

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER BRANCUSI'S *LA MUSE ENDORMIE*

- FIRST TIME APPEARING AT AUCTION
- MASTERPIECE IN MODERN SCULPTURE



Property from a Private Parisian Collection
CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI (1867-1957) *La muse endormie*
signed 'Brancusi' (on the back of the neck); stamped with foundry mark 'C. VALSUANI CIRE PERDUE' (on the side of the neck),
patinated bronze with gold leaf, Length: 10 ½ in. (26.7 cm.)
Original marble version carved in 1909-1910; this bronze version cast by 1913
Estimate: \$20,000,000-30,000,000

New York - Christie's will offer Constantin Brancusi's sculpture *La muse endormie* as a highlight of its May 15 Evening Sale of Impressionist and Modern Art in New York (estimate: \$20-30 million). *La muse endormie* counts among the greatest achievements in sculptural history. Its drastic purification of form and emotional resonance mark the dawn of a new sculptural language.

First conceived in marble in 1909-1910, *La muse endormie* was cast by Brancusi in six bronze versions by 1913. Four bronzes today are housed in museums—The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The Art Institute of Chicago, and two examples in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris—while two, including the present work, remain in private collections. *La muse endormie* to be offered at Christie's in May was acquired by the distinguished French collector Jacques Ulmann in the 1950s and has remained in his family to this day.

Jessica Fertig, Senior Vice President, Head of Evening Sale, Impressionist and Modern Art, comments, "*Bringing Brancusi's masterpiece of 20th Century sculpture to market for today's collectors is an honor for Christie's. La muse endormie has a magical amplitude — displaying a formal genius and wondrously modulated patina. Brancusi considered each of his La muse endormie bronzes a unique work of art, rather than as part of a uniform edition. He therefore oversaw the patination process during casting to ensure variations between every bronze. Brancusi delighted in the varying effects of color and finish, always aware of the diversity of expression he could achieve through patination. The present sculpture has a rich, warm patina that Brancusi heightened by gilding sections, a contrast he described to the legendary American*

collector John Quinn as enhancing the expressive power of his art. With four examples of Brancusi's *La muse endormie* in museum collections, and one of two left in private hands, this is a rare opportunity for collectors to acquire a work of iconic status."

Anika Guntrum, International Director, Impressionist & Modern Art, states, "*Jacques Ulmann remains, even today, one of France's most important collectors. He was active in the 1950s and 1960s, buying international avant-garde works in all mediums. He acquired Number 13 by Jackson Pollock, now in the Saint Louis Art Museum; Tête de Fernande in plaster by Picasso from Ambroise Vollard; countless paintings by Dali, Ernst and the Surrealist artists, as well as Tribal art. He was Dubuffet's earliest supporter, and not only financially supported him by acquiring his works but also championed the artist to the international market. These works, along with the seminal *Muse endormie* by Brancusi now being offered for sale, are a testament to Jacques Ulmann's extraordinary eye and the passionate quest for art that challenges and delights.*"

La muse endormie is the first in Brancusi's series of ovoid sculptures, marking the inception of the artist's mature work and his advance towards pure abstraction. The form of a sleeping woman's head has been distilled into an almost perfect oval, the purity of outline marked only by subtle allusions to the physical features of the model.

Brancusi was in his early thirties when he conceived this breakthrough sculpture. He had arrived in Paris from his native Romania in 1904 at the age of twenty-eight. From his earliest years in Paris, Brancusi had been fascinated by the theme of sleep. Between 1906 and 1908, he sculpted several heads of sleeping women and children, all of which retain the descriptive naturalism that he had learned from his work in Auguste Rodin's studio.

Notes to Editors:

- Brancusi first carved *La muse endormie* in white marble in 1909-1910. It now belongs to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
- The present sculpture is one of only two bronzes from this sequence that remain in private hands. The Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York each have one, and the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris houses the remaining pair, as well as the original plaster model.

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Auction: *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale, May 15, 2017*

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in 2016 that totaled £4 billion / \$5.4 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie's offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, 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.

Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.

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