

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 24 September 2014

HALF A CENTURY OF ITALIAN ART BURRI / CASTELLANI / FONTANA / BOETTI

Featuring

'Mapping Modern Art in Italy: Half a Century of Art from a European Private Collection'

The Italian Sale, London 16 October



London – Christie's season of Post-War & Contemporary Art auctions will be highlighted by **The Italian Sale**, which will take place on 16 October in King Street following the Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening sale. Subsequent to the record breaking successes of the Italian Sale in 2013 and the single owner collection *Eyes Wide Open, An Italian Vision* this past February, the Italian Sale this year will continue to represent the very best of Italian Art, with key works by Modern artists such as Giorgio Morandi, Giorgio De Chirico and Marino Marini and his sculpture *Cavaliere*, which strongly resonates with the artist's *L'angelo della città*, a cast of which now famously stands at the entrance of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice (estimate: £600,000-800,000, *illustrated above centre*). Important pieces by Post-War Italian masters such as Alberto Burri and his *Rosso Nero* (£1,500,000 – 2,000,000, *illustrated above left*), Lucio Fontana and his *Concetto Spaziale* (estimate: £800,000 – 1,200,000 *illustrated above right*) will also be featured.

Arte Povera masterpieces will be featured, including important works by Alighiero Boetti such as *Colonna*, from 1968 among others (estimate: £1,500,000 – 2,000,000). The auction will also present works by two of the founders of **AZIMUT** gallery, Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani, which coincidentally celebrates the current exhibition at [The Peggy Guggenheim Collection](#) in Venice, curated by Luca Massimo Barbero and supported by Christie's as a technical sponsor. Comprising over 60 lots, the auction will also feature an important group works assembled by a private collector focussing on the development of art in Italy during the post-war era. Entitled *'Mapping Modern Art in Italy: Half a Century of Art from a European Private Collection'*, this selection features works by artists working in the avant-garde, including Boetti, Burri and Fontana.

BOETTI

This season, the Italian Sale is led by Alighiero Boetti's *Colonna* (Column), (estimate: £1,500,000 – 2,000,000, *illustrated right*). Rarely found offered on the private market, this is a unique opportunity to acquire such a significant arte povera sculpture in exceptional condition. Executed in 1968, *Colonna* is a highly important and pivotal work that marks both the culmination of the artist's early arte povera explorations and the beginning of the more conceptual direction that his art would take on after this decisive year. Consisting of numerous thin confectionary paper doilies bought from a cake shop supplier and each laid vertically over a central iron rod to form a large, robust and also decorative column, *Colonna* is a unique example made for one of the very first arte povera exhibitions to be held in Rome. It is the first

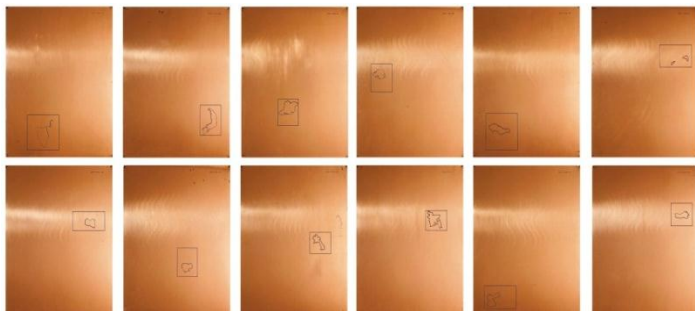


of a group of nine such paper columns that Boetti would make throughout 1968 and which culminated in a group showing of five similar 'centrini' columns at Boetti's solo exhibition *Shaman Showman* held at the Galleria de Nieubourg in Milan in April 68. Of



these nine works, *Colonna* is a uniquely open and interactive example that contains within itself numerous 'secret' inscriptions and dedications that were made by fellow artists, guests and exhibitors at the Rome exhibition. Boetti's decision to make a classical-looking column from an assemblage of cheap, commonplace materials was therefore appropriate to both the arte povera context of the show and the conceptual nature of the piece.

Boetti is further highlighted in the sale with a selection of other works including a green *Mappa* (£1,000,000 – 1,500,000, *illustrated below right*) from the series of embroidered world maps that he made between 1971 and his premature death in 1994. Today these tapestries are widely recognised as being not only among the artist's most important creations but also as fascinatingly accurate predictions of the constantly shifting sands of today's geo-political world. Another socio political work by Boetti will be offered during the auction: *Dodici forme dal 10 giugno 1967* (estimate £600,000 – 800,000, *illustrated below left*).



FONTANA



Christie's is equally pleased to present a selection of works by renowned conceptual painter Lucio Fontana, including *Concetto Spaziale*, an outstanding example of his landmark series of *Olii* (estimate: £800,000 - 1,200,000, *Illustrated left*).

With its vast, thick and black surface, thrillingly penetrated by a constellation of violent lacerations at its heart, *Concetto Spaziale* was executed at the dawn of the Space Age, the year after Yuri Gagarin first soared into space. Fontana lovingly built layer after layer of oil paint, creating this surface of thick texture and then set to work on penetrating it with holes which are at once violent, yet sensitive, composed yet random, and whose very existence threatens the stability of the surface which they are supposed to be supporting. The present work was included in Fontana's ground-breaking exhibition held at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis in 1966, which later travelled to the University of Texas Art Museum.

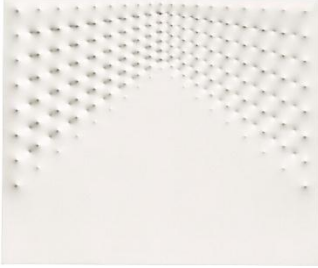
BURRI



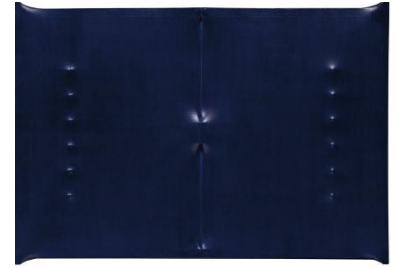
Another artist who equally altered the public's perception of painting was Alberto Burri. *The Italian Sale* will offer an important selection of his renowned *Sacchi* and *Combustione* series, including the above works, illustrated from left to right: *Combustione* (estimate: £350,000 – 500,000); *Combustione Plastica* (estimate: £1,000,000 – 1,500,000); *Bianco* (estimate: £500,000 – 700,000).

Like the pierced canvases of his contemporary Lucio Fontana, Burri has enshrined his own activities within the fabric of his picture surface. Burning his material, stitching it, gluing it, Burri made vivid works that contained reality whilst representing nothing. A cornucopia of texture and material, *Combustione* was created by Alberto Burri in 1961 and perfectly demonstrates his ability to celebrate humble materials. The works illustrated above demonstrate an intense sense of internal balance and poise. Exuding as much finesse as one of Pablo Picasso's Cubist collages, these compositions do not refer to the outside world. Instead, they stand alone in their own right, autonomous. With the upcoming [Burri exhibition](#) scheduled at the Guggenheim Museum in October 2015, discerning collectors will not want to miss out on the opportunity to acquire such an incredible range of quality works by the artist.

CASTELLANI



Enrico Castellani, a founder of the Azimut/h gallery, is one of the great veterans of Italian art who, over the decades, has shown an incredible rigour and discipline, creating variations that often function within the strict bounds of the proto-Minimal aesthetic that he developed early in his career. *Superficie blu scuro* from 1963 (estimate: £300,000-



500,000, *illustrated right*), shows Castellani's growing interest in shaping the canvas and redefining the space occupied by painting. He has taken the bare bones of traditional painting, the nails, the frame, the canvas and the paint itself, and radically reconfigured them to create something that bespeaks objectivity, which is evident in his later work, such as *Superficie bianca* from 1967 (estimate: £400,000 – 600,000, *illustrated left*).

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Notes to Editors

Exhibition dates in Italy

Turin – 18 September – Palazzo Birago, Camera di commercio di Torino, Via Carlo Alberto 16

Rome – 25 September – Musei di San Salvatore in Lauro, Piazza San Salvatore in Lauro 15

Milan – 2 October – Palazzo Clerici, Via Clerici 5

*The Tour of the Italian Sale in Italy is sponsored by Brioni

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2014 that totaled £2.69 / \$4.47 billion, making it the highest half year total in Christie's history. 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 around 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 & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales in the first half of 2014 totalled £498.9 million (\$828.2 million).

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai 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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