

# CHRISTIE'S

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## A Claude Masterpiece Leads Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* London, December 2013



*'Although Claude was a painter of fairyland, and sylvan scenery of the most romantic kind, he is nowhere seen to greater advantage than in his sea ports.'* John Constable

**London** – Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* in London on 3 December 2013 is led by an important rediscovery by Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), one of the greatest and most influential landscape painters of 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, *A Mediterranean port at sunrise with the Embarkation of Saint Paula for Jerusalem* (estimate: £3-5 million, *illustrated above*). The sale presents international collectors with 46 important works representing the most sought-after artists and genres in the European tradition, many with distinguished provenance and offered for the first time in several generations. Further highlights include a portrait by Rembrandt and studio, *Man with a Sword* (estimate: £2-3 million), a remarkable still-life of flowers by Jan Davidsz. de Heem (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million), an imposing equestrian portrait by George Stubbs, *James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Clanbrassil (1730-1798), with his hunter Mowbray, resting on a wooded path by a stream* (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million), iconic works by Pieter Breughel the Younger, *The Bird Trap* (estimate: £800,000-1,000,000) and *The Payment of Tithes* (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000) as well as Jan Breughel the Elder's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000). With estimates ranging from £30,000 up to £5 million, the sale is expected to realise in excess of £20 million.

## CLAUDE

The reappearance of *The Embarkation of Saint Paula* from the Smith collection at Hambleden Manor, Buckinghamshire constitutes the most important rediscovery of a painting by Claude Lorrain in more than a generation (estimate: £3-5million, *illustrated page 1*). Whilst not entirely unrecorded, the Hambleden Claude was inaccessible to scholars and students of Claude's works – even through photographic reproduction – and had been unseen by the public since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was last exhibited at the Royal Academy. Over time, claims of authenticity were advanced for various copies of the composition and a damaged version in the Musée des Vosges, Épinal, came to be accepted as the prime version since the 1950s, largely because it was thought to have had French royal provenance. The recent reassessment of the provenance and careful examination of the present painting, undertaken in the last few months after it was withdrawn from a Christie's sale (*Colefax and Fowler. Then and Now. Collection from Hambleden Manor, Lushill and 39 Brook Street Mayfair*), has shown the Hambleden painting to be – beyond question – not only Claude's unique autograph version of the composition, but a masterpiece of the artist's full maturity. Upon studying the canvas for the first time, Professor Marcel Rothlisberger, *doyen* of Claude studies and author of the *catalogue raisonné* of the artist's paintings – who had never before seen the present painting – has declared it a 'great Claude', concluding that it is 'a truly sensational discovery, all the more so as the picture is in such wonderful condition, luminous, visible down to every detail, complete with an elaborate figure scene, the brilliant sun, rippling waves, a Roman temple, trees and rocks.'

Commissioned in 1650 by the Roman Cardinal Domenico Cecchini (1589-1656), and recorded as such in the artist's illustrated record of commissions (the *Liber Veritatis*), the picture was in the collection of the Earls of Portarlington, probably by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in that of the famous English retailer WH Smith. In the foreground, the artist has portrayed with great clarity a touching moment from the story of Saint Paula who is about to embark on her journey to Jerusalem, accompanied by a daughter but leaving her other children behind. The real force of the composition rests with Claude's masterly creation of atmosphere and light, the sun bursting through the sky and illuminating the rippling waves with shimmering light. It is this naturalistic depiction of sunlight and the notion of an ideal landscape that has exerted such a powerful influence on so many artists since – not least Turner, who was to use Claude's work as a platform for his own radical experimentation with colour and light.

## REMBRANDT AND STUDIO



Recently the subject of a thorough re-appraisal, *Man with a Sword*, 1644, sheds fascinating new light on Rembrandt's studio practice during one of the most enigmatic and least well-documented phases of his career (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated left*). Traditionally regarded by connoisseurs as a masterpiece by the greatest of all Dutch artists, in recent years, along with many other Rembrandt paintings from 1643-45, the status of this painting had been disputed, with attributions made to various pupils of Rembrandt rather than the master himself. Through a process of scientific investigation, which had never before been conducted on the picture, the removal of an old obscuring varnish, and fresh scholarly analysis, *Man with a Sword* has now been acknowledged as a reliably signed and dated portrait by Rembrandt, later

fashioned into a historical portrait or *tronie* by another artist active in the Rembrandt workshop. This painting has a long and, for the most part, illustrious history within the Rembrandt canon and was first documented in an English collection in 1765.

## DE HEEM AND THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

An exquisite *Still- life of flowers* by **Jan Davidsz. de Heem** (1606-1684) in pristine condition leads a group of Dutch Golden Age pictures from a *Distinguished Private Collection* (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million, *illustrated right*). De Heem is rightly regarded as one of the most accomplished still life painters of the period; the taste for his works of this calibre was recently attested to in the spectacular result achieved for *Flowers in a glass vase on a draped table, with a silver tazza, fruit, insects and birds* (sold 3 July 2013, £3,009,250). Another still-life by **Hubert van Ravesteyn** (estimate: £200,000-300,000) and a view of the *Grote Market, Haarlem* by **Gerrit Berckheyde** (1638-1698) (estimate: £70,000-100,000) from this collection, acquired in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and fresh to the market, provide a rich selection for collectors in the field of Dutch 17<sup>th</sup> century art in much the same



way as the Dreesmann Collection did in July 2013. A seascape by **Willem van de Velde II** (1633-1707), the whereabouts of which have been unknown since it was last offered at auction over 130 years ago (estimate: £400,000-600,000, *illustrated left*); and *Travellers halting outside an inn* by **Jan Steen** (1626-1679) (estimate: £150,000-25,000), which also remained untraced since its last appearance on the art market in 1881 (estimate: £150,000-250,000) from a *European Private Collection* give collectors further opportunity to acquire works of great quality.

## ICONIC BREUGHEL

*The Birdtrap* by **Pieter Brueghel II** (1564-1637) is a beautiful example of what is arguably the Brueghel dynasty's most iconic invention (estimate: £800,000-1,000,000). *The Bird Trap* composition is one of the most enduring and popular images in Western art. The present work is recognised as autograph by Klaus Ertz, the leading expert on the artist. Ertz praised its '*remarkable quality and perfect state of conservation, certainly [a work] by the hand of the master himself.*' A composition of distinctive poetic beauty, the *Bird Trap's* success had a profound effect in the history of landscape painting and contributed to the emergence of the winter landscape as an autonomous genre. A second work by **Pieter Brueghel II** (1564-1637), *The Payment of Tithes* (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000) is equally popular and unusual in the artist's *oeuvre* in that it is a rare instance when the artist does not copy of one of his father's compositions. **Jan Breughel I** (1568-1625), *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* which is offered from the *Property of a Private Collection in the Netherlands* (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000) is a vivid rendition of an apocalyptic vision. This glistening, meticulously painted copper by Jan Brueghel the Elder is a rare example of the subject – one of only eight versions, amidst an *oeuvre* of almost 400 works, it is a potent testament to both the artist's power of imagination as a well as his technical abilities. Jan Breughel the Elder was the son of Pieter Bruegel the Elder the patriarch of the eponymous family of Flemish painters, whose extraordinary fame and achievement have stood the test of time. Further highlights include a monumental landscape of exceptional



quality by the **Master of the Female Half-lengths**, notable as a very early example of an autonomous landscape within the canon of European art (estimate: £300,000-500,000) and, from the *Property of Jacques and Gaiha Hollander*, an exceptionally large treatment of the popular subject *Saint George's Day: A village kemesse* newly ascribed to a contemporary of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, **Marten van Cleve I** (estimate: £200,000-300,000).

## ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Works from the renowned collection of Rev. Walter Davenport Bromley (1787-1863) – the most active of a number of mid-nineteenth-century collectors – now form part of many of the great art institutions in Europe and the United States, with seven pictures in the National Gallery, London. Christie's is proud to present two exceptional Italian works which span the Renaissance from the property of the Bromley-Davenport Family this December. *Saint John the Baptist and Saint Michael* – left panel of the main tier of a polyptych is a stately panel, characteristic of **Lorenzo di Bicci's** late work (estimate: £200,000-300,000). Originally in the Convent of Saint Agata Florence, this work exhibits de Bicci's luminous, nuanced palette which is evident in the carefully modelled pink robe and armour of the saints. *An angel facing right in a niche*; and *An angel facing left in a niche* are a remarkable pair of panels by **Giovanni Antonio Sogliani** (1492-1544) who was trained in the disciplined tradition of the late *quattrocento*, going on to become a key exponent of High Renaissance taste in Florence (estimate: £400,000-600,000).



## STUBBS - A BRITISH MASTER



*James Hamilton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Clanbrassil (1730-1798), with his hunter Mowbray, resting on a wooded path by a stream, 1765, by George Stubbs, A.R.A.* (1724-1806) is a masterpiece from Stubbs' early maturity (estimate: £1.5-2.5 million). It demonstrates the artist's supreme skill at rendering the equine form, combined with his gifts as a portraitist and his dexterity as a landscape painter. Stubbs' period of anatomical study through practical dissection, between 1756 and 1758, which resulted in his ground-breaking publication *Anatomy of the Horse*, both revolutionised the genre of sporting art and heralded Stubbs as a true exponent of the wide-ranging intellectual movement

of the Enlightenment. In this picture, Stubbs has masterfully captured the physiognomy of his sitter, an Irish peer and later Member of Parliament for Helston, Cornwall. Clanbrassil was one of the few Irish clients to commission a horse portrait from the artist and was, on his mother's side, a cousin of one of Stubbs' most important patrons, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Portland. This picture dates to the same year as Stubbs' celebrated painting of Gimcrack on Newmarket Heath, sold at Christie's London in July 2011. Further important sporting works include a pair of paintings of stallions by **Johann Georg de Hamilton** (1672-1737), 1725, which is one of three lots offered from the *Parnassus Institute* (estimate: £250,000-350,000).

## ITALIAN BAROQUE AND THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



Important Italian works are led by a major rediscovery for the oeuvre of **Bernardo Strozzi**, *The Supper at Emmaus* is offered from the *Property of a Lady and Gentleman* (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000, *illustrated left*), and can be regarded as possibly the lost prime version of this well-loved composition by the artist. *The Carnival in Naples in 1778*, by **Pietro Fabris**, is a previously unpublished canvas (estimate: £500,000-800,000). In remarkable original condition, this is the most ambitious work known by the artist and is arguably his greatest masterpiece.

A majestic and theatrical picture, it conveys the historic spectacle of an extraordinary costumed carnival parade held in Naples in 1778, whilst also capturing the enchanting anecdotal detail of everyday street life. *The Property of a Spanish Noble Family*, it was acquired almost 100 years ago and has passed by descent to the current owners. Providing an unusual twist, the sale presents two pastels on paper by **Lorenzo Baldissera Tiepolo** (1736-1776). *Tipos madrileños: The Fortune Teller (La Buenaventura)* (estimate: £400,000-700,000, *illustrated right*) and *Tipos madrileños: A majo smoking a pipe, with an elegant couple* (estimate: £400,000-700,000) form part of a remarkable series executed by the artist during his final years in Madrid. They demonstrate both his mastery of the medium and the striking originality of his imagination. No other pastellist at this date was exploring genre scenes with such a colourful and vivid interpretation of popular culture. The series would become the artist's most celebrated and recognisable works, unprecedented not only in Spain but in all of Europe.



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*Images available on request*

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