

**For Immediate Release**

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## Remembering Rembrandt ...

### CHRISTIE'S CELEBRATES REMBRANDT'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY



**Old Master, Modern and Contemporary Prints**

**Wednesday, 29 March 2006**

**Christie's London**

**London** – On July 15, 1606, one of the world's most versatile, innovative, and influential artists Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-1669) was born in Leiden. Four hundred years later, Christie's joins the celebrations of the anniversary of the master's birth. An important group of fifty-five etchings by the artist from the collection of Dutch industrialist and patron, G.A.H. Buisman Jzn. will be offered alongside the 29 March sale of *Old Master, Modern and Contemporary Prints* in London.

*"This superb private collection lends a fascinating insight into the technique and mastery of the artist's graphic oeuvre and with estimates starting at just £1,500 offers an excellent opportunity to collect an original by this famous artist in his 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary year,"* said Richard Lloyd, Head of Christie's Print Department.

Rembrandt was a multi-talented artist, acquiring international fame not only as painter and draughtsman but also for his graphic works. He explored different forms, styles and subjects throughout his artistic life, with his first etching dating to circa 1626 and his last from 1665. The strength of his reputation as one of the most important graphic artists remains to this day.

The collection to be sold at Christie's reflects the broad range of subjects that Rembrandt addressed from portraits, and self-portraits, to landscapes, allegorical scenes, mythological and biblical stories as well as animal studies. The fifty-five examples to be offered at Christie's span the breadth and depth of his print making oeuvre, providing a rare overview, with the provenance of many of the prints dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Amongst the Rembrandt portraits to be offered is the arresting print of *The Artist's mother sitting at a table*, circa 1631 (estimate: £5,000-8,000), and the *Self-portrait with plumed hat* from 1634 (estimate: £8,000-12,000). For their time, Rembrandt's portraits were revolutionary. He believed the emotional character of the subject to be of greater importance than the appearance, whilst his use of chiaroscuro, contrasting light and dark is well-known.



A rare treasure in the Collection is the contre-épreuve (counter proof) of the portrait of *Jan Antonides van der Linden* from 1665, which is offered with an original print (estimate: £4,000-6,000). A *contre-épreuve* was made by laying another sheet of paper directly on the initial print whilst the ink was still wet; creating a mirrored image. Both impressions were part of the famous William



Esdaile collection, which was sold by Christie's in 1840.

One of Rembrandt's most famous etchings is the *Hundred Guilder Print* (estimate: £25,000-35,000). Depicting Christ healing the sick, it is rumoured to have earned its name when Rembrandt had to pay one hundred guilders to buy back an especially fine impression. The large print, circa 1649, exemplifies the height of Rembrandt's ability. His powerful implementation of chiaroscuro lighting brings the moment dramatically to life and subtly focuses the viewers' attention on the figure of Christ, standing in the middle of the picture (as shown in this detail). Further works with a Biblical theme, from 1645, include *The Descent from the Cross* (estimate: £15,000-20,000) and *Christ is carried to the tomb* (estimate: £3,000-5,000).



A further treasure of the G.A.H. Buisman Jzn. Collection is the remarkable print of the *Goldsmith* from 1655 (estimate: £2,000-3,000). In this composition, for which the copperplate still exists, a sculptor works on a statue of a woman holding two children in her arms. This intricate etching, measuring just 76 x 56 mm. invites one to examine it closely and search for new visual discoveries.

No less than ten different landscapes, including *View of Amsterdam from the North-West*, 1641 (£8,000-12,000), give a glimpse of Rembrandt's surroundings and views during his walks around Amsterdam. Two panoramic farm views from 1641, *Oblong landscape with a cottage and a haybarn* (estimate: £12,000-18,000) and *Landscape with a cottage and a large tree* (estimate: £15,000-20,000) are considered highlights



of 17<sup>th</sup> century landscape prints. The *Goldweiger's Field*, 1651 (estimate: £10,000-15,000) shows the Dunes of Bloemendaal, part of the 'Saxenburg' estate, owned by one of his financiers Christoffel Thijsz. This etching may have been part repayment for Thijsz's extensive loans.

A small but charming aspect of Rembrandt's work is his studies of animals. Works offered include *The Hog*, 1643 (estimate: £7,000-10,000) juxtaposing the contentment of an unsuspecting sow with a man preparing for the slaughter and a laughing boy playing with a pig's bladder. Several etchings center on the theme of hunting in *The small lion hunt*, circa 1629 (estimate: £4,000-6,000) and *The large lion hunt*, 1641 (estimate: £15,000-20,000).

Rembrandt's exploration of societies less fortunate is revealed in his early etching *The beggar with the wooden leg*, circa 1630 (estimate: £1,500-2,500).

Further highlights of the *Old Master, Modern and Contemporary Prints* sale include a first edition set of Goya's *Disasters* (estimate: £35,000-45,000) and a set of Albrecht Durer's *Apocalypse* (estimate: £50,000-70,000). The modern section is headed by *Grande natura morta con la lamapada a petrloio* by Giorgio Morandi, 1930 (estimate: £40,000-60,000) and Picasso's *La Femme au Fautenil* (estimate: £25,000-35,000), while Roy Lichtenstein's *Reverie* (estimate: £35,000-45,000), Cy Twombly's six lithographs *Untitled*, 1971 (estimate:£40,000-60,000) and Donald Judd's ten woodcuts *Untitled*, 1988 (estimate: £10,000-15,000) lead the contemporary section.

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*Images available on request*  
*Visit Christie's at [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)*

### **Notes to Editors:**

**Public View:** Sunday 26 March – Tuesday 28 March

**Sale:** Wednesday, 29 March 2006 at 10.30 am & 2pm

### **Exhibition Tour Dates:**

Christie's New York: 4-8 February 2006

Christie's Zurich: 21-22 February 2006

Christie's Amsterdam 3-5 March

Christie's Berlin: 8-10 March 2006

Christie's Stuttgart: 13 – March 2006

Christie's Paris: 18-22 March 2006

Part of the funds raised from the sale of the G.A.H. Buisman Jzn. Collection will go to the Maecenas World Patrimony Foundation. For further information on the Foundation please go to [www.worldpatrimony.org](http://www.worldpatrimony.org). For an obituary of Mr G.A.H. Buisman please go to [www.gahbuisman.com](http://www.gahbuisman.com)

In 2005 the intellectual connoisseur G.A.H. Buisman Jzn. passed away. Having become the heir to his family spice mill and pharmaceutical wholesaling company at a young age, he developed the family concern into one of the leading businesses in its industry sector, in the Netherlands. G.A.H. Buisman Jzn. began his art collection at the age of sixteen when he bought his first oil painting. He considered social righteousness to be a gentleman's civic obligation. The family initiated several heritage conservation efforts, on of which is the Maecenas World Patrimony Foundation which undertakes the conservation of "orphaned" art objects at the United Nations' offices such as Marc Chagall's Peace Window at the UN Building in New York. Parts of G.A.H. Buisman's collections remain on permanent loan to museums.

All of the prints from the G.A.H. Buisman Jzn. Collection were exhibited in the Moscow *Pushkin Fine Arts Museum*, the Geneva *Palais des Nations* and most recently in the Strasburg *Musée Palais Rohan*, the collection was also shown in cooperation with Dutch Museum *Het Rembrandthuis*. All etchings are approved by the *Foundation for Paper Research*.

Christie's London established the world auction record for a print at auction when Pablo Picasso's *Le Repas Frugal (Bloch 1; Baer 2 II a2)*, 1904, sold for £657,250/\$1,173,341 on 30 November 2004, and also holds the world auction record for a Rembrandt print at auction with his drypoint *Christ presented to the people; oblong plate*, 1655 which realized £528,000/\$935,341 on 10 December 1991. Sales of Prints are held ten times a year, four in New York and six in London. Christie's is proud to have pioneered themed sales and print collections, the success of which is reflected in the superb results for the Albrecht Durer collection of the late Count Antoine Seilern in 1998 which realised

£1,211,613/1,984,622 and the Rembrandt collection of Walter J. Johnson in 1997 which realised £1,624,086/\$2,619,495.

## **Rembrandt**

Rembrandt was born in Leiden to well-off, Protestant mill owners. He attended Leiden's Latin school and, briefly in 1620, its university, he was then apprenticed for about three years to painter, Jacob van Swanenburgh, who taught him basic workshop practice. In 1624 he trained with Pieter Lastman, the leading history painter of his generation in Amsterdam.

Rembrandt soon received critical attention. In about 1630, the secretary to Stadholder, Frederick Henry, Constantijn Huygens wrote glowingly of Rembrandt's *Judas Returning the Silver Pieces* (1629), singling out the emotional characterization of Judas. It was at this time that Rembrandt was experimenting with facial expressions, producing small etchings of his face in emotional states ranging from curiosity and annoyance to anger and surprise. These reproducible works also enabled Rembrandt to advertise his ability to render the human passions, a capacity essential for history painting as well as portraiture.

Although Rembrandt tried his hand at almost every pictorial subject, these two genres became the mainstay of his career. In the early 1630s, through Huygens's mediation, Rembrandt received both portrait and history commissions from the Stadholder and his wife.

At the encouragement of Hendrick Uylenburgh, an art dealer and broker of portrait commissions, Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam c.1631–2. He immediately received the prestigious commission for *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp* (1632; The Hague, Mauritshuis), a group portrait of Amsterdam's college of surgeons. By arranging the likenesses into the story of Dr Tulp's demonstration of the workings of the human hand, Rembrandt diverged from the static tradition of such portraits. Rembrandt's portraits of individual sitters are similarly energetic, emphasizing faces, hands, and dynamic silhouettes at the expense of costumes and settings. They made him the city's leading portraitist until c.1650.

Rembrandt's large history paintings of the 1630s became increasingly spectacular. The dramatic scale, subjects, and gestures are in the grand manner, but the protagonists look down-to-earth and the rich colouring has a narrow tonal range. In 1634 Rembrandt married Saskia Uylenburgh, Hendrick's niece. The couple had four children, of whom only Titus survived infancy. Rembrandt's personal life is of particular interest because he represented himself and his family members in many guises. Around 1629 he had begun to paint the first of his famous self-portraits ultimately creating a lifelong autobiographical sequence of which 80 survive.

By 1639, Rembrandt's success allowed him to buy a large house in a prosperous neighbourhood. He filled the house with a collection of paintings, prints, naturalia, and other curiosities. In 1642 Rembrandt completed *The Nightwatch or Militia Company of Frans Banning Cocq* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). The myth of Rembrandt's decline after *The Nightwatch* was spurred by Saskia's death in 1642, even though he soon found a lifelong companion in Hendrickje Stoffels. In the later 1640s, Rembrandt began to experiment with landscape, recording the countryside around Amsterdam in limpid drawings and etchings and painting imaginary realms. His etchings became more technically intricate and thematically inventive. *The Hundred Guilder Print* (c.1642–9), named for its fabled price around 1700, fuses aspects of Matthew 19 into a bustling scene whose unshakeable centre is Christ.

Although Rembrandt continued to receive commissions, his late style of broad brushwork yet complex layers was partly eclipsed by a new preference for smoothly finished, classically composed, and decorously conceived paintings. Rembrandt's grave, quiet, yet unidealizing mode may have been unsuitable for large historical works, but it was indispensable to the weight of his last self-portraits.

It is unclear to what extent Rembrandt's notorious financial difficulties were caused by waning patronage. His expensive house and trade losses were responsible in part. In 1656, Rembrandt

declared a *cessio bonorum*, a form of bankruptcy under which he had to sell his house and much of its contents. To protect Rembrandt from further claims, Titus and Hendrickje formed a company that employed him. In 1658, Rembrandt made his final move to a rented house in a modest middle-class quarter. He passed away in October 1669.