

CHRISTIE'S

THE ART PEOPLE

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | 15 APRIL 2015 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK TO OFFER GIACOMETTI'S ICONIC LIFE-SIZE SCULPTURE

L'HOMME AU DOIGT (POINTING MAN)

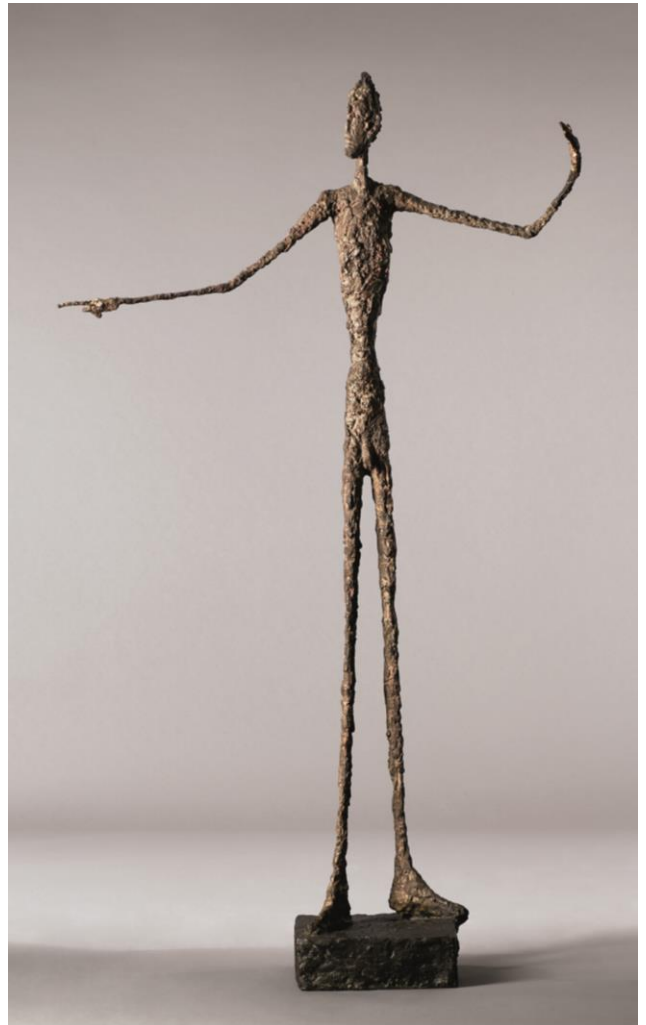
AS A STAR LOT OF ITS CURATED EVENING SALE ON MAY 11

- RARE MASTERPIECE TO MAKE ITS FIRST EVER APPEARANCE AT AUCTION
- OFFERED FROM A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE COLLECTOR THAT HAS OWNED THE WORK FOR THE LAST 45 YEARS
- ESTIMATED TO CHALLENGE THE CURRENT AUCTION RECORD FOR ANY SCULPTURE

New York – Christie's, the world's leading art business, announces a major highlight of its upcoming spring auction in New York: **Alberto Giacometti's** most iconic and evocative sculpture, *L'homme au doigt (Pointing Man)*. Cast in bronze and standing whippet-thin at five feet ten inches, this dynamic and powerful figure is widely recognized as one of the most important sculptural achievements of the Modern era, created by the greatest master of the medium. It has never before been offered at auction. The sculpture will be featured in Christie's May 11 sale, *Looking Forward to the Past*, at an estimate in the region of \$130 million, a reflection of the rarity and significance of this extraordinary work of art.

Instantly recognizable and awe-inspiring to view in person, *Pointing Man* is among the great masterpieces in the collections of New York's Museum of Modern Art and London's Tate Gallery. Giacometti conceived the work in 1947 and made just six casts of it plus one artist's proof. Today, four are in major museums; the remaining are in foundation collections and private hands. The extreme rarity of the work is underscored by the fact that the cast to be offered at Christie's is believed to be the only bronze version of *Pointing Man* that Giacometti painted by hand in order to heighten its expressive impact, making this a singular opportunity for the world's top collectors to view and compete for this exceptional work.

"Pointing Man is unquestionably Giacometti's greatest sculpture. Executed after the War in one incredible night of creative fervour, this noble figure points mankind towards a brighter future beyond our limited horizons. The curators of the Tate Gallery moved quickly to acquire a work from this edition in



Property from a Private Collection
ALBERTO GIACOMETTI (1901-1966)
L'homme au doigt
signed and numbered 'A Giacometti 6/6'
inscribed with foundry mark 'Alexis Rudier Fondateur Paris'
bronze with patina and hand-painted by the artist
Height: 69 7/8 in. (177.5 cm.)
Conceived in 1947
Estimate upon request

1949, and the Baltimore Museum of Art and New York's Museum of Modern Art were delighted to receive examples by bequest from the arts patrons Saidie May and Blanchette Rockefeller soon after. This example stands apart from all others because it is unique -- it was hand-painted by the artist himself," commented **Jussi Pylkkanen**, Global President, Christie's. "It is quite simply one of the finest works of art I have had the honour to handle in my long career at Christie's. The auction event on May 11 promises to be an extraordinary night for the global art market."

Christie's previously announced that Pablo Picasso's 1955 masterpiece *Les Femmes d'Alger (Version O)*, the artist's tour-de-force homage to the great 19th century master Eugène Delacroix, will headline 'Looking Forward to the Past', a special Evening Sale comprised of a mix of important works from the Impressionist, Modern, Post-War and Contemporary periods. The painting is estimated in the region of \$140 million, making it a contender for the most valuable painting ever offered at auction ([see related release](#)).

"Since I've been in the auction business, I've always heard that Giacometti's *Pointing Man* was the ultimate masterpiece of sculpture from a collector's point of view. Being able to offer it in the same night alongside with Picasso's '*Les Femmes d'Alger (Version O)*' is more than just a dream come true – because I would have never dared to dream it," added **Loic Gouzer**, International Specialist and Curator of the May 11 sale.

About Pointing Man

By Giacometti's own account, he created *L'homme au doigt* in a single phenomenal night in October 1947. His first solo exhibition in nearly 15 years was due to open at Pierre Matisse's gallery in New York the following January, and time was running short. He was nearing the end of a year of extraordinary productivity, in which he had begun to grow his diminutive "pin people" into life-size figures exhibiting his famously attenuated, wraith-like style. On this particular night, his looming deadline spurred the sculptor to new heights of creativity and daring, reaching a crescendo in the early hours when his prototype was completed. "I did that piece in one night between midnight and nine the next morning," Giacometti told his biographer James Lord.

"That is, I'd already done it, but I demolished it and did it all over again because the men from the foundry were coming to take it away. And when they got here, the plaster was still wet".



When his solo exhibition at Pierre Matisse Gallery opened in January 1948 in New York, *L'homme au doigt* was front and center – part of a trio of life-sized figures that formed the focal point of the show, which also included his celebrated figures *Walking Man* and one of his *Standing Women*. The exhibition was an instant sensation, introducing his radically innovative style and body of work to New York's post-war art scene.

Pointing Man stands with superb self-assurance, dominating the space around him and with his head held high. His body turns slightly toward his right, following the direction he points towards with a rigid, stick-thin arm. The gesture evokes the classic oratory pose of the Roman emperor Augustus or Rodin's Saint John the Baptist. His left arm is also raised behind him, as if beckoning others forward to join him or perhaps to embrace a companion next to him. Giacometti later reported that he had initially started to compose two figures to stand side by side, but after *L'homme au doigt* was completed "it was entirely impossible for me to make the second and I didn't even begin it." He revisited the idea four years later in 1951, creating a plaster figure to accompany *Pointing Man*. But it was not to last; after exhibiting it once Giacometti destroyed the plaster figure without making any bronzes of it and abandoned the idea for good. "*Pointing Man will remain on its own*," he declared.

Like all of Giacometti's signature post-war sculptures, *L'homme au doigt's* surface is feverishly worked, so that the rippling bronze flesh appears tormented and even scarred in places. But where the faces of his Walking Men and Standing Women seem anonymous, without resemblance to any particular person, many have observed that the face of Pointing Man, with its craggy features and shock of hair on top, looks much like the artist himself. In the version to be offered for sale this spring, Giacometti's decision to hand-paint flesh tones on the elongated body and black pigment on the hair and one eye lend the towering figure a uniquely riveting presence, and serves to heighten the eerie sense of resemblance.

Exceptional Provenance

This cast of *L'homme au doigt* comes to market with a distinctly American provenance, having been purchased direct from Pierre Matisse in 1953. Its original owners were the celebrated collectors Dr. Fred and Florence Olsen, whose wide-ranging interests extended from Chinese and pre-Columbian art and objects to Abstract Expressionism. The Olsens were also the first owners of Jackson Pollock's famous masterpiece *Blue Poles* (1952), and the two great modernist works shared pride of place in the couple's custom-built Connecticut home, still known as The Olsen House, which they commissioned from the architect, painter, and sculptor Tony Smith. By 1970, the work passed into the collection of the current owner, a distinguished private collector who has kept it for the last 45 years.

The Sculpture Market

Giacometti remains the only sculptor whose work has surpassed the \$100 million mark at auction. In the last five years alone, four Giacometti bronzes have sold for more than \$50 million, including *Walking Man*, which holds the current record for any work by the artist at \$103.9 million, and *Grand Tête Mince*, from the legendary Brody Collection, which soared above its pre-sale estimate of \$25-35 million to achieve \$53.2 million at Christie's New York. The tremendous international demand for Giacometti's work has set a new precedent within the global auction market for masterpieces of sculpture, where he continues to lead in the rarified space shared by his peers Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani, and Pablo Picasso, as well as the contemporary artist Jeff Koons.

Note to Editors:

As previously announced, Christie's ['Looking Forward to the Past'](#) sale will kick off a full week of auctions at Christie's New York, running May 11 to 15. The complete schedule of sales is available [here](#) and as follows:

May 11: Looking Forward to the Past Evening Sale at 7:00 p.m.

May 12: Post War and Contemporary Day Sale at 9:00 a.m.

May 13: Post War and Contemporary Evening Sale at 7:00 p.m.

May 14: Post War and Contemporary Day Sale at 9:00 a.m.

Impressionist and Modern Evening Sale featuring the Collection of John C. Whitehead at 5:30 p.m.

May 15: Impressionist and Modern Works on Paper Sale at 10:00 a.m.

Impressionist and Modern Day Sale at 2:00 p.m.

Companion Online-Only Sales:

Picasso Ceramics, May 5 - May 19

Post War and Contemporary Art, May 8 - May 19

Public exhibition dates: May 2-11

Auction: May 11 at 7pm

Christie's Rockefeller Center, New York

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 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 totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion).

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, New Delhi, 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.*

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Images available on request

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