

# CHRISTIE'S

NEW YORK | 25 MARCH 2015

## ***Looking Forward to the Past***

*"To me there is no past or future in my art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was..."* Pablo Picasso, 1923

### **CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK ANNOUNCES *LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PAST* – A CURATED EVENING SALE**

- **LED BY PICASSO'S MASTERPIECE OF THE 1950s, *LES FEMMES D'ALGER (VERSION "O")* PREVIOUSLY IN THE COLLECTION OF VICTOR AND SALLY GANZ**
- **FEATURING WORKS BY MASTERS OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY FROM MONET TO KIPPENBERGER**
- **SALE DATE: MONDAY, MAY 11, 2015 AT CHRISTIE'S ROCKEFELLER CENTER**

**New York** – In keeping with the current strong global market for Impressionist, Modern, Post-War and Contemporary works at auction, Christie's announces an exciting addition to its spring calendar of auctions this May: a curated Evening Sale entitled *Looking Forward to the Past*, scheduled for Monday, May 11.

Through a concept devised by **Loic Gouzer**, International Specialist, Post-War and Contemporary Art, working with the global team of specialists, *Looking Forward to the Past* provides a distinct and dynamic perspective on some of the greatest and most revolutionary artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gouzer explains, "*Looking Forward to the Past will illustrate enduring dynamics at the root of artistic creation. 20<sup>th</sup> Century artists were heavily influenced by their predecessors, and through an exploration of the past, they were able to create new and exciting territory of their own. It is remarkable that a work by Mondrian painted nearly a century ago has lost none of its visual impact or novelty. It would be just as strong and relevant in a cutting-edge contemporary collection as when it hung previously in renowned blue-chip collections. It is clear that the art of yesterday informs the art of today, while the art of now is an endorsement of that of the past.*"

**Jussi Pylkkanen**, Global President, Christie's noted: "*From the auctioneer's rostrum it has become apparent that we live in a new era of great collectors who are chasing major objects across all of our evening sales, particularly of Impressionist and Post War Art. Their appetite to buy the best and to explore the advent of modernism has led us to curate a sale that describes the very best of 20<sup>th</sup> Century art by the geniuses of the last century. The sale will span the century and will include exceptional works of the early 1900s by Claude Monet and major works by Pablo Picasso and Mark Rothko which define Post-War Modernism. We are delighted to have created a concept that will allow our senior specialists and leading collectors to explore the major themes, ideas and artistic breakthroughs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Christie's specialists, led by Brett Gorvy and Giovanna Bertazzoni in their respective fields, have worked together for many years creating great curated sales, from our auctions of German and Austrian Art, to Surrealist Art and more recently Loic's fascinating 'If I Live' auction. 'Looking Forward to the Past' is another historic step in that journey and we*

are delighted that so many leading collectors have responded with exceptional consignments to this special auction. This will be a sale to remember.”

**Brett Gorvy**, Chairman and Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art, Christie’s, added: “Today our most powerful clients globally are assembling collections that are characterized by the outstanding quality of individual objects rather than specific periods or national movements. We have deliberately curated this sale to mirror how our collectors are inspired by the dialogues and juxtapositions of art over the last century and a half, where an extraordinary Monet will speak to a seminal Picasso or a Rothko or a Warhol or a Kippenberger. We want this sale to feel like one of the great collections of our time.”

### **PABLO PICASSO’S LES FEMMES D’ALGER (VERSION “O”)**

*Looking Forward to the Past* will be led by one of Picasso’s most significant 1950s canvases, *Les femmes d’Alger (Version “O”)*, previously in the celebrated Collection of Victor and Sally Ganz, which was sold at Christie’s in 1997. This iconic work promises to cause a sensation within the global art market this spring and is expected to realize in the region of US\$140 million.

This majestic, vibrantly-hued painting is the final and most highly finished work from the artist’s mid-1950s series in which he looked back to 19<sup>th</sup> century French master Eugene Delacroix for inspiration, and in the process created a new and singular style of painting that combines elements of Cubism, Fauvism and Neo-Impressionism ([see related press release](#)).

Picasso painted a series of fifteen variations on Delacroix’s *Les femmes d’Alger* between December 1954 and February 1955, designated as versions A through O. Throughout his series, Picasso references Delacroix’s two versions of the shared subject, intermingling their elements. Picasso is quoted as having an imaginary conversation with Delacroix, “You had Rubens in mind, and painted a Delacroix. I paint [the *Les femmes d’Alger* series] with you in mind, and make something different again,” (ed. M. McCully, *A Picasso Anthology: Documents, Criticism, Reminiscences*, London, 1997, p. 251). Picasso had been fascinated by Delacroix all his adult life, and by *Les femmes d’Alger* in particular. Picasso proclaimed, “I have a feeling that Delacroix, Giotto, Tintoretto, El Greco, and the rest, as well as all the modern painters, the good and the bad, the abstract and the non-abstract, are all standing behind me watching me at work.” (H. Parmelin, *Picasso Plain*, New York, 1959, p. 77).

Picasso also conceived the series as a eulogy to his greatest rival in the 20th century, Henri Matisse. Matisse had died in November 1954, five weeks before Picasso began the series. Matisse had viewed Delacroix as his immediate forebear in terms of color and Orientalist subject matter. Carrying this legacy forward, Picasso stated, “When Matisse died, he left his odalisques to me as a legacy,” (R. Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Art*, Berkeley, 1985 (3rd ed.), p. 396).

### **ADDITIONAL CURATED HIGHLIGHTS**

*Looking Forward to the Past* will include approximately 25 lots created between 1902 and the end of the century. Additional highlights of the sale will be announced in coming weeks and include paintings, drawings, and sculpture by artists including **Claude Monet, Piet Mondrian, Egon Schiele, Marcel Duchamp, René Magritte, Pablo Picasso, Jean Dubuffet, Mark Rothko, Alexander Calder, Martin Kippenberger, and John Currin**, among others. All of the works featured will be chosen as a reflection of the sale’s overarching theme of artists using inspiration from the past to create something entirely innovative and new.

*Looking Forward to the Past* continues in the spirit of Christie’s recent successful themed auction of contemporary art, entitled “*If I Live I’ll See You Tuesday*” also organized by Gouzer. The highly successful 35-lot sale reflected a desire within the art world for fresh takes and points of view. Over the past five years, the number of clients who bid on works in both *Evening Sales* of Impressionist & Modern and Post-War & Contemporary Art at Christie’s in New York and

London has increased 80%, while the overall sales volume increased from \$1.4 to \$4 billion for these two categories combined.

*“This sale puts the spotlight on how interconnected the contemporary art category is with modern art – a truth that is sometimes overlooked in the current market. By presenting works to the market in this new context we hope to ignite dialogue about artists and their influences, inspire discussion and debate about artistic innovations, and demonstrate how great contemporary collections can evolve forward by looking to the past,”* said **Brooke Lampley**, International Director and Head of Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie’s New York.

*Additional highlights of **Looking Forward to the Past** will be announced in the coming weeks, prior to the start of an international highlights tour, which will further celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> century art and its legacy through a program of events and exhibitions designed to inspire engagement and discussion among collectors and art enthusiasts.*

**Full collection catalogue available in mid-April**

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#### **Notes to the Editors:**

- In 2014, Christie’s achieved global sales of US\$1.2 billion for Impressionist and Modern Art, an increase of 19% over the previous year. In May 2010, Christie’s set the auction record for any work by Pablo Picasso at \$106.5 million, with the sale of *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust* from the *Collection of Mr. and Mrs Sidney F. Brody*.
- Christie’s is the leader for Post-War and Contemporary Art worldwide, with total sales in 2014 of \$2.8 billion, up 39% over the previous year.
- On November 12, 2013, at Christie’s New York, Francis Bacon’s *Three Studies of Lucian Freud*, was sold for \$142.4 million setting the new world auction record for any work of art ever sold at auction. The *Evening Sale* of Post-War and Contemporary Art, on November 12, 2014, totaled \$852.9 million – the highest auction total in art market history.

#### **Tour dates for highlights of *Looking Forward to the Past***

Hong Kong: 2 – 6 April 2015

London: 11-15 April 2015

New York: Highlights: 30 April - 4 May 2015; Exhibition: 9 - 13 May 2015

#### **Auction:**

New York: 11 May 2015

Christie’s 20 Rockefeller Plaza

#### **PRESS CONTACTS:**

Elizabeth Van Bergen (NY) | +1 212 636 2680 | [evanbergen@christies.com](mailto:evanbergen@christies.com)

Paddy Feeny (UK) | +44 20 7389 2664 | [pfeeny@christies.com](mailto:pfeeny@christies.com)

#### **About Christie’s**

Christie’s, the world’s leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totaled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual 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, jewelry, 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 Jewelry. Private sales totaled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion) in 2014, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie’s has a global presence with 54 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 Shanghai, New Delhi, 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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