

CHRISTIE'S

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Steen, Canaletto, Poussin & Rubens Lead Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* London, July 2013



London – Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* in London on Tuesday 2 July 2013 presents international collectors with 52 works from some of the category's most sought-after artists and genres, many with distinguished provenance and some offered for the first time in centuries. With estimates ranging from £30,000 up to £10 million, the sale is expected to realise in excess of £30 million.

The remarkable variety and quality of the works in this sale reflects the diversity of the Old Master field and collectors' sustained and growing interest in acquiring works of the highest calibre. Highlights range from a rich large-scale interior scene by the Dutch Golden Age master **Jan Steen** (1626-1679), *'Easy Come, Easy Go': the artist eating oysters in an interior* (estimate: £7-10 million, *illustrated above*) and a glittering view of Venice by **Canaletto** (1697-1768) painted at the height of his powers, *The Molo, Venice, from the Bacino di San Marco* (estimate: £4-6 million), to one of the earliest independent still-lives in the history of Western art by **Ludger tom Ring II** (1522-1584), *Narcissi, calamine violets and periwinkles in a ewer, on a ledge with a sprig of rue* (estimate: £500,000-800,000). In addition to a head study painted *ad vivum* by **Sir Peter Paul Rubens** (1577-1640), *Head of a bearded man in profile holding a bronze figure* (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million), further highlights include **Nicolas Poussin's** (1594-1665) heroic portrayal of *Hannibal crossing the Alps on an Elephant* (estimate: £3-5 million), as well as an elegant half-length *Portrait of Emily, Lady Berkeley* by **Sir Thomas Lawrence** (1769-1830) (estimate: £400,000-600,000).

JAN STEEN

Acquired by the 1st Earl of Lonsdale in 1763, it is exactly 250 years since *'Easy Come, Easy Go': the artist eating oysters in an interior* by **Jan Steen** (1626-1679) last appeared on the art market (estimate: £7-10 million). A work of exceptional quality and inventiveness, it has long been regarded as one of Steen's masterpieces and can now be

considered the most important large-scale genre scene by the artist still to remain in private hands. Painted in 1660 at the pinnacle of Steen's career, the picture reveals his mastery of composition and his supreme skill at rendering light, texture and detail. Beautifully preserved and executed in the artist's most refined manner, the picture delivers a powerful moral message that is a testimony to Jan Steen's genius as a narrator of genre subjects. Steen depicts himself as the central protagonist, eating oysters at a table in an elaborate interior. The key to the picture's message is given by the allegorical programme of the elaborately carved chimneypiece, in which a personification of Fortuna stands between symbols of wealth and good fortune on the right, and poverty and bad luck on the left. Steen cautions that what is gained can just as easily be lost depending on the winds of chance. Casting himself as the decadent wastrel, he warns that over-indulgence and greed will lead inescapably to ruin, a message as pertinent today as it was in 17th-century Holland.

CANALETTO

Executed at the height of **Canaletto's** (1697-1768) powers in the 1730s, *The Molo, Venice, from the Bacino di San Marco* is a beautifully preserved masterpiece from the artist's famous sequence of views of the Molo from the Bacino, showing the greatest religious and secular monuments at the heart of Venice (estimate: £4-6 million, *illustrated right*). Bathed in a clear, luminous light, the celebrated buildings are meticulously described and are skillfully enlivened by the hustle and bustle of the boats and figures in the foreground.



The observation of the figures is, as always with Canaletto, acute: the standing boatman in the large vessel on the far left is shown pulling back, straining his oar in an effort to avoid colliding with the smaller sandolo passing in front. This exceptional canvas – one of the largest of this type of composition – was supplied to Edward Howard, 9th Duke of Norfolk (1686-1777), who was a major British artistic patron of the day; it passed by descent in the family until the 1970s.

A further notable depiction of Venice is *View of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice with the Punta del Giudecca* by **Francesco Guardi** (1712-1793), which shows the island monastery with its celebrated façade designed by Andrea Palladio, in afternoon light (estimate: £400,000-600,000). From another Venetian artist of the time, **Bernardo Bellotto** (1721-1780), is an *Architectural capriccio* which was conceived in Dresden, during the artist's second period of residence there from 1761 until the winter of 1766-1767 (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000).

POUSSIN



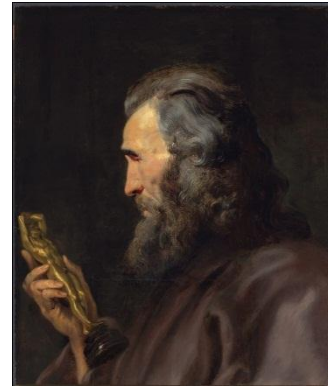
Hannibal crossing the Alps on an Elephant by **Nicolas Poussin** (1594-1665) is a striking and unconventional image of Hannibal, the legendary Carthaginian general, leading an historic invasion of Italy on the back of a war elephant (estimate: £3-5 million, *illustrated below*). It is one of the earliest masterpieces executed by Poussin after his arrival in Rome in the mid-1620s. A rarely illustrated episode of Ancient Roman history recounted by Livy, it depicts the military strategist and hero of the Second Punic War astride the great Asian beast, directing the massing troops on the long journey from Iberia, over the Pyrenees

and the Alps, into northern Italy. Hannibal dominates the massive beast as he would soon dominate a conquered Empire and much of the western world: posture erect, arm outstretched toward his inevitable goal. The picture

was acquired immediately after its execution by Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657) - the man who would become Poussin's most loyal and enlightened patron and a scholar and intellectual with a life-long interest in antiquity and the natural sciences, who worked for the Barberini Pope Urban VIII. Cassiano dal Pozzo may have coveted this work as a depiction of one of the ancient world's defining historical events and an accurate rendering of one of nature's most impressive and mighty exotic animals. But Poussin would also have known that such a patron - as both a privileged member of one of the most forceful courts in Europe and an acolyte of the rapacious Barberini pope - would not have failed to appreciate his composition as an iconic image of charismatic leadership and ruthless power.

RUBENS

Head of a bearded man in profile holding a bronze figure is an impressive, vigorously executed and characterful head study by **Sir Peter Paul Rubens** (1577-1640), which throws light on Rubens's creative method during a busy period in his career, after he had returned from Italy and established his pre-eminence in Antwerp (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million). It reveals a fascinating aspect of Antwerp's cultural attitudes, as it was later enlarged on three-sides by Jan Boeckhorst (1605-1668), one of Rubens's most intriguing early followers, and one of the city's leading artists following the deaths of Rubens and Sir Anthony van Dyck, in 1640 and 1641, respectively.



Head of a bearded man in profile is one of the spontaneous, rapid studies painted by Rubens *ad vivum* from a model in the studio, to record a particular face - often from multiple angles - for use in larger, multi-figural compositions. It is a study for one of the kings in Rubens's monumental *Adoration of the Kings* painted in 1616/7 for the Church of Saint John in Mechelen. The panel is recorded, since at least 1719, as belonging to the German princely house of Schönborn - a name long associated with one of the greatest cumulative contributions to the cultural landscape of Germany since the High Renaissance.

STILL-LIFE PAINTING



The strong offering of still-life paintings is led by *Narcissi, calamine violets and periwinkles in a ewer, on a ledge with a sprig of rue* by **Ludger tom Ring II** (1522-1584) (estimate: £500,000-800,000, *illustrated below*). This supremely elegant picture is one of the earliest independent still-lives in the history of Western art. Born into a dynasty of German artists from Münster, Ludger tom Ring specialised in portraits and floral still-lives, a genre in which he achieved unparalleled mastery, decades before the Dutch and Flemish painters of the Golden Age popularised it. In this panel, a simple, minimalistic arrangement of crisply designed narcissi and violets, set in an elaborate ewer bearing the artist's signature, stands out against a dark background. The resulting stark contrast of patterns and colours prove strikingly modern. The artist's surviving oeuvre is extremely small, making this picture an absolute rarity.

The cross category appeal of the best still-life paintings was made evident in the July 2012 sale when the works by Coorte drew widespread interest from new and established collectors. This season, highlights by the best known names in 17th-century still-life paintings are led by *Tulips, roses, bluebells, Narcissus tortuosis, forget-me-nots, lily of the valley and cyclamen* by **Ambrosius Bosschaert I** (1573-1621) who emerged as a pioneer in the genre of the flower still-life (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000, *illustrated right*). The skill of Jan Davidsz. de Heem, a leading still-life painter of the Golden Age, is exemplified by *A*



tulip, roses and other flowers in a glass vase (estimate: £500,000-800,000). Further examples range from *A leg of ham, a partly sliced lemon and slices of bread on pewter platter* dated 1655, which is characteristic of **Willem Claesz. Heda's** (1594-1680) finest breakfast pieces (estimate: £400,000-600,000), to a superbly restrained depiction of *Quinces and medlars on a ledge* by Jan Jansz. van de Velde (1619/20-1662), one of the most striking talents in still-life painting of the 17th century (estimate: £250,000-350,000).

NORTHERN RENAISSANCE ART



Two important works by Lucas Cranach the Elder are presented. *Portrait of Albrecht von Brandenburg as Saint Jerome in a landscape* by **Lucas Cranach the Elder** (1472-1553) is an icon of Northern Renaissance art (estimate: £1.5-2 million, *illustrated left*). The picture is rare surviving evidence of the relationship between Albrecht von Brandenburg, the supreme Catholic dignitary in Germany in the early decades of the 16th century, and Lucas Cranach the Elder, an artist often described as Martin Luther's foremost propagandist. The story of this portrait brings together three titans of the Reformation whose inextricably entwined destinies shaped this period of European history. This painting is the only one of four surviving portraits of Albrecht in the guise of Saint Jerome painted by Cranach, to remain in private hands. Providing another rare opportunity, *Christ on the Cross* is a unique, intimate depiction of this subject by **Lucas Cranach the Elder** (1472-1553) (estimate: £500,000-800,000). This poignant work seamlessly blends extreme pictorial refinement with a heightened sense of pathos.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MASTERS



British paintings include a remarkably subtle half-length *Portrait of Emily, Lady Berkeley*, which is an exceptional example of **Sir Thomas Lawrence's** (1769-1830) early work (estimate: £400,000-600,000). Emily, Lady Berkeley, was the second of the three daughters of Lord George Lennox, the younger son of Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond, whose father the 1st Duke was the illegitimate son of King Charles II. This vivacious and alluring portrait epitomises the qualities of the extraordinary artistic vision that underpinned Lawrence's meteoric career and established him as the natural heir to Sir Joshua Reynolds and the dominant force in British portraiture. Further examples include a pair of works by **Joseph Wright of Derby** (1734-1797): *A view of Dovedale, Derbyshire* and *A view of the Convent of San Cosimato and part of the Claudian Aqueduct near Vicovaro in the Roman Campagna* (estimate: £500,000-800,000). They were commissioned in 1786 by the artist's great friend and patron, the Reverend Thomas Gisborne, to express the notion that the sublime might be found equally in the English and Italian countryside.

A group of 18th-century French works are led by a joyful scene of countryside delights *La Cueillette des Cerises*, one of the most enchanting late creations by **François Boucher** (1703-1770) (estimate: £300,000-500,000). A further work by the great master of French *rococo* painting is *La petite fermiere*, 1769 (estimate: £250,000-350,000). The other French works of the period comprise an intimately sized, jewel-like cabinet picture *La Surprise* by **Jean-Honoré Fragonard** (1732-1806) (estimate: £120,000-180,000) and a seductive highly finished work *La Lettre* (estimate: £120,000-180,000) by **Louis-Leopold Boilly** (1761-1845).

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Images available on request

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