 9am - 5pm
Wednesday, 3 December: 9am - 5pm

AUCTION:

Old Master Prints
King Street
Wednesday, 3 December 2014
2pm

AUCTION:

Prints & Multiples
South Kensington
Thursday, 4 December 2014
10:30am & 2pm

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2013 that totaled £2.4 billion/\$3.68 billion. In 2012, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 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 over 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 and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £465.2 million (\$711.8 million) in the first half of 2013, an increase of 13% on the previous year, and for the third successive year represents the highest total for the period in both company and art market history.

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