

Press Release

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**CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK SPRING IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN
ART EVENING SALE TO OFFER EXCEPTIONAL MASTERWORKS
THAT SPAN THE ENTIRE COLLECTING CATEGORY**

Signature Monet Paintings From His Early and Late Periods

The Strongest Group Of Alberto Giacometti Works To Appear At Auction Since 1987

Expressionist Explorations In Color And Form From 20th Century Masters



**Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale
May 6, 2008**

New York – Christie's New York Spring 2008 *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* takes place on May 6 and is a well-edited and focused 58-lot auction that features prime examples from every movement of the category. From High Impressionist 1870s masterworks to post-war paintings and

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sculpture, the sale's theme is one of over-arching quality, with a rich selection of works from the leading artists of the era.

Expected to realize between \$287 and \$405 million, the auction has the third highest pre-sale estimate in the category's history, and includes great painterly achievements by Claude Monet, Paul Signac, Kees Van Dongen and Henri Matisse – along with a remarkable selection of sculpture, with a highly important group of works by Alberto Giacometti, as well as masterpieces by Auguste Rodin and Henry Moore.



Two Claude Monet Masterpieces

The sale includes three works by the quintessential Impressionist master, including *Le Pont du chemin de fer à Argenteuil*, one of the greatest Impressionist pictures left in private hands. Painted in 1873, *Le Pont du chemin de fer à Argenteuil* is a rare and luminous masterpiece of high Impressionist style and a hugely significant work in Monet's oeuvre (estimate

on request). The picture may break the world auction record for the most well-known and sought-after Impressionist painter (**separate press release available on request**).

Le Pont du chemin de fer à Argenteuil contains all the trademark themes of Monet's early work of the 1870s. The auction also features *Nymphéas*, painted in 1908, a canvas that dates to Monet's most creative and productive period of his late career. During the last two decades of his life, Monet devoted himself almost single-mindedly to depicting his water garden at Giverny and produced an astonishingly complex series of around two hundred canvases that constitute some of the most innovative and influential works of his entire oeuvre. This canvas was featured in the inaugural exhibition of the series at the Galerie Durand-Ruel in 1909, an exhibition that received an overwhelmingly positive critical response, with one critic declaring the series a supreme achievement, ranked alongside Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and Beethoven's last string quartets (estimate: \$10,000,000-15,000,000).



A Superlative Giacometti Group

The most impressive group of Giacometti sculpture and paintings to appear at auction since Christie's sale of the Lambert Collection in 1987 form a central thread in the Spring sale. Featuring two spectacular bronzes, two important and unique plasters and one painting, the works are exceptional in quality and rarity, and will offer collectors an unrivalled opportunity to source the very best from the celebrated modern master this Spring. The group is led by the monumental nine-foot high bronze *Grande femme debout II*, 1959/60 (estimate on request) and the multiple-figure work *La Place II*, 1948/49 (estimate on request), with both marked no.1 from their respective editions.



The series of four tall standing women that Giacometti executed in 1960, each titled *Grande femme debout* with numbers I to IV, were the largest sculptures he ever made, with the present work the tallest of all. The sculptures were executed in response to a commission for the new Chase Manhattan Bank headquarters and public plaza in New York which – had he completed it – would have certainly been the crowning achievement of his career and his most famous public work.

Giacometti initially worked on the project with enthusiasm, and by April 1960 had completed plaster models of these four standing women, along with two walking men and two large heads, and had the majority cast in bronze. However, for logistic and artistic reasons, Giacometti finally gave up the commission, but the bronzes that remained were a remarkable achievement.

Giacometti created two versions of *La Place* in 1948, and had them cast the following year. The initial version was his very first multi-figure postwar sculpture and the casts of it were among the first of his works to enter public collections. In both versions, which are largely similar in composition, Giacometti has positioned four walking men and a solitary standing woman on a broad and thick platform. Conceived and created after his hugely successful Pierre Matisse Gallery solo exhibition in New York in 1948, these group sculptures were an unavoidable outgrowth from the single figures of women and men he had previously worked on, a necessary step in avoiding undue repetition. For all the interpretations of his work with the existential zeitgeist and the solitary figure, Giacometti's *La Place* series demonstrates his deep interest in



interconnectivity. The artist himself said, “I believe that all life is the opposite of solitude, for life consists of a fabric of relations with others...”



Elsewhere in the Giacometti selection, *Homme (Apollon)*, 1929 is a unique plaster model that followed on from a series of plaque-like works executed in 1928/29. One of the works that attracted the attention of the Surrealists in the early 1930s when they were keen to draw him into their camp, the plaster was included in Giacometti's legendary 1948 New York exhibition at Pierre Matisse's gallery (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000).

Modernist Explorers of Color and Form

Last season in New York, Christie's set a new world auction record of \$33.6 million for one of the leading modernist explorers of the expressive power of color and form, Henri Matisse. In this sale, an important portrait from his Nice period, *Portrait au manteau bleu*, will be offered at auction for the very first time (estimate on request). He painted this Fauve-inspired tour-de-force of expressive color and lyrical line in 1935, and was his first major portrait of Lydia Delectorskaya, the young Russian woman who had recently become his favorite model. A contemporary depiction of a well-to-do and absolutely modern woman, Matisse imbues the sitter with an air of seriousness, individuality and personal dignity, qualities that the painter has underscored in his choice of deep-toned color relations.



An expression of sensibility over sensuality, of reality over reverie, the forms in the sitter's figure are absolutely flat, with the suggestion of depth created purely by zoned color contrasts.



An over-size masterwork by another leading Fauve painter, Kees Van Dongen, features in the sale, *Anita en almée*, painted toward the end of the movement's short but influential existence (estimate: \$12,000,000-16,000,000). More than any other painter working in Paris at that time, Van Dongen aimed first and foremost to generate visceral erotic excitement. His works confront, provoke and titillate, and he ensured his sensational subjects were the very substance of his approach to modernism with his violent use of color. This volatile union of strident color and vigorously rendered painterly forms was used to depict the Parisian demi-monde. This work depicts Anita la Bohémienne, a regular sitter and dancer, and represents the culmination of this period of experimentation. Tapping into the famously sensual but entirely

respectable manner of French Orientalist painting, Van Dongen lifts this portrayal onto a more sophisticated plane, and it is without doubt the most consciously beautiful and alluring version from this period. He clearly intended it as a defining masterwork, a fully-fledged statement of his aims and manner.

Paul Signac, a leader of the Neo-Impressionist cause and its founding principles of divided color and scientific method in the late 19th century, helped lay the groundwork for the Fauves and the further exploration of color and form. His work *La Corne d'or* from 1907 bridges both his earlier scientific, theoretical color exploration, along with his more mature, liberal and vibrant approach to its use and application (estimate: \$5,000,000-7,000,000). He befriended the Fauves in 1903/04, and his mature, independent style developed, with



wider, looser brushstrokes, along with a more variegated, decorative patterning that begin to breakdown form and offer a point of origin for abstraction. The present work is a consummate example from this period, and creates a brightly harmonious seascape out of Oriental color and Mediterranean light, casting an incandescent, romantic glow over Constantinople harbor.

Other Sculpture Highlights



Beyond the Giacometti grouping, the sale includes a particularly strong sculpture section, including *Eve, grand modèle-version sans rocher* by Auguste Rodin (estimate: \$9,000,000-12,000,000), and *Family Group*, 1946 by Henry Moore (estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000).

Rodin initially conceived Eve to accompany the figure of Adam as a pair of flanking sculptures for the *Gates of Hell*, and the bronze marks one of the great turning points in modern sculpture. Its rough and freely worked surface is more like that of a wax or plaster model than a Salon bronze, and this divergence from convention to a more expressive conception of surface texture and material finish is the defining characteristic of Rodin's later, revolutionary style. This cast was François Rudier's *première épreuve* of the work, and was purchased in 1897 by collector Auguste Pellerin, after his unsuccessful bid for Rodin's scandalous *Balzac* sculpture. It

exemplifies Rodin's mastery as a narrative artist, with Eve turning in upon herself protecting her newly vulnerable body, revealing her sin and fall from grace. This cast remained in the Pellerin Collection for more than a century and when it last appeared on the market, it established a world auction record for the artist.

Moore, one of the leaders of British 20th century modern sculpture, executed this *Family Group* the year his first and only child, Mary, was born (estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000). The Second World War had ended the year before, and with the coming of peace and the arrival of a child after sixteen years of marriage, Moore was inspired to return to an earlier recurrent motif of mother and child that allowed him to create this modern symbol for the enduring value of the familial bond.



Auction: Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale
Viewing: Christie's, 20 Rockefeller Plaza

May 6, 2008
May 2-6

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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