

CHRISTIE'S

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THINKING ITALIAN: DESIGN Italian Architect-Designed Masterworks Of the 20th Century

London, 17 October 2018



Lisa Ponti and Luigi Licitra, with examples of the present lot by Carlo Mollino at home in their Milan apartment, circa 1951

London - This October, Christie's will present the auction *Thinking Italian: Design*, offering a variety of architect-designed works to include glass, ceramics, furniture and lighting from the most sought-after Italian designers of the 20th century, a selection of which will be exhibited in King Street during the London Design Festival, from 15-20 September. Held alongside the Design auction on 17 October in London, this various-owner sale draws together rarely-seen works from important collections, and features seminal pieces of Italian design including a rare and important chair by Carlo Mollino that was gifted to Gio Ponti's daughter Lisa Ponti for her wedding in 1950 (estimate: £200,000 - £300,000, *illustrated above*). Acknowledged as one of the most original creators of 20th century Italian architecture and design, Mollino's few remaining works are today preserved in international museums and private collections. With a distinctive bipartite back and seat, the present lot is a modern and visionary chair, one of only six that were created. In excellent condition and with full provenance, this is an opportunity not to miss for new and discerning collectors alike. Further highlights of leading Italian designers of the last 120 years will be offered across furniture, lighting and glass by the. With over 75 rare, iconic and unusual lots, Estimates range from £5,000 to £300,000.



A further highlight by Carlo Mollino is an important armchair, *circa 1952*, (estimate: £120,000 - £180,000, *illustrated right*), designed

for the Turin apartment of Gemma Acotto. Of organic outline, and featuring sumptuous velvet upholstery in the deep green colour that was so characteristic of the designer, the form anticipates the biomorphic design that was to characterise the 1950s. Further lots designed by Carlo Mollino, include furnishings designed for the Casa del Sole, Cervinia, 1954-55.

GIO PONTI



Gio Ponti's contribution to pioneering Italian design was crucial and established the template for a progressive, innovative and unified spirit in Italian design that endures to the present day. An extensive selection of his most important work is represented in this sale, including a rare and important dining table, *circa* 1959 (estimate: £80,000–120,000, *illustrated above*). With diamond-shaped top poised upon agile, anthropomorphic structure, this exceptional design fluently reveals the essence of Gio Ponti's spirit. Ponti's furniture is additionally represented by a rare pair of lounge chairs, *circa* 1952 (estimate: £40,000 – 60,000, *illustrated above left*), and a specially-commissioned brass lattice table, *circa* 1955 (estimate £50,000 – 70,00, *illustrated above right*), amongst others. The sale also includes scarce examples of Ponti's 1920s porcelain designs for manufacturer Richard Ginori, including the 'Angeletto' vase illustrated (estimate £6000 – 8000). We are pleased to be offering these alongside the forthcoming Gio Ponti exhibition that opens on 19 October at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

ITALIAN GLASS

The auction presents an extremely rare and hitherto unseen 'Red and Black Laccati' bowl, 1940, by Carlo Scarpa (estimate: £60,000 - £80,000, *illustrated right*). Reminiscent of the lacquered ceramics found in Japanese aesthetics, Carlo Scarpa is acknowledged as amongst the leading masters of Italian glass through his mastery of innovative techniques and strikingly elegant forms. The innovative and highly skilled technique revealed by this rare example is considered nearly impossible to perform and consequently only 4 of these bowls are known to have been made. This exceptional example leads an important section of glass by this influential architect. Scarpa was recently the subject of a major retrospective at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, with further exhibitions currently being staged at Treviso, Italy, at the present time.



Another sculptor to invent a new glass-blowing technique was Napoleone Martinuzzi. Appointed artistic director at Venini in 1925, he challenged the traditional elements distinctive of Venini's production, and indeed of Murano glass at the time: transparency, lightness and purity of forms. Martinuzzi experimented with the vast possibilities of glass, and created pulegoso glass, where the surface is covered in burst-air inclusions, making the glass opaque and often slightly iridescent. Exhibited for the first time at the XVI Venice Biennale in 1928, the series of vessels made of pulegoso were inspired by ancient

forms, with complex applied decorations such as a series of handles as shown by the present example (estimate: £160,000 – £200,000, *illustrated left*). The only known example in this colour, this vessel was first exhibited in Turin in 1984 at the exhibition Mostra del

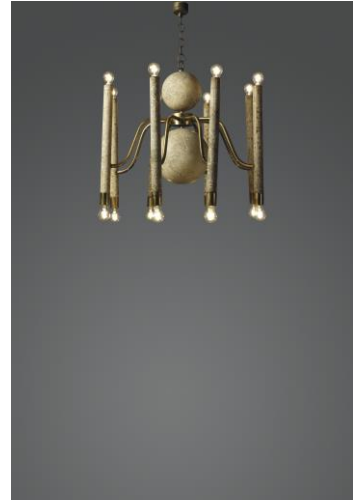


Vetro Italiano 1920-1940, the label from the exhibition is still visible to the underside of the piece. Amongst other highlights, the sale will also offer a rare 'Mezzaluna Murrine' vase by Paolo Venini, 1954, *illustrated page 2, bottom right* (estimate £20,000 – 30,000).

LIGHTING



During the 1940s and 50s Italy was at the forefront of progressive lighting design, often synthesizing new technologies with elegant modern styling. The sale will present a fascinating survey of Italian lighting, including examples that are scarce to appear on the open market. Leading the Italian lighting selection is an important prototypic floor lamp, 1940s, by Franco Albini (estimate £30,000 – 40,000 *illustrated left*), and a rare, possibly unique chandelier by Piero Fornasetti (estimate £20,000 – 30,000, *illustrated right*).



FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Pierluigi Giordani

A unique centre table, *circa* 1950
85.5 cm. high; 207.8 cm. long;
109.8 cm. wide
Estimate: £30,000 – 40,000



Yoichi Ohira

A unique 'Colata di Lava' vase, 2005
43 x 33 cm
Estimate: £50,000–80,000



Paolo Buffa

An early console with shelving unit, *circa* 1930
240 cm. high; 106 cm. wide;
45 cm. deep
Estimate: £25,000-35,000

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About Christie's

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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.

**Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

**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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