

For Immediate Release  
31 May 2011

CHRISTIE'S

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**A GLIMPSE OF THE DIVINE:  
MICHELANGELO DRAWING TO BE OFFERED  
AT CHRISTIE'S IN JULY 2011**

**RARELY SEEN STUDY FOR ONE OF THE ARTIST'S SEMINAL COMMISSIONS  
EXPECTED TO REALISE £3 MILLION TO £5 MILLION**



***Old Masters and British Paintings Evening Sale***

**Auction: Tuesday 5 July 2011 at 7pm**

**London** – Christie's will offer an exceptional and rarely seen drawing by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) at the *Old Masters and British Paintings Evening Sale* on Tuesday 5 July 2011 in London. Drawn at a pivotal point of the artist's career, this preparatory study is one of only 24 sheets related to his seminal, prestigious and lost commission of *The Battle of Cascina* – and the last to remain in private hands. The commission saw Michelangelo pitched directly alongside his elder rival Leonardo da Vinci who was commissioned to paint *The Battle of Anghiari* on the opposite wall of the newly-built Sala del Gran Consiglio in Florence's Palazzo della Signoria. The drawing has been seen in public only once before at the exhibition of the artist's drawings at the Albertina, Vienna, in 2010, and is expected to realise £3 million to £5 million. It is being offered at auction for the first time having been in the same collection for over 30 years.

**Benjamin Peronnet, Director and International Head of Old Master and 19th Century Drawings, Christie's:** *"This drawing relates to one of the highpoints of the Renaissance – the commissions for the Sala del Gran Consiglio in Florence. The young Michelangelo was pitched directly against his elder rival, Leonardo da Vinci, as both were commissioned to execute large-scale depictions of battle scenes. Sadly neither exists, and there are few relics relating to these epic masterpieces. This drawing offers an exceptionally rare, direct link to one of the greatest Western masterpieces that never was, and offers us a glimpse into the mind of a genius at the peak of his powers as he freely put his thoughts to paper. We're very excited to be offering the work at auction for the first time, and to be able to show a rarely seen drawing by Michelangelo to the public in Hong Kong, New York and London."*

Michelangelo is one of the very few artists whose reputation has never faltered and who excites the same admiration today as he did among his contemporaries, who called him 'divine'. This vigorous, dynamic double-sided sheet, which is a preparatory study for *The Battle of Cascina*, probably dates from late 1504, shortly after Michelangelo had begun to work on the commission. At this stage his ideas for the composition were still fluid and this sheet is evidently an exploratory work in progress, perhaps seen most clearly in the pentimento on the *recto* which betrays an earlier idea for the inclination of the head. The *verso* gives an impression of forceful energy, combining three figures at different stages of finish, which seem almost to blend into one another, the lightly-sketched form on the left countering the densely-hatched hip and thigh on the right-hand side of the sheet. The male nude was always the subject which most inspired Michelangelo, who saw in the unclothed form the perfection of the Platonic soul. His decision to focus *The Battle of Cascina* on a group of bathing soldiers, unexpectedly called to arms, allowed him to explore the full potential of the twisting, energised male body; and both sides of the present sheet show a characteristic interest in the tension of the back and thigh muscles, and the delineation of the spine.

*The Battle of Cascina* was to represent a Florentine victory of 1364 over neighbouring Pisa, against which the Florentines were again considering military action in 1504. Commissioned for the newly-built Sala del Gran Consiglio in Florence's Palazzo della Signoria, the fresco was to inspire and educate the 3,000 members of the city's republican government who gathered in the hall. The commission was a coup for Piero Soderini, the elected head of state. Florentine civic virtue was to be commemorated through two frescoes, each representing a historical victory. The two frescoes were to be executed by the two most notable Florentine artists of the day: Michelangelo and Leonardo, directly set against one another in a thrilling 'battle of Battles'. Unfortunately, Soderini's dream was never accomplished: Michelangelo was recalled to Rome by Julius II in 1505 and completed no more than the central section of his cartoon. Leonardo began to paint his fresco, but it began to deteriorate almost instantly and was abandoned partway through. Michelangelo's cartoon, which had such a powerful influence on the next generation of Florentine artists, was broken up and dispersed among admirers within only a few years of its execution. It is now known only through copies. The present drawing is therefore one of only 24 sheets from Michelangelo's hand which record his vision for *The Battle of Cascina* and it is the only study for the fresco in private hands, as well as being the most recent addition to the group.

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Images available on request

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