

For Immediate Release

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**RARE CARTOON BY IL SODOMA CROWNS SALE OF OLD MASTER AND
19TH CENTURY DRAWINGS AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK**

*Important Old Master and 19th Century Drawings
January 22, 2003*

New York – The elegance of the pencil line, the delicacy of the paper sheet, the mystery of the portrayed figure – these and so many other elements intricately related to the field of drawings will be revealed once again, in all its magnitude, in Christie's sale of Important Old Master and 19th Century Drawings, to take place on January 22, 2003. Amidst much splendor and highly artistic work, there is one exquisite star lot: the cartoon of Madonna and Child with Saints by Il Sodoma.

Il Sodoma ~ The Madonna dei Calzolari cartoon

Vercelli was his place of birth but Siena soon became home to Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, called Il Sodoma. He settled in the city in 1501 and it was almost three decades later, in 1530, that the Sienese Shoemakers Guild commissioned him to paint a fresco. The subject matter was straightforward and well-defined: the Madonna with Child, surrounded by Saints Crispin, John the Baptist, Francis and Roch. Saint Crispin, as the patron saint of the shoemakers, was crucial in this composition that was to be painted on the façade of a house by the Piazza dei Tolomei, near the Guild's church of San Cristofano. All evidence of the fresco has been erased by the passing of time, but the work itself remains alive through a description by Giorgio Vasari who was lyrical about the painting and claimed that "Giovanni Antonio acquitted himself very well". The exact extent of these words and their unfailing truth can be judged by the one great surviving piece of history connected to this fresco: the cartoon it was based upon. The magnificence of this drawing originates from two elements. Firstly, it is exquisitely drawn and a prime example of the level of sophistication achieved in the art of cartoon making. Secondly this work imposes because of its dimensions and scale: sixteen sheets of paper were used and the complete composition measures

nearly 56 by 75 inches. *The Madonna dei Calzolari* cartoon is a rare survival of artistic practice in High Renaissance Italy and it is exceptional in having remained in private hands. It will be offered with an estimate of \$800,000 to \$1,200,000.

Further to Il Sodoma, the sale offers more Italian work executed by Masters such as Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, il Grechetto. By the latter, the sale presents *Portrait of a turbaned man holding a book*, possibly a self-portrait (estimate: \$30,000–50,000) and *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (estimate: \$30,000–50,000). An ideal female head in profile, by Giovanni Battista Franco, il Semolei, clearly shows the artist's interest in Michelangelo's work from which he copied this profile (estimate: \$30,000–50,000). This section also offers *A seated youth reading*, by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, il Guercino, which probably is a study for a drawing for the cupola of the Piacenza cathedral (estimate: \$50,000–80,000).

The French segment includes several iconic draftsmen whose name is synonymous with finesse and elegance. *The Seated woman in profile* by Antoine Watteau is rendered in such a delicate manner that it is almost certainly done as a study for one of his famous *fêtes galantes* (estimate: \$200,000–300,000). Orientalism is prevalent in the two drawings by Louis-Nicolas de Lespinasse, set in Constantinople and portraying the official honors bestowed upon an Ambassador during his visit to Topkapi Palace (estimate: \$120,000–160,000 for the pair). The breathtaking *View of the Castle of Sully from the river Loire* and *View of the gardens of the Castle of Sully* (estimate on request), catalogued as French School, are among the highlights of the French drawings section. Also included are works by Claude Lorrain, Jean-Etienne Liotard and Boucher.

The Northern Schools are represented by Abraham Bloemaert, Nicolas Maes, Jan Josefsz. van Goyen and a beautifully pure *Christ as the Gardener* (estimate: \$80,000–120,000), executed by an artist of the Swabian School circa 1480 and showing calligraphic exercises to the left of the figure.

Drawings of the nineteenth century have become a collecting category in their own right and although heir to the tradition of the old masters, they never fail to bring to life the 19th century atmosphere with all its intense sentiments. Themes as diverse as heroism, romanticism, caricature and nature all found their legitimate place in the 19th century artist's oeuvre. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres is represented by an early full-length portrait, two drawings of the female nude and a study for hands (estimates between \$20,000 and \$200,000). The undisputed leader of social caricature, Honoré Daumier, appears with *Violoniste Chantant* (estimate: \$20,000–30,000) while the always serene Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's *Landscape with figures by trees* (estimate: \$20,000–30,000) plunges one in deep thought and calm.

The sale will be immediately followed by the auction of Works on Paper by J.H.W. Tischbein (separate release)

Auction: Important Old Masters and 19th Century Drawings January 22 at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

January 18 - 21

More information about Christie's sale of Important Old Master and 19th Century Drawings can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.

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