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CECILY BROWN AND ADRIAN GHENIE STAR IN LONDON SESSION *ONE: A GLOBAL SALE OF THE 20TH CENTURY*

HONG KONG – PARIS – LONDON – NEW YORK
10 JULY 2020



Cecily Brown, *Carnival and Lent* (2006-2008, estimate £4,000,000-6,000,000)
and Adrian Ghenie, *The Arrival 3* (2015, estimate: £3,000,000-5,000,000)

London – As part of *ONE: A Global Sale of the 20th Century* on 10 July 2020, Christie's will offer seminal paintings by Adrian Ghenie and Cecily Brown as leading highlights in London. An extraordinary, cinematic vision spanning two metres in width, *The Arrival 3* (2015, estimate: £3,000,000-5,000,000) is an outstanding large-scale painting by Adrian Ghenie. Against a vibrant backdrop of rich, abstract texture and swirling, hallucinatory forms, a central figure looms large, clad in a crisp black suit. A pyrotechnic expanse of colour and movement, *Carnival and Lent* (2006-2008, estimate £4,000,000-6,000,000) exemplifies Cecily Brown's command of oil paint. Inspired by Pieter Brueghel the Elder's 1559 masterpiece *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, its 2.5-meter canvas creates an all-engulfing textural and chromatic world, with hints at figure and form caught in swirls, tangles and marbled blurs of pigment.

André Zlattinger, Deputy Chairman, Post-War and Contemporary Art Europe: "Christie's is thrilled to offer these exceptional paintings by two artists who represent the gamut of painting in the 21st century. Cecily Brown was recently included in the Whitechapel Gallery's group exhibition 'Radical Figures' which focused on those pushing the boundaries of representation. Her sources are hugely varied and *Carnival and Lent* places her work in dialogue with Old Masters. Adrian Ghenie's paintings explore moments of significant change in history using

figures the viewer may not want to confront but is suddenly compelled to do so. Presenting these two innovative painters in our new relay-format auction, provides a global context within which their work can be viewed."

The warm terracottas, visceral reds and cooler touches of lavender and teal in Cecily Brown's *Carnival and Lent* echo the palette of Brueghel's painting, detonating his bird's-eye crowd scene into an immersive, fleshy scape of abstracted energy. Brueghel depicts Prince Carnival and Lady Lent—personifications of drunken appetite versus spiritual discipline—in a farcical joust, splitting his composition between the patrons of the inn and church that flank a Netherlandish town square. His work teems with earthy humour, playful detail and intricate symbolism. Its conflict between ribald abandon and monastic restraint makes it an apt figure for Brown's practice, which draws vivid life from the tension between abstraction and figuration. In *Carnival and Lent*'s lush bacchanal of hues it might seem clear that carnival has won out, but the work is nonetheless held together by Brown's keen eye for structure: her paintings are unresolved battles between chaos and control, between body and mind, and between painter and paint itself.

Painted in 2015, the year that Adrian Ghenie represented Romania at the Venice Biennale, *Arrival* depicts Doctor Josef Mengele: the infamous Nazi physician, whose ghostly form recurs throughout the artist's *oeuvre*. Informed by his own upbringing under totalitarian rule, Ghenie is fascinated by how we visualise the past. By translating his subjects into visceral, carnal spectres, the artist forces us to confront them as living, breathing beings, highlighting the ways in which we instinctively distance ourselves from our own history. While the present work's title might be seen to refer to Mengele's exiled arrival in South America, or, more broadly, the advent of a dark new chapter in European history, it also conjures the sense of revelation that Ghenie seeks to inspire in his viewers. Through the dense, painterly chaos of the work's surface, we arrive at a moment of disturbing recognition, face to face with the horrors of the past. Ghenie's complex historical imagination is founded upon an interest in turning points. Third Reich officials sit alongside Charles Darwin and Vincent Van Gogh as key members of his cast: all of them figures who, in the artist's mind, ruptured the course of humanity.

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