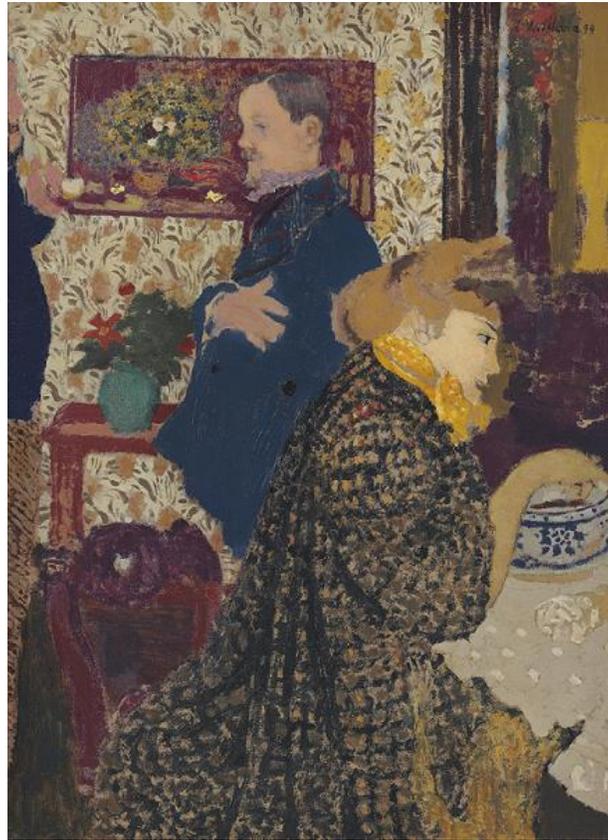


# CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER WORKS FROM THE ESTATE OF RENOWNED EGYPTOLOGIST WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON



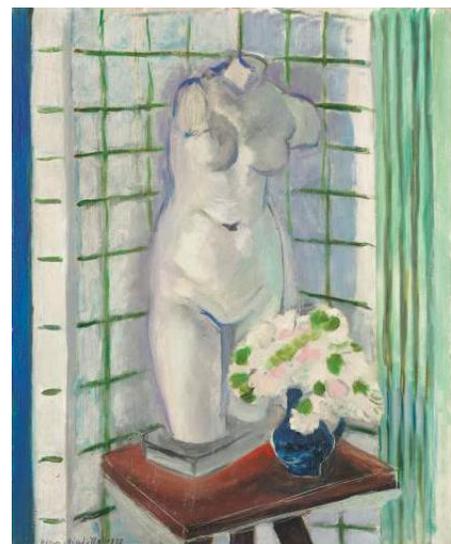
Edouard Vuillard, *Misia et Vallotton à Villeneuve*, oil on board laid down on cradled panel, Painted in 1899 | \$7,000,000 – 10,000,000

**New York** – This November, Christie's will offer **Property from The Estate of William Kelly Simpson** as a highlight of its November 13 Evening Sale of Impressionist and Modern Art. Professor Simpson was an eminent Egyptologist and visionary collector in whose home hung several of the most iconic paintings of the Nabi movement alongside American folk art, European decorative art, Egyptian antiquities and Mughal miniatures. The collection will be sold across Christie's Antiquities, Art from The Islamic And Indian Worlds, American Art, and Impressionist and Modern Art Evening and Works on Paper Sales. Many of these works were acquired by descent from the estates of Abby Aldrich and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The group is expected to realize in excess of \$25 million.

**Max Carter, Head of Department, Impressionist and Modern Art, New York, remarked,** "We are proud and deeply honored to be offering *Property from the Estate of William Kelly Simpson*. A prolific scholar, distinguished curator and discriminating collector, Professor Simpson's extraordinary range is reflected in his collection—from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century B.C. portrait head of Amenhotep III to Nabi masterworks by Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard. The top lot, Vuillard's *Misia et Vallotton à Villeneuve*, from 1899, represents the culmination of the artist's most innovative and celebrated decade. Acquired in 1979, we expect this painting, perhaps the finest Vuillard ever to appear at auction, will be met with enthusiasm by collectors and institutions around the world."

Upon the death of Professor Simpson in March 2017, scholars mourned the loss of one of Egyptology's most lauded minds. Throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, he stood at the forefront of Egyptology, inspiring countless individuals to pursue their own investigations in this rich area of study. In Professor Simpson's forty-six years in academia, he rose from Associate Professor to Chair of Yale's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature; was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in the Humanities; and positioned Yale as one of the foremost centers for Egyptology. In 1970, Professor Simpson was approached by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to lead its Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art. During his seventeen-year tenure there, Professor Simpson vastly increased the scale of the department's collection and refurbished its exhibition galleries. To students and enthusiasts, his co-authored works on the history of the ancient Near East and ancient Egyptian literature have become indispensable texts.

The collection is led by Édouard Vuillard's superlative *Misia et Vallotton* from 1899 (estimate: \$7-10 million) – *pictured on page one*. This painting was purchased by Professor Simpson, and his wife, a granddaughter of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The subject of this work, Misia Natanson, was the artist's perennial muse and the object of his unrequited infatuation during the last years of the nineteenth century. Misia occupies the foreground, where she is in close proximity to the painter yet unaware of his presence. Behind her, turned in the opposite direction, is the painter Félix Vallotton, who also had a charged and flirtatious relationship with Misia. The third character in this intricately



contrived drama is Misia's husband Thadée, co-founder of the influential literary journal *La Revue Blanche*, whose portly frame and pipe are recognizable at the far left of the composition. Misia turns her back on Thadée as he converses with Vallotton, implying his limited significance in her emotional world; Vuillard, likewise, has reduced him almost to a non-presence, radically cropping the image so that only a sliver of his form remains visible.

Also highlighting the collection is *Plâtre, bouquet de fleurs*, 1928, by Henri Matisse (estimate: \$1.5-2.5 million) – *pictured left*. This work was acquired by descent from the collection of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, co-founder of the museum of modern art in New York. In late 1926 or early 1927, Matisse moved from an apartment in Nice that he had occupied for five years, on the third floor to a space nearly twice the size on the top story of the same address. Whereas the artist's studio in the previous flat had been snug and heavily

decorated, the current one was dramatically lit with triple floor-length windows facing south over the Baie des Anges. It was here that Matisse painted *Plâtre, bouquet de fleurs*, unexpectedly transforming a corner of his new atelier into a veritable meditation on the history of art and the nature of art-making. The focal point of this elegant canvas is a plaster cast of a nude female torso from classical antiquity. Strictly aligned with the edges of the canvas, these verticals assert the materiality of the painted surface as opposed to that of the represented object. This play of volume and flatness—of artistic tradition and modernist innovation—embodies the very pictorial synthesis that Matisse sought at Nice during the 1920s.

Another top lot includes Pierre Bonnard's *Le joueur d'orgue*, 1895 (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) – *pictured right*. By 1895, the year that he painted *Le joueur d'orgue*, Bonnard had begun to seek ways of combining the immediacy of direct experience with the highly





decorative art form favored by the Nabis. The close cropping of the present scene, inspired by Japanese ukiyo-e prints and the new technology of the Kodak snapshot, conveys all the freshness and informality of the first glance, while simultaneously reinforcing the underlying structure of the image.

Highlighting the selection of antiquities, which will be sold on October 25, is an Egyptian Greywacke Portrait Head of Amenhotep III, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, 1390-1352 BCE (estimate: \$200,000-\$300,000) – *pictured left*. This portrait depicts a youthful Amenhotep III wearing a striped nemes headcloth fronted by a uraeus that rises up from a broad band at the forehead. The angle of the tail of the nemes indicates that this head likely comes from a sphinx. His eyes are shown fully banded with extended cosmetic lines and conforming arching brows above. His smiling mouth is indented at the corners and displays the characteristic thicker upper lip.

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**Auction:**

25 October | Antiquities  
26 October | Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds  
13-14 November | Impressionist & Modern Art Evening and Day Sales  
21 November | American Art

**About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in first half of 2017 that totalled £2.35 billion / \$3 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie's offers around 350 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.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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*Images available on request*

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