

For Immediate Release

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ITALIAN FLAIR

20th Century Italian Art at Christie's this October



Alberto Burri, Sacco Combustione, 1953 (estimate: £300,000-500,000)

The Italian Sale

21 October 2003 (evening)

London – Iconic works from some of the most renowned Italian artists of the last century will feature in Christie's fourth annual curated auction, The Italian Sale, on the evening of 21 October, providing an international forum for collectors of fine and important 20th Century Italian Art. The sale will comprise major paintings and sculptures from the foremost modern and contemporary masters while also bringing the best examples from artists better known in Italy to the international market, providing a comprehensive overview of the diversity and vitality of Italian art through the modern, post-war and contemporary eras.

“Christie's Italian Sale has, since its inception, been a highly-fuelled forum for Italian art on an international scale,” says Olivier Camu, the specialist in charge of the sale. “Year after year, we have developed ever closer links to museums, to private collectors in America, Asia and Europe and

to some of the artists themselves, giving us a privileged position from which to propel Italian art onto the international stage.”

The sale will be led by highly recognisable examples by modern Italian masters. Amongst the works in several media by Marino Marini is *Piccolo miracolo* of 1951 (estimate: £350,000-500,000), a bronze conceived in 1951 showing his perennial theme of the horse and rider, a powerful, universal metaphor for so many issues in the modern world, both on a personal and a world scale. Amongst other figurative sculptures are two good examples of Giacomo Manzù's central theme, the *Cardinale*, (estimates: £80,000-120,000 & £250,000-350,000).

Cortile di Via Fondazza (estimate: £220,000-280,000), painted in 1947, is a highly personal painting by Giorgio Morandi, a reclusive, almost monk-like artist whose paintings are amongst the most famous examples of Italian art in the Twentieth Century. The master of the still life has here used his sense of poise and tranquillity to create a shimmering, almost abstract, Zen-like image of the area around his home in the city in which he spent most of his life, la città rossa, Bologna. Also painted in 1947 and to be offered in the sale is Natura morta (£350,000-400,000). The composition, with its sophisticated structure and concentrated, subtle lyricism, allows the viewer an interesting perspective on the painting genre that was so obsessively revisited by the artist.

Amongst the more iconoclastic Italian artists of the Post-War period is Piero Manzoni, whose Achromes feature prominently in the sale, not least in the elegant and restrained Achrome (estimate: £250,000-350,000) of 1958, a deceptively simple, absorbing work in which time, gravity and kaolin have combined their efforts with the artist to harden and create a mystic product of the universe itself. With their varying perspectives on the use of the universal, works by Lucio Fontana and Enrico Castellani will also feature in the sale.

A contrasting perspective is provided by Alberto Burri, whose Sacco combustione (estimate: £300,000-500,000), from 1953, explores the extremes of the work's various media, which have been torn, pierced, painted and stitched together in a parody of a quilt. Visually, this creates a sensual variety of texture and effect, while being a strong statement about, and against, art as he rips the canvas without the precision of a Fontana. Taking seemingly poor materials Burri has created a beautiful and haunting work. There is a sense of transcendence in Sacco combustione, the materials being raised to the level of an artform, an effect heightened by the presence of gold leaf in the work.

Heading up the more 'Pop' inspired works in the sale is Domenico Gnoli's White Bed, painted with acrylic and sand on canvas in 1968 (estimate: £200,000-300,000). Gnoli's large paintings of details of shirts, heads, shoes, desks and beds both have the iconic, poster-like power of Pop while

being indirect heirs of the Metafisica tradition. White Bed seems to ooze into the viewer's reality, a crisp image of a perfect bed somehow condensed into a slightly skew reality. Meanwhile, Mimmo Rotella's collages provide another important testimony to the openly rebellious nature of Italian Pop art. His tattered and torn movie posters evoke a sense both of fame and transience, giving a sense of the decadence of the glamorous world portrayed in the poster.

Of particular importance this year is the section dedicated to the art from the 1960s which includes two masterpieces from Pino Pascali, the celebrated enfant terrible of Arte Povera: Cannone semovente, created in 1965, a towering imitation of a weapon over 2m high, filled with a powerful and immediate iconic force (£500,000-700,000), and the playful Quattro trofei di caccia of 1966, a fantastic example of the idiosyncratic Surrealism of this genial Southern Italian artist (£350,000-550,000). Likewise, Alighiero Boetti features prominently in the sale with several historic works from the 1960s and 70s. The selection includes tapestries and drawings, as well as Dama, from 1968 (£45,000-65,000), Mappa of 1983 (estimate: £150,000-200,000).and an important work related to his epic Mille fiumi cycle, perfectly demonstrating the poetic possibilities of his intricate aesthetic universe (£200,000-300,000).

From the likes of de Chirico to Boetti, from Afro to Merz, The Italian Sale will feature an array of works from the leading Italian artists of the 20th Century.

International Exhibition Tour:

Milan:

Tuesday 23rd September from 10.00am -7.00pm at B&B, via Durini 14, 20121 Milano

Florence:

25 - 28 September from 10.00am - 8.30pm at the Westin Excelsior Hotel, sala Affreschi, piazza Ognissanti, 3, Florence

Turin:

12 October from 11.00 - 8pm at Unicredit Private Banking, salone d'onore, via XX Settembre 31

New York:

8-10 October from 10am - 5pm (10am -2pm on 10 October only) at Christie's New York

The sale will open for viewing at Christie's King Street from 18-21 October.

Images available on request

Visit Christie's on the Web: www.christies.com