

# CHRISTIE'S

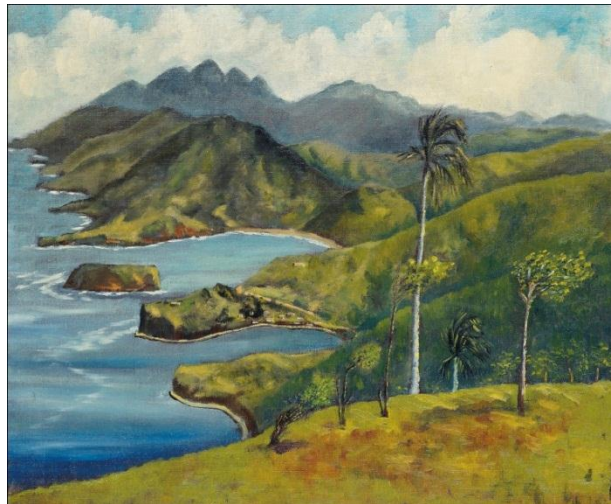
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## CHRISTIE'S PROUDLY OFFERS ARTWORKS FORMERLY IN THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF SIR NOËL COWARD

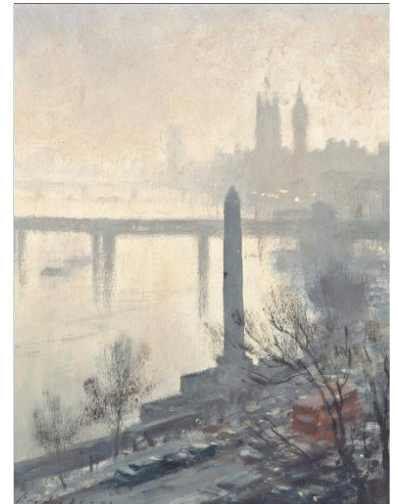
IN THE SALE OF MODERN BRITISH AND IRISH ART  
At Christie's South Kensington, 19 March 2015



Sir Noël Coward Painting  
at Firefly



Noël Coward - *The View from Firefly*  
Estimate: £10,000-15,000



Edward Seago - *Towards Westminster*  
Estimate: £15,000-25,000

**South Kensington** – Christie's is proud to announce the sale of a selection of artworks formerly in the private collection of Sir Noël Coward, which will be offered as part of the *Modern British and Irish Art* sale on 19 March 2015 at South Kensington. This collection features a group of paintings by Coward himself, which include portraits and scenes of Jamaica – his Caribbean home – alongside paintings he acquired as gifts from friends such as the actress Elizabeth Taylor, the actor David Niven, and the composer, actor and entertainer Ivor Novello. It comprises works by revered British artists such as Christopher Wood, John Nash, Edward Seago and Derek Hill. Never before seen together in public, the collection perfectly encapsulates the essence of Sir Noël Coward – who *Time* magazine described as exuding “a combination of cheek and chic, pose and poise” – and the auction provides a rare opportunity to acquire paintings owned by this most quintessential of British artists. Estimates range from £300 up to £100,000.

Sir Noël Coward was known principally as a celebrated playwright, composer, director, actor and cabaret artist. What is less well known is his skill as a painter and his love of art as a collector. Coward began painting at a young age but devoted more time to his art in later years, particularly at his homes in Switzerland and Jamaica. Coward famously entertained celebrities of the stage and screen at both homes, his visitors including Sir

Winston Churchill, Sir Laurence Olivier, Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, Cecil Beaton, HM The Queen Mother and Ian Fleming. It was when holidaying at Fleming's Jamaican home, Goldeneye, that Coward first fell in love with the island and its landscapes and inhabitants both provided inspiration for Coward's art; he painted vibrant scenes of people at work and play, and picturesque coastal scenes, such as *The View from Firefly* (estimate: £10,000-15,000, *illustrated page one, centre*). He experimented with both watercolours and oils, often working with rich primary colours to create vibrant compositions. As Coward received paintings as gifts from friends, he too was known to give his paintings as first-night performance or birthday gifts, and also hung his works at home. The *Modern British and Irish Art* sale presents a group of eighteen of Coward's paintings, showcasing the themes and subjects that captivated him and his skill as a painter.

Coward also amassed a collection of paintings by other British artists whose work he admired, often acquiring them directly from the artists themselves. Edward Seago's *Towards Westminster* (estimate: £15,000-25,000, *illustrated page one, right*) is dedicated 'for Noel from Ted 1972'. In a letter from Edward Seago to Coward in the summer of 1966, it is evident that Seago thought highly of Coward; Seago writes "I'm still very thrilled to think that the man who's [sic] work I admire far more than that of anyone else in his art – or several arts for that matter – should profess a liking for my pictures." The collection also includes Oliver Messel's *Portrait of Adrienne Allen* (estimate: £2,000-3,000, *illustrated right*), which was originally a gift from the artist to actress Adrienne Allen on the occasion of her marriage to Raymond Massey in 1929, and later gifted to Coward in 1979. A good friend of Coward, Messel visited Jamaica and painted many Jamaican scenes. In his 1976 biography of Coward, Cole Lesley wrote, "Noël was enchanted by his good friend's paintings and bought one. Then Messel gave him another one for good measure."



The auction also presents a group of landscapes by Christopher Wood including a pencil and watercolour titled *Frigate*, bequeathed to Coward by Ivor Novello (estimate: £2,000-3,000). A highlight of the group is Wood's *Fishing Village, Cornwall* (estimate: £70,000-100,000, *illustrated left*). Wood met and befriended Ben and Winifred Nicholson, visiting them regularly at Bankshead, their home in Cumbria, and traveling to Cornwall where Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood discovered the work of self-taught, naïve artist Alfred Wallis in 1928. During his time spent in Paris, Wood mixed with the *beau monde* of Parisian society and met Picasso, Cocteau and Diaghilev, and the auction includes a painting Wood executed while in the city; *Paris Square* (estimate: £50,000-80,000).

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**Public Exhibition:**  
14 - 18 March 2015

**Auction:**  
Modern British and Irish Art  
19 March 2015  
10:30 am, Christie's South Kensington