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Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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## THE VINCENT FERGUSON COLLECTION OF IRISH ART AT CHRISTIE'S SOUTH KENSINGTON IN MAY 2009



### The Vincent Ferguson Collection

Friday, 8 May at 2.00 pm

**South Kensington** - Christie's are pleased to announce the sale of **The Vincent Ferguson Collection** on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Vincent Ferguson (1932 - 2007) was both a successful businessman and an art collector with the eye of a true connoisseur; he was held in the highest regard by Irish institutions and the artists themselves, with whom he was close friends. Ferguson had an unquenchable passion and belief in the importance and creativity of 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary Irish artists and the beauty of their works. He is remembered with great fondness by all who knew him personally and regarded as inspirational by all that knew of him. The paintings and sculptures featured in Christie's auction occupied a special place in Ferguson's heart; they were living, breathing parts of his Sligo family home, which brought joy to each day. Comprising over 140 lots, this very personal collection provides a celebration of Irish artists including Basil Blackshaw, H.R.H.A. (b.1932), Rowan Gillespie (b.1953), Terence P. Flanagan, R.H.A., R.U.A. (b. 1929), Charlie Brady, H.R.H.A. (1926-1997) and Brian Maguire (b. 1951) and many others (*please see Notes to Editors for full list*). With estimates ranging from £800 to £80,000, highlights include Basil Blackshaw's *Man and Dog*, date, (estimate: £60,000-80,000) and Blackshaw's important *Traveller Series* (each with an estimate of £20,000 to £30,000).

**Bernard Williams, International Director of Irish Art at Christie's:** *"Christie's are privileged to have been entrusted with the sale of Vincent Ferguson's stellar collection. The quality of the art works, individually and as a group, is a testament to the importance of buying with the heart. This auction provides the opportunity for both established and new collectors to acquire 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary Irish art treasures, both big and small, which come fresh to the market for the first time in many years and in some cases for the first time ever. Vincent was close friends with the artists whose work he collected and supported, and many of the works trace the evolution of Irish art during the period."*

The former director of Atlantic Resources Ltd and Fitzwilton plc, Vincent Ferguson went on to be director of Independent News and Media plc. and upon his retirement returned with his wife, Noeleen, to their beloved Sligo to continue their passion: collecting art. The Ferguson's generously shared the joy of their art collection, donating 35 works by artists such as Basil Blackshaw, Michael Mulcahy, Barrie Cooke and Patrick Hall, all of whom are represented in the sale on 8th May, to the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1997. The donated works subsequently featured in exhibitions at IMMA and throughout

Ireland as part of the Museum's National Programme. Four further works were donated to IMMA by the family in Vincent's memory, in 2008.

14 paintings by the distinguished Irish artist Basil Blackshaw are amongst the highlights from Vincent Ferguson's collection to be offered at Christie's. Born in Glengormley, Co Antrim, Blackshaw studied at Belfast College of Art and was awarded a scholarship by the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) in 1951 to study in Paris. Subsequently, he has exhibited in Ireland, America and Paris and was elected as an associate of the Royal Ulster Academy of the Arts in 1977, and elected an Academician in 1981.



Celebrated initially for his sophisticated traditional style, Blackshaw is now most highly regarded for his loose, gestural works, which are often figurative and explore Irish themes such as travellers and rural landscapes. Ferguson surrounded himself with Blackshaw's works. He hung *Dodie's Garden* (estimate: £40,000-60,000) by his favourite chair, *illustrated left*, at his home 'Cois na Sidhe' in Rosse's Point, Sligo; the *Traveller Series* alongside family photographs and the piano, *illustrated page one centre*, and Blackshaw's *Man and Dog* (estimate: £60,000-80,000) on the adjacent wall. The other works by Blackshaw include *Nude before a window, day* (estimate: £50,000-80,000); *Nude before a window, night* (estimate: £50,000-80,000); *Taz* (the Fergusons' dog) (estimate: £6,000-8,000) *illustrated below top left*; *Cherry Blossom* (estimate: £15,000-20,000) *illustrated below far right*; *Yellow Birds* (estimate: £20,000-30,000); *The Little House I* (estimate: £3,000-5,000) and *The Little House II* (estimate: £3,000-5,000).

Terence P. Flanagan is represented by seven works, led by an evocative watercolour, *Castle Coole* (estimate: £18,000-25,000) *illustrated page one top left*, which hung in the dining room at Sligo and *Ben Bulbin* (estimate £10,000 - 15,000). The other five Flanagan works are understated, yet arresting landscapes in watercolour. Brian Maguire's painting *The Kid's Okay* (estimate: £10,000-15,000) *illustrated right, in the centre* and Enzo Plazzotta's kneeling nude bronze (estimate: £6,000-8,000) *illustrated right, in the bottom right corner*, are nestled amongst other family treasures indoors. Outside, in the garden of Sligo, Nicola Godden's sculptures, which are offered for sale, were positioned fluidly around the garden, *illustrated page one top right*. Further key works featured include four sculptures by Rowan Gillespie led by a bronze of W.B Yeats, 1986 (estimate: £8,000-12,000) and six oils by Charlie Brady, including *The Sandwich* (estimate: £6,000-8,000).

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Images available on request

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

#### **Sale dates:**

#### **Vincent Ferguson Collection:**

Friday, 8 May at 2.00 pm at Christie's South Kensington, Old Brompton Road, London, SW3 3LD

#### **The Irish Sale: (full details to follow)**

Friday, 8 May at 10.30am at Christie's King Street, 8 King Street, St. James', London, SW1Y 6QT

#### **Public Viewing dates**

Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road, London, SW3 3LD: between 5 May and 7 May 2009

#### **Other artists to be offered as part of the Vincent Ferguson Collection are:**

Felim Egan, Ross Wilson, Elizabeth Magill, Anya Waterworth (Basil Blackshaw's daughter), Robert Lynn, Barrie Cooke, JB Yeats, Carol Graham, Michael Cullen, Michael Flaherty, Dorothy Cross, Clement McAleer, David Crone, Gwen O'Dowd, Eithne Jordan, Sybille Ungers, Guggi, Jacinta Feeney, Patrick Graham, Gilbert Swinburghe, Patrick Hall, Eileen McCarthy, Cecily Brennan, Jackie Stanley, Tim Goulding, Roy Johnston, Philip French, Peter Collis, Brian Henderson, Charlie Whisker, Anita Shelbourne, Richard Ward, Pete Sluis, Zdzislaw Ruskowski, Cormac O'Leary, Noel Sheridan, John Jobson, Sean Shanahan, Nancy Wynne-Jones, Rosaleen Davey,

Tom Carr, Mary Fitzgerald, Michael O'Dea, Stephen McKenna, Enzo Plazzotta, Henry Robertson Craig and Bernard Dunstan.