

For Immediate Release
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**ILYA REPIN'S MAGNIFICENT 1875 CANVAS 'A PARISIAN CAFÉ'
SOLD FOR £4.5 MILLION
HIGHEST PRICE FOR ANY RUSSIAN PAINTING OFFERED IN A
RUSSIAN SALE BY AN INTERNATIONAL AUCTION HOUSE
NEW WORLD AUCTION RECORD FOR ILYA REPIN
IN BOTH CATEGORIES – PAINTING AND DRAWING**



London – Christie's established a new world auction record for **Ilya Repin (1844-1930)** by selling his masterpiece, *A Parisian Café* for £4,521,250. This represents also the highest price for any Russian painting offered in a Russian sale by an international auction house. The bidding started at £1.8 million, and within seconds the room was buzzing as people were waiting in anticipation for further bids to come. The piece finally sold to an anonymous bidder on the telephone who bid

repeatedly against someone in the room. This great result underlines Christie's position as leaders in selling exceptional masterpieces from all around the world.

Sarah Mansfield, Head of the Russian Art department: *“Created in the turbulent centre of artistic innovation, that was Paris in the late 19th century, Ilya Repin's epic painting “A Parisian Café” is a masterpiece of the period, revealing both the influence of Western art on the Russian artist and Repin's status as a trailblazing pioneer. This attracted interest from around the world and Christie's showcased with this picture its ability to research, estimate and sell masterpieces of such uniqueness.”*

Painted in Paris in 1875, this monumental canvas, arguably the most important work by the artist attracted a lot of interest in Moscow and Paris, where it was exhibited prior to the auction. The fact that it has remained in a distinguished private collection since 1916 added to its importance.

Nearly 80 exquisite preparatory sketches and studies for Repin's seminal work were also sold alongside the painting and achieved a stunning £253,250, establishing a new world auction record for any drawing by Ilya Repin. All other individual sketches sold between 100,000 and 11,000.

A Parisian Café

A unique canvas in Repin's work, *A Parisian Café* is quite atypical of his celebrated Russian subjects and marks a critical turning point in the then young artist's burgeoning career. Painted during Repin's stint as a student in Paris 1873-76, and exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1875, this was a time of creative consternation for the young Repin, faced with the artistic wonders of Europe and the cosmopolitan lifestyle of the French capital. The finished work, exhibited in Paris in April-May 1875 under the title «Un café du boulevard», provoked a heated exchange with his prime mentors, Vladimir Stasov and Ivan Kramskoi, with Repin defending his right to artistic independence

Certainly, looking at both the subject and the richly painterly treatment of *A Parisian Café*, parallels can be drawn between Repin and the Impressionists and to their pioneer Edouard Manet in particular. *A Parisian Café* in fact prefigures many of the group compositions showing people socialising at bars and cafés that would become such an icon of Impressionism, for instance Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Le Moulin de la Galette* of 1876 – executed the year after *A Parisian Café* had been shown at the Salon - as well as his *Déjeuner des canotiers* of 1881 or Manet's *Un bar aux Folies Bergères* from the following year.

About Christie's

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium