

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 16 OCTOBER 2023

RENE MAGRITTE'S

L'EMPIRE DES LUMIÈRES

TO HIGHLIGHT 20TH CENTURY EVENING SALE



RENE MAGRITTE (1898-1967)

L'empire des lumières

oil on canvas

19 1/8 x 23 1/8 in. (48.5 x 58.7 cm.)

Painted in 1949

\$25 – 35 million

NEW YORK – Christie's is honored to announce *L'empire des lumières* by René Magritte will be a leading highlight in Christie's 20th Century Evening Sale taking place on November 9, 2023 during the New York Marquee Week of sales. The work is the first of 17 oil paintings that was completed by the artist in this iconic, all-important series. Nelson A. Rockefeller was the first private owner of the work who acquired it the year following its completion while serving as chairman and president of Chase National Bank in Rockefeller Center. This fall, the work will travel to Taiwan before returning to Rockefeller Center prior to the sale, where it is estimated to achieve \$25 million – 35 million.

Max Carter, Christie's Vice Chairman of 20th and 21st Century Art, remarks, "In 1949, Magritte embarked on the series of 17 paintings that would define him. Formerly in the collections of Nelson Rockefeller and Daniel Filipacchi, *L'empire des lumières* introduced this now-iconic series to the world and broke the record for any work by Magritte in its only appearance at auction. We are deeply honored to offer this historic masterpiece in November."

L'empire des lumières is an immediately recognizable work from Magritte's singular oeuvre. Translated to "the dominion of light" the work is a sublime example of the finest of the artist's surrealist compositions. Filled with a rich sense of mystery that confounds and beguiles, it presents a seemingly impossible

collision of day and night in a single moment. In the 15 year period from 1949 to 1964, Magritte created in total 17 oil paintings of this series, with ten more in gouache. The present oil painting is the first canvas the artist completed, though not the first that he began. The 16 additional oils completed over the next 14 years, all slight variants based on the conception of the simultaneity of night and day, were made for interested collectors in response to the present example's extreme popularity.

As Magritte explained, the power of works such as *L'empire des lumières* lay in transforming the familiar, everyday world in unexpected ways. Executed with a precision and attention to detail that only reinforces the uncanniness of the scene, the *L'empire des lumières* paintings offer an elegant summation of Magritte's unique form of Surrealism, reveling in a game of unexpected contradictions, in which all is familiar and yet ultimately strange, and the ordinary is rendered extraordinary.

Versions of *L'empire des lumières* were acquired by important patrons including Jean and Dominique de Menil, Harry Torczyner, Peggy Guggenheim, and Nelson A. Rockefeller, previous owner of the present work. Three of the 17 paintings are among the top ten record prices for Magritte at auction—including the currently world record of \$79.4 million established in the spring of last year.

Tour Dates:

Taichung	October 16 – 17
Taipei	October 21 - 22

IMAGE FOR PRESS USE AVAILABLE [HERE](#).

PRESS CONTACT: Jessica Stanley | jstanley@christies.com | 212 636 2680

About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business with a physical presence in 46 countries throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, and flagship [international sales hubs](#) in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. Renowned and trusted for our expert live and online-only auctions, as well as bespoke [Private Sales](#), Christie's unparalleled network of specialists offers our clients a full portfolio of [global services](#), including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's [auctions](#) span more than [80 art and luxury categories](#), at price points ranging from \$500 to over \$100 million. Christie's has sold 8 of the 10 most important single-owner collections in history, achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction, launched the first [fully on-chain auction platform](#) dedicated to exceptional NFT art and manages [an investment fund](#) to support innovative startups in the art market. Christie's is also committed to advancing [responsible culture](#) throughout its business and communities worldwide. To [learn more](#), browse, bid, [discover](#), and join us for the best of art and luxury at christies.com or by downloading Christie's apps.

* Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium.

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON

