

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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**REMBRANDT MASTERPIECE
– UNSEEN IN PUBLIC FOR 40 YEARS –
TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S
IN DECEMBER 2009**



Rembrandt Harmensz. Van Rijn (1606-1669)
Portrait of a man, half-length, with his arms akimbo
Estimate: £18 million to £25 million

Old Masters and 19th Century Art Evening Sale

Auction: Tuesday 8 December 2009 at 7pm

Exhibition: 4 to 8 December 2009

London – Christie's will offer a masterpiece by Rembrandt (1606-1669) at the *Old Masters and 19th Century Art Evening Sale* on Tuesday 8 December 2009 in London. Unseen in public for almost 40 years and offered at auction for the first time since 1930, *Portrait of a man, half-length, with his arms akimbo*, 1658, is offered from a distinguished private collection and is expected to realise £18 million to £25 million.

Richard Knight, International co-Head of Old Masters and 19th Century Art at Christie's:

'Rembrandt is recognised as one of the greatest and most influential artists in European history, and we are honoured to be able to offer at auction a truly remarkable portrait by him dated 1658. The picture has been unseen in public since 1970, and we are excited to be exhibiting it for the first time in almost 40 years in London from 4 to 8 December. The same exhibition and auction will also feature Domenichino's 'Saint John the Evangelist', another exceptional 17th century masterpiece of the greatest importance, quality and condition, and we look forward to welcoming international collectors and institutions from around the world to what will be a landmark auction in the history of the European art market on 8 December 2009 at Christie's in London.'

Portrait of a man, half-length, with his arms akimbo is a tour de force painted in 1658 during one of Rembrandt's most artistically inventive periods and at the same time as one of the most turbulent stages of his personal life. In 1658 the artist was forced to sell his house and move to a smaller studio having been declared bankrupt two years earlier. By this time Rembrandt had evolved his much celebrated late style, characterised by an increasingly bold and animated manner of execution and a masterful rendition of colour, lighting and texture. Only one other dated painting by the artist from 1658 is known to exist; the great three-quarter length *Self-portrait* now in the Frick Museum, New York.

Portrait of a man, half-length, with his arms akimbo measures 42¼ x 34¼ inches (107.4cm x 87cm) and depicts an unknown sitter facing the artist with a defiant pose, hands on hips in a display of complete self-assurance. The brushstrokes are painted onto the canvas with a loose yet controlled mastery, and as with the best of the artist's late works, it boasts a mesmerising use of light and shade. While the sitter is unknown, he is wearing an unusual costume, perhaps suggesting that he was a visitor to Amsterdam; the painting has previously been called *Portrait of an Admiral*.

Portrait of a man, half-length, with his arms akimbo, 1658, was first published in the artist's catalogue raisonnée by Cornelius Hofstede de Groot in 1916, and has subsequently been recorded by all of the principal scholars of the artist through the course of the 20th century. It has only recently been examined for the first time by Professor Ernst van de Wetering, the foremost scholar on the artist and chairman of the Rembrandt Research Project

The portrait was first recorded in 1847 at an exhibition at the British Institution in London where it was lent from the collection of George Folliott (d.1851). His grandson sold the picture at auction in London on 14 May 1930 where it realised £18,500 – a noteworthy sum at the time. Soon afterwards, it was acquired privately by George Huntington Hartford II, a prominent art collector and the principal heir to the Atlantic and Pacific supermarket chain who for a long time was one of the richest men in the world. He acquired the work while only in his 20s and described it throughout his life as *'the greatest Rembrandt portrait I have ever seen'*. He donated the portrait to Columbia University in 1958 where it hung in the President's office. When students occupied the office during a demonstration in 1968, the portrait was removed and put into

storage before being sold privately in 1974 to benefit the endowment fund of the University. It has been in the same distinguished private collection since 1974, and has been unseen in public since it was shown at the exhibition *Rembrandt After 300 Years* at The Detroit Institute of Arts in 1970.

Domenichino's *Saint John the Evangelist*



The auction will also feature *Saint John the Evangelist* by Domenico Zampieri, called Il Domenichino (1581-1641), one of the most important Baroque paintings to be presented at auction in a generation, which will be presented for sale for the first time in over 100 years at Christie's in December (estimate: £7 million to £10 million).

Most probably painted for Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani or his younger brother, Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani (1564-1637), the picture was first recorded in 1621 as part of their collection in Rome. The Giustinianis were among the most important Italian art collectors of the 17th century, and the picture was one of the most significant of their collection which also included no fewer than 15 works by Caravaggio. Its importance led it to be included in most 18th century guide books and it was engraved by Jean-Honoré Fragonard. Measuring almost 2.5 metres by 2 metres, it is a reinterpretation of the artist's pendentive fresco of Saint John the Evangelist in Sant'Andrea della Valle, Rome. Apparently painted soon afterwards (*circa* 1627-29), it displays a sculptural character which would go on to define the artist's most celebrated masterpieces; the frescoes in the chapel of Saint Januarius in the Cathedral at Naples.

Domenico Zampieri, called Il Domenichino (1581-1641), was one of the most important Italian artists of the 17th century. By the 18th century he enjoyed an enormous reputation and his masterpiece *Last Communion of St. Jerome* in the Vatican was considered to be one of the greatest pictures ever painted, second only to Raphael.

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**Images available on request
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- The current world record price for a work by Rembrandt sold at auction was established when *Portrait of a lady aged 62* realised £19,800,000 (\$28,675,830) at Christie's London on 13 December 2000. This represents the 4th highest ever price for an Old Master painting sold at auction.