

CHRISTIE'S

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TWO EXCEEDINGLY RARE STUDIES FOR GEORGES SEURAT'S MASTERPIECE

Un Dimanche d'été à l'Île de La Grande Jatte

WILL HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S MAY 20TH CENTURY EVENING SALE



LEFT: Georges Seurat, *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)*, oil on cradled panel, 6 x 9 3/4 in., 1884 | \$7,000,000-10,000,000
RIGHT: Georges Seurat, *Le Saint-Cyrien*, oil on cradled panel, 6 x 9 3/4 in., 1884 \$3,000,000-5,000,000

NEW YORK – On May 11, Christie's 20th Century Evening Sale will be highlighted by two works by Georges Seurat, *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)*, 1884 (\$7-10 million) and *Le Saint-Cyrien*, 1884 (\$3-5 million) being sold from the **Family of Robert Treat Paine II**. The two oil panels are among the few examples of Seurat's extensive preparatory practice for this masterpiece to remain in private hands – today, more than half of the oil studies for *La Grande Jatte* are in the collections of prestigious museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, and the National Gallery of Art, London, among others.

Both Seurat panels remained in the artist's possession until his untimely death in 1890, at which point, *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)* was acquired shortly thereafter by a fellow artist, the Belgian painter Jean de Greef. The painting would pass through the collection of the Symbolist poet and art dealer Charles Vignier during the early twentieth century, before crossing the Atlantic in the mid-1920s. Similarly, *Le Saint-Cyrien* was gifted by the artist's mother to the painter Henri-Edmond Cross, a close friend of Seurat. It subsequently passed to Félix Fénéon, the influential French art critic who coined the term Neo-Impressionism, before also making its way to the Americas, where it was reunited with *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)* in 1929.

Cyanne Chutkow, Deputy Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's, remarked: “It is an honor to have been entrusted with these two exquisitely painted panels, which are among the most fully realized and richly colored studies for Georges Seurat's revolutionary *Un Dimanche d'été à l'Île de La Grande Jatte* to come to market in years. The artist's radical departure from the established notions of composition and coloration come into sharp focus in these paintings, offering a nuanced insight into Seurat's creative process throughout this breakthrough period in his oeuvre. *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)* and *Le Saint-Cyrien* were acquired in 1929 by the American collector Robert

Treat Paine II, a fierce intellectual renowned for his highly selective purchases that were best representatives of an artist's *oeuvre*. These two panels have been cherished by subsequent generations of his family for nearly a century."

Seurat completed his first studies for *Un Dimanche d'été à l'Île de La Grande Jatte* at the same time that he began painting the monumental composition, and over the following year and a half would move back and forth between drawings, outdoor sketches, and preparatory canvases in his studio, gradually changing and altering the final composition as his ideas developed and progressed. The artist produced twenty-eight drawings, twenty-eight oil on board paintings – including the two works presented for sale – and three works on canvas in preparation for the final composition. Together these studies chart the gradual evolution of Seurat's ideas and thoughts in relation to his grand masterpiece, each panel or sheet revealing a different aspect of the various compositional and chromatic challenges that the artist faced.

As is evident from the majority of the oil panels, including *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)* and *Le Saint-Cyrien*, Seurat had settled on his general viewpoint within the scene quite early in the painting's conception. Apart from subtle shifts in the positioning or profiles of the trees, the view of the landscape changed little over the course of his studies. Instead, the drawings and oil studies focused primarily on the nuances of color and light within the landscape, as well as the modelling of the figures and their arrangement within the scene.

In *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)*, the artist focuses on the elegant woman in a rose colored skirt and tailored jacket allowing her to occupy a prominent position that is close to her final placement in *Un Dimanche d'été à l'Île de La Grande Jatte* housed at the Art Institute of Chicago. To her left, a tall man wearing an overcoat and top hat adopts a *contrapposto* stance, his back turned to the goings-on of the river, as his attention is caught by the young woman walking by. Though he who would disappear completely from the artist's studies after the present work, the presence of the gentleman in *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)* lends the scene a rich sense of intrigue – though the two stand apart, suggesting they are not together, there is something in their body language and stance that implies the pair are about to begin a conversation.

In contrast to the dynamic interactions that appear to take place between the characters in *Paysage et personnages (La jupe rose)*, the power of *Le Saint-Cyrien* lies in its focus on a single lone figure at the far end of the island, the stark emptiness of the usual bustling park making his presence in the scene all the more surprising. His bright scarlet trousers punctuate the great expanse of green grass surrounding him, and draw our eyes straight through the serene landscape to his form. The figure appears in much the same position within the final full-scale composition, though he is joined by a fellow soldier, doubling their impact of his uniform within the scene. The majority of *Le Saint-Cyrien* is given over to the study of the play of light falling across different aspects of the park. The panel was likely built up patiently, in carefully considered layers and adjustments, and intended primarily as a color study. Seurat pays close attention to the interaction of different hues in even the smallest patches of sunlight, seen perhaps most clearly in the examination of tone and gradient in the cluster of trees dotted across scene.

The Boston-based collector Robert Treat Paine II was a descendant of Robert Treat Paine (1731-1814), a signatory of the Declaration of Independence, and nephew of the dynamic philanthropist and social reformer Robert Treat Paine Jr., after whom he was named. Robert Treat Paine II was an avid collector and true connoisseur of art, acquiring a diverse array of masterpieces over the course of his life and gifting many to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Property from the Family of Robert Treat Paine II will also be underscored by works from Henri-Edmond Cross, Alexander Calder, Jules Pascin, and William Glackens throughout May in Christie's 20th Century and American Art Sales; Hans Hoffman in the First Open Sale in July; and Francesco Fanelli in the October Old Master Art sale.

Exhibition Details:

Christie's New York: April 30-May 11

Auction: Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Livestreamed globally via [christies.com](https://www.christies.com)

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