

CHRISTIE'S

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REALITY AND SURREALITY A TWENTIETH CENTURY DIALOGUE

Christie's Announces Modern, Surrealist & Post-War Works By

MODIGLIANI | MIRÓ | MAGRITTE | DELVAUX | PICASSO | GIACOMETTI | MOORE | FONTANA

From

A DISTINGUISHED EUROPEAN COLLECTION

London, February 2015



London - Christie's is proud to announce an outstanding group of 24 Modern and Surrealist works presenting *Reality and Surreality: A Twentieth Century Dialogue*, which will be auctioned across *The Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* and *Art of the Surreal Evening Sale* on 4 February 2015 in London. Following the recent sale of Francis Bacon's major portrait *Seated Figure (Red Cardinal)* which was sold from the same collection in New York on 12 November for \$45 million/ £28 million, these Modern and Surrealist works are offered along with a small group of six Post-War art works as *Property from A Distinguished European Collection*. Highlighting the flair and vision underpinning the collection, these works present the market with an inspiring, thought provoking and rich journey, showcasing important examples by Modigliani, Miró, Magritte, Delvaux, Picasso, Giacometti, Moore, Fontana and others; the group is led by Joan Miró's *L'oiseau au plumage déployé vole vers l'arbre argenté*, 1953 (estimate: £7-9 million) and Amedeo Modigliani's *Les deux filles*, 1918 (estimate: £6-8 million). The full collection of 31 Modern, Surrealist and Post-War works of art is expected to realise a combined final total in excess of £64 million (\$100 million).

Olivier Camu, Deputy Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's: *"This collection spans the personal collecting journey of a private European collector over almost half a century, dating from the early 60s through to recent years. It has been a privilege to work closely together with him for the last 20 years and it is an honour to now present discerning and sophisticated international buyers with a rare opportunity to acquire exceptional Modern and Surrealist art works alongside important Post-War art from this dynamic collection, which caters perfectly to the taste of both Modern and Post War art collectors. This collector's*

discipline has always been to focus on quality rather than quantity, thus every painting and sculpture in this collection is a 'signature' work for the artist in question and it includes the most important Magritte collection to come to the market since the Harry Torczyner sale at Christie's New York in 1998."



A diverse group of three works by **Joan Miró** points to the breadth of techniques and media that the artist worked in, from oil on canvas and oil on burlap to gouache on black paper. The artist's key themes and subjects ranged from poetry and dreams to music and stars, women and birds; he was an artist who allowed himself to be influenced by a range of things, from music, poetry and hallucinations induced by hunger during his early years in Paris, to patterns made by chance. The group is led by the most valuable of the Modern and Surrealist works from the collection, Miró's masterful *L'oiseau au plumage déployé vole vers l'arbre argenté*, 1953, which is a remarkable example of his artistic developments in the early 1950s (estimate: £7-9 million). Covering a large canvas, the painting combines a wealth of effects, pairing precise, graphic details with expressive effusions of paint. Evoking a fantastical world, populated by curious creatures, *L'Oiseau au plumage déployé vole vers l'arbre argenté* combines the poetry of its title with Miró's enticing visual universe. This work was once part of the celebrated American collection of Edgar Kaufmann Jr.

Two further works by Miró comprise *Untitled (Image)*, 1937, a large gouache on black paper (estimate: £1-1.5 million) and *L'échelle de l'évasion (The Escape Ladder)*, 1939, oil on burlap, which is one of two pivotal works with this title which he executed at this significant period in his career (estimate: £3-5 million, *illustrated right*); this is one of the very last of nine paintings Miró executed on burlap, known as the Varengeville II series. *L'Echelle de l'évasion* is among the most colourful and densely worked pictures in this series and is a work that led him directly to the famous 'Constellations' series.



Les deux filles is a rare double portrait by **Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920)** which is offered at auction for only the second time having previously been in the same family collection for over 90 years (estimate: £6-8 million, *illustrated left*). One of only five recognised double portraits by Modigliani, this beautiful painting is preserved in its original unlined condition. This sale provides the market with a rare opportunity as three of the other four double portraits are in major public collections; The Art Institute of Chicago, The Centres Georges Pompidou, Paris, and The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.. Modigliani used his portraits to provide a visual window into the soul. The present example, which portrays two girls sitting side by side, highlights the contrast of age and life experience of the two sitters. The elder girl also appears in an individual portrait by the artist now in the Kunstmuseum Basel. *Les deux filles* was first acquired by Leopold Zborowski, the artist's dealer, who had financed

Modigliani's lifestyle and paid for his materials in return for all his paintings since 1916. Before 1923 it was acquired by Jonas Netter, one of the greatest collectors of the artist's work during his lifetime, later passing by descent until it was acquired by the present owner at Christie's London in 2009.



Femme de Venise V by **Alberto Giacometti** (1901-1966) was conceived in 1956 and cast in the artist's lifetime (estimate: £6-8 million, *illustrated left*). The present bronze, which exhibits an extraordinarily rich brown and green patina, belongs to the renowned series of sculptures known as the *Femmes de Venise*. The series comprises nine individual but closely related figures cast in bronze, which played a significant role in establishing Giacometti's fame and reputation as the most important sculptor of the Post-War era. They were created in response to a landmark invitation from the French government to exhibit in the main gallery of the state pavillion at the 1956 Venice Biennale; Giacometti also agreed to a major retrospective at the Kunsthalle Bern that would run concurrently. Keen to show only his very latest sculptures, Giacometti decided to create a series of standing nude women, and set to work in early 1956, initiating a rush of sustained and feverish activity that lasted until the end of May. Using a single armature, Giacometti worked and reworked the figures almost daily; his brother Diego making plaster casts, which required only a few hours pause in Alberto's work, whenever he had achieved a result that interested him at that moment.

A total of 8 works by **René Magritte** (1898-1967) - 4 oils on canvas and 4 gouaches on paper – which span his oeuvre and include much of his most iconic imagery, constitute the most extraordinary and extensive collection of works by Magritte to come to the market since the landmark Harry Torczyner sale in 1998, which took place at Christie's New York

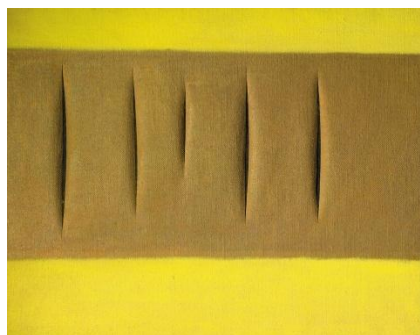
and established new market price levels for the artist. The group is led by the triumphantly eerie *Les compagnons de la peur*, 1942, which centers on the subject of transformation, challenging the realms of possibility and turning the traditions of landscape and portraiture on their head, to present – perched atop a mountain - four owls transforming from bird to plant world, or vice-versa (estimate: £2.7-3.5 million, *illustrated far right*). Another important, large-scale work is *Quand l'heure sonnera*, circa 1964-1965 (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million). *Les muscles célestes* was part of the recent critically acclaimed exhibition co-organised by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Menil Collection, Houston, and The Art Institute of Chicago *Magritte: The Mystery of the Ordinary, 1926–1938* (estimate: £1.5-2 million, *illustrated second left*). This is a fabulous work from 1927 which plays with the concept of space and distance by posing a conundrum, whereby the distant skies transcend accepted boundaries, seeping in to the immediate foreground on a de Chirico-like theater stage. In *Le thérapeute*, a highly poetic gouache executed in 1962, Magritte has subverted the nature of pictures and the concept of the portrait with the captivating absence at the heart of the composition: the torso of the subject is a void through which the blue sky and clouds of a summer's day entices the viewer beyond the twinkling night sky (estimate: £600,000-900,000, *illustrated far left*). Further highlights include *Souvenir de voyage*, a gouache from circa 1961 (estimate: £450,000-650,000, *illustrated second right*).





Painted on 6 March 1937, *Nature morte à la cruche* by **Pablo Picasso** (1881-1973) is both playful and sensual - perhaps alluding to his then lover Marie-Thérèse Walter - with luscious curves and pink undertones, providing an insight into the mind of Picasso during this period (estimate: £800,000-1.2 million, *illustrated left*). Perhaps the most playful of elements is not the deliberately looping brushwork, but instead the picture-within-a-picture, which appears like a swirling drawing with hatching, yet perfectly conveys the impression of another still life with fruit within this painting. Picasso is taking the opportunity to introduce a witty meditation on art and representation within the arena of his own still life.

Coming to the market for the very first time, *Le bout du monde*, 1969, by **Paul Delvaux** (1897-1994) was commissioned directly from the artist by the present owner (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million). A nocturnal mystery complete with sleepwalking virgins, empty train carriages and a foreboding forest by a lake, *Le bout du monde* is a classic late example of Delvaux's unique brand of Surrealism.



Concetto spaziale, Attese (il sole), 1959, by **Lucio Fontana** (1899-1968) is a rare work defined by its dual palette of gold and yellow, articulated in three painted bands (estimate: £1-1.5 million, *illustrated left*). Entitled '*Il Sole*' ('Sun') on the reverse, the work extends the spatial concept of Lucio Fontana's early tagli into a more painterly expression invoking the non-dimensional quality of sunlight – a light too brilliant and intense to be seen by the naked human eye. Evocative of solar eclipse – that unearthly, disquieting phenomenon – Fontana's five perfectly-placed cuts suggest a mystical

opening in the golden rays to the vast infinity of space beyond. This work will be offered in the Post War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale in London on 11 February, with a total of 5 further works by Jean Fautrier, Karel Appel (2), Victor Vasarely and César offered in the Post War & Contemporary Art Day sale on 12 February.

Pre-sale public exhibition dates of select touring highlights from the collection:

Hong Kong: 21-22 November, 2014

London: 21-24 November, 2014

New Delhi: 27-30 November, 2014

Mumbai: 9-11 December, 2014

Taipei: 19-20 January, 2015

London - full pre-sale exhibition: 30 January – 4 February, 2015