

Contact : Capucine Milliot  
Carine Decroi

+331 40 76 84 08  
+331 40 76 85 88

cmilliot@christies.com  
cdecroi@christies.com

## TÊTE DE CARYARIDE - AMEDEO MODIGLIANI

COLLECTION GASTON LEVY

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**Paris** – The Impressionist and Modern Art department is honored to present an extremely rare *Tête*, dated 1910-12, by Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920). Estimated 4-6 million euros, this 65 cm limestone head is one of the last in private hands, and has never been offered on the market.



While Amedeo Modigliani is certainly considered to be primarily a painter, it was sculpture that the artist considered his true calling; his twenty-seven known sculptures represent some of the purest statements of his aesthetic intent, and number among the undisputed masterpieces of his career. So although poor health and financial difficulties forced the artist to abandon stone-carving in the last five years of his life, the distinctive character of his sculpted works – their elongated proportions, architectonic elegance, and enigmatic aloofness – remained crucial to the development of his later, trademark painting style.

The present work is an outstanding example of Modigliani's achievement in three-dimensions. Among the most highly finished and more beautiful of his extant sculptures, *Tête* possesses the paradoxical combination of structural clarity and emotional inscrutability that is character of the artist's finest work. Pared-down to a series of simple geometric forms, rigidly frontal and rigorously symmetrical, *Tête* emanates a feeling of haunting mystery. Behind the stylized semi-circles for eyes, one senses the presence of a fragile, numinous core.

*Tête* is notable as a compendium of the key sources that helped Modigliani to forge his distinctive style. Foremost among these influences was the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, whom Modigliani met through Dr. Paul Alexandre in 1909. Brancusi quickly became both friend and mentor to the young artist. In the present work, the simplification of form,

emphasis on geometry and feeling for linear rhythm clearly reflect the Romanian artist's influence. Brancusi. A second influence in the present work is African sculpture. By 1909, Modigliani had seen examples of tribal art in the gallery of Joseph Brummer. He had also met Picasso and may have seen works of African and Oceanic art in his studio. The influence of African sculpture is manifest in the mood of tranquil mystery that comes from Modigliani's subtle and rhythmic combinations of geometric form. Another key source for Modigliani's hallmark style was the art of antiquity. In its stylized grandeur, the present work echoes the distinctive aesthetic of archaic Greek, Egyptian and Khmer sculptures which Modigliani had certainly seen at the Louvre. Modigliani was fascinated by the theme of the caryatide; he dreamed of producing a great series of them in stone to surround a temple dedicated to the glory of humankind. Only one was ever executed, and today is housed in the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

This magisterial *Tête* entered the Gaston Lévy collection in 1927, where it has been ever since. A businessman as imaginative as he was wealthy – he co-founded what would become the Monoprix supermarket chain – Lévy avidly collection Impressionist and Modern works of art. Though his collection numbered over 100 works at its zenith, Lévy is must revered for his contribution to Signac scholarship. A friend and patron of Signac, Lévy sponsored the Pointillist painter's travels to realize the watercolors of the *Ports de France*. This series quickly became the artist's crowning achievement as a watercolorist.

***Tête*, among other works by Signac, Valtat and Pissarro, will be included in the Impressionist and Modern Art sale to be held in Paris the 14 June 2010.**

**Viewing : 11, 12, 13 and 14 June 2010**

**Auction : 14 June 2010 at 3pm**

**Christie's Paris – 9 avenue Matignon – 75008 Paris**