

For Immediate Release

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BACON AND FREUD LEAD POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON



Francis Bacon

Study from Portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velazquez, 1959

Estimate on request



Lucian Freud

Man in a String Chair, 1988-89

Estimate: £3,000,000-4,000,000

Post War and Contemporary Art, Evening Sale Christie's King Street 8 February 2006

London – Superb examples by some of the most celebrated artists from the London School will be included in Christie's evening sale of *Post-War and Contemporary Art* on 8 February 2006. Lucian Freud's *Man in a String Chair* and Francis Bacon's *Study from Portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velazquez* are just two of the highlights in a line up of outstanding works to be offered by distinguished European and American Post-War artists together with some of today's most sought-after contemporary giants. The sale follows the record breaking sale totals set in New York in 2005, and is expected to fetch in the region of £18 million.

“Once again, Christie’s has gathered some of the most spectacular museum-quality Post-War and Contemporary Art works together in one sale. Our collectors have exceptionally high standards, demanding exceptional works of art, with excellent provenances, and we are delighted to be able to offer them the very best, particularly at Christie’s in London,” commented Fernando Mignoni, Director, Christie’s Post-War and Contemporary Art Department.

Considered to be one of Francis Bacon’s most celebrated and iconic subjects, *Study from Portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velazquez*, 1959 (estimate on request) is one of the star lots. Velazquez’s painting of Innocent X inspired a number of Bacon’s pictures from 1950 onwards. This painting dates from a turning point in Bacon’s art. The thinner, raw brushwork of his earlier paintings gave way to painterly swirls as seen in the face, distressing the paint to create a disfigured, angst-ridden figure. Glancing sideways at the viewer, the figure of Pope Innocent X appears anxious, as though caught and restrained. Appropriately, this was only the second painting that Bacon openly titled and inscribed with a full reference to Velazquez’s portrait

Like most of Lucian Freud’s work, *Man in a String Chair*, 1988-89 (estimate: £3,000,000-4,000,000) was not a commissioned portrait but was painted at Freud’s own instigation. In this powerful full-length portrait of his friend, the gambling magnate Victor Chandler, Freud presents him in casual attire, reclining comfortably in a chair, at ease both with himself and his surroundings. What began life as a head and shoulder depiction took almost two years to complete, with Chandler sitting as often as four times a week, sometimes for six hours at a time. Just as the portraits by Gainsborough, Ingres and Manet captured the characters and atmosphere of their respective eras, so does this work succeed both as a frank and perceptive portrait and as a timeless representation of our modern age (see separate press release).

A second oil by Francis Bacon, *Self-portrait* of 1969 (estimate: £1,400,000-1,800,000) is one of six important paintings from the private and personal collection of Miss Valerie Beston, the loyal assistant to artists of the London School, that is being sold in this sale with the rest of her collection being offered in a single-owner sale at South Kensington on 10 February 2006. In this raw and powerful work, Bacon’s recognisable but seemingly beaten-up and swollen features stare directly out of the painting with an air of nonchalance that borders on disdain. It is one of the first of Bacon’s single-head portraits, and was a gift from the artist to Miss Beston, in appreciation of her friendship and loyalty. Frank Auerbach was another artist that Miss Beston was to nurture during her career and four commanding oils from her collection are included in this sale. Auerbach’s masterly painting style is clearly shown in *Head of Julia*, painted in 1983 (estimate: £100,000-150,000), while *Reclining head of E.O.W.*, 1969 (estimate: £90,000-120,000) and *Julia sleeping*, 1978-79, (estimate: £70,000-90,000) are earlier works. A landscape by Auerbach, *Tree on Primrose Hill* is also included (estimate: £70,000-100,000) alongside a rare oil by Michael Andrews *Study of a head for ‘Lights’* painted in 1968 (estimate: £40,000-60,000) (see separate press release).

Painted in 1966, *Ein Roter* is one of Georg Baselitz’s celebrated Heroes series, of a red man standing forlorn in a ravaged landscape, a pioneer and a hero against all odds (estimate: £500,000-700,000). In his Heroes series, Baselitz’s draws on subjects and themes from German history. He has stated that it was in part based on the Communist forces defeating the White Russians in the 1920s. Of all the

paintings in the series, this work has the title that most clearly associates him with this moment in history. However, this is the Communist Revolution as seen by a non-believer, by a cynic.

Also in the sale is a private collection formed by a European married couple with a passion for collecting contemporary art including key works from the 1960s to the 1980s. Transforming part of their house into a studio, they encouraged artists to come and work at their home, and it was here that Arman assembled *Antoine et Cleopatre* in 1966 (estimate: £70,000-100,000). Other major items in their collection include *Narva*, one of Jean Tinguely's most important works, 1961 (estimate: £100,000-150,000), Antonio Saura's *Nong dans son fauteuil*, 1985 (estimate: £70,000-90,000) and Andy Warhol's complete set of screenprints of *Marilyn Monroe*, 1967, (estimate: £200,000-300,000).

Another highlight of the evening sale is Andy Warhol's *Last Supper* (estimate: £850,000-1,200,000). Painted in 1986, it is an outstanding example from his final great series of pictures. Imbued with a new and lively pop intensity, Leonardo's masterpiece in Milan has been reincarnated by Warhol, in this extremely rare black and white image within the series. Here, the stark appearance of the *Last Supper* is further subverted by the double presentation of Christ and his disciples, adding a poster-like feel to Leonardo's picture.

Work from another important European Collection is also offered, including Jean-Paul Riopelle's *Retour de l'Espagne*, 1952, (estimate: £200,000-300,000), where paint has been applied both through drips and directly with the palette knife, creating an intriguing interplay of contrasts, Pierre Soulages's *Peinture, 6 Decembre 1954*, (estimate: £150,000-200,000), Serge Poliakoff's *Composition*, 1957 (estimate: £180,000-250,000) and Nicolas de Stael's *Nature morte au verre*, 1954 (estimate: £250,000-350,000), where the artist has conveyed the dignity and beauty of these everyday objects in a manner reminiscent of Chardin.

A superb cor-ten steel sculpture by Eduardo Chillida, *Elogio de la Arquitectura IV* (estimate: £500,000-700,000) is also offered in the sale. The deceptive simplicity of the tower-like sculpture allows it huge scope to dovetail with its surrounding space. Trapped on a pedestal, Juan Muñoz's *Greek Ballerina III* (estimate: £120,000-180,000) perfectly encapsulates the deep personal sense of isolation so central to his work. Bobbing gently on her curved base, lending her a disquieting sense of animation, she is inescapably mute, presenting the viewer with a perfect image of the impossibility of true communication.

Three works by Mona Hatoum will be offered from a private American collection. This includes *Door Mat*, 1996 (estimate: £20,000-30,000), made of pins of varying length, with the word 'Welcome' made from shorter pins. This work is Hatoum's material reflection of her experience as an outsider in Britain in the early 1980s and her attempts to deal with this environment. The installation *Marrow*, 1996, (estimate: £80,000-120,000), is a limp hospital cot made out of marrow-like rubber. Here Hatoum has subverted and reversed the function of this object of support and protection, rendering it vulnerable and helpless. While *Deep Throat*, 1996, (estimate: £35,000-45,000), is a work that plays with the social niceties of eating in a restaurant by also exposing the physical reality of such an act.

Another example of this edition was exhibited at the *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy of Art in London in 1997.

Bursting with shifting forms and images is Franz Ackermann's *b2 barbeque with the duke*, 1999 (estimate: £150,000-200,000). In this huge and important work, Ackermann manipulates the viewer, setting our minds in motion as we work through the picture, seeking familiarity, and in this way we are taken on a hallucinogenic rollercoaster ride. A colour video diptych by Bill Viola, *Mater*, also features in the sale (estimate: £120,000-180,000). A sense of theatre is present in Matthias Weicher's interior, *Ohne Titel*, 2002 (estimate: £35,000-45,000). However, rather than inviting the viewer to enter the pictorial space, the centre of the painting is dominated by the corner of a jutting wall, bare of ornament.

Christie's Post War and Contemporary Art Day sale, 9 February 2006

The star lot of the sale is *Casa del Popolo*, 1984, (estimate: £120,000-180,000) which was collaboratively created by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Francesco Clemente and Andy Warhol. Other works in the sale include Fontana's very rare aluminium piece *Concetto spaziale*, 1962 (estimate: £80,000-120,000), Miquel Barcelò's *Germination*, 1986 (estimate: £120,000-180,000), Maria Helena Viera da Silva's *Construction*, 1953 (estimate: £100,000-150,000), Zao Wou-Ki's *31.1.62*, 1962 (estimate: £100,000-150,000) and Cy Twombly's *Untitled*, 1958 (estimate: £60,000-80,000). Two private collections also feature with works ranging from the Eduardo Chillida's sculpture *Lurra G-69* (estimate: £40,000-60,000) to *Escritura Blanca a Circulos, No. 2*, 1977 by Jesús Rafael Soto (estimate: £40,000-60,000).

"The market for works in the Post War and Contemporary Art Day Sale continues to go from strength to strength as new buyers emerge from China and the Far East," said Laetitia Catoir, specialist and head of sale. "We are beginning to see increasing numbers of Impressionist collectors cross buying and starting to purchase Post War and Contemporary Art works. New fairs like Frieze and Miami Basel have drawn greater focus to contemporary art and young, new artists, whose work is often difficult to obtain on the primary market, is becoming available at our auctions."

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Images available on request

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Notes to Editors

Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art Market

Christie's leads the Post-War and Contemporary Art market sales. The February 2005 London evening sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art achieved £24,461,600 (\$45,792,115), the highest total ever realized in this category, while the June 2005 London evening sale totalled £24,459,600 (\$44,516,472). While in New York, the November 2005 evening sale totaled \$157,441,600, a record for any sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art worldwide, ever.