

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 9 OCTOBER 2018

CHRISTIE'S TO PRESENT *COIN DE JARDIN AVEC PAPILLONS* BY VINCENT VAN GOGH PREVIEW EXHIBITION IN TOKYO 10-11 OCTOBER



Vincent Van Gogh, *Coin de jardin avec papillons*, oil on canvas, 1887

'Between the winter of 1886 and the summer of 1887 Van Gogh effectively crossed the divide into contemporary art.'
– **Richard Kendall, art historian and curator at large at the Clark Art Institute**

New York – On 11 November Christie's will offer the painting that marked the moment Vincent Van Gogh 'crossed the divide into contemporary art,' *Coin de jardin avec papillons*, 1887 (estimate on request).

Presented at auction for the first time, *Coin de jardin avec papillons* possesses a sweeping exhibition history. Most recently, it was exhibited as a focal point of 'Van Gogh & Japan,' a travelling exhibition that explored the artist's fascination with Japonism, and the significant impact it had on his work. 'Van Gogh and Japan' toured to the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Sapporo, the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and The National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto throughout 2017 and 2018. Van Gogh's *Coin de jardin avec papillons* will return to Japan once again for a presale exhibition at Christie's Tokyo from 10-11 October.

David Kleiweg de Zwaan, Senior Specialist, Impressionist and Modern Art at Christie's, remarked: "The two years that Van Gogh spent in Paris, from March 1886 until February 1888, represent a pivotal period in his career, during which he assimilated a host of diverse artistic currents and forged a deeply personal style. With its range of creative influences, from pointillism to Japanese prints, the present painting exemplifies the experimental zeal of the era. Van Gogh's *Coin de jardin avec papillons* is a key example of his innovative and radical style."

'What people demand in art nowadays is something very much alive, with strong colour and great intensity,' wrote an exhilarated Van Gogh to his sister Wil in the summer of 1887. The cause of the Dutch painter's excitement was the discovery of a groundbreaking new art movement that had exploded onto the Parisian art scene in the 1870s. *'In*

Antwerp I did not even know what the Impressionists were,' he wrote to a friend. 'Now I have seen them and though not being one of their club yet I have admired certain Impressionist pictures.'

Out went the earthy tones and studied gravity and in came a series of richly-coloured landscapes and still lifes alive with the spontaneity of *plein air* painting, and the stylistic influence of Japanese wood block prints. As he studied the colour theories and gestures promoted by artists like Georges Seurat, his brushstrokes became looser and his palette became brighter.

Executed between May and June 1887, *Coin de jardin avec papillons* marks this crucial turning point in the artist's career. Painted at a time when experiments in photography were pushing the boundaries of pictorial conventions, it is nature in close-up — a profound departure from the traditional landscape. At its centre, six butterflies dart between the foliage, their wings iridescent spots of white and red.

Interestingly, the park Van Gogh used for *Coin de jardin avec papillons* was in Asnières, a small Paris suburb on the banks of the Seine, which in the mid-1800s became a popular destination with day-trippers. Here, Van Gogh became acquainted with many of the younger Post-Impressionists, including Emile Bernard and Paul Signac. They inspired him to adopt some of their experimental techniques, particularly Pointillism, which Van Gogh had first encountered at the eighth Impressionist exhibition in 1886.

Yet Van Gogh was never one for structure or rules. Under his brush, Seurat's neatly ordered dots were willfully slackened and applied with a furious intensity. What Seurat thought of Van Gogh's very personal twist on his invention is not known, but it did not seem to bother Signac, who became a friend of Van Gogh's and was intrigued by his feverish passions.

As the summer came to an end, Van Gogh's attention turned south, toward Arles. *Coin de jardin avec papillons* anticipates the garden paintings he would make [in the asylum at St Rémy](#) in 1888 following a mental breakdown, and the butterflies are a fitting metaphor for the fragility of his own life.

In the *Van Gogh & Japan* exhibition catalogue, art historian Cornelia Homburg describes *Coin de jardin avec papillons*, stating: "There are no other fully fledged works from Paris that show a similarly concentrated focus and attention to detail as in this extraordinary canvas."

Originally held in the collections of Theo van Gogh and his descendants, *Coin de jardin avec papillons* also belonged to Joseph Reinach, the 19th-century French journalist and politician best known as the public champion of artillery officer Alfred Dreyfus.

On 11 November, this sumptuous painting will be offered in the [Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale](#) at Christie's in New York, as part of 20th Century Week.

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Preview Exhibition
10-11 October, 2018

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