

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK RUSSIAN ART SALE FEATURES RARE AND IMPORTANT BRONZE PORTRAIT OF ILYA REPIN



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Viktor Vasnetsov (1848-1926), *Portrait of I.E. Repin*, bronze with dark brown patina, cast in 1909, estimate: \$100,000-150,000

New York – The artistic exchange between two of the greatest Russian artists of the 19th Century is embodied in Viktor Vasnetsov's bronze *Portrait of I.E. Repin*, which will highlight Christie's sale of **Russian Works of Art** on April 9 in New York (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). A work of monumental historic and artistic significance, this bronze bust, which was Repin's personal copy, is one of the few works of sculpture created by Vasnetsov. It is being offered at auction for the first time.

Mark Moehrke, International Director of Russian Works of Art, comments: *"The Portrait of I.E. Repin is truly an exceptional work. One of the few works of sculpture by Viktor Vasnetsov, it depicts not only one of Russia's greatest artists but also documents the importance of art patronage at a seminal point in Russian history. The portrait was created in such remarkable circumstances and involves major figures in late 19th century Russian culture, from Vasnetsov,*

Repin and Savva Mamontov to the Tretyakovs and the Silotis. It is our privilege to offer one of the rarest and most historically significant works of Russian art in our April sale."

In the summer of 1880, Ilya Repin (1844-1930) and Viktor Vasnetsov (1848-1926) gathered in the important artistic community of Abramtsevo, founded by the great industrialist and art patron, Savva Mamontov (1841-1918), and together went on to produce three of the most spectacular and unique sculptures in the history of Russian Art. Working simultaneously, Vasnetsov sculpted a plaster bust of Repin; Repin a bust of Mamontov; and Mamontov, of Vasnetsov.

The portrait of Repin is one of the few works of sculpture by Vasnetsov, who was known primarily for his paintings of mythological and historical subjects. Repin greatly admired the portrait, as did the renowned Moscow collector Ivan Tsvetkov, who in 1909 received permission from Vasnetsov to cast in bronze a version for his own collection. The casting was done by the Robecchi foundry, and the bust remained a part of Tsvetkov's collection until it was acquired in 1927 by the State Tretyakov Gallery, where it remains today.

The original plaster bust of Repin remains in the Abramtsevo Museum-Reserve. A second version of the plaster was produced and cast for Repin himself in 1909 and is currently held in the Museum-Estate of I.E. Repin, Penates. The bronze model offered was owned by Repin until the mid-1920s, when it was acquired directly by Levko Alexandrovich Siloti (1897-1984). Levko, an art collector and dealer, was the son of the famous Russian pianist Alexander Siloti (1863-1945) and Vera Pavlovna Tretyakova (1866-1940), who was the daughter of the great Russian art collector, Pavel Tretyakov (1832-1898). The bronze portrait remained in the personal collection of Levko Siloti and has descended in the family to the present owner.

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