

# CHRISTIE'S

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## PRE-RAPHAELITE STUNNERS AT CHRISTIE'S IN JUNE

Works by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Poynter and Leighton



**London** – This summer, Christie's London presents a stellar collection of Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian drawings and paintings – one of the very best collections in private hands with museum-quality works, some of which have not been seen for decades. Offered as part of the *Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite & British Impressionist Art* sale on 16 June 2015, this beautiful collection features 45 works and is expected to realise in the region of £2 million. Leading the collection is one of eight works by **Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)**, *Beatrice: A Portrait of Jane Morris* (estimate: £700,000-£1 million, *illustrated above left*). The collection presents the opportunity for both established and new collectors alike to acquire works at a wide range of price points with estimates ranging from £1,000 to £700,000.

Harriet Drummond, International Head of British Drawings & Watercolours, Christie's: "*Christie's is delighted to be handling this important and breath-takingly beautiful collection of paintings and drawings brought together by a couple of anglophile art lovers, who combined their passion for the aesthetic of the Victorian Period with the discerning eye of the connoisseur collector. It is the art of this Victorian era celebrating beauty through its depiction of largely female figures, from the monumentality of 'Desdemona' to the intimacy of 'Fanny Cornforth, asleep on a chaise-longue' that so strongly influenced our idea of beauty today.*"

With the recent re-emergence of interest in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, led by Tate's *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* exhibition in 2012, this collection represents many of the 'Stunners' who inspired their paintings and made their work truly 'romantic', including eight beguiling works by Rossetti. The fine selection of works on paper is led by Rossetti's impressive life-size study for the protagonist in *Desdemona's Death Song* (estimate: £500,000-

800,000, *illustrated above right*). Modelled by Alexa Wilding, the composition is based on Shakespeare's *Othello*, and shows the hauntingly beautiful Desdemona preparing for bed on the fatal night she is murdered by her estranged husband. These women informed the paintings they modelled for and introduced a new concept of female beauty to the Victorian public. It is the art of this period – startling realism, intimacy and feminine beauty – that indelibly defines our images of nineteenth-century England, and transformed British art forever.

A 'Stunner' who proved irresistible to Rossetti, and dominated the artist's imagination in the early and mid-1860s, was Fanny Cornforth (1835-1906). After an exhausting day of modelling, *Fanny Cornforth, asleep on a chaise-longue* shows her resting between sittings and provides an insight into Rossetti's domestic arrangements in Chelsea, where Fanny had been installed as his housekeeper (estimate: £120,000-180,000, *illustrated right*). This captivating drawing has formed part of the world's most renowned collections, given by Rossetti to his friend, patron and fellow artist G.P. Boyce in 1862, it has since belonged to four well-known connoisseurs: Herbert Horne, Edward Marsh, Sir Brinsley Ford, and the novelist Sir Hugh Walpole.



It is clear that the two collectors have focused on drawings, most of which exemplify the romance, imagination, and soul of the Pre-Raphaelites, their contemporaries and the artists they influenced. Alongside the seven drawings by Rossetti himself, are three by **Edward Burne-Jones**, four by **Simeon Solomon**, two by **Frederick Sandys**, and an example by **Charles Fairfax Murray**, **Evelyn De Morgan** and **Emma Sandys**. *Proud Maisie* by Sandys is one of the artist's most popular subjects and this present composition is charged with sexual tension and raw emotion (estimate: £50,000-70,000 *illustrated left*). The model for *Proud Maisie* was Mary Emma Jones, an actress who had ten children with Sandys and was his principal muse, inspiring countless works which celebrate her distinctive profile and luxuriant tresses.

Three of the Pre-Raphaelites' contemporaries who celebrated classicism – **Frederic Leighton**, **E.J. Poynter**, and **William Blake Richmond** – are also present. Poynter's painting of *Judith* (estimate: £80,000-120,000, *illustrated right*) depicts the story when the Hebrew heroine saves her people by seducing and beheading Holofernes. Exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1881 and still in the original tabernacle frame, it is a magnificent study of character and intent, this painting has not been on the market for three decades.



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**PUBLIC EXHIBITION:**

Friday, 12 June 2015: 9:00am – 4:30pm  
Saturday, 13 June 2015: 9:00am – 5:00pm  
Sunday, 14 June 2015: 9:00am – 5:00pm  
Monday, 15 June 2015: 9:00am – 4:30pm  
Tuesday, 16 June 2015: 9:00am – 12:00pm

**AUCTION:**

*Victorian & British Impressionist Art*  
Tuesday, 16 June 2015  
2:30pm

**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) in 2014, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

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*\*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.*

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