

# CHRISTIE'S

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## STROKES OF GENIUS

*The Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale,*  
Christie's London in June, 2013



**London** – Building on the strength of Christie's vibrant New York sales of *Impressionist & Modern Art* in May - which welcomed bidders from 30 countries, selling 94% by lot and 90% by value - the *Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale* in London will take place on Tuesday 18 June. The auction is led by Wassily Kandinsky's rare Expressionist masterpiece *Studie zu Improvisation 3*, 1909 (estimate: £12-16 million, *illustrated above*). With the majority of works from Kandinsky's 'Improvisation' series in major institutions – including the final version of this work which is in the Centre George Pompidou, Paris - this painting provides international collectors with a very exciting opportunity, following Christie's landmark sale of *Studie für Improvisation 8*, 1909, which set a record for the artist at auction in November 2012, selling for \$23million. Comprising 44 lots in total, the London June sale presents the market with a wide variety of inspiring works that cover the whole gamut of this rich category; from the roots of Impressionism evident in Eugène Boudin's (1824-1898) 1864 painting *Scène de plage* (estimate: £500,000-700,000) to Henry Moore's *Stone Form*, a unique abstract in granite from 1984 (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million). With estimates ranging from £180,000 up to £16 million, the pre-sale estimate is £52,830,000 to £75,800,000.

**Jay Vincze, International Director and Head of Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's London:** "*The market for Impressionist & Modern Art at Christie's in 2013 shows great strength and draws global interest. Following the success*

of the February auctions in London, which saw the highest sell through rates for an evening sale in this category in London, the continuing international demand for works across this established category was further highlighted by the most recent sales in New York which saw bidding from 30 countries resulting again in very high sell through rates - 94% by lot. We are pleased to meet this appetite with a week of London sales which present to the market works of exceptional quality at all price levels. The auctions commence with the Evening Sale, which offers major examples by the leading artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, Joan Miró, René Magritte, Amedeo Modigliani and Paul Signac.”

A work of great art historical importance, *Studie zu Improvisation 3*, 1909, by Wassily Kandinsky belongs to Kandinsky’s revolutionary series of paintings, started earlier that year, known as ‘Improvisations’, which mark his first major forays into the realm of abstraction (estimate: £12-16 million). These were the very first paintings intended to convey an inner emotional response to and understanding of the visual phenomena of the outer world, through spontaneously and unconsciously created near-autonomous coloured forms. They are among the first paintings in the history of art to mark the deliberate freeing of form and colour from their conventional pictorial duties towards the creation of non-material, non-objective and abstract art of the spirit.

Like most of the ‘Improvisations’, *Studie zu Improvisation 3* is founded on a pictorial theme that could be seen to derive from both Tunisia and the middle ages. A fusion of the radiant and heightened Tunisian light and colour common to many of these paintings, it centres on one of Kandinsky’s most frequently depicted motifs, a knight with a lance on horseback. The rider often signifies the figure of Saint George, Moscow’s patron saint and a knight whose battle with the dragon also symbolised, for the Russian artist, the victory of the individual human spirit over the vast collective forces of materialism. The Romantic image of a lone knight preparing to storm the citadel is a clear and repeated symbol in Kandinsky’s art of the dawning of a new age, of the coming of the Apocalypse and of the ultimate Resurrection of the spirit that would, Kandinsky believed, inevitably follow it. The lone rider or Knight Errant can also be viewed as a symbol of Kandinsky’s own personal odyssey into abstraction and his mystic quest to herald the end of the materialist age with a new art of the spirit.

Kandinsky’s inspiration for the series stemmed from his discovery of the idyllic Bavarian town of Murnau, south of Munich, which proved the catalyst for his liberation of colour from form; it also prompted his renewed affection for folk art and inspired his profound sense of the ‘spiritual.’ Heightening his use of colour to a level of expressionistic intensity, and broadening his brushstrokes to the point where each mark takes on a formal function of its own within the work, Kandinsky’s Murnau landscapes rapidly grew to become increasingly abstract statements about the nature of painting itself.

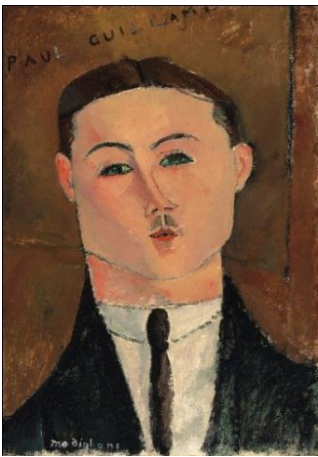


Offered for the first time at auction, from a Distinguished Private Collection, *La tige de la fleur rouge pousse vers la lune* (*The Stem of the Red Flower Grows Toward the Moon*) by Joan Miró (1893-1983) was painted in 1952, a pivotal year in the artist’s oeuvre when he created some of his most revolutionary and acclaimed pictures (estimate: £5.2 – 7million, *illustrated left*). Miró has combined his elegant, often delicate symbols and signs with a more brutal gesturality that reflects the developments occurring in the avant garde at the time, such as Abstract Expressionism, which Miró’s example had helped to spur into existence. It is one of 60 paintings exhibited in New York at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1953. The exhibition catalogue’s preface by James Johnson Sweeney focused largely on Miró’s playfulness, which is demonstrated in the present work both in terms of the

techniques used and the subject matter. There is a primal energy that is perfectly suited to the seeming savagery of

the main figure dominating the composition, who is rendered with incredible gusto. Miró has then added layer upon layer of marks and signs, adding to the drama through additions such as the tooth-like black and white marks of the mouth at the top, while also allowing whimsy and caprice to take their places in the more ethereal forms swirling around it. These forms suggest meanings; faces seem to appear and other semi-recognisable subjects shimmer through a range of sometimes suggestive ciphers.

This period of Miró's work was very influential on artists such as Adolph Gottlieb and Jackson Pollock, whom Miró had met when he first travelled to the United States in 1947. Thick, rough marks delineate some of the forms of the central figure, giving a vivid sense of the directness of Action Painting, while elsewhere a meticulous precision has been applied in filling in various fields of colour or in rendering the filiform star and other shapes, which themselves recall the sculptures and mobiles of Miró's friend and fellow artist, Alexander Calder.



*Paul Guillaume*, 1916, by Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) is the only one of four portraits that the artist painted of the art dealer - who represented him between 1914 and 1916 - which is in private hands (estimate: £5-7million, *illustrated left*). The others are in the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, in the Museo del Novecento (formerly the Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea), in Milan and in the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.

Modigliani's portraits are celebrated in part for their combination of idealised beauty and apparent insight in to the character of the sitter. These qualities are evident in the present portrait of Paul Guillaume, which is the most intimate and least formal of the group of pictures showing the dealer. His head is tilted to the side, as he gives a quizzical yet relaxed look to the artist and, by extension, the viewer; there is an engaging immediacy about this work, which is accentuated by the tight composition and the sensation of physical proximity.

Before Guillaume met him, Modigliani had hoped to be a sculptor rather than a painter, studying for some time with the Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi. Reluctantly, because of his poor health, Modigliani had to give up sculpture. Guillaume is believed to have helped to persuade him to abandon the medium, not just because of the duress that resulted from carving, but also because paintings were essentially easier to stock and to sell. Modigliani's experiences as a sculptor did inform his paintings: there is an almost carved appearance to the features in *Paul Guillaume*. Guillaume and Modigliani shared a love of African sculpture, the influence of which is also evident in the mask-like face; the eyes appear all the more striking for their contrast with the sheen of the chiselled, smooth face - they are inlets revealing the character behind.

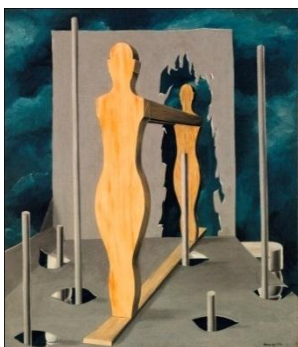
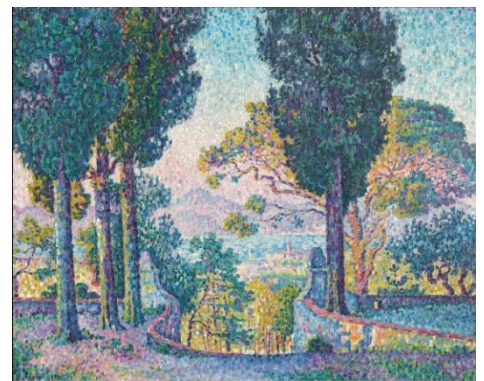
Painted in December 1960, *Femme assise dans un fauteuil* by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) is one of a group of portraits of his partner Jacqueline Roque - only a few months before their marriage - created after Picasso's purchase of the Château de Vauvenargues (estimate: £4-6 million, *illustrated right*). Jacqueline proved to be the most enduring of Picasso's loves, staying with him for almost two decades at the end of his life and becoming one of his most frequently-depicted Muses. During this period, Picasso created several related images of Jacqueline, adding his own distinctive twist to the elegant portraiture of the Golden Age of painting in his native Spain; reinvigorating them through his use of a post-Cubist idiom. Jacqueline sits in stately splendour, as though enthroned; there is a sense of calm, of poise and tranquility, which may reflect



Picasso's new-found security and domestic situation. It was once in the collection of Gioconda King, a noted philanthropist after whom a room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is named; she bequeathed this picture to the Met, by whom it was sold in 2006 in order to raise funds.

During the post-war years, Picasso often turned to his old artistic antecedents such as Delacroix, Rembrandt and Velasquez, sometimes paying homage to them and sometimes sparring with their legacy, emphasising his own primacy. In *Femme assise dans un fauteuil*, Picasso has used the visual language of the Old Masters as the launch-pad for a series of bold experiments. This is also reflected in the vigorous treatment of the paint itself. Picasso is clearly involving himself with the entire legacy of painting, keeping one eye on the post-war development of Art Informel and Action Painting, as is reflected in the surface and the sheer vigour of *Femme assise dans un fauteuil*, and the other on the entire tradition of which he was such an important defender. Picasso revisits his earlier depictions of women in armchairs, usually associated with Dora Maar, while allowing Jacqueline to sit in comfort as opposed to the torments of the Dora images. Picasso's backwards glance at his own pictorial vocabulary may have been partially inspired by the important retrospective which he had been given in London that year at the Tate Gallery.

A colourist masterpiece, created through an explosion of neo-impressionist mosaic-like brushstrokes, *Sainte-Anne (St. Tropez)* by Paul Signac (1863-1935) is a hymn to the South of France where the artist made his home (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million, *illustrated right*). Showing the evening light caressing the trees, buildings and distant hills, the stylistic freedom of this 1905 landscape points to the important developments in Signac's technique following Seurat's death. The port of Saint-Tropez itself lies in the lower-centre of the composition, the bell-tower clearly visible, silhouetted against the turquoise sea. This picture, which is filled with nuanced light and electric colour, was clearly admired at the time both by the artist himself and by his contemporaries, as it featured in a number of important early exhibitions of Signac's work including his 1907 retrospective at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune. The importance of *Sainte-Anne* is also reflected in its provenance: it was formerly in the collection of Gustave Fayet, one of the most important supporters of the avant garde in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as an early patron of Post-Impressionism and of Paul Gauguin in particular.



*La chambre du devin (The seer's chamber)* is an important and historic early work by the Belgian master René Magritte (1898-1967) (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000, *illustrated left*). Painted in 1926, only shortly after he had begun to develop his now-iconic Surreal style, it featured in Magritte's first one-man show and in the first significant article dedicated to his work, both of which occurred in 1927, the year following its execution. This picture also featured in a number of Magritte's lifetime exhibitions. It shows a wooden silhouetted figure jutting out through a cavity in a wall which resembles a stage set. There is a sense of mysterious machinery to the picture, with protruding poles and other

elements lending an ambience that is partly alien, while the various items shown hover near the borders of recognition. The influence of one of the great pioneers of Pittura Metafisica, Giorgio de Chirico, whose work Magritte had seen in reproduction only shortly before *La chambre du devin* was painted, is evident. This was one of the great epiphanies of twentieth-century art: within a short time, Magritte forsook the post-Cubist and post-Futurist idioms that had characterised his pictures, and instead began to explore the powerful potential of poetic juxtapositions.

**Property from *The Collection of Simone and Jean Tiroche*** will be offered across the Evening and Day sales during the *Impressionist and Modern Art* and *Post War and Contemporary Art* sale weeks, presenting the market with a fantastic array of important 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century works. A bohemian couple from Tel Aviv, Jean Tiroche opened the city's first art gallery in 1960 and went on to become an internationally respected dealer. Highlights from the Tiroche Collection include a 1964 painting, *La nuit enchantée*, by Marc Chagall (1887-1985) which exemplifies the artist's celebrated mix of heady colourism with a unique and poetic view of the world (estimate: £1-1.5 million, *illustrated right*).



Tracing the evolution of the category, the breadth and depth of the sculpture offered reflects the variety and strength of the sale as a whole. The earliest example is Auguste Rodin's (1840-1917) smooth and tactile *Eve après le péché*, conceived in 1880-1881 and executed *circa* 1900-1915, which presents one of the artist's most iconic subjects (estimate: £500,000-700,000). Moving to a more expressive and freer period, Edgar Degas's (1834-1917) *Dancer* focuses on the movement and tension of the figure in fourth position (estimate: £300,000-500,000). The 20<sup>th</sup> century avant garde is represented by two sculptures of the same female motif by Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966), both with frenetic and highly charged surfaces: one executed in bronze, conceived in 1956 and cast *circa* 1961 (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million), the other in plaster, 1956 (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000 million). A similar sense of movement is found in the vigour and dynamism of Marino Marini's (1901-1980) depiction of a horse, *Cavallo*, conceived in 1950 (estimate: £250,000-350,000). The journey continues with the works of one of the towering icons of 20<sup>th</sup> century sculpture: Henry Moore (1898-1986), represented by his early *Family Group*, conceived in 1944 (estimate: £300,000-500,000); through to a stunning evocation of one of his most famous motifs in *Reclining Figure No.7*, conceived in 1978-1980 (estimate: £1.4 – 1.8 million); and concluding with his unique monumental granite abstract, *Stone Form*, executed in 1984 (estimate: £1.2 – 1.8 million).

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**Notes to Editors:** Please click [here](#) to view the e-catalogue for the full **Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale**.

**Pre-sale estimates for Impressionist & Modern works offered in the June auctions:**

Impressionist/Modern Evening Sale	18 <sup>th</sup> June	£52,830,000	-	£75,800,000
Impressionist/Modern Works on Paper	19 <sup>th</sup> June	£5,925,000	-	£8,499,000
Impressionist/Modern Day Sale	19 <sup>th</sup> June	£12,390,000	-	£18,175,000
Impressionist / Modern South Kensington	21 <sup>st</sup> June	£1,552,500	-	£2,239,300
Picasso Ceramics South Kensington	18 <sup>th</sup> June	£896,200	-	£1,283,350
		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£73,593,700 - £105,996,650</b>

**About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2012 that totalled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion. 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 totalled £631.3 million/\$1 billion in 2012, an increase of 26% on the same period last year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the Middle East, with successful sales, exhibitions and initiatives in Moscow, Baku, Beijing, Mumbai, Delhi, Jeddah, Abu Dhabi, Doha 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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Images available on request

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