

CHRISTIE'S

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NETHERLANDISH MASTERPIECES HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S SALE OF OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

FRESH-TO-THE-MARKET WORKS FROM INSTITUTIONS AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS
TO BE OFFERED ON JUNE 5 AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK



Pieter Brueghel II, *The Wedding Dance*
oil on panel, 15 x 22 ½ in. (38.1 x 57.2 cm.)
Estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000

New York - Christie's *Old Master Paintings* sale in New York on June 5 will present works from private collections and institutions, many of which are fresh to the market. With more than 100 works by great French, Italian, Flemish, Dutch and British masters of the 15th through the 19th centuries, the sale includes exceptional works by Gerrit van Honthorst, Pieter Brueghel II, and Jacques-Louis David among others.

The sale will be led by Gerrit van Honthorst's *The Duet* (pictured right; estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000), a significant work with an exceptionally distinguished Russian provenance, which includes the collection of Count Alexander Stroganov, art advisor to Catherine the Great, as well as the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Painted in 1624 at the height of Honthorst's career, this picture is one of the finest examples of scenes of nocturnal revelry for which the Dutch artist is celebrated. On display at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for more than 40 years, the picture was recently restituted to the heirs of Bruno Spiro, who was forced to sell the painting during World War II. For more information on this lot, please click [here](#).



Two major fresh-to-the-market works by Pieter Brueghel II will also be offered in the sale. A highlight in the history of Flemish painting and belonging to a tradition established by the artist's father, *The Wedding Dance* (pictured page 1; estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000) can be viewed as a record of daily peasant life in the 16th-century Netherlands, or as a genre scene rife with allegorical and symbolic meaning, with overtones warning against drinking, over-indulgence, and lust. The work depicts a bustling party in which a large group celebrates a newly married couple; whirling dancers occupy the foreground as the bride sits at the center with a crown atop her head, denoting her special status as "Queen for the day." She watches as those surrounding her place pewter coins on a plate in front of her, while eager onlookers greedily survey the offerings. *The Drunkard pushed into the Pigsty* (pictured left; estimate: \$500,000-700,000) is similarly meant to convey a moralizing message in its portrayal of a Flemish proverb. The combination of drunkenness, gluttony, and lust is

referred to in the iconography of the work, as the pig has long been connected with excess. Despite the didactic meaning of the work, *The Drunkard pushed into the Pigsty* reflects Brueghel's unique ability to project a sympathetic and humorous attitude toward human weakness and folly. This picture is one of only two extant autograph versions and the only one remaining in private hands.

Three exquisite Italian Renaissance works comprise the Property from the Art Institute of Chicago that will be offered, with Vincenzo Catena's *The Virgin and Child with a Female Saint* highlighting the group (pictured right; estimate: \$200,000-300,000). Described by the art historian F. Heinemann as "la più bella composizione dell'artista" ("the most beautiful of the artist's compositions"), the work depicts a *sacra conversazione*, or "holy conversation," a popular format of 16th-century Venice in which figures are shown engaging with each other before a pastoral landscape. Artists of the time, especially Giovanni Bellini, who Catena followed



closely, were particularly drawn to this format, as it allowed them to depict biblical figures along with saints who lived at different times. The serenity of mood and idealization of the figures are typical of Catena's works from the first decade of the 16th century. Also included in the Property from the Art Institute of Chicago is *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine of Alexandria* from the studio of Francesco Francia (estimate: \$40,000-60,000) and *The Virgin Adoring the Christ Child with Saint John the Baptist* by a follower of Domenico Ghirlandaio (estimate: \$70,000-100,000), a wonderful tondo that features several symbolic elements. Saint Francis of Assisi is visible in the background receiving the stigmata, an allusion to Christ's death on the Cross; the goldfinch serves a similarly symbolic purpose, as according to legend, the bird obtained its distinctive red spot when it plucked at Christ's crown of thorns on the road to Calvary and was stained by his blood.

The sale will feature seven works from the estate of the esteemed art historian John Michael Montias as well. Originally trained as an economist, Montias' interests eventually led him to the study of economics of the art market in the 17th-century Netherlands. His research and subsequent publications examined the culture and context in which 17th-century artists and art collectors lived and worked, becoming a major influence in the discipline of art history. Among the works from his discerning collection is Matthäus Terwesten's *Pygmalion and Galatea*, which illustrates the tale of a sculptor who falls in love with his creation (*pictured right*; estimate: \$10,000-15,000). With the story's origin in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the idealized treatment of the figures, this picture testifies to Terwesten's reputation as one of the most distinguished classicizing artists of the 17th-century Netherlands.



Painted in the early 1770s, the spirited, life-sized *Portrait of Mademoiselle Guimard as Terpsichore* (*pictured left*; estimate; \$400,000-600,000) marks the sparkling debut of the young Jacques-Louis David, the transformative genius who would re-imagine the art of painting in Europe for a new century. Renowned for her beauty, Mademoiselle Guimard was a celebrated dancer and courtesan who starred in the Paris Opéra for several decades, acquiring well-placed lovers and considerable wealth along the way. This ravishing portrait, which shows the charming naivete, pastel palette and rococo energy of David's earliest work, depicts Mademoiselle Guimard as Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance, daintily executing a dance step as Cupid aims an arrow at her white satin slipper adorned with a pink rosette.

This *Old Master Paintings* sale will be included in Christie's **Classic Week** in June, a weeklong series of sales in New York devoted to the finest of Old Master Paintings, Antiquities, and European Decorative Arts and Carpets. Following a public viewing beginning on June 1, the four sales will take place over the course of three days, June 5-7, in conjunction with an exciting line up of specialist-led gallery tours. For more information on **Classic Week**, please click [here](#).

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