

## For Immediate Release

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## SOMETHING SURREAL AT CHRISTIE'S IN FEBRUARY 2003



René Magritte, *Les barricades mystérieuses*, oil on canvas, 1961 (estimate: £1,600,000-2,200,000)

### The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale

3 February 2003

**London** - Following a series of highly successful sales of Surrealist works of art since 1989, Christie's fourth 'curated' auction dedicated to this fantastical, and sometimes, disturbing art movement, *The Art of the Surreal*, will take place on the evening of 3 February 2003 immediately following the evening sale of *Impressionist and Modern Art*.

*The Art of the Surreal* is led by René Magritte's (1898-1967) *Les barricades mystérieuses* (estimate: £1,600,000-2,200,000), painted in 1961, a variant of his most famous and sought after series of *L'empire des lumières*, based on the contrast between daylight and darkness. Christie's New York recently established a new high for the artist at auction with another work from the series, *L'empire des lumières*, which sold for \$12.6 million in May 2002.

*Les barricades mystérieuses* leads a group of nine works by Magritte in the sale, including oils, objects and gouaches, amongst which there is an exquisite 1939 painting *La Victoire* (estimate: £600,000-900,000). This work depicts an enormous door, ajar, situated on a beach, through which a cloud passes. This is an iconic image that Magritte returned to later in his life. As well as many Surrealist artists, he sought to convey a sense of the surreal by using a juxtaposition of the bizarre and the familiar, to reveal the surprising and hidden world of everyday objects. *Claude Mary*, executed in 1937 (estimate: £380,000-460,000), is an eerie portrait of the actress sister-in-law of Magritte's great friend and patron, Claude Spaak. Her disembodied head floats before a bright cloudy sky in a mirror, with brooding mountains in the background. The mirror is both a hallmark of Magritte's art and a reference to cinema's silver screen, a particularly apt image for the actress whose partner, Charles Spaak was an eminent screenwriter. *Le bouchon d'épouvante*, a bowler hat together with a label, printed with the words 'USAGE EXTERNE, Magritte 1966,' is also offered (estimate: £30,000-50,000), an example of a seminal motif of the artist.

Max Ernst (1891-1976) is well represented in the sale with five works, using different techniques, spanning the period from 1923 to 1953, of which the star is *Convolvulus! Convolvulus!* (estimate: £400,000-600,000). Painted in 1941, this wild, jungle-like landscape is populated with animals and half-vegetal, half-human figures. Technically dazzling, this painting is Hieronymus Bosch-like in its fanatical attention to detail and in the fertility displayed by the artist's creative imagination.

*The Art of the Surreal* includes four works by Paul Delvaux (1897-1994), spanning the period 1945-1968, including his rare and very large watercolour *Les courtisanes d'Alexandrie*, executed in 1949 (estimate: £250,000-350,000). Also by the artist is *La fin du voyage* (estimate: £300,000-500,000), a large blue and oneiric canvas. Painted in 1968, it shows an empty tram in a night draped mountainous seascape setting, an image made even more subtle and strange by the presence of a naked woman in the foreground, a motif that along with that of the tram was a hallmark of his work.

Other important works in the sale include Yves Tanguy's pivotal *Second Message III*, painted in 1930 (estimate: £400,000-600,000), as well as the exquisite and minimalist *Dansense II* by Jean (Hans) Arp (1887-1966), executed in string and oil on canvas, 1930 (estimate: £180,000-240,000),

**Salvador Dalí is represented by a number of sculptures and works on paper. The sale also features works by Victor Brauner, Carlo Carrà, Giorgio de Chirico, Joseph Cornell, Julio González, Konrad Klapheck, André Masson, Joan Miró, Francis Picabia, Pablo Picasso and Antoni Tàpies.**

*“This is the best auction celebrating ‘The Art of the Surreal’ we have staged yet,” says Olivier Camu, specialist in charge of the sale. “It promises to be a very exciting event for the field, which still remains under-collected, particularly after the high profile exhibitions celebrating Surrealist art at the Tate Modern, New York MOMA and Centre Georges Pompidou and Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen which have taken place in the last 12 months.”*

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*Images available on request*

*These auctions will be featured on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). A complete illustrated online catalogue will be published with hard copies available to purchase via the site. If a collector is interested in finding any specific works of art for their collection Christie's online search engine Lotfinder® Assistant can immediately source specific forthcoming items of interest.*

## **Exhibitions**

Selected works from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century evening sales will go on view at Christie's in New York between 22-25 January, and selected highlights from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century day sales will go on view at Christie's Paris between 21-23 January 2003.

## **19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ART AUCTIONS AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON IN FEBRUARY 2003**

**German and Austrian Art (evening sale)** 3 February at 5pm

**Impressionist and Modern Art (evening sale),** 3 February at 7pm

**The Art of the Surreal (evening sale),** 3 February immediately following Impressionist and Modern Art

**Impressionist and Modern Art (day sale),** 4 February at 2pm

**Post-War and Contemporary (evening sale),** 5 February at 7pm

**Impressionist and Modern Works on Paper,** 6 February at 11am

**Post-War and Contemporary (day sale),** 6 February at 2pm