

For Immediate Release

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BLUE PERIOD PICASSO TO LEAD CHRISTIE'S FALL SALES



Pablo Picasso, *Angel Fernández de Soto*, 1903
Oil on canvas

Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale

November 8, 2006

London/New York - The magnificent Blue Period portrait of Angel Fernández de Soto, 1903, will be offered at Christie's New York evening sale of Impressionist and Modern Art on 8 November 2006. The painting is arguably one of the most important of this period in the artist's oeuvre and is estimated at \$40 – 60 million (£22 – 33 million).

“We are thrilled to offer a work of such stature by Picasso in our evening sale this November,” says Guy Bennett, Senior Vice President and Head of Christie's Impressionist and Modern Art department in New York. “The dramatic and intense friendship of the artist and his subject makes this one of the most personal and powerful works from the Blue Period. Christie's has had particular success in offering works from

this moment in Picasso's career - from the haunting *Femme aux bras croisés* which sold in 2000 for \$55 million to most recently *Portrait de Germaine* which sold for \$18.6 million in May 2006, making us the natural choice to handle this sale."

Picasso met Angel de Soto in 1899 at the cafe Els Quatre Gats, an artists' gathering place in Barcelona. The pair quickly became close friends. De Soto was a self-styled Bohemian who earned a meager living working for Mir I Estrada, a firm in the Carrer Princessa that imported spices and other colonial products. Despite being almost penniless, de Soto established himself as a colourful and dandy man-about-town.

Described by Picasso biographer Josep Palau i Fabre as 'slender and elegant ... and almost always surrounded by women', this boulevardier became an ideal companion for Picasso. In 1902 and again in 1903 the two friends briefly shared a studio, but Angel's appetite for women and his penchant for entertaining, especially at night during Picasso's working hours, prevented the artist from painting and the arrangement soon came to an end. But the two remained friends until de Soto was killed in the Spanish Civil War in 1938.

Angel de Soto appears in a number of images by Picasso, culminating in this magnificent oil portrait. One of the most accomplished and moving paintings from Picasso's Blue Period – which lasted from autumn 1902 to spring 1904 – the work shows characteristic themes of this stage in the artist's career, including a deep sense of isolation and social alienation. Picasso approaches his sitter with the caricaturist's eye, emphasising his lithe physique and somewhat effete countenance, and exaggerating his prominent chin, elegant hands and crooked nose.

The portrait is a *tour de force* of thick, loose brushwork, giving bold definition of form. De Soto's haunting face with its heavy features emerges from a deep Prussian blue background. The elegantly dressed sitter appears to scrutinise the viewer with an intense gaze, his inner agitation suggested by the forceful brushstrokes and the cloud of smoke hovering above him. This is a striking study in psychological introspection, the mood of which is established by abstract harmonies of colour.

The portrait is being offered by The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and is being sold to benefit a variety of charitable purposes. Andrew Lloyd Webber will make no personal gain from the sale.

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Notes to Editors:

Christie's Blue Period results:

Pablo Picasso, *Femme aux bras croisés*, 1901-1902
Sold for \$55,006,000 (£38,465,734)
November 8, 2000 in New York

World Auction Record for a Blue Period work by Picasso

Pablo Picasso, *Maternité*, 1901
Sold for \$24,750,000 (£13,785,000)
November 14, 1988 in New York

Pablo Picasso, *Portrait de Germaine*, 1901
Sold for \$18,608,000 (£10,168,306)
May 1, 2006 in New York

For further information on The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation please contact
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