

For Immediate Release

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DRAWING OF A MALE NUDE BY MICHELANGELO A WINTER HIGHLIGHT FOR CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK

Old Master and 19th Century Drawings
January 24, 2006



New York – Christie's announces the sale of the *Study of a male torso* by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), to be sold in New York on January 24, 2006. One of only a handful of Michelangelo drawings still in private ownership, this masterful work offers collectors around the globe an extremely rare opportunity to own a masterpiece by one of the towering geniuses of Western Art.

Expected to realize in the region of \$4 million, this black chalk drawing has appeared on the open market only once before. Formerly part of the famous collection formed by John Malcolm of Poltalloch (1805-93), it was one of a group of important drawings given by him to his son-in-law Alfred Gathorne-Hardy. On Malcolm's death the greater part of the collection was bought by the British Museum, but this drawing remained with the family. It reappeared for sale only in 1976, when it was bought by the current owner, a private collector, for £178,200, setting a new world auction record for an Old Master Drawing.

Noël Annesley, Honorary Chairman, Christie's International (UK) Ltd. notes "The searching and sensitive chalk strokes of this powerful drawing epitomize Michelangelo's lifelong preoccupation with the expressive possibilities of the male nude."

Male torso is one of a small number of very late drawings by the artist which seem to relate to the figure of Christ for a Pietà composition, although no commission of this type is recorded. As with the similarly late series of drawings of the Crucifixion, this drawing may simply be the ageing artist musing on his own mortality, a mood reflected in his famous mystical poems of the same period. The monumental proportions of the figure suggest that it is the summation of a lifetime's study of the human form rather than a drawing from a studio model.

Dating from the 1550s, while the artist was working on the completion of St. Peter's, this study miraculously survived Michelangelo's determined destruction of his own drawings. The letters of his contemporaries are full of references to bonfires in which his sketches were destroyed, although his motives for this seeming vandalism are disputed. His biographer Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) suggested he was afraid that the intensity of his creative struggles would be revealed through scrutiny of his working drawings, but he may simply have been paranoid that his legendary inventiveness would swiftly be copied by unscrupulous fellow artists. Whatever the reason, of the tens of thousands of drawings that he must have produced over a productive career spanning seven decades only a little more than 600 survive; and the overwhelming majority of these have long been in the great public collections of Europe.

Notes to editors:

Christie's holds regular sales of Old Master Drawings in London, New York and Paris, and holds the majority share of the international market. The following are the top 3 prices realized for Old Master Drawings at auction, all achieved at Christie's:

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| 1. | 4 th July 2000 | Michelangelo, <i>The Risen Christ</i> , Christie's London | \$12,305,206 |
| | | World Record Price for an Old Master Drawing at Auction | |
| 2. | 10 th July 2001 | Leonardo da Vinci, <i>Horse and Rider</i> , Christie's London | \$11,474,543 |
| | | World Auction Record for a Drawing by Leonardo | |
| 3. | 5 th July 2005 | Andrea del Sarto, <i>Saint Joseph</i> , Christie's London | \$11,395,008 |
| | | World Auction Record for a Drawing by del Sarto | |

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Auction: Old Master and 19th Century Drawings
January 24, 2006 at 11am
Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center
January 19 – 23

