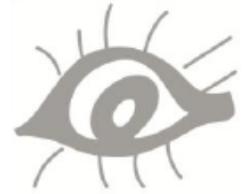


# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 14 January 2014



## EYES WIDE OPEN: AN ITALIAN VISION

An exceptional collection which explores key works of  
Arte Povera, its roots and its influence on art today



A Single-Owner Auction including  
the largest and most important  
Private Collection of Arte Povera  
ever to be shown in the UK

Exhibition and auction view at

Christie's Mayfair

5 -14 February, 2014

Auction at Christie's King Street

11 February, 2014

**London** – Arte Povera artists filled galleries with animals and decaying matter decades before Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. With its idea that humble 'poor' everyday materials – both natural and man-made – can be transformed into powerful, evocative works of art, Arte Povera transformed the landscape and language of contemporary art in the late 1960s and 70s and has become one of the most influential art movements of the past half century, exerting a profound impact on art around the world, including conceptual art, minimalism and the YBAs.

Christie's London is proud to present the exhibition and auction *Eyes Wide Open: An Italian Vision*, the most important private collection of Arte Povera ever to be shown in the UK, exploring the movement's roots in the work of Post-War Italian

Michelangelo Pistoletto (b. 1933)  
*Lei e Lui- Maria e Michelangelo*, 1968  
painted tissue paper on polished stainless steel - 230 x 120cm  
Estimate: £600,000 – 800,000

artists **Alberto Burri, Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni and Fausto Melotti** and its flowering in the works of artists such as **Michelangelo Pistoletto, Alighero Boetti, Mario Merz, Luciano Fabro, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone and Emilio Prini**. Exceptionally, this collection also investigates Arte Povera's legacy in the work of artists as diverse as **Cy Twombly, Olafur Eliasson, Anish Kapoor, Tony Cragg, Rosemarie Trockel and Thomas Schütte**.

Carefully assembled over the past 25 years by an Italian couple, this single-owner collection encompasses 109 powerful works by a vast range of celebrated artists. The title 'Eyes Wide Open' reflects the collectors' intense vision – one focused on Arte Povera that also encompasses international contemporary art – and works will be presented in the catalogue as seen through the collectors' eyes. The couple have written a text for every work that talks of their emotions in acquiring each work and living with it. The entire collection will be on display in a special stand-alone exhibition at Christie's Mayfair from 5-14 February and there will be an international tour of highlights. This collection will be offered at a dedicated auction on 11 February at King Street.

**Mariolina Bassetti, Chairman Christie's Italy, International Director, Post-War & Contemporary Art:**

*"Following our huge success in last October's Italian Sale, a record for any of these sales in their 15-year history, Christie's is pleased to be offering this exceptional private collection – the best collection of Italian art I have ever seen come on the market. Never before have we seen a private collection that shows the 'before and after' of Arte Povera in such depth – its roots in Burri and its huge legacy to succeeding generations of artists around the world, from Cy Twombly and Anish Kapoor to Thomas Schütte and Olafur Eliasson. It has been assembled with passion and rigour by an Italian couple over 25 years. The first time I saw their collection, over twenty years ago, I was stunned by the impeccable quality of each work, from large masterpieces by some of Italy's greatest artists to smaller, more intimate works by young artists. Each time I met the couple, I saw how the collection was the mirror of its collectors and I was deeply touched by the manner of their collecting and by the intimate harmony that existed between them. The collaborative nature of the couple's collecting and partnership is reflected in the recurrence within the collection of many doubles and pairings, such as Michelangelo Pistoletto's self-portrait with his companion, Lei e Lui."*

As the collectors have written in the catalogue: *"The aim of the collection has been to pursue 'energy': perhaps we have given preference to that which springs from the mind, but we have not neglected what flows from the heart. Italian Post-War art and Arte Povera have constituted the core that has given the collection its identity: outstanding artists who have left their mark."*

The term Arte Povera was coined by the Genoese critic **Germano Celant** in his 1967 catalogue and exhibition 'Arte Povera – Im spazio'. It had a profound impact on artists around the world, from Cy Twombly and Anish Kapoor, to Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, as well as on a younger generation of Italian artists like Maurizio Cattelan, who decided to make art after seeing a mirror self-portrait by the Arte Povera artist Michelangelo Pistoletto. Over the past decades, the movement has been featured many influential exhibitions, including the Hayward's 1993 'Gravity and Grace: The Changing State of Sculpture 1965-75', which made a strong impression on the YBA generation. Other significant shows have included 'Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962-1972' (2002-3) at Tate Modern, the Walker Art

Gallery and the Hirshhorn Gallery, as well as last year's recreation of the landmark 1969 exhibition 'When Attitudes become Form' curated by Germano Celant (in fact it was also with Rem Koolhaas and Thomas Demand) at the Prada Foundation in Venice. In 2015 the Guggenheim NY will stage a retrospective of Alberto Burri, whose radical deconstruction of the canvas influenced the evolution of Arte Povera, as well as Robert Rauschenberg's 'Combine' paintings. **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, the Arte Povera scholar and Director of Documenta 13 in 2012, has cited the influence of Arte Povera on the contemporary art selected for this monumental international show.

To reflect the museum-quality nature of this collection, the 'Eyes Wide Open' exhibition and auction are accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, which features texts by curators and critics such as **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Sarah Whitfield**, as well as essays by the collectors. Christie's will also stage an international tour of highlights from the collection in Turin, Milan, New York, Dallas, Chicago and London, with talks by prominent curators, including **Massimiliano Gioni**, Director of the 2013 Venice Biennale, and **Richard Flood**, Chief Curator of the New Museum in New York.

A highlight of the collection is *Lei e Lui – Maria e Michelangelo* (illustrated page 1, estimate: £600,000-800,000) by **Michelangelo Pistoletto**, a key member of the Arte Povera movement. This life-sized, double-portrait 'mirror-painting' depicts the artist and his life-long companion and artistic collaborator Maria Pioppi facing each other in an act of intimacy and union. It also reflects the intimate relationship of the collectors and their passionate search for art. Executed at the beginning of 1968, this work was a centrepiece of one of Pistoletto's most famous exhibitions at the *Galleria L'Attico*, Rome, in 1968. The reflections of light and movements triggered by the viewers are key elements of Pistoletto's paintings on mirrors, which remain some of his best-known works and are icons of Arte Povera.



Further highlights of the sale include a monumental shaped canvas by **Pino Pascali** entitled *Torso di negra al bagno* (illustrated left, estimate on request), a mesmerizing totem of femininity that appears to have erupted from the floor. Hovering between abstraction and figuration, this monolithic shiny black torso of a woman in a bathing costume, two-metres high, also asserts itself as an anti-monument and alternative to the European tradition of a white Venus rising from the waves. Surrounded at its base by cartoon-like, linear curves that simulate ripples around her, this black 'Venus', created in 1964, is a masterpiece of Pascali's tragically brief career. It is the sole stand-alone sculpture in the series of deliberately artificial hollow canvas 'feigned-sculptures' and 'object-paintings' that Pascali made for his first solo exhibition at La Galleria Tartaruga in Rome in 1965.

These works are a theatrical mix between ancient and modern – between classical architecture and contemporary icons drawn from advertising, commercial eroticism and pop culture.

Another key work is **Luciano Fabro's** striking sculpture *Piede* (Foot), with its startling contrast between a giant, claw-like polished bronze foot and its thin, light, towering column of radiant blue silk reaching to the ceiling (*illustrated right, estimate: £800,000-1,200,000*). A fantastic mix of luxurious materials and natural history, it is part of the extraordinary series of *Piedi* (Feet) made between 1968 -71 that Fabro exhibited at the 1972 Venice Biennale. Fabro has described these works as 'revelatory' structures that transform their surroundings into the realm of a fairy tale.



**Alighiero Boetti**, the subject of a major survey in 2012 at Tate Modern, the Reina Sofia and MoMA NY, is represented by several important works, including his *Mappa* from 1979 (*illustrated left, estimate: £450,000-650,000*) – part of the famous series of embroidered world maps that he made between 1971 and 1994 in partnership with Afghan women weavers living in Kabul and later as refugees in Peshawar - are the best-known and most-loved of all his works. Reflective of the constantly changing patterns of the political world map as it moves through time, and also of a long-running and intensely personal East/West dialogue that ultimately determined much of the course of Boetti's art and life, they present a profound vision of the world as a vast, holistic and intercommunicative entity.

The sale also features an igloo sculpture by **Mario Merz** which, like so many of the artist's works, is an exercise in fluid creativity - a structure that infuses the space around it with light, energy and a pervasive sense of the endless procreative flow of the cosmos (*estimate on request*).

The collection will also present a selection of enigmatic photographs by **Emilio Prini**, exemplified by a rare and important piece, *Untitled*, produced in 1968, which provides a trace of a performance by Prini in 1968 (*detail illustrated right, estimate: £30,000-40,000*). As curator **Hans Ulrich Obrist** describes the artist: "Since the late 1960s, Emilio Prini has exerted a very strong influence on artists, critics and curators, yet he nonetheless remains an enigmatic figure in the pantheon of *Arte Povera* and early conceptual art practices. This is perhaps due to the fact that, more so than many other artists over the years, Prini has worked through the radical implications of dematerialization, keeping his involvement in exhibitions to a minimum..."



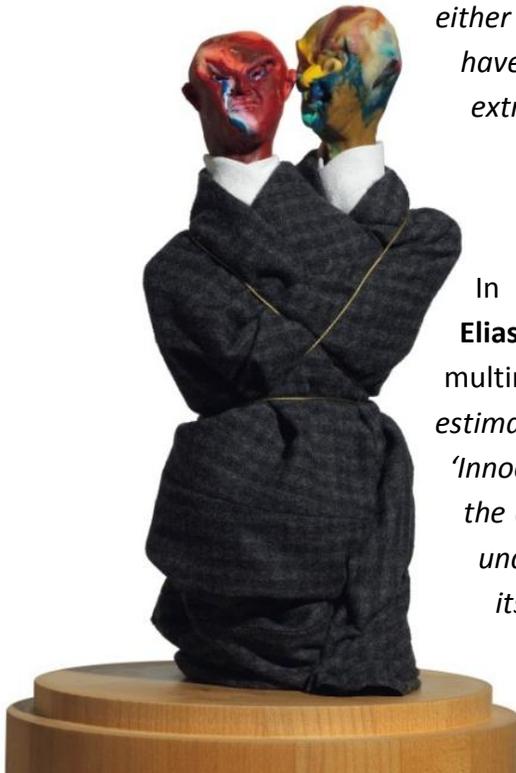


The Italian Post-War section of the sale includes iconic work by **Alberto Burri**, a major influence on Arte Povera. His work explores materials and their transformation through processes such as chemical reactions or burning, as in his *Combustione plastica* (illustrated left, estimate: £1,700,000-2,200,000). Burri, who also influenced international artists such as Rauschenberg and Tapies, will be the subject of a major retrospective at the Guggenheim, New York in 2015.

The Post-War section also includes an exceptional group of four *Natura* sculptures by **Lucio Fontana**, two terracotta pieces and two bronze pieces, including *Concetto Spaziale, Natura*, executed in terracotta in 1959-1960 (illustrated right, estimate: £700,000 – 1,000,000). As critic and curator **Sarah Whitfield** describes, “The *Natura* works are as abstract as rocks, and as timeless. The idea of geological upheaval is still apparent in the rough surfaces and in the large jagged fissure left by the pole Fontana used when gouging into the lump of wet clay. But now these spheres, which are



either cast in bronze or made of terracotta, have the mystery of the unidentified which gives them an extraordinarily powerful presence.”



In addition to work by **Cy Twombly**, **Anish Kapoor** and **Olafur Eliasson**, the contemporary section includes **Thomas Schütte's** multimedia sculpture *Innocenti*, executed in 1994 (illustrated left, estimate: £450,000 – 650,000). As the Collectors describe the work: “The ‘*Innocenti*’ (*Innocents*), bound one to the other, are a sublime example of the artist’s ability to imprint, with the modelling material, a mixture of underlying expressions and feelings, which go beyond our imagination itself”. Schütte tells us everything about his characters with the head, nothing else is necessary: it is a sort of x-ray, a map of the opposing sentiments and contradictory emotions.

---

**PRESS CONTACT: Alexandra Deyzac | +44 207 389 2265 | [adeyzac@christies.com](mailto:adeyzac@christies.com)**

**Notes to Editors:**

**The collection featured in *Eyes Wide Open: An Italian Vision* includes the following artists:**

Vincenzo Agnetti, Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Alberto Burri, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Enrico Castellani, Ettore Colla, Gianni Colombo, Tony Cragg, Hanne Darboven, Olafur Eliasson, Luciano Fabro, Lucio Fontana, Nan Goldin, Piero Gilardi, Mona Hatoum, Anish Kapoor, Joseph Kosuth, Jannis Kounellis, Francesco Lo Savio, Urs Lüthi, Julia Mangold, Piero Manzoni, Fausto Melotti, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Tatsuo Miyajima, Maurizio Mochetti, Juan Muñoz, Luigi Ontani, Roman Opalka, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Victor Pasmore, Giuseppe Penone, Gianni Piacentino, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini, Robert Rauschenberg, Thomas Schütte, Serse, Roberta Silva, Andreas Slominski, Rosemarie Trockel, Cy Twombly, Gilberto Zorio.

**International tour of the collection:**

**Turin – 24 January 10am – 7pm, Palazzo Birago Camera di commercio di Torino Via Carlo Alberto, 16 Torino**

**New York – 21-26 10am – 5pm, January Christie’s 20th Floor, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020**

**Milan – 30 January 10am – 7pm, Palazzo Clerici, via Clerici 5 – 20121 Milan**

**Chicago – 29 & 30 January 9am – 5pm, Christie’s Chicago 875 North Michigan Ave 3810 Chicago, IL 60611 USA**

**Dallas – 29 & 30 January 9am – 5pm, The Warehouse 14105 Inwood Road Dallas, TX 75244 USA**

**London – 5 – 14 February 10am – 5pm, Christie’s Mayfair, 103 New Bond Street W1S 1ST**

**About Christie’s**

Christie’s, the world’s leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie’s history. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie’s has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie’s offers around 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie’s also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie’s has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie’s has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

