

# CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S ANNOUNCES AN EXCITING ADDITION TO ITS HIGHLY- ANTICIPATED OLD MASTERS WEEK IN NEW YORK: **THE RENAISSANCE SALE**

### THE 'ROCKEFELLER MADONNA' AMONG THE STAR OFFERINGS OF SPECIAL CURATED SALE



**New York** - Christie's is pleased to announce that *Renaissance*, a curated sale devoted to the artistic traditions that flourished in Europe from 1300 to 1600, will highlight Old Masters Week in January 2013. *Renaissance* will take place on 30 January and celebrates the golden age that produced some of the most extraordinary innovations in poetry, music and literature, painting, sculpture, and architecture. The sale will feature a select group of paintings, works on paper and other media from some of the greatest masters of the era who were active throughout Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and France.

Among the star attractions of the *Renaissance* sale is Sandro Botticelli's *Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist* (illustrated, estimate: \$5,000,000-7,000,000). Intended for private devotional use, the work depicts the Virgin and Child with the young Saint John the Baptist, a popular subject in Florence, as he was the patron saint of the city; his presence was likely intended to signal that the patron was a good Florentine patriot. The tender sentiment between mother and child is here combined with an allusion to the Resurrection in the tomb-like structure, carved with a classical relief, just behind the figures. The diaphanous veil which falls over the Madonna's head and

shoulders signifies her purity, as this was the traditional head covering of unmarried Florentine women.

The painting comes to market with a highly distinguished provenance, having been acquired in the early 1930's from Lord Duveen by John D. Rockefeller. It remained in the Rockefeller family for some 50 years, and has more recently passed into a private New York collection, though it is still widely referred to as "the Rockefeller Madonna."

Over the years, the painting has been the subject of continued scholarship by leading experts in the field of Italian Renaissance painting. In his landmark 1979 monograph, Botticelli scholar Ronald Lightbown was equivocal with respect to a full attribution to the artist, having seen the painting only from photographs. After examining the work in person, he later determined it to be definitively that of the master and published his revised monograph in 1989 with full attribution -- an assertion further supported by a broad consensus of scholars in the field. In praise of Botticelli's superlative skill in composing and rendering the intimate scene, Lightbown noted "the scene takes place in a loggia

whose parapet is formed of a classical relief, executed in gray with highlighting simulated in gold. This is one of the few direct quotations from the antique in Botticelli's work, and its vigorous rendering of the densely moving forms of ancient relief shows that Botticelli was as sensitive as any of his contemporaries to the character and style of classical sculpture. The landscape is rendered as a bird's-eye view from the loggia; it is bathed in a gentle sunset light that is very characteristic of this moment in Botticelli's art of heightened sensibility to the emotive and dramatic suggestiveness of light and darkness."

Botticelli's *Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist* has been featured in prominent museum and gallery exhibitions, including the important 2004 exhibition *Botticelli and Filippino, Passion and Grace in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting*, held at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. The upcoming global tour and preview at Christie's Rockefeller Center marks the first major New York exhibition of the painting in more than a dozen years, and its first known viewing within Russia.

**Nicholas Hall, International Co-Chairman of Old Masters & 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art**, comments: "*The Rockefeller Madonna is a rare and important example of Botticelli's mature style that now holds its rightful place in the canon of the great master's work thanks to the continued scholarship of leading experts, including Lightbown, Larry Kanter of Yale, and Everett Fahy of New York's Metropolitan Museum. Christie's is honored to make 'Madonna and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist' a focal point of our global tour of highlights from January's Old Master Week sales and give collectors around the world a renewed opportunity to see this beautifully preserved and exquisitely rendered masterpiece.*"

The Rockefeller Madonna and additional select highlights from *Renaissance* will be included in a global tour to:

Christie's Hong Kong - November 24-28  
Christie's London - December 1-4  
Moscow World Fine Art Fair - December 13-18  
Christie's New York - January 26-29

More details on Christie's Old Masters Week, including *Renaissance*, will be available in the coming weeks.



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Images are available upon request.