

CHRISTIE'S

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Best of Italian Post-War Art From the Pioneers to the Contemporaries



Alberto Burri, *Sacco*, oil and burlap on canvas
Executed in 1953, estimate: £1,800,000-2,500,000

London - Christie's is pleased to present the 13th edition of their prestigious Italian Sale, the only annual international auction dedicated to the masters of 20th century Italian Art. It will be offered in the King Street saleroom on 18 October 2013, following the evening auction of international Post-War and Contemporary Art. This year's curated selection will feature more than 50 works created by a wide array of artists, from those belonging to the Modern movement, such as Giorgio de Chirico and Giorgio Morandi, to post-war revolutionaries including Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana, to more recent artists, who include Alighiero Boetti, Pino Pascali and Maurizio Cattelan.

Mariolina Bassetti, Chairman Christie's Italy, International Director, Post-War & Contemporary Art: "While collectors' interest in 20th century Italian art is constantly growing and attracting a more and more international audience, Christie's London Italian Sale this October features a particularly strong and rich selection of museum-quality works, which are totally fresh to the market. I am particularly proud of the section dedicated to Alberto Burri which, ahead of the major retrospective the Guggenheim Museum will host to celebrate the artist's anniversary in 2015, includes extremely rare and important works by one of the most innovative artists from post-war Europe, who is still undervalued."

The top lot of the sale is an historical, frequently-published early **Sacco** by one of the most important and influential Italian artists of the 20th century, **Alberto Burri** (estimate: £1,800,000-2,500,000; *illustrated on page 1*). In **Sacco**, Burri has deliberately juxtaposed canvases of different colours, textures and weaves in order to create a composition that is abstract and yet ontologically sound. **Sacco** dates from the period when Burri's works were gaining an increasing audience, as he was enjoying group and one-man shows both in Italy and in the United States, where he was championed by the legendary director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, James Johnson Sweeney.

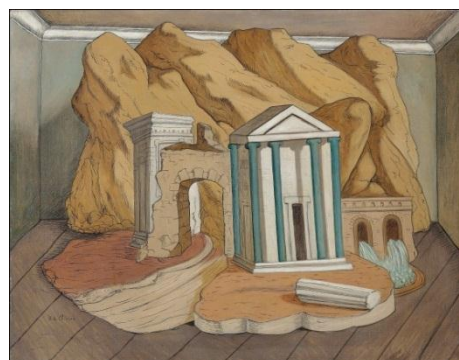


Acknowledged as one of the pioneers of Italian art in the second half of the 20th Century, Alberto Burri's most celebrated innovation relates to his use of fire. Created in 1968 and acquired directly from the artist by the present owner, **Rosso plastica**, another important work by Burri featured in Christie's Italian Sale, belongs to an iconic group of works in which the artist explored the nature of plastic through its exposure to fire (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000; *illustrated above right*). Both these works will be offered from the same prestigious Italian private collection where they've been kept for over thirty years, having being directly acquired from the artist. Seven works overall have been consigned from the same collection, including pieces by Burri, Dorazio and Melotti.



Equally revolutionary was the extraordinary practice of **Lucio Fontana**, an artist whose work is widely represented in Christie's Italian Sale. Among the most interesting works on offer is an elegant **Concetto spaziale, Attesa** painted in 1959 (estimate: £600,000-800,000; *illustrated left*). Perfectly expressing Lucio Fontana's most celebrated motif, the slash, this work is one of the earliest of Fontana's *Tagli*, or 'Cuts', the iconic slashed canvases in which he opened up the picture surface, revealing it as a three-dimensional object. The single vertical cut is accentuated in the present work by the bands of paint that cross the canvas horizontally in black and gold, a colour with associations to the precious metal, which provided the backdrop to Fontana's work during this period. Only 4 comparable works in black and gold are recorded, out of which one is in the collection of the I.V.A.M, Valencia.

Highlighting the figurative section of the sale, **Giorgio de Chirico's** **Thèbes**, 1928, shows the 'landscape in a room' theme, which featured in a number of works from this period (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000; *illustrated right*). By the time **Thèbes** was painted, de Chirico had moved away from his early *Pittura Metafisica*. The present work relates to the 'furniture in landscape' series of paintings which de Chirico developed in the late 1920s after he was struck by the unexpected and incongruous sight of furniture in the street, exhibited by a second-hand Parisian shop.



Executed towards the end of the Second World War, **Natura Morta** is a rare, remarkable still life from **Giorgio Morandi's** much-acclaimed war period (estimate: £600,000-800,000; *illustrated left*). In 1944, the year the picture was completed, Morandi only produced ten recorded works, four of which can be grouped into the sequence to which **Natura Morta** belongs. The present work thus occupies a prominent and central place within Morandi's artistic activity during that turbulent year.



Increasingly seen as powerful and even prophetic icons of the fast-paced and perpetually changing, globalised image of our time, **Alighiero Boetti's** *Mappe* are the simplest and most elegant of the artist's quasi-mystical, quasi-conceptual, aesthetic that informed all his creative output from the 1970s until 1994. Christie's Italian Sale will

feature a unique and poignant *Mappa* completed in 1994 yet executed in a similar format to the black 1989 example now owned by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000; *illustrated above*).

A vast 3-metre-long, 2-metre-high wall-like structure comprised of a sequence of rectangular sponge blocks each bearing the stenciled misnomer 'Pietra' (Stone), **Pino Pascali's** *Muro di pietra* (Wall of Stone) is a work that explodes the traditional boundaries between painting, sculpture, language, theatre and environment. Executed in 1964, it is one of a pioneering sequence of semi-theatrical 'object-sculptures' that Pascali exhibited together at his first one-man show at the Galleria La Tartaruga, in Rome in 1965 (estimate: £400,000-600,000; *illustrated below right*).

THE ITALIAN SALE

Auction:

Christie's - 8 King Street, St James's - London SW1Y 6QT

Friday 18 October 2013

To follow the *Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Auction*

Viewings:

Christie's - 8 King Street, St James's - London SW1Y 6QT

Sunday 13 October 12 noon - 5.00 pm

Monday 14 October 9.00 am - 5.00 pm

Tuesday 15 October 9.00 am - 8.00 pm

Wednesday 16 October 9.00 am - 9.00 pm

Thursday 17 October 9.00 am - 3.00 pm

Friday 18 October 9.00 am - 4.00 pm



Pino Pascali, *Muro di pietra (Pietra pietra)*
Executed in 1964, estimate: £400,000-600,000

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2013 that totaled £2.4 billion/ \$3.68 billion. In 2012, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £465.2 million (\$711.8 million) in the first half of 2013, an increase of 13% on the previous year, and for the third successive year represents the highest total for the period in both company and art market history.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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