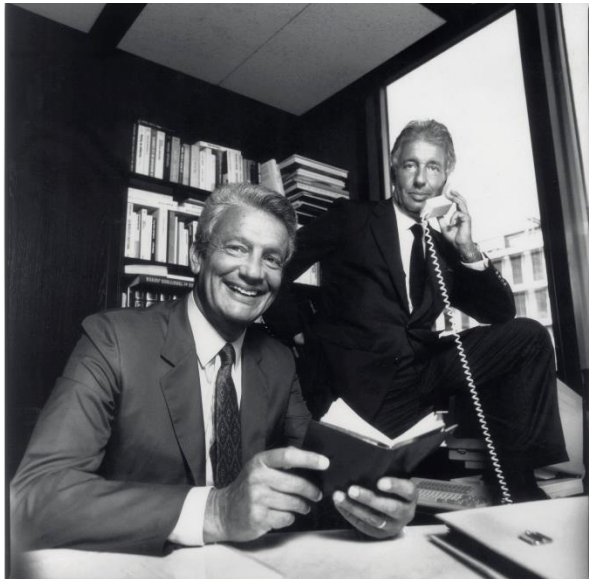


CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE - PARIS – FRIDAY 23 APRIL 2021 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Collection of Francis Gross

Christie's Paris - 30 June 2021



Francis Gross in the foreground and his brother Gilbert

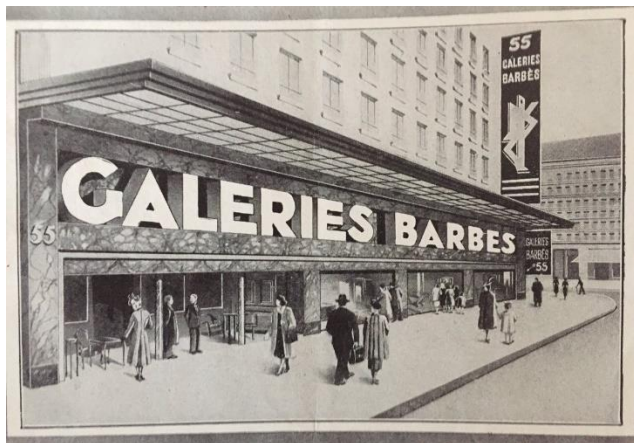


René Magritte (1898-1967)
La Vengeance, 1936
Estimate on request

Paris— On 30 June, Christie's will be offering an exceptional collection of 20th century works assembled over a decade by the successful businessman Francis Gross, unseen since his death in 1992. This discreet collector, who comes from a family of entrepreneurs, brought together works by the most iconic artists of the 20th century including Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti, Aristide Maillol, René Magritte, Henri Matisse, Henri Moore, Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Nicolas de Staël. Preciously preserved by his family for nearly 30 years, the 28 lots that compose this group testifies to Francis Gross's extensive knowledge and passion for Impressionist and modern art. It is estimated at between €14 and €20 million.

This sale will be part of a series of auctions, *London to Paris – 20th & 21st Century Sales*, on 30 June across London and Paris, livestreamed globally, commencing at 3pm (Paris time) with a *20th/21st Century Art* sale from London followed by *The collection of Francis Gross* and *Paris Post-War and Contemporary Evening Auction* both orchestrated from Paris. The series of auctions will take live bidding from Hong Kong, New York, London and Paris.

Pierre Martin-Vivier, Deputy Chairman Post-War & Contemporary Art: "It is a great honour for our company to offer this exceptional collection in Paris. Comprising 28 paintings and sculptures, this collection has not been shown to the public since the death of Francis Gross in 1992. It bears witness to the precise and sure taste of a great visionary man and businessman who had a profound impact on the world of advertising. Among the many works in the collection is *La Vengeance*, a previously unseen work by René Magritte, whose sale is already shaping up to be one of the major art market event of the year. We are confident that this important collection will attract collectors and art lovers from all over the world."



Francis Gross began his professional career in the late 1960s when his father, Maurice, entrusted him with the family business: the Galeries Barbès. This legendary store, founded in 1895 by his grandfather, Jules Gross, was a resounding success, particularly after the First World War, when Galeries Barbès had a dozen buildings in the Barbès-Clignancourt district. The group grew exponentially until it reached a turnover of 100 million francs, making it the largest furniture distributor of the inter-war period. After the death of Jules Gross, the business was taken over by

Maurice, the founder's eldest son, and then by Francis, son of the latter, in the late 1960s. He had a flair for the business and developed several concepts to attract new customers, such as night openings, free buffets and intensive advertising campaigns. After selling the business to a major trader, Francis Gross joined his brother Gilbert in 1974 in an advertising company that became the Carat Group in 1986. Specializing in the purchase of advertising space, the company experienced meteoric growth and revolutionized the world of advertising.

On the fringe of his professional activities, Francis Gross developed a passion for art in the mid-1980s and began to acquire works of art almost compulsively. His collection grew over the years to include the greatest artists in impressionist, modern and contemporary art, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Andy Warhol and Daniel Buren. His daughters remember with nostalgia visiting artists' studios with their father, such as Buren's, on several occasions. Francis Gross was close to artists and often bought directly from them or in the many art galleries he frequented.

Among the works presented in this collection is **René Magritte's** *La vengeance*, a 1936 masterpiece never before offered at auction. Produced during the artist's best years, this work is enclosed in a gilded frame, in the living room of a bourgeois flat, the painting, which had been locked up too quickly in its two dimensions, comes out of its frame to invade the real world and signify to the viewer that Painting is above all a recreation of the World. Bought in 1936 by the Belgian surrealist poet Paul Colinet, lover of the painter's wife, the painting entered an American collection in the 1960s before being acquired by Francis Gross in the mid-1980s. The estimate is in the region of 6-8 million euros.





A painting by **Nicolas de Staël** will also come under the auction hammer with *Bouteilles*, painted in 1952 (estimate: €2,000,000-3,000,000). Considered one of the most important artists of the post-war period, Nicolas de Staël's *Bouteilles* is a pivotal work, showing the painter's return to figuration, a transition that marks one of the major turning points in Western painting. This work initially comes from the collection of the artist's art dealer, the great Jacques Dubourg.

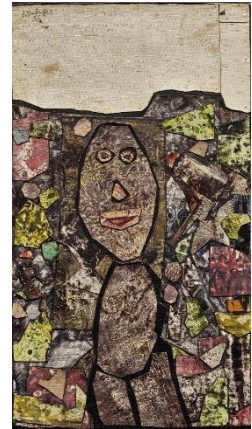
The second version of Eli Lotar's bust, *Lotar II*, by **Alberto Giacometti** is also part of this remarkable ensemble. Known as the artist's last model, Eli Lotar, filmmaker and photographer, lived out his final years thanks to the generosity of old friends such as Giacometti, who asked him to pose and perform small services in exchange for money.

Giorgio Soavi, the Italian writer and poet, described these intermittent poses in which Lotar had to maintain absolute immobility: *'Giacometti's eyes were filled with strange glimmers, his body vibrated with all its limbs, he followed only the impulses that governed his hands, his arms, his legs: he was in ecstasy. Observing the two faces carefully, I understood the secret that allowed Lotar not to breathe: if he was the ideal model for this sculpture, it was because Eli was dead. He did not breathe, did not think, remained highly concentrated. An electric current linked the artist to the model, enveloping them in a real complicity. They played together, without ball, racket or net.'*



Another key piece is a portrait of Dora Maar by **Pablo Picasso** executed in 1941. Instead of exploring this portrait in oil as usual, Picasso returned to synthetic cubism with the use of papier-collés. The dress is made of folded wallpaper, the face is worked in gouache and graphite. The crown is a collage of golden foliage and the whole is affixed to a corrugated cardboard which adds an extra dimension to this unique work which perfectly illustrates the limitless creativity of the genius from Malaga (estimate: €800,000-1,200,000).

Two works by **Jean Dubuffet** complete the sale. Dating from different periods, they reflect the preoccupations that governed the artist during the first two decades of his career. *Le chien mangeur de cheveux*, painted during the war, in 1943, shows in an unusual scene the beginnings of the art brut of which Dubuffet was to be the great promoter (estimate: €500,000-700,000). *L'Africain*, a collage of canvases on canvas created in 1956 and acquired from the Pierre Matisse Gallery, reveals the artist's obsession with materials and textures in the 1950s (estimate: €600,000-800,000).



Sale : Wednesday 30 June 2021. This auction will be part of a series of auctions from *London to Paris* on 30 June 2021 commencing with a *20th/21st Century Art* sale at 3pm (Paris time) followed by the *Collection of Francis Gross* and ending with the *Paris Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*. The three auctions will be taking biddings from Hong Kong and New York

Viewings: From 26 to 30 June from 10am to 6pm. Open on Sunday from 2pm to 6pm

Christie's : 9 avenue Matignon, 75008 Paris

PRESS CONTACT:

Beverly Bueninck - +33 (0)1 40 76 84 08 - bbueninck@christies.com
Briséis Leenhardt +33 (0)6 71 62 74 15 – BLeenhardt@christiespartners.com

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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Images available on request

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