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## **CHRISTIE'S NEGOTIATES THE SALE TO THE NATION OF WORKS BY DEGAS AND NICHOLSON FROM THE ESTATE OF LILLIAN BROWSE C.B.E.**

**London** - *Préparation à la danse, pied droit en avant* by Edgar Degas (1843-1917) and *Begonias* by Sir William Nicholson (1872-1949) have been negotiated to the nation by Christie's. The works were offered in lieu of tax from the estate of the late Lillian Browse C.B.E. (1906-2005) on the condition that the Sir William Nicholson painting be allocated to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and the Degas sculpture be allocated to the Samuel Courtauld Trust.

The 'Duchess of Cork Street', Lillian Browse was a distinguished art historian and art dealer during a time when the profession was still very much a man's world. A formidable and elegant woman, she helped to found Roland, Browse & Delbanco in Cork Street, with Henry Roland and Gustave Delbanco in 1945 which later became Browse & Darby in 1977. An accomplished writer, her pioneering book *Degas Dancers* (1949) is still today considered a seminal work and her *William Nicholson: Catalogue Raisonné* (1956) remains the only published catalogue. A memorial exhibition dedicated to Lillian Browse is being currently held at Browse & Darby in Cork Street from 27 November to 1 December 2006

*Préparation à la danse, pied droit en avant* by Degas shows a dancer in fourth position and was conceived *circa* 1882-1895; this bronze version was cast between 1919 and 1937 or later in an edition of 22. Sculpting was an intensely personal medium of artistic expression for Degas and during his lifetime he only ever exhibited one work (the famous *Petite danseuse de quatorze ans* shown in the 1881 Impressionist exhibition in Paris). Degas' interest in dance dominated his works across various media throughout the 1880s and 1890s and his studies and sculptures of the bodies of dancers allowed him to understand more fully the figures he depicted in paintings and drawings. Lillian Browse wrote that "*no other field allowed such unlimited possibilities of form in movement...dancing is the fundamental expression of the human body, and the human body the fundamental form in European art.*"

Sir William Nicholson (1872-1949) painted *Begonias* during the winter of 1939-40 whilst he was working on Lord Allendale's portrait at his home, Bretton Park in Yorkshire. *Begonias* was given by Nicholson to Marguerite Steen, who became his partner in 1943 after he separated from his second wife Edith Wortley in 1933. Marguerite was a novelist and wrote an eponymous book about the artist in 1943, in which she described *Begonias* as "*one of the*

*most brilliant of his many flower pictures*". The painting was later passed to Lillian Browse who knew Nicholson and also organized the 1942 Nicholson-Yeats exhibition at the National Gallery in London. Browse used the painting as the illustration on her book about Nicholson and wrote that "*the lovely Begonias, virtually the last of the still life pictures and perhaps the most beautiful of them all, show with what controlled freedom Nicholson handled the rich and limpid pigment that oil paint can be in the hands not of a virtuoso, but of a master.*"

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### **Notes to Editors**

Lillian Browse, C.B.E. Memorial Exhibition will be held from 27 November to 1 December 2006 at Browse & Darby, 19 Cork Street in London. For further information tel: 0207 734 7984, email: [art@browseanddarby.co.uk](mailto:art@browseanddarby.co.uk)

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