

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK TO OFFER RARE NEOCLASSICAL PICASSO *TÊTE ET MAIN DE FEMME* (1921)

Impressionist and Modern Art May 4, 2005

New York – Christie's sales of *Impressionist and Modern Art*, taking place on May 4 and 5 in New York, offer a strong ensemble of works that portrays some of the period's most influential and powerful artistic creations. Besides presenting an exquisite group of paintings, the evening sale will certainly add vigor to the sculpture market. **Constantin Brancusi's** sublime *Bird in Space* (estimate: \$8,000,000-12,000,000) (*separate release available*) leads this category, accompanied by major works by Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore and Artistide Maillol. Among the multiple private and museum collections making their appearance are Property from The Maspro Art Museum, Japan offering a major work by **Paul Cézanne** (*separate release available*), Property from the Cincinnati Art Museum sold by order of the Board of Trustees to benefit the Acquisitions Fund, Property from the Collection of Ruth and Harvey Kaplan and Property from the Collection of Fernand and Beatrice Leval.

One of the centers of gravity of the sale is **Pablo Picasso's** *Tête et Main de Femme* (estimate on request), a supreme example of the artist's "neoclassical" paintings. The present work was painted in 1921 in Fontainebleau, where Picasso was spending the summer with his wife and son. Picasso first began to integrate classicizing forms into his art in 1914, after having worked in the cubist mode for seven years, employing both visual idioms between 1918 and 1924. He refused to believe in a fragmentation of art history and solemnly followed his belief that true art is always alive and has no past or future. Picasso's classicized forms sprouted from many different sources including excursions to Italy, a deep admiration for the neoclassical forms used by Ingres, Poussin and Puvis

de Chavannes, his own paintings done in Gósol in the summer of 1906, and the repertory of classicizing female deities who represented the French nation during the post-war years.

Alberto Giacometti's most acclaimed themes - man walking and standing woman - found their origins in the pivotal year 1947 when the sculptor was finally able, after a long and frustrating period of sculpting only diminutive figures, to create an impressive series of life-sized and over-life-sized compositions. This sudden flow of creative forces was noticed by Pierre Matisse who offered Giacometti a one-man show in his New York gallery in 1948. *Femme Leoni* (estimate: \$7,000,000-10,000,000), from the Collection of Ruth and Harvey Kaplan, is one of the most important works from this watershed year, exemplifying the gaunt, elongated proportions that would become the hallmark of the artist's post-war oeuvre. The figure possesses a disturbing expressive power but at the same time there is a sense of fragility in the work, brought about by the tension between the woman as an object of desire and an object of devotion. The present sculpture was sold directly to Harvey Kaplan by Pierre Matisse.

Crowned by Brancusi and Giacometti, the group of sculpture contains many more pivotal names. By **Henry Moore**, the sale presents *Draped reclining mother and baby* (estimate: \$4,500,000-6,500,000), a large-scale work conceived in 1983 and cast during the artist's lifetime. From the John W. Kluge Morven collection come two sculptures by **Artistide Maillol**: *L'Action enchaînée* (estimate: \$1,200,000-1,800,000) and *Monument à Paul Cézanne* (estimate: \$1,500,000-2,000,000).

In the final decades of his career, **Claude Monet** embarked upon a serial approach, executing a number of paintings of the same subject influenced by the varying lighting effects and weather conditions. Last season's *Parliament* was an exquisite example and *Vétheuil, après-midi* (estimate: \$7,000,000-10,000,000), offered this spring, is another stellar work illustrating this pattern. Part of a series of fifteen, it depicts the picturesque village of Vétheuil on the right bank of the Seine, painted from Lavacourt, directly across the water. For Monet, the *Vétheuil* series might have signified a nostalgic return with a deep personal resonance for he had lived and worked in the village from 1878 to 1881, a watershed moment in his career. The *Vétheuil* paintings reveal the same fascination with the evanescent aspects of nature, so powerfully expressed in his later *Nymphéas* and *Thames* series.

Donna con collana rossa, a serene yet quietly haunting image of a young girl, painted by **Amedeo Modigliani** in 1918 (estimate: \$4,000,000-6,000,000), is being sold by order of the Board of Trustees of the Cincinnati Art Museum to benefit the Acquisitions Fund. Modigliani, together with many other artists, were being moved to the South of France by their dealer Léopold Zborowski, in 1918. Cagnes-sur-Mer and its neighboring towns became Modigliani's main work territory and source of inspiration after this move. His creativity flowered enormously and portraits of Cagnes's

residents are now considered amongst the strongest of his career. At first glance, the sitter of the present painting offers an image of tranquility, almost passivity. On a deeper level however, feelings of tension, energy, and unresolved emotions become apparent. Modigliani used different techniques to create this underlying liveliness. He focused heavily on the face, drawing the viewer's attention to her inscrutable features that mask a richness of feelings. His use of contrasting colors – blue for dress and the background, stark red for her necklace - further contribute to evoking tension. *Donna* also shows many other artistic influences at work: Cézanne for his vision of humanity, Brancusi for his abstract refinement, and African art for its rhythmic combinations of geometric form.

Other highlights of the evening sale include **Edgar Degas's** superb *La Loge* (estimate: \$4,000,000-6,000,000), which, by using a radically different vantage point, represented an entirely new kind of portrait when it was unveiled in 1888. From the Collection of Fernand and Beatrice Leval comes *La Table, la fin du déjeuner chez madame Vuillard* by **Edouard Vuillard** (estimate: \$2,500,000-3,500,000), a work executed circa 1895 and part of a series Vuillard painted, fixing his sight on the near breakdown of the marriage of his beloved sister Marie and Kerr-Xavier Roussel, his best friend.

Works on Paper and Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale

On May 5, the series of Impressionist and Modern Art sales will continue with a morning session devoted to Works on Paper immediately followed by the Day Sale of Impressionist and Modern Art, which will run through the afternoon. **Piet Mondrian's** early work rarely comes up for sale and the delicate watercolor of two roses (estimate: \$150,000-200,000) painted after 1921 is an exquisite example of his draftsmanship and eye for detail. Two beautiful works come from the Collection of Helen and David B. Pall: *Tête de Femme* by **Henri Matisse** (estimate: \$300,000-400,000), one of his last drawings and characterized by bold and active use of the full breadth of the paper ground, and *Etude pour 'L'Ensemble'* by **Wassily Kandinsky** (estimate: \$200,000-300,000), in which Kandinsky based his abstract forms on biomorphic shapes and used a dark paper as a backdrop. The Day Sale contributes to the already substantial offering of sculpture this season. By **Auguste Rodin**, the sale offers *Idylle d'Ixelles, petit modèle* (estimate: \$80,000-120,000), the only known cast of this size, and *Le sculpteur et sa muse* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000), a reflection of the end of his liaison with Camille Claudel in which the sculptor relates both his inner feelings toward women as well as their impact on his work. Property from the Francey and Dr. Martin L. Gecht Collection presents a large ensemble of sculpture highlighted by **Matisse's** *Nu couché à la chemise* (estimate: \$225,000-275,000) and **Picasso's** *Femme au bras levé* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000), one of the artist's famous cut sheet-metal works. The impressive *Grande table octogonale aux caryatides* by **Diego Giacometti** (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) comes from a Private European Collector. From the Ruth and Harvey Kaplan Collection, come *Faune* by **Henri Edmond Cross** (estimate: \$200,000-300,000); *Jeux (Nature morte aux cartes)* by **Fernand Léger** (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) and *Paysage avec oiseau blessé* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000) by **André Masson**.

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| Auction: Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale | May 4 at 7 p.m. |
| Works on Paper | May 5 at 10 a.m. |
| Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale | May 5 approx. 11.15 a.m. and 2 p.m. |
| Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center | April 29 – May 4 |

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Images available on request
Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

More information about Christie's sales of *Impressionist and Modern Art* can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.