

For Immediate Release

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**A VAN GOGH MASTERPIECE:
CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK TO OFFER *L'ARLESIENNE, MADAME GINOUX***

Impressionist and Modern Art

May 2, 2006



New York – On May 2, Christie's New York will lead the impressionist and modern art collecting world to new heights when Van Gogh's magnificent painting *L'Arlesienne, Madame Ginoux*, will be offered during the Impressionist and Modern Art evening sale at Rockefeller Center. From the Bakwin Family Collection, *L'Arlesienne* is expected to realize in excess of \$40 million, and to take a key position in the impressive group of paintings by Van Gogh that have been sold by Christie's in New York and London over the years.

L'Arlesienne is the most important painting from a series of five oils that Van Gogh executed in February 1890 as an homage to his good friend and collaborator Paul Gauguin, and the only painting of the series which was intended specifically for Gauguin himself.

Van Gogh painted this masterwork during a period of deep nostalgia in his life when the intense collaboration with Gauguin had abruptly ended and the artist was institutionalized in the asylum of St.-Paul-de-Mausole in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. Through his work on the *Arlésienne* series, Van Gogh revived a less isolated existence than the one which he was living in Saint-Rémy and he perceived the creation of these paintings as a symbolical connection to Gauguin with whom he was still corresponding.

Madame Marie Ginoux, the subject of the present work, was proprietress of the Café de la Gare on place Lamartine, an establishment frequented by both Van Gogh and Gauguin during their time in Arles. Both artists regularly used local residents as models and in November 1888, they persuaded Marie Ginoux to pose for a series of sketches. In the present depiction of Madame Ginoux, where she is shown against a floral background and wearing a pink and white dress with a green bodice, Van Gogh diverted from his own, somewhat more expressive sketch and adopted a treatment that was closer in style to that of Gauguin's original sketch from the initial sitting. The painting - executed in a soft palette - possesses an overt femininity. Madame Ginoux appears refined and slightly bemused, her eyes are lucid and even the books she is reading—Charles Dickens' *Christmas Stories* and what is believed to be Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—seem to appeal to feminine sensibilities.

On 17 June 1890, van Gogh wrote of the present work to Gauguin, "...it gives me enormous pleasure when you say the Arlésienne's portrait, which was based strictly on your drawing, is to your liking. I tried to be respectfully faithful to your drawing, while nevertheless taking the liberty of interpreting through the medium of color the sober character and the style of the drawing in question. It is a synthesis of the Arlésiennes, if you like; as syntheses of the Arlésiennes are rare, take this as a work belonging to you and me as a summary of our months of work together."

Auction: Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale May 2 at 7 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center April 28 – May 2

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Images available on request

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More information about Christie's sale of *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening* sale can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.