

CHRISTIE'S

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MASTERS OF THE AVANT-GARDE

INCLUDING ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GROUPS OF WORKS
BY GIACOMETTI TO COME TO THE MARKET

LEAD

CHRISTIE'S *IMPRESSIONIST & MODERN ART EVENING SALE*

24 JUNE 2014



London – The strength of demand for the very best Impressionist and Modern Art has been demonstrated at Christie's in 2014 with the record breaking London *Evening Sale* in February, which set the highest total for any art auction held in London and the stellar New York *Evening Sale* in May, which achieved the highest total for the category in New York since May 2010. Both auctions attracted deep, international bidding and high sell through rates of 86% by lot and 96% by value, and 89% by lot and 96% by value, respectively. Christie's London *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* on 24 June will continue to meet current market tastes with a rich offering of 60 avant-garde and modern works by the towering greats of the 20th century, many of which are being offered at auction for the first time.

A group of four masterworks by **Alberto Giacometti** from an important private collection presents the market with one of the most significant collections of works by the artist to come to the market in many decades. The star lot is Giacometti's iconic sculpture *La Main*, conceived and cast in 1947, which was in the New York exhibition that launched Giacometti's Post-war international career (estimate: £10-15 million). The wealth of highlights from other private collections also include *Composition A, with Double Line and Yellow*, 1935, by **Piet Mondrian** which is among the property being offered from the *Rudolf and Leonore Blum Collection* (estimate: £5-8 million); *L'artiste et le modèle nu*, 1921, by **Henri Matisse** (estimate: £7-10 million); and arguably the most important work by **Kurt Schwitters** ever to come to the market, *Ja – Was? – Bild* ('Yes-What?-Picture'), 1920, which is one of only three early large reliefs from this first revolutionary Merzbilder series to remain in private hands (estimate: £4-6 million). It is offered from the *Viktor and Marianne Langen Collection*; this follows the sale of works from the collection at Christie's New York in May which was 100% sold and realised \$79,829,000. With estimates ranging from £200,000 up to £15 million, the pre-sale estimate for the *Evening Sale* is £96,350,000 to £141,450,000. *Select highlights from the sale will go on view for the first time between 13 and 17 June during Christie's free five-day public exhibition 'Open House 2014' which will showcase timeless international masterpieces of the summer auction season.*

Jay Vincze, International Director and Head of The Impressionist and Modern Art Department, Christie's London: “We are thrilled to have brought together such an exciting, varied and rare group of 60 works, which perfectly encapsulates today’s informed, intelligent and eclectic collecting tastes. Many of these works are appearing at auction for the first time in generations and have formed part of some of the most celebrated collections of 20th century art. Following the huge success of both our record breaking February sale in London and our May sale in New York, we are looking forward to welcoming global collectors to London and to furnishing them with numerous opportunities to acquire museum quality works at auction. This important sale leads a week of ‘Impressionist and Modern Art’ and ‘20th century Modern British and Irish Art’ sales at Christie’s London, including the highly anticipated Picasso Ceramics auction and our first online-only auction of modern sculpture ‘Small is Beautiful’.

Alberto Giacometti – 4 Masterworks from an Important Private Collection

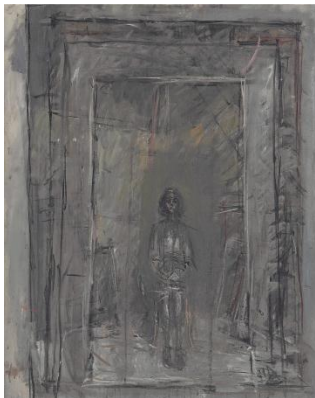
The importance of *La Main*, by **Alberto Giacometti** was highlighted by the artist himself who sent it to the United States at the end of 1947 to be shown at Pierre Matisse’s gallery the following January in the groundbreaking exhibition that launched Giacometti’s Post-war international career (estimate: £10-15 million, *illustrated page one*). Offered with highly evocative provenance, this cast - the first in a series of just five - was soon acquired from Pierre Matisse by Edward James, the celebrated English collector and patron of the Surrealists. James went on to give it to Ruth Ford, an American model and actress, possibly as a gift on the occasion of her marriage in 1952 to the Hollywood actor Zachary Scott. The bronze remained in Ruth Ford’s apartment in the Dakota building on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where it would have been seen by, among others, William Faulkner, Orson Welles, Tennessee Williams and Andy Warhol, until it was sold to the present owner at auction in 1985.

The aesthetic power of this sculpture resonates on many levels. The hand is our prime intermediary between the mind and the world, it allows thought to act upon and transform the world. The outstretched hand expresses the human need to grasp, to reach out towards the world and to aspire within it; the hand enables us to realise our potential in accomplishing all things, a particularly potent symbol for a sculptor. In the face of another, the hand may embrace in love or ward off in fear, extend itself in joy or lamentation. No part of the human body, except for the head itself, is a more powerful expression of the totality of human endeavour. As fragile as it may appear, Giacometti’s *La Main* carries the emotional and symbolic weight of all these gestures. Giacometti created three sculptures during 1947 that represent parts of the human body – *La Main*, *Le Nez* and *Tête sur tige* – as he set out to work on the first of his famously thin, elongated signature sculptures.

This work is offered alongside three other masterworks by Giacometti from the same *Important Private Collection*, including *Femme de Venise II*, which was conceived in 1956 and cast in the artist’s lifetime (estimate: £8-12 million, *illustrated right*). Displaying an extraordinary and rare golden patination, the present cast belongs to the renowned series of sculptures known as the *Femmes de Venise*, comprising nine individual but closely related figures cast in bronze, which played a significant role in establishing Giacometti’s fame and reputation as the most important sculptor of the Post-war era. They were created in response to a landmark invitation from the French government to exhibit in the main gallery of the state pavillion at the 1956 Venice Biennale; Giacometti also agreed to a major retrospective at the Kunsthalle Bern that would run concurrently. Keen to show only his very latest sculptures, Giacometti decided to create a series of standing nude women, and set to work in early 1956, initiating a rush of sustained and feverish activity that lasted until the end of May. Using a single armature, Giacometti worked and reworked the figures almost



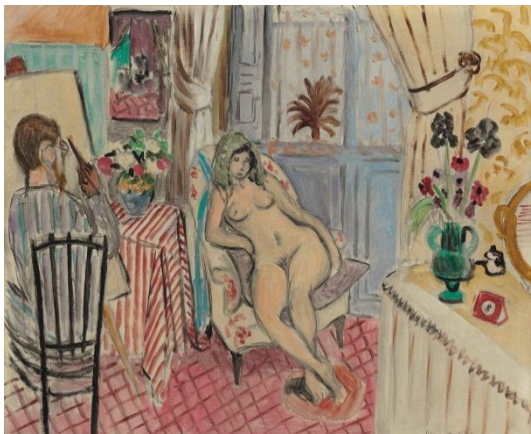
daily; his brother Diego making plaster casts, which required only a few hours pause in Alberto's work, whenever he had achieved a result that interested him at that moment.



The other two stellar works from the collection both depict Giacometti's wife Annette. *Portrait de femme (Annette)* dates from 1954, one of the artist's highpoints of his portraiture; it shows his wife seated within one of the most complex visual armatures of his career (estimate: £3.5-5.5 million, *illustrated left*). *Annette IV*, conceived in 1962 and cast in the artist's lifetime, is one in a series of ten portrait busts that Giacometti created of his wife between 1962 and 1965 (estimate: £1.5-2 million, *illustrated right*). This work demonstrates the artist's assertion that sculpture should capture an essential quality of the sitter through an extreme measure of style rather than exact physiognomic representation.



An Important Private American Collection



L'artiste et le modèle nu, 1921, shows one of the most celebrated subjects painted by **Henri Matisse**: the artist and his model (estimate: £7-10 million, *illustrated left*). Painted during the early years of Matisse's time in Nice, this picture provides a rich tapestry of colours and sings with a sense of light, warmth and sensuality. Matisse's quest for the arabesque is clear, with the rigid vertical and diagonal lines that make up so much of the composition juxtaposed with the main focus: the curvaceous naked figure draped on the chair at the centre of the canvas. Introducing an intriguing perspective onto the creative act of

painting, this work shows the artist at his easel, looking at the nude reclining. *L'artiste et le modèle nu* has featured in almost every major exhibition and monograph of Matisse's work from the last few decades and was also shown publically only shortly after its execution; in part this is due to the relative scarcity of pictures showing the artist in the act of painting. Despite the extensive literature surrounding this picture, it has changed hands only a few times. It was first owned by the celebrated American collector John Quinn; it appears to have been acquired at his posthumous auction by Ruth and Harry Bakwin, in whose hands it remained for almost six decades until it was sold to the present owner in 1985.

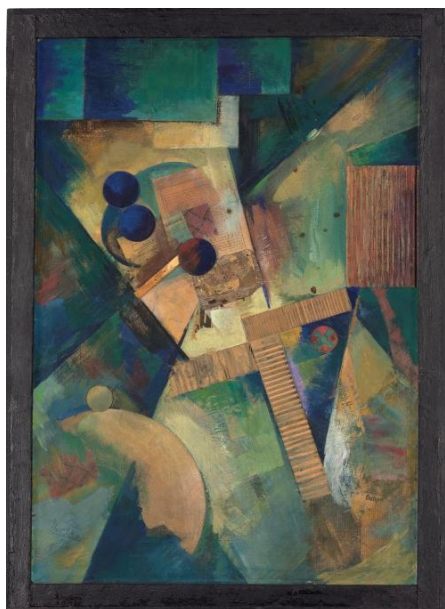
Property from The Collection of Rudolf and Leonore Blum

Coming to the market for the first time in almost half a century from **The Blum Collection**, which is a tribute to the intellectual approach, inquisitive eye, and passion of its creators, *Composition A with Double Line and Yellow* is an historic painting by **Piet Mondrian** dating from 1935 and featuring a relatively recent innovation in his work: the double line (estimate: £5-8 million, *illustrated right*). As well as bringing more emphasis to the white, the double line allowed Mondrian the opportunity to create a deliberate disruption within the sense of balance of his pictures, introducing a greater internal dynamism to the compositions. Mondrian himself recognised the importance of this work and



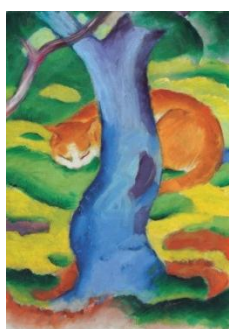
shortly after it was completed sent it to Lucerne to feature in *These Antithese Synthese*, an important exhibition organised at the Kunstmuseum by Hans Erni. The picture was purchased the same year by the celebrated museum director, art historian and collector James Johnson Sweeney, and featured in the posthumous retrospective of Mondrian's work which he organised at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1945, where the artist had made his final home. Reviewing the show for *The Nation*, Greenberg noted: 'the hope shining from Piet Mondrian's white canvases with their criss-crossed bands of black...express an almost naïve faith in the future... Mondrian was one of the greatest painters of our time.' *Composition A with Double Line and Yellow* was the fruit of long labours. Mondrian's pictures remain rare because of the incredible amount of time that each took, be it in planning the composition or adding the layers of paint. For the years 1934 and 1935, for example, when this work was painted, fewer than two dozen pictures are detailed in the catalogue raisonné - and several of those were considered unfinished. Of those works, pictures such as *Composition A with Double Line and Yellow* that feature Mondrian's 'double line' are even rarer.

Property from The Viktor and Marianne Langen Collection



The large 'Merzbild' relief-paintings that **Kurt Schwitters** made between 1919 and 1921 are widely recognised as being the works that established him as one of the most radical and important artistic pioneers of the twentieth century. Measuring nearly a meter high, Schwitters's *Ja-was?-Bild* ('Yes-What?-Picture'), a large framed Merzbild relief, created in 1920, is one of the most mature and thoroughly integrated examples from this seminal series (estimate: £4-6 million, *illustrated left*). One of ten works offered this season from the *Viktor and Marianne Langen Collection*, this work's wide array of component parts, along with its frame, combine to form an integral part of a coherent whole in which each varied and highly individual element appears to have become interdependent upon the other. Schwitters himself noted the same year that he created this work that the complex, intricate balance of interrelated forms and different materials, elegantly mastered in *Ja-was?-Bild*, was a key element of these

first Merzbilder. Breaking down the boundaries between art and daily life and instigating an entire culture of materials which continues to inform much contemporary art today, Schwitters' Merzbilder were immediately recognised as something absolutely new - as creations expressive of a radical new concept of both what a work of art could be and how it could be made. A major influence on artists such as Alberto Burri, Cy Twombly, Robert Rauschenberg, Joseph Beuys and Sigmar Polke among others, much of these artists' work is almost unthinkable without the precedent set by the Merzbilder that Schwitters made in the years immediately following the First World War.



Further important examples by **German** artists include works by **Franz Marc**, **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner** and **Egon Schiele**. *Property from The Ablers Collection* is led by a very rare work from Franz Marc's relatively small output: *Kinderbild (Katze hinter einem Baum)* (*Children's Picture (Cat behind a Tree)*, 1910-11, which was formerly on long-term loan to the Sprengel Museum in Hannover and more recently to the Franz Marc Museum in Kochel am See (estimate: £5-7 million, *illustrated left*). One of the most famous and popular paintings in the museum, this work is widely reproduced and much loved; its appeal derives

essentially from the charm and directness of its imagery. In a wonderfully simple blend of vibrant colour and lyrical form, an orange cat is shown sleeping in a landscape behind the winding trunk of a blue tree. This deceptively simple painting is one of Marc's first great painterly triumphs in what would turn out to be his lifelong search to create a sophisticated and vitalising art in which the basic elements of picture-making - form, colour and symbol - were to be synthesised into a single, harmonious and unified expression of spiritual resonance and joy. From the property of a *Distinguished German Collection*, *Nacktes Mädchen vor grünem Sofa*, 1908, by **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner** is one of the artist's first celebrated Brücke group paintings of naked models in the studio (estimate: £2-3 million). It is also one of his first attempts to create a heightened sense of reality through an aesthetic fusion of flattened colour, simplified form and raw subject matter. The female nude is further explored in *Akt mit roten Strumpfbänder (recto)*; *Liegender Akt (verso)* by **Egon Schiele** from the *The Estate of Edgar M. Bronfman*, a visionary businessman who has contributed greatly to contemporary Jewish life (estimate: £1.8-2.5 million).

Property from a Private European Collection



Executed in 1971, *Femme à la voix de rossignol dans la nuit* presents some of Joan Miró's most characteristic themes on a dramatic scale and with grand simplicity of means (estimate: £4-6 million, *illustrated left*). Birds, women and the night had, since the very beginning of his career, constituted some of the most poetic ingredients of Miró's universe. In this work the artist's imagination forged a new scenario in which these three symbols are united in a single evocative image: the woman has stolen the nightingale's song, as the night envelops her. Almost two metres wide,

Femme à la voix de rossignol dans la nuit expands Miró's vocabulary on a monumental scale, reinforcing the power of his art through a simplification of forms. Miró's method of creation through successive colour fields induced him to consolidate and condense the system of signs which his art had created. Other than plain colours, *Femme à la voix de rossignol dans la nuit* is only composed of a few broad, sweeping brushstrokes. In its poetic intent, however, *Femme à la voix de rossignol dans la nuit* continues the relationship between poetry and painting that was at the core of Miró's art. Elsewhere in the sale, other notable Surrealist works include *La belle promenade*, an exquisite gouache by René Magritte, 1965, that has only changed hands once since it was purchased from the artist (estimate: £700,000-1,000,000).

Notes to Editors:

Please click [here](#) to view the e-catalogue for the full *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*

Pre-sale estimates for Impressionist & Modern works offered in the June auctions:

<i>Impressionist & Modern Evening Auction</i>	24 June	£96,450,000 - £141,450,000
<i>Impressionist & Modern Works on Paper</i>	25 June	£5,963,000 - £9,007,000
<i>Impressionist & Modern Day Sale</i>	25 June	£13,568,000 - £19,837,000
<i>Picasso Ceramics</i>	26 June	£673,600 - £1,000,800
<i>Impressionist & Modern, South Kensington</i>	27 June	£1,070,000 - £1,596,100
		TOTAL £117,724,600-£172,890,900

PRESS CONTACT: Hannah Schweiger | +44 (0)207 389 2964 | hschweiger@christies.com

Images available on request
Visit Christie's Website at www.christies.com