

# CHRISTIE'S

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Miró

## SEVEN DECADES OF HIS ART At Christie's In February 2014



**London** – Christie's is pleased to announce *Miró – Seven Decades of His Art*, an outstanding collection of 85 works showcasing seven decades of Joan Miró's (1893–1983) rich and dynamic career, which will be offered in February 2014. This is one of the most extensive and impressive offerings of works by the artist ever to come to auction. An important figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century art, Miró was highly influential for a huge number of artists, from Picasso to Pollock. Most often associated with Surrealism, Miró's work has an appeal that transcends traditional categories, with today's market seeing collectors of both Impressionist & Modern Art and Post-War & Contemporary Art compete for his paintings, works on paper and sculptures. The property was formerly in a private corporate collection and is now being sold by decision of the Portuguese Republic.

Highlighting Miró's incredible ability to innovate, the works feature a wide range of materials and techniques as well as his key themes and subjects, from poetry and dreams to music and stars, women and birds. He was an artist who allowed himself to be influenced by a range of things, from music, poetry and then hallucinations induced by hunger during his early years in Paris, to patterns made by chance, to the materials themselves. The two top lots are *Femmes et oiseaux (Women and Birds)*, 1968 (estimate: £4-7 million, *illustrated above, second row, far left*) and *Painting*, 1953, a monumental oil on canvas measuring 22 ½ x 196 ⅞ in. (57 x 500 cm.) (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million, *illustrated across the top of the page*). With estimates ranging from £10,000 to £7 million, this collection provides collectors at every level with a remarkable opportunity to not only add key works to established collections but for new collectors and enthusiasts to buy their very first work from Miró's rich oeuvre. The works will be offered across three sales: *The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale*, 4 February; *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale* and *Impressionist and Modern Art Works on Paper Sale*, 5 February; the complete collection is expected to realise in excess of £30 million.

**Olivier Camu, Deputy Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's:** "It is an honour to bring to the market such a comprehensive collection of works by Joan Miró, one of the great modern masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tracing Miró's oeuvre across seven decades, the breadth of works to be offered provides an unparalleled opportunity for collectors at every price level to celebrate and engage with the creative genius and joyous immediacy of Miró's work. Having held the inaugural standalone Dada and Surrealism sale in 1989 and established the first annual *Art of the Surreal Sale* in 2001, we have witnessed the exponential growth in global demand for works in this category, attracting new collectors each year, with Miró's work in particular transcending traditional categories and appealing to both Impressionist & Modern Art and Post-War & Contemporary Art collectors."

### The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale

Highlights depicted on page 1 from top left to right: Joan Miró (1893-1983) *Painting*, oil on canvas, 1953 (estimate: £2,500,000-3,500,000); *Femmes et oiseaux*, oil on canvas, 1968, (estimate: £4-7 million); *Apparitions (Visions)*, gouache and India ink on paper, executed on 30 August 1935 (estimate: £450,000-650,000); *Le chant des oiseaux à l'automne (Birdsong in Autumn)*, oil on celotex, painted in September 1937 (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million); *Toile brûlée 3 (Burnt Canvas 3)*, acrylic on burnt canvas, executed 4-31 December 1973 (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million).



The star lot, *Femmes et oiseaux*, an oil on canvas painted on 3 January 1968, illustrates one of the most enduring and characteristic themes in Joan Miró's oeuvre: women and birds (estimate: £4-7 million, *illustrated left*). Executed with broad brushstrokes and fluid lines as well as small and subtle finger marks, this large work offers a poetic and important example of the freedom of execution and audacity with which the artist approached painting in the late 1960s. In 1966, Miró had travelled to Japan, where Tokyo and Kyoto museums had organised a retrospective of his work. The trip enabled Miró to visit the country's museums and experience the local culture, as well as rekindling his interest in and admiration for calligraphy. In the years which followed, his lines became more ample, his signs more potent. In its verticality – which recalls the presence of a Japanese scroll – and in the intricate smoothness of its lines, *Femmes et oiseaux* evokes the artist's fascination for the oriental art of calligraphy. Miró himself acknowledged the connection in 1968: "These long paintings, for example, evoke Japanese writing. That is because I feel deeply in harmony with the Japanese soul."

The birds and women who inhabit *Femmes et oiseaux* were motifs that recurred, often in conjunction with each other, throughout Miró's work, first appearing decades earlier and subsequently becoming important touchstones for the artist. In the present work, birds and women have dissolved into round, embryonic forms, colliding and echoing each other at the centre of the picture. They evoke a fluid world of shifting entities, totemic presences and hybrid creatures of which Miró's unconscious, poetic gesture held the cues. Inspired by calligraphy, yet governed by Miró's most recondite spiritual instincts, *Femmes et oiseaux* offers an intriguing and distinguished example of Miró's ability to widen and deepen his creative universe, plunging into the infallible vast ocean of his imagination. On the occasion of Miró's seventy-fifth birthday in 1968 – the year *Femmes et oiseaux* was painted – a major retrospective was organised, shown first at Saint-Paul-de-Vence at the Fondation Maeght, then in Barcelona at the Antic Hospital de la Santa Creu and finally in Munich at the Haus der Kunst. The show featured a wide selection of works from Miró's career, but it also showcased his latest production, emphasising the creative stride that still animated his art. *Femmes et oiseaux* was exhibited on that occasion, both in Saint-Paul-de-Vence and Barcelona, where the show marked a memorable date: it was the first time in fifty years that Spain had dedicated an important exhibition to Miró.



This collection is quite extraordinary in its depth. It contains six of the 27 paintings on masonite that Miró created during the summer of 1936, on the cusp of the Spanish Civil War (four in *The Art of the Evening Sale* and two in the *Day Sale*, detailed below). It also features three of the beautiful and rarely seen 36 enamel-like gouaches that Miro executed between August and September 1935, led by *Apparitions (Visions)*, gouache and India ink on paper, executed on 30 August 1935 (estimate: £450,000-650,000, *illustrated second left page 1*).

### The Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale, 5 February 2014



Highlights from left to right: Joan Miró (1893-1983), *Femme dans la nuit*, 1944, oil on canvas (estimate: £600,000-900,000); *Peinture*, summer 1936, oil, casein, tar and sand on masonite (estimate: £600,000-900,000); *Sobreteixim 10*, 1973, acrylic and felt stitched to woven wall hanging by Joseph Royo (estimate: £280,000-350,000); *Peinture*, summer 1936, oil, casein, tar and sand on Masonite (estimate: £500,000-800,000).

The group of masonite works, several of which are in museum collections, is filled with a raw energy (*Day Sale examples illustrated above, second left & far right*). Miró has used a variety of materials and gestures to create frantic signs; these are made all the more visceral by the warm glow of the rough, man-made background. For some of the *Peintures*, as these pictures were all titled, Miró would paint on the smoother surface, for others turning the Masonite around in order to have an even more textured backdrop upon which to work. The rough-hewn quality of both sides resulted in a range of gestural effects that was only underscored by the incredible range of materials that Miró used to create the pictures, including casein, tar and sand as well as oil paints. Several of them also incorporate stones which have been encrusted into the surface, bound within the paint, allowing the motifs to burst from the picture surfaces and thereby continuing Miró's exploration of different elements of *bricolage* and collage. Looking at the surfaces of the Masonite works in this collection, it becomes clear that they are a league away from the earlier, smaller pictures on the same support that Miró had created at the beginning of the year. Now that the Spanish Civil War had begun, Miró created his paintings on Masonite, which are filled with torrid passages of paint and other material. This was in stark contrast to the controlled conflict in the earlier Masonite pictures. Now, Miró appeared to be attacking the entire process of representation, taking his own visual language and disassembling it.

### The Impressionist and Modern Works on Paper Sale, 5 February 2014



*Highlights from left to right: Joan Miró (1893-1983) Le Petit village, executed on 31 October 1938, pencil, watercolour and gouache on black paper (estimate: £200,000-300,000); Personnage dans un paysage, 1970, gouache, pastel and pen and India ink on paper (estimate: £40,000-60,000); Personnages et oiseau dans la nuit, executed on 26 July 1963, watercolour and brush and India ink on paper (estimate: £160,000-220,000); Femme et oiseau, 1965, gouache, pastel and wax crayon on paper (estimate: £300,000-500,000).*

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*Images available on request*

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## **Notes to Editors:**

### Pre-Sale Exhibitions:

**Christie's Mayfair** - January 20 to 26 & **Christie's London**, 8 King Street, St James' - January 30 to February 4

### **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.

*\*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.*