

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER A SUPERLATIVE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN ART

Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale November 1, 2005

New York – Christie's is privileged to offer a superb group of paintings and sculpture from *A Private American Collection*, during the evening sale of *Impressionist and Modern Art* on November 1. Brilliantly chosen in the course of just a few years, from the late 1960's to the early 1970's, these works of art, each exceptional in its own right, also form part of an unusual harmonious ensemble. The collection is expected to reach in excess of \$48 million.

Masterpieces are plentiful in this superlative group of works but one extraordinary highlight, both for its striking image as well as the entirely new artistic paradigm it provided, is Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *La blanchisseuse* (estimate: \$20 – 25 million). When Lautrec painted this stunning portrait, he was probably not yet 23 years old, but demonstrated a degree of worldly understanding that was well beyond his years. The painting depicts one of Paris' many laundresses – blanchisseuses – who often also worked as prostitutes, leading a hard existence that reflected the other side of the medal of life in the City of Light. The model for this work is Carmen Gaudin, a russet-haired woman Lautrec had met by chance. In this work, the artist captured and crystallized the very essence of Carmen, he projected himself straight into her soul without becoming sentimental. Warily, hunched forward by the weight of her chores, she leans forward in the light, suddenly assuming an almost saint-like aura. The painting is an exquisite example of Lautrec's magic gift to transform the particulars of daily life into the universal image of art. *La blanchisseuse* represents Lautrec's first steps into the Paris he would come to know and love best – the nether regions of mixed light and shade, of glamour and tawdriness, of Zola's haunting novels having come to life.

Two crucial elements brought about the refinement of Matisse's use of and incomparable feel for colors: the end of the First World War and his discovery of the vibrant and unique light of the Mediterranean. In 1919, after the dreariness of war had ebbed away, Matisse celebrated the revived hopes of joy and peace with a trilogy of brilliantly colored floral still-lives, including *Les marguerites* (estimate: \$10 – 15 million). Quintessentially French in their sensuousness and joie de vivre, the works also marked the sea change in the artist's own life and art as he responded to an irresistible wave of inspiration and creation which had swept over him after his return from Nice. He found his senses completely reawakened by the radiant and startling light of the Midi and a growing wave of contentment had come to fill his days and paintings. His own garden at Issy-les-Moulineaux was the source of inspiration for *Les marguerites* and the two accompanying paintings. Although full of the high spirit and joyfulness of the Nice experience, *Les marguerites* goes beyond the decorative richness of the Nice interiors, to a more reductionistic synthesis of form that will come to characterize Matisse's compositions of the 1930's and thereafter.

In 1912, Bonnard moved to Vernonnet, a picturesque hamlet in the valley of the Seine, and this move originates a new painterly focus on his own domestic life and its attributes. *Comptoir et assiettes de fruits* (estimate: \$5 – 7 million), is one of the most complex and largest examples from a series of still lifes Bonnard painted at Vernonnet, depicting a voluptuous assortment of foods and vessels, arranged on a white table cloth. The glossy finish and velvety texture of the fruits create an intricate dialogue of reflections, which are further challenged by the optical device of the precipitously forward tilting tabletop which lends the whole ensemble a floating quality. A touch of reality is added by the appearance of a cat's face and Bonnard's favorite dachshund. Also offered is Bonnard's *Les pots verts sur la terrasse*, 1912 (estimate: \$700,000-900,000), a work that clearly demonstrates the artist's fascination with the effect of light and colors.

The height of impressionism is represented with a delightful group of works by an illustrious triumvirate: Monet, Pissarro and Sisley. Monet was legendary for his obsession – even in winter – with 'en plein air' painting and *Route à Louveciennes, effet de neige* (estimate: \$4 – 6 million), offers a splendid example of the artist's superb feel for the quality and intricate structure of snow. It is one of the five snow scenes that Monet painted in the winter of 1869-70 and shows the road looking north, with the Marly aqueduct in the background and Pissarro's house on the left. While the sun has melted most of the snow at the left side of the road, there is an abundant amount that remains on the road and to the right of it. Completely different in character is Monet's *Les rosiers dans le jardin de Montgeron* (estimate: \$4 – 6 million), a lush and ebullient garden scene study for one of four panels Monet painted for Ernest Hoschedé, a pre-eminent early collector of impressionism. When Monet received the commission in 1876, he traveled to Montgeron and worked from an isolated fishing cabin located on the Hoschedé property where he profoundly enjoyed and expressed the pleasures of being surrounded by nature. Monet completed the four paintings by the end of that year. By a

turn of fate, Monet married Alice Hoschedé several years later, after she had been abandoned by her husband and he had become a widower.

The paintings Pissarro made in and around Pontoise are widely recognized as the most beautiful in the artist's oeuvre and *Paysage, la moisson, Pontoise* (estimate: \$4 – 6 million) executed in 1873, is a sublime example of this phase in his career. The work depicts one of Pissarro's favorite Pontoise motifs: the rolling wheat fields north of the town, stretched between isolated farm villages. In composition, the present painting reflects Pissarro's strong sense of geometry whereas the use of light brushwork and the bright colors reveal a strong influence of Monet.

Bords de Seine à Port-Marly (estimate: \$1.8 – 2.5 million), painted by Sisley in 1875 depicts a group of farmhouses on the Ile de la Loge, a view the artist captured from the riverbank of the Marly, looking directly across the Seine toward the Ile. A figure standing in a small skiff is in the process of dredging sand from the bottom of the river, providing a clear channel for the barge traffic between Le Havre and Paris. The present work was firstly owned by Count Armand Doria, an important early collector of impressionist paintings.

The group of works from *An American Private Collection* further includes *Nature morte au raisin*, 1920, by Joan Miró (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000); Eduard Vuillard's *Géraniums et boules de neige*, circa 1910 (estimate: \$400,000-600,000); *Omnibus Madeleine Bastille* by Kees van Dongen (estimate: \$400,000-600,000); *La danse espagnole*, a lovely bronze by Degas (estimate: \$400,000-600,000); and Georges Braque's *Le Comptoir*, 1942 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000), which reflects a clear indebtedness to the almost mystical still life paintings of Jean-Baptiste Chardin.

Auction: Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale November 1 at 7 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center October 28 – November 1

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Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

More information about Christie's sale of *A Private American Collection* 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.