

# CHRISTIE'S

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## THE COLLECTION OF HÉLÈNE ROCHAS



**Paris** – Christie's is honoured to announce that *The Collection of Héléne Rochas* will be offered at auction in Paris on 27 September 2012, following a pre-sale public exhibition from 11 to 26 September. The collection comprises art works from the Modern and Post-War eras; exquisite examples from the Art Deco period, important furniture and European *objets d'art* as well as Old Master and 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings and drawings. Madame Rochas was regarded as, and still remains, the embodiment of Parisian elegance and perfection; her refined taste was bold and sober, and epitomised French style at its best. The collection is estimated to realise 8 million euros.

**François de Ricqlès, *President of Christie's France*:** *"I first met Héléne Rochas in 1985 at the opening of the Musée Picasso in rue de Thorigny, Paris. She became a friend but the memory of this first encounter remains flawless in my mind. Today, we have the opportunity to gather her collection one last time at Christie's. This unique ensemble comprises the exceptional works of art and 'souvenirs' of a true lady, whose benevolence and extraordinary taste was admired by all."*

Héléne Rochas, also known as 'la belle Héléne' or 'la belle Madame Rochas', lived for over 60 years in her Parisian apartment on rue Barbet de Jouy, in the elegant 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. There she created a collection which epitomises 'le grand goût français' with a hint of cosmopolitanism. Her unique French taste blossomed beyond the strong foundations originally set by the Parisian social elite at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and further developed by the influences of wealthy foreigners, aesthetes, and

collectors who followed the examples of Carlos de Beistegui, Arturo Lopez-Willshaw, Antenor Patiño or even took inspiration from the more modern tastes of Eugénia Errázuriz and Cole Porter. Their style was quite unique as it differed from that of the big aristocratic collections as well as from those amassed by the French financial and industrial bourgeoisie.

Embodying this elegance and spirit, Hélène Rochas's social life knew no boundaries allowing her collection to reflect the rich and varied international milieu where she shined so naturally.

In 1974, while living in New York, she commissioned four portraits by Andy Warhol (each estimated at €200,000-300,000), and also acquired Ben Nicholson's 1933 abstract painting *Fiddle and Spanish Guitar*, a testimony to the Abstract movements that led the 1930s art scene (estimate: €300,000-500,000). This work was displayed in her Paris apartment facing a striking Neoclassical sofa previously owned by Arturo Lopez-Willshaw, who had acquired it at the age of just 16 (estimate: €12,000-18,000). It was flanked with a pair of ormolu-mounted neoclassical candelabras, from Harewood Castle in England (estimate: €100,000-150,000).

A magnificent life-size *Portrait of Lucien Guitry* by Edouard Vuillard (featured as number 303 in the Vuillard retrospective at the Grand Palais, Paris September 2003-January 2004), dominated the entrance hall welcoming and astonishing visitors with its monumental size, measuring 151 x 94 cm.(estimate: €150,000-250,000).

The living room was presided over by *Braunes Schweigen*, a 1925 oil painting by Wassily Kandinsky which hung above a sofa (estimate: €1,5 million-2 million). A large 1954 terracotta vase by Picasso (estimate: €40,000-60,000) stood on one of a pair of Neoclassical side tables (estimate: €80,000-120,000), filling with a friendly and comfortable atmosphere which overlooked a green and white garden

Also furnishing the apartment were gorgeous Art Deco artworks and objects including a *torchère serpent*, created by Edouard Marcel Sandoz in 1931 (estimate: €25,000-30,000); a floor lamp by Edgar Brandt & Daum (estimate: €40,000-60,000), *Deux masques*, circa 1925 by Jean Lambert-Rucki and Jean Dunand, inlaid with egg shell (estimate: €60,000-80,000), as well as four works by Diego Giacometti, led by a *Berveau* coffee-table circa 1963 (estimate: €60,000-80,000).

Alongside her friends Yves Saint-Laurent and Pierre Bergé, Hélène Rochas was one of the first to start an important Art Deco collection. She explained she found a “dreamlike potential” in the period. An important sale of her Art Deco collection was organised at Christie's Monaco in 1990.

The *petit salon* was the area where Madame Rochas hosted friends and guests, presenting them with a large Balthus painting, *Japanese woman with red table*, 1967-76, which hung over the entire wall (estimate: €3 million-5 million; dimensions: 144 x 192.2 cm). The work represents Setsuko Ideta, the painter's second wife, whom he met in Rome, after he was appointed director of the Academy of France at the Villa Medici, and married in 1967. This relationship had a considerable influence on his art, and Setsuko became his muse, adopting a traditional Far-Eastern style. In the same room, above the fire-place sat an important flower bouquet by Jean Fautrier (estimate: €60,000-80,000) once part of the André Malraux Collection.

Hélène Rochas was a beautiful, compassionate and strong woman, her exquisite manners characterising her deep respect for all she met. Her taste, free and refined, which is apparent in this stellar collection, paid tribute to the best artists, both famous and unknown, from the past and to her contemporaries.

**Exposition: From September 11<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> 2012 except on Sundays.**

**Sale: On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at 2:30 pm**

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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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*Images available on request*

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