

# CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S TO PRESENT MASTERWORKS OF IMPRESSIONIST & MODERN ART AT EVENING SALE ON MAY 8

### WORKS FROM RENOWNED PRIVATE COLLECTIONS HIGHLIGHT THE SALE

- MODERN MASTERPIECES BY SOUTINE AND DERAINE
- CLASSIC IMPRESSIONIST LANDSCAPES BY MONET, PISSARRO AND SISLEY
- PRE WAR PARIS AVANT-GARDE WORKS BY PICASSO, MODIGLIANI, VAN DONGEN



Chaïm Soutine (1893-1943), *Le petit pâtissier*, circa 1927 (estimate: \$16-22 million)

**New York** – Christie's Impressionist & Modern Art *evening sale* on May 8 in New York will offer a superb selection of paintings, sculptures and works on paper, representing the key artistic achievements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modern masterpieces lead the sale with *Le petit pâtissier* from Chaïm Soutine's seminal series of chefs in classic whites and André Derain's portrait of *Madame Matisse au kimono* created during the pivotal summer of 1905 in Collioure. The auction features classic Impressionist landscapes by Monet, Pissarro and Sisley, and selection of pre-war Paris avant-garde works. Among the many highlights this season, we are honored to present works from the noted collections of Mona Ackerman, Armand and Celeste Bartos, Veronique and Gregory Peck, Arthur M. Sackler and Andy Williams.

**Brooke Lampley, Head of Department, Impressionist & Modern Art,** comments, “*The spring evening sale of Impressionist and Modern Art offers a selection of exquisite works assembled for discriminating collectors. From a sublime Soutine to high-Fauve masterpieces to the landscapes that inspired the Impressionist masters, the May sales series are a veritable master class in the major movements and artists of the late-19th through to mid-20th century. Given the interest we saw in February from all corners of the globe, we expect this sales series to continue the strong upward trend in this collecting field.*”

Leading the sale is 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*. Coming from an Important Private European Collection the painting is estimated at \$16-22 million and promises to reset the artist’s world auction record. Painted *circa* 1927, it 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.

In *Le petit pâtissier*, Soutine challenges the classic aesthetic values of measure and clarity of the French *grande tradition* with his expressionistic and agitated application of paint, sonorous palette and distortion of form. *Le petit pâtissier* stands against a blue backdrop, pressing against the surface of the picture, and invading the viewer’s space. Compared with the earlier works in the series, this is the youngest-looking of all the pastry chefs and is a figure of utmost melancholy. His face verges on prettiness in spite of the blunt handling, and his mouth turns down, brooding and petulant.

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 currently comes from an Important Private European Collection where it has been for over three decades.



Another highlight from the Important Private European Collection is **Marc Chagall’s** (1887-1985) *Les trois acrobates*, painted in 1926 (*pictured left*, estimate: \$6-9 million). 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.

Other works included in Evening Sale from the same collection include two paintings by Soutine, *Vue sur le village* (estimate: \$1,600,000-2,400,000 million) and *Les Glaieuls* (estimate: \$650,000-950,000), and *Biergarten in Laren, Studie*, by **Max Liebermann** (1847-1935) (estimate: \$600,000-900,000).

## CONS OF MODERNISM

The sale features eleven works by **Pablo Picasso** (1881-1973) reflecting the various facets of his protean career, from the delicate figurative pastel *La Diva*, created in Paris in 1901 (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000), to *Femme assise en costume rouge sur fond bleu*, a 1953 cubist portrait of Françoise Gilot, his mistress, muse and mother of their children Claude and Paloma (*pictured right*, estimate: \$7-10 million). Picasso creates an equivocal mood in this work by playing off the startling red dress and the brilliant lunar white of her face and hands against the deeply somber nocturnal cyan blue of the background. He employs a favorite vintage device in depicting Françoise's face: two profiles are joined along the center nose-line to create a single forward-looking visage. The feminine right side, with the woman's hair pulled back and tied in a chignon, is Françoise, and the left-hand profile is dominated by the unmistakable wide-open eye, a direct gaze that Picasso usually claimed to represent his own persona.



Other highlights among the Picasso group include *Mandoline et portée de musique* painted in 1923 from the Collection of Mona Ackerman (estimate: \$8-12 million). 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. For more information on this work and the Collection of Mona Ackerman, [click here](#). Picasso's *Composition (Figure féminine sur une plage)* painted in Cannes in the summer of 1927, is offered from the Collection of Andy Williams (estimate:



\$800,000-1,200,000). This painting may well be Picasso's first painted version of the bather subject rendered in the surrealist figuration of the *Métamorphoses* drawings, which are characterized by oddly sensual bodily distortions, dislocations and visual double-entendres. For more information on this work and the Collection of Andy Williams, [click here](#).

A group of works by **Joan Miró** (1893-1983) are led by the important work, *Peinture*, from a celebrated group of eighteen paintings made between March and June of 1933 (*pictured left*, estimate: \$10-15 million). In *Peinture*, enigmatic biomorphic shapes float atop lushly modulated backgrounds of subdued, yet radiant color. The significance of *Peinture* and the other great canvases of 1933—and the dramatic impact they made—can be attributed to the intriguing working procedure Miró used to generate them, their originality and grand scale. Miró based these canvases, some of the largest he had created up to that point, on a parallel sequence of collages depicting



mechanical instruments and tools. *Peinture* was included in Miró's first major retrospective, held at The Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1941. This exhibition had an enormous impact upon the group of artists who would become known as the Abstract Expressionists. Other works in the sale by Miró include *Personnage obscure devant un soleil*, 1949 (estimate: \$2-3 million), and *Tete de femme*, 1976 (estimate: \$1.5-2 million).



Two works by **Fernand Leger** (1881-1955) from the 1920s are offered; one representing clean purist lines inspired by mechanical idiom and the 1920s *rappel d'ordre* another showing the figurative concern and human side of Leger's art. Leger's *Nature morte (Les camées)*, painted in 1926, is a large scale classical work and is being offered from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections Trust (estimate: \$4-6 million). The still life components are subjected to radical simplification and all extraneous details are eliminated, yielding forms that appear incapable of further reduction without unduly obscuring their identity. From the Collection of Veronique and Gregory Peck, the Oscar-winning actor, is Leger's *Les deux figures*, painted in 1929 (*pictured left*, estimate: \$3,000,000-5,000,000). Depicting two women, one white and one of color, merged in an embrace, these figures propose an ideal of inter-racial harmony, and represent a contemporary, universalized embodiment of femininity and fertility myths drawn from humankind's deepest past.

## PRE-WAR PARIS AVANT-GARDE

The sale offers a stunning selection of pre-war Paris avant-garde fauvist portraits. The leading lady is **André Derain's** (1880-1954) *Madame Matisse au kimono*, which comes to Christie's from a private European collection where it has resided for over 40 years (*pictured right*, estimate: \$15-20 million). This high fauve masterpiece is the most important portrait by the artist ever to appear at auction and represents a pivotal moment of artistic collaboration between André Derain and Henri Matisse. Derain painted Madame Matisse in August 1905, during the famous summer he spent with Matisse in Collioure, prior to the now celebrated Salon d'Automne exhibition, when fauvism exploded with startling effect on the Parisian art world. For more information on this lot, please [click here](#) to view the dedicated press release.



**Amedeo Modigliani's** (1884-1920) *La Juive* is a striking portrait of the American woman Maud Abrantès, which 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 (*pictured left*, estimate: \$2-3 million). *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.

*La femme au collier vert*, a portrait painted by **Kees Van Dongen** (1877-1968) between 1906-1910, flaunts the artist's hallmark style with its virulent, acidic colors and bold, opaque strokes (pictured right, estimate: \$3-5 million). Unlike his Fauvist contemporaries who often chose landscapes as their subject matter, Van Dongen preferred the lively inspiration of the cheap entertainments of the Parisian underbelly, including singers, dancers, and acrobats. *La femme au collier vert* is a quintessential portrait by the artist, where the unknown female subject directly confronts the viewer with her strong physical presence, saturated color, and emotional intensity.



## CLASSIC IMPRESSIONIST LANDSCAPES

The auction will offer eight works representing the quintessential landscape subject matter that inspired the Impressionists. The landscapes that **Claude Monet** (1840-1926) painted at Argenteuil during the 1870s have been widely hailed as the high point of Impressionism. Monet arrived in this picturesque village on the Seine in 1872, and in the two years leading up to the watershed First Impressionist



Exhibition in 1874, he completed nearly sixty paintings, more than in the previous three years in Bougival, Trouville, London, and Holland combined. As other progressive painters – Sisley, Renoir, Caillebotte, and Manet – joined Monet at Argenteuil, the town became the locus of the new movement. At Argenteuil, Monet consolidated the formal vocabulary of this revolutionary new manner of painting, producing a string of *plein-air* masterpieces that seem as fresh and vital today as they did then. Among these, the carefully crafted composition of *Argenteuil, fin d'après-midi*, (pictured left, estimate: \$5,000,000-7,000,000), painted in 1872, 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.

Over the next decade, as the Impressionist experiment moved onto a new chapter, **Alfred Sisley** (1839-1899) found his inspiration in a more rural setting near the Fontainebleau forest. In January 1880, Sisley left the Paris suburbs for Veneux-Nadon, and immediately made the area his own, tirelessly exploring the gently undulating terrain until his death in 1899. Few paintings express Sisley's delight in these surroundings better than *Printemps à Veneux* (pictured right, estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000), painted in April of 1880. The graceful boughs of a large apple tree, silhouetted against the bright blue sky, fairly dance with vitality and exuberance, their white blossoms echoed in the cottony cumulus clouds. The striated patterns of green grass and brown earth lead the viewer up a gentle



slope from the bottom right, past a small figure in the middle distance, and the spreading branches draw the eye across the canvas toward the farmhouse at the far left. Sisley thus calls attention to the signs of human presence in his idyllic rural scene, as though to emphasize his own enjoyment of the landscape.

Before the Impressionists flocked to Argenteuil, they ensured the town of Louveciennes, near Versailles, would become virtually synonymous with the birth of Impressionism. Monet and Renoir were already settled nearby when **Camille Pissarro** (1830-1903) moved to here in 1869, and Sisley followed two years later. This was the period when the Impressionist movement took shape as a serious challenge to the art establishment in France, characterized by active and varied brushwork, a heightened palette, and an interest in depicting the effects of light and weather in innovative



compositions that transform unassuming views into compelling, modern images. Displaying all these elements, Pissarro's *Le Relais de poste, route de Versailles, Louveciennes, neige*, from 1872 (pictured left, estimate: \$1,800,000-2,500,000), uses muted harmonies of white, brown, blue, and gray to render this peaceful landscape as a meditation on winter. He experimented with this view in several canvases, altering the angle of the road and balance of masses along its length, emphasizing the serene quality of the frosty rural scene.

#### **Notes to Editors:**

Christie's previously announced the following highlights with dedicated press releases:

- [Madame Matisse au kimono by André Derain](#)
- [Property from the Collection of Mona Ackerman](#)
- [Property from the Collection of Andy Williams](#)

The NY press preview for this sale is Friday, May 3 at 9:00a.m. To RSVP, please contact Christie's New York press office.

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#### **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2012 that totaled £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 totaled £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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