

# CHRISTIE'S

POST-SALE RELEASE | NEW YORK  
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## CHRISTIE'S IMPRESSIONIST & MODERN ART EVENING SALE ACHIEVES \$158 MILLION (£101 MILLION / € 120 MILLION)

CHAÏM SOUTINE'S *LE PETIT PÂTISSIER* SELLS FOR \$18 MILLION –  
SETTING A NEW WORLD AUCTION RECORD FOR THE ARTIST

- Strong Sell-Through Rates of 94% By Lot, 90% By Value – 35% Growth From Spring 2012
  - Vibrant Market Underscored By Bidding From 30 Countries
- A Night For Connoisseurs – Soutine, Chagall and Schiele Lead The Sale
  - Paris Pre-War Avant-Garde Art Prevails



Chaïm Soutine (1893-1943), *Le petit pâtissier*, circa 1927 (sold for \$18 million)

**New York** – Christie's *Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale* on May 8 in New York achieved \$158,505,000 (£101,443,200 / €120,463,800) and was sold 94% by lot and 90% by value, the strongest sell-through rates in the category since 2006. Of the 49 works offered, 4 lots sold for over \$10 million, 10 for over \$5 million, and 36 for over \$1 million. Chaïm Soutine's *Le petit pâtissier*, which realized \$18 million, was the top lot of the sale and set a new world auction record for the artist.

**Brooke Lampley, Head of Department, Impressionist & Modern Art,** comments, “It was wonderful to see such confidence and enthusiasm on the part of the collectors gathered in our saleroom this evening. With all but three works sold and exceptional sell-through rates of 94% by lot and 90% by value, this sale ranks among the strongest we have hosted in this category in New York. Bidders competed head-to-head for classic Impressionist works by Monet, Sisley and Renoir, great Modernist works by Picasso, Léger and Miró, and masterpiece works by School of Paris artists Modigliani, Soutine and Chagall. In all, it was gratifying to witness a sophisticated and intelligent market at work, and see the strong collecting trends from our winter sales in London gain even more momentum here in New York.”

Throughout the sale, works at both the top end and the middle market level performed consistently well and several pieces in the sale demonstrated the lasting value of Impressionist and Modern art over time. In addition to Soutine’s *Le petit pâtissier*, which last sold at auction for \$180,000 in 1977, Claude Monet’s *Chemin* achieved \$5,163,750, having last sold for \$770,000 in 1991. Similarly, Pablo Picasso’s *Femme assise en costume rouge sur fond bleu* fetched \$8,523,750 having last sold for \$662,500 in 1995.

The top lot of the night was the vibrant masterpiece *Le petit pâtissier* (the little pastry chef) by **Chaïm Soutine** (1893-1943), a subject which represents one of the best-known and most compelling achievements of his career and is illustrated on the cover of the artist’s *catalogue raisonné*. The painting sold for \$18,043,750 (£11,548,000/ €13,713,250), and achieved a new world auction record for the artist, surpassing the previous record for the 1921 work, *L’homme au foulard rouge*, which sold for \$17,215,886 in 2007. Painted circa 1927, *Le petit pâtissier* is the culminating work in a sequence of six portraits of pastry chefs created over the span of nearly a decade. During the course of this important series, Soutine achieved a dramatic reversal of fortune – from an unknown and destitute painter, to one of international fame – due to his discovery by the American collector and patron, Dr. Albert Barnes.

The pastry chef paintings signify Soutine’s earliest explorations of the figure in uniform, a theme that preoccupied him as he later painted valets, bell-hops and waiters. Soutine had known the bitter taste of poverty and he immortalized the humble employees who served. While the uniform had the effect of generalizing the sitter, it also allowed Soutine to capture the individual behind the occupation. The painting has been in an Important Private European Collection since 1977.

#### **Further leading highlights of the sale:**

**Marc Chagall’s** (1887-1985) *Les trois acrobates*, painted in 1926, achieved \$13,003,750 (£8,322,400/ €9,882,850). The first version of *Les trois acrobates* was executed approximately twelve years earlier when the artist was living in Russia, but had traveled to Paris. When Chagall officially moved to France in September of 1923, he was forced to leave many works behind, including *Les trois acrobates*. The current example represents an urgent endeavor to recreate his lost artistic past after receiving constant acclaim for the works he had created before the war. Though he attempted to reconstruct the works from memory and photographs, there are often differences in composition and color scheme, which reflect the evolution of his style during this period. For example, while the original version included an arc in the background to denote the circus ring, the present example depicts the performers on a stage. It is also likely that the second version of *Les trois acrobates* led to the commission by Ambroise Vollard to paint nineteen gouaches, known as the *Cirque Vollard*. The circus subjects developed by Chagall in these years would continue to permeate his later

*oeuvre*, placing him in a distinguished line of Impressionist and Modern masters who drew inspiration from the setting, such as Degas, Seurat, and Toulouse-Lautrec.

**Egon Schiele's** (1890-1918) *Selbstbildnis mit Modell* sold for \$11,323,750 (£7,247,200/ €8,606,050), well above its low estimate of \$5 million. The work belongs to a series of bold religious allegories in which Schiele portrayed himself together with his lover and model, Valerie Walburga Neuzil, called "Wally." The painting ranks among the most accomplished and ambitious of all of the artist's paintings. Painted in 1913, it is a work that captures the artist's burgeoning sense of his own mystical identity as an artist. Christie's was honored to sell this work on behalf of the Neue Galerie, New York and the proceeds will benefit future acquisitions.

**Amedeo Modigliani's** (1884-1920) *La Juive* doubled its high pre-sale estimate to achieve \$6,843,750 (£4,380,000/ €5,201,250). This striking portrait of an American woman Maud Abrantès, was likely painted in 1907 and included in the 1908 Salon des Indépendants, making the work one of the few from his early period that are known to have survived. *La Juive* is of particular importance to understanding the artist's development, as it marks his entry into the modernist milieu of Parisian art, then at a crucial juncture between the passing wave of Fauvism and the emergence of Cubism. The contemporary elements in the painting aim to project the emotional state of the sitter while physically placing her in a social context. It is these stylistically prescient works that would eventually allow Modigliani to establish himself as the most distinctive and famous portraitist of the century.

**Pablo Picasso's** (1881-1973) *Mandoline et portée de musique*, painted in 1923 and from the Collection of Mona Ackerman, realized \$9,195,750 (£5,885,280/ €6,988,770). This sophisticated still-life painting, with its unified, almost monochromatic palette of deep reds and rich browns, derives from Picasso's sustained exploration of the cubist idiom in the 1920s. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, Picasso tirelessly explored the pictorial possibilities offered by juxtaposing two still-life elements; a stringed instrument and a piece of tableware. With their fragmented forms and flattened planes, and sand infused surface, these compositions represent a continuation of Picasso's cubist explorations of the previous decade, and his concern with formal arrangements.

**Claude Monet's** (1840-1926) *Argenteuil, fin d'après-midi*, sold for \$6,059,750 (£3,878,240/€4,605,410). Painted at Argenteuil during the 1870s, the painting is from a body of works widely hailed as the high point of Impressionism. The carefully crafted composition underscores the sense of consummate order and beauty the French craved after the Franco-Prussian War. The view of sailboats on the Seine in the rich glow of late afternoon, the sky and water streaked with pale orange and pink, a pleasant house and quiet factory visible in the distance, embodies the balanced integration of the new and old, the natural and the human.

**The complete lot list for this sale is available online.**

**[Please click here for the top ten.](#)**

**[To view complete price list, click here.](#)**

Christie's Impressionist & Modern Art *Works on Paper* and *Day Sales* continue on May 9.

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*\*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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