

For Immediate Release

October 4, 2007

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CEZANNE, MATISSE AND PICASSO TO LEAD CHRISTIE'S IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN ART EVENING SALE

Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale November 6, 2007

New York – Christie's Evening Sale of *Impressionist and Modern Art* on November 6, with previews in New York starting on November 2, will be the quintessential 'museum of an instant,' showcasing a tightly edited ensemble of paintings and sculpture that are among the most riveting and cardinal artistic creations of the late 19th/early 20th century. Works by Cézanne, Matisse, Modigliani, Signac and Picasso will be highlighting the sale alongside paintings by Balthus, Beckmann, Toulouse-Lautrec and Léger.

"I'm still going to the Cézanne room ... the puzzlement and insecurity of one's confrontation with his work... and then suddenly one has the right eyes." (Rainer Maria Rilke, October 10, 1907)

Paul Cézanne, the father of modernism to many, is represented in the sale with an extraordinary group of five watercolors and two paintings. Of these, *Portrait de Vallier*, 1904/06 (estimate: \$15 – 25 million) is arguably the finest watercolor to have come to market in recent memory. The work portrays Vallier, the gardener who tended the property surrounding Cézanne's studio in the Chemin des Lauves. Vallier, who consented to pose for portraits on a regular basis during the last years of his life, is seen against a network of undulating tree trunks and verdant foliage. The Vallier portrait fits into the series of peasant and laborers portraits which Cézanne had begun in the late 1880s but it transcends these works in its powerful emotional charge. In fact, the work may even be considered a metaphorical self-portrait, emblematic of the close identification of the artist with his model.

Cézanne's depiction of la Montagne Sainte-Victoire, set in a rocky and rugged landscape dotted with prehistoric caves and Celtic, Roman and medieval ruins, is widely regarded as one of the major catalysts in the development of cubism. During the last years of his life, the artist frequently painted

the vast, isolated terrain east of Aix-en-Provence, and the sale offers two exquisite drawings of the subject, *La Montagne Sainte Victoire vue des Lauves*, 1902/06 and the double-sided *Route tournante* with a recto depicting *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire vue des Lauves* (estimate: \$5 – 7 million each). In total Cézanne painted seventeen watercolors in 1902/06 which depict the craggy peak of the Montagne Sainte-Victoire from the slopes of Les Lauves. Although these can not be regarded as an ensemble, they do represent the last and most important series of landscapes the artist painted of this seminal motif.

Les Jas de Bouffan, painted in 1890/94 (estimate: \$12 – 16 million), depicts the ornamental pool which stood in front of the house and which was one of the artist's favorite motifs on the property. Jas de Bouffan, its house and gardens, was the site of some of Cézanne's earliest artistic explorations in the 1860s when he began exploring outdoors paintings and would remain his main source of inspiration for decades to come. The present painting, which has been described as 'Cézanne's farewell to the Jas' is both the artist's final view of the pool as well as the very last view Cézanne executed of his family's home near Aix and occupies a very critical place in his oeuvre.

Compotier et assiette de biscuits (estimate: \$10 – 15 million), painted circa 1877, is one of several still-lives of fruit and sweets that Cézanne painted in 1877/79. In this painting, Cézanne, who had been compared by Roger Fry to Rembrandt for his mastery of the still-life genre and famously said "With an apple, I want to astonish Paris," renders red and yellow apples nestling in a bed of dark green leaves which sets off the table cloth and the fruit bowl. Interestingly, the wallpaper shown in the background of the painting provides a clue as to its dating as it has been associated with the apartment on rue de l'Ouest where Cézanne and his wife lived from the end of 1876 through March of 1878 and again in the spring of 1879.

In vibrancy, color-harmony and expressiveness, few portraits reach the heights Modigliani conquered with his *Portrait du sculpteur Oscar Miestchaninoff*, 1916 (estimate: \$18 – 25 million). He depicts his subject seated with his hands firmly planted on his lap, and views him frontally. Although linear rhythms, reminiscent of African art and of Modigliani's own work as a sculptor, are clear, Miestchaninoff is very much a real-life person with real-life traits running through the work. Head and neck are slightly tilted, the position of the hands reveals confidence as well as a shimmer of awkwardness, and the striking rosy-red cheeks transform the mask-like features into living flesh. This is the portrait of a sympathetic friend, a fellow emigre artist – Miestchaninoff had arrived in Paris from Vitebsk in 1906 – and someone Modigliani felt affectionate toward. The second Modigliani portrait in the sale, is of an entirely different nature, and depicts an unnamed young girl in peasant clothes. She is one of the sitters the artist worked with in Cagnes-sur-Mer, a village in the South of France where he worked after having been evacuated from Paris by his dealer Leopold Zborowski in the spring of 1918. From 1917 onwards, Modigliani's style had changed – he had

become increasingly focused on naturalism and in the heightened sense of solidity and mass, one recognizes the influence of Cezanne. This move toward the more natural, away from the affected culminated in his Cagnes-sur-Mer stay where he was far away from the Parisian coterie which normally surrounded him. *Jeune fille assise en chemise* (estimate: \$9 – 12 million) was executed in 1918 and belongs to a group of at least three paintings, which all depict the same model.

‘Picasso form, Matisse color’ were Kandinsky’s painterly ideals, and the sale offers a spectacular example by each of these two fabulous masters. Interestingly enough, both paintings have as a subject the exotic and sensuous odalisque, a recurrent favorite focus in art history ever since 18th century Vienna surrendered to the *alla turca* theme and the highly mysterious qualities of the Ottoman Empire inspired composers and artists alike. Matisse painted odalisques as the mainstay of his art for more than two decades while he was at the height of his career. Picasso claimed to have inherited the odalisque from Matisse upon the latter’s death in 1954 and in one form or another, this subject dominated the work of his final years, until his death in 1973. *L’Odalisque, harmonie bleue*, 1937 (estimate: \$15 – 20 million) by Henri Matisse, portrays Lydia Delectorskaya, a blond Russian émigrée who served as a model for several of his paintings. She is attired in a chiffon jacket with translucent lace sleeves and green billowing silk pants. The contours of her figure dovetail with the curving stems of the flowers, accentuating Matisse’s *femme-fleur* idea, the woman as epitome of beauty, sensuality and fertility. “I do Odalisques in order to do nudes,” Matisse declared in 1929. However, for the viewer who is observing the atmosphere of idleness and fantasy which hovers over *L’Odalisque*, while losing oneself completely in the exotic and luxuriant décor of the secluded environment which is so attractive to the voyeuristic gaze and which creates such strong seductively sensual impressions, this simple phrase represents nothing if not a monumental understatement.

Picasso’s *Femme accroupie au costume turc (Jacqueline)*, painted on 26 November 1955 (estimate on request), is the crowning, definitive painting in a group of ten portraits of his companion Jacqueline Roque which the artist painted toward the end of 1955, and which all depict the odalisque, the exotically robed or nude figure of an alluring young woman. When Matisse died in 1954, Picasso, then in his early 70s, was virtually alone. With the memory of his friend Matisse weighing heavily on his mind, he began his variations on Delacroix, and continuing with Matisse, Velazquez, Rembrandt, Ingres and Manet, he seemed to have felt a need to measure himself against these masters. The Delacroix angle was further sharpened through the presence of Jacqueline Roque, Picasso’s new companion, who epitomized the Delacroix type. Picasso painted the present painting in one day, on 26 November 1955, and through the inclusion of the screen or rug visible on the right side and a striking floor pattern, he opened a new dimension of spaciousness and renders the most Matisse-like of all his *Les Femmes d’Alger*-related works. *Femme accroupie au costume turc* is Picasso’s ultimate and consummate odalisque. The artist never would return to this subject in his painting in this full-blown, comprehensively realized manner.

After setting a world auction record for Signac in the May sale with *Arrière du tub*, at \$11.68 million, Christie's follows up with another superb masterpiece by this pointillist artist par excellence – *Cassis. Cap Canaille* (estimate: \$8 – 12 million), painted in 1889. Signac painted five important and quintessentially Neo-Impressionist canvases during his stay in Cassis, a small town on the Mediterranean coast, during April-June 1889. Following his custom at the time, he designated each of these works with an opus number, which was opus 200 for the present painting. *Cassis. Cap Canaille* has been in private collections for virtually all of its history and has not appeared on the market since 1974 when it was last sold. Signac's painting fully captures the grandeur of Cap Canaille, the highest falaise in all of France, in all its magnificence. When exhibited as a center piece in Signac retrospective exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 2001, this painting dazzled viewers as they contemplated the imposing presence of the brilliant yellow-red massif and its monolithic profile sharply etched against a cloudless pale blue sky and magically mirrored in the calm waters of the bay below. Signac himself thought highly of the work and included it in two exhibitions in 1890, first in January at the Salon des XX in Brussels and in March in the sixth Salon des Indépendants in Paris. Its first owner was Sylvie Deschamps, the head of the prestigious Monnom publishing house in Brussels.

A major inspirational figure for generations of artists was Camille Pissarro, and the sale will present an important group of works by him. *Les Quatre Saisons*, 1872/73 (estimate: \$12 – 18 million), a cycle of four landscapes, shows Pissarro at his most magnificent, and has widely been acclaimed to be one of his finest achievements from the early 1870s, 'the apex of his career as a landscape painter.' *Le Printemps*, *L'Été* and *l'Automne* were all painted on the outskirts of Pontoise, a bustling market town north-west of Paris. *L'Hiver* was executed in Louveciennes. The paintings follow similar patterns in that there are no potent forms, no allegorical subjects and the eye can observe with great detachment, reading in and along the surface of the ever-productive earth stretching out gloriously in these generous, horizontal formats. All four paintings share the elongated, panoramic perspective and a preponderance of warm, ocher tonalities. *Les Quatre Saisons* was the first major commission Pissarro ever received and it was only in 1891, during the sale of the works of Pissarro's patron, collector/banker Achille Arosa, that the set was publicly exhibited together for the first time. The cycle was then dispersed but reunited in 1901 and has remained in its entirety ever since.

Further highlights include *Le Rêve II*, 1956/57 by Balthus (estimate: \$9 – 12 million); Max Beckmann's *Stilleben mit Grammophon and Schwertlilien*, 1924 (estimate: \$7 – 10 million); *Au bal de l'Opéra* by Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, executed in 1893 (estimate: \$6 – 8 million) and Claude Monet's *Pins, cap d'Antibes*, 1888 (estimate: \$4 – 6 million)

On November 7, Impressionist and Modern Art will further be offered in the Day Sale and the Works on Paper sales. The *Day Sale* will feature *Les bras vides*, a canvas by Kees van Dongen from the fabled collection of Anton Philips (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) as well as Matisse's *Figure assise, tapis rayé*, 1920 (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000) which will be the cover lot of the catalogue. The *Works on Paper Sale* features Edouard Vuillard's superb *Biana Duhamel dans le role de 'Miss Hehyett'*, drawn circa 1891-92 (estimate: \$350,000-450,000) as well as cover lot, Fernand Léger's *Les Lutteurs*, 1921, which calls to mind the sportsmen of Rousseau's *Joueurs de Foot-Ball* which Léger would certainly have seen as the Salon des Indépendents of 1908 (estimate: \$450,000-650,000). Both sales will also offer works from the Estate of Pierre-Noel Matisse and Property from a Distinguished European Collection including Tamara de Lempicka's *Le turban vert*, 1929 (estimate: \$700,000-900,000), René Magritte's *L'esprit et la forme*, 1961 (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) and Egon Schiele's *Male Torso (Body and Arm)*, 1911 (estimate: \$700,000-900,000).

Auction: Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale November 6 at 6.30 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center November 2 – 6

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