

CHRISTIE'S

NEW YORK – THE EXCEPTIONAL SALE- 11 DECEMBER 2014
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BACCHIC FIGURE SUPPORTING THE GLOBE BY ADRIAEN DE VRIES

TO LEAD CHRISTIE'S INAUGURAL EXCEPTIONAL SALE IN NEW YORK



New York – On 11 December 2014 Christie's will hold its inaugural Exceptional Sale in New York. Since its inception at Christie's London in 2008, The Exceptional Sale is a highly selective offering of the finest furniture, silver, ceramics, clocks and sculpture from classic periods - as well as for cultural icons of the modern age. Each work in The Exceptional Sale exemplifies excellence in design, craftsmanship, materials, condition and provenance. The Exceptional sale in New York will be led by a 17th century masterpiece by the Dutch master of Mannerist sculpture Adriaen de Vries (1550-1626): the bronze *Bacchic Figure Supporting the Globe*, which is estimated to realise between \$15 million - \$25 million. Dating to 1626, this is possibly the last fully autographed work executed by the artist, presenting the pinnacle of his sophisticated skill. *Bacchic Figure Supporting The Globe* was discovered in 2010 on a Christie's routine valuation at a castle in Upper Austria.

Donald Johnston, Christie's International Head of Sculpture: "The appearance of this previously unrecorded masterpiece by Adriaen de Vries - one of the most important and avant-garde sculptors of the

late Mannerist period - is a hugely significant event which provides an unprecedented opportunity for lovers of both old master and modern sculpture. A unique work of exceptional beauty and superb provenance, *Bacchic Figure Supporting The Globe* has the potential to become the most valuable piece of early European sculpture ever to be sold at auction. It is truly extraordinary that such a monumental work was not recorded in any literature on the artist before its discovery in 2010 – a situation which was only possible due to its remote location in an aristocratic collection for so many centuries.”

The current world auction record for European sculpture was set in 2003 when Christie’s sold a parcel-gilt and silvered bronze roundel depicting Mars, Venus, Cupid, and Vulcan, Mantuan, *circa* 1480-1500, for £6.9 million. Prior to that, the most valuable early European sculpture was *The Dancing Fawn*, the most recent work by de Vries to be auctioned, which was sold to the Getty for £6.8 million in 1989. Thought to date to *circa* 1615, it is smaller than the bronze offered today and was neither signed nor dated.

Having trained as a goldsmith before working with Giambologna in Florence, Pompeo Leoni in Milan, and finally for Rudolf II in Prague, de Vries is one of the most fascinating sculptors of his era. Originally working in the meticulous style of Medici Florence, his style evolved, particularly after he was released from the strictures of the imperial court in Prague and he began working on a series of monumental sculptures for private clients.

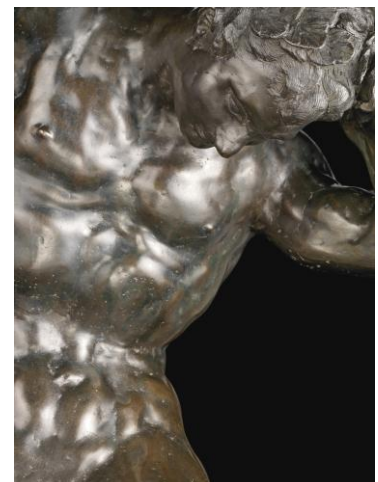


De Vries developed a highly distinctive and impressionistic style in his later years, as did other artists such as Michelangelo, Titian and Rembrandt. His later style reflects his growing interest in the blurring of outlines and the play of light on the surface of his bronzes and it gives these works an immediacy that is lacking in many of the highly finished works he produced for the imperial court. It is this combination of a strong overall sense of form combined with the expressive modeling of surface details that makes these late works appear so modern. In his abstraction of the human form de Vries can be said to parallel the work of his contemporary, El Greco, who also discarded many of the conventional artistic canons of the Renaissance and Mannerist periods.



Inspiring modernist masters, the influence of de Vries on 20th century sculpture: The arresting and dynamic stance of this male figure illustrates the remarkably modern surface handling of de Vries’ late works which mark him as an earlier precursor of avant-garde sculptors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from Rodin to Brancusi, Giacometti and Modigliani. The vigorous modeling of this sculpture moves away from the refined crisp clean lines of the artist’s early work, powerfully capturing the vitality of the subject’s movement, in an impressionistic and raw manner. Unlike most other bronzes which are cast in multiples, de Vries is one of the only sculptors working in bronze who almost exclusively used the direct lost wax process, which means that his works are almost always unique.

It is only in recent years that the direct inspiration of de Vries on Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), which had often been observed, was clearly confirmed when a relief of *Les Forgerons*, cast by Rodin, was discovered actually to be a copy of de Vries’s *Vulcan’s Forge* of 1611, and not an original composition



by the French sculptor. This is a clear illustration that de Vries was literally centuries before his time. The present bronze *Mythological Figure Supporting The Globe* represents the apogee of this movement towards a new expressionism and shows exactly why de Vries was so admired by sculptors of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2014 that totalled £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.