

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S TO PRESENT TWO MASTERWORKS WORKS BY ALBERTO GIACOMETTI



Alberto Giacometti, *Le Chat*, bronze with dark brown patina. Conceived in 1951 and cast in 1955 | \$14-18 million

ON VIEW IN HONG KONG 23-25 OCTOBER

New York – In its November 11 Evening Sale of Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's will present two consummate examples by Alberto Giacometti: *Femme assise*, conceived in 1949-1950 and cast in 1957 (\$14-18 million) from a Distinguished Private Collection – *pictured right*, and *Le Chat* – “The Lambert Cat” – conceived in 1951 and cast in 1955 (\$14-18 million) – *pictured above*, which was Formerly In The Johanna Lambert Collection. These works come to auction on the heels of Giacometti's widely celebrated retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Adrien Meyer, Co-Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's, remarked: “Giacometti created *Femme assise* during 1949-1950, at the height of a breakthrough period of astonishing productivity. The subject is anchored to the ground on her throne-like chair, vulnerable yet not weak, echoing the grace of Egyptian antiquity. The present work has been in the same collection for decades and will be sold at auction for the first time ever; this cast is one of only three left in private hands.”

Olivier Camu, Deputy Chairman and International Director Impressionist & Modern Art, continued: “Alberto Giacometti had one of the most intense and penetrative gazes in all 20th century art; always fighting hard to capture the essence of reality around him. In this beautifully black patinated bronze cat - one of his rare



animal sculptures, (conceived in 1951, cast in 1955 and which has never left the Lambert family since), Giacometti powerfully captures the feline nature of a domestic cat.”

Giacometti created *Femme assise* during 1949-1950, at the height of a breakthrough period of astonishing productivity, in which he brought forth definitive masterworks, one after another, in his newly attenuated, weightless, and visionary post-war mode. In three exhibitions, his first solo shows in nearly fifteen years—at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, in 1948 and 1950, and at Galerie Maeght, Paris, in 1951—Giacometti unveiled *L’homme au doigt*, *Homme qui marche*, *La Main*, *Trois hommes qui marchent*, *La Place II*, *La Cage*, *Le Chariot*, *L’homme qui chavire*, *La Clairière*, and *La Forêt*, among other works.

Embodied within the unprecedented, radical, and extreme filiform configuration of *Femme assise*, thin and light, is the classic subject of the artist and his model—this full-length seated woman is nude. Giacometti could neither conceive nor sculpt her in any other way. Never before has a nude been so bare, exposed, and fleshless as she is here. Having been cast in bronze affords her figure some tensile strength; the original model—preserved today in the Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti, Paris—is a most precious, fragile object.

An early owner of the present *Femme assise* was a woman whose own life was an “astonishing adventure”—the dealer and gallerist Erica Brausen. Brausen became friends with Giacometti in the early 1930s, when they were neighbors in Montparnasse; after a stint in Majorca during the Spanish Civil War, during which she assisted numerous Jewish and socialist friends in escaping from Franco’s forces, she arrived penniless in London at the start of the Second World War. In 1947, she established the Hanover Gallery, which quickly rose to prominence as one of the most influential showcases of advanced art in Europe. Brausen gave Giacometti an exhibition in 1955 and thereafter served as his principal dealer in London.

Femme assise is being presented at auction for the very first time.

The present cast of *Le Chat* comes from the legendary Lambert Collection. A Belgian banking dynasty renowned for its eponymous Banque Lambert, the Lambert family has also become famed for its esteemed collection, with a love of art passed down through generations. The family’s collection was started in the late 19th Century by Baron Léon Lambert, who, with his wife, Baroness Lucie Lambert, the granddaughter of James de Rothschild, began to acquire and inherit a notable array of artworks from their families. This passion was continued by their son, Baron Henri Lambert and his Viennese wife, Baroness Johanna ‘Hansi’ Lambert. In 1956, she visited Giacometti’s studio in Paris. It was soon after this meeting that she purchased *Le Chat*, which has remained in the family’s collection ever since.

“In a burning building,” Alberto Giacometti declared, “I would save a cat before a Rembrandt”. There is good reason to believe the sculptor’s empathy for creatures great and small, especially on the evidence of the four sculptures that he created in 1951 of three different species of animal—two horses, a dog, and the cat offered here. As Valerie Fletcher has noted, all three were reputedly executed in plaster during a single day. Each of the sculptures is life-size or even larger—*Le Chat* has an exceptionally long neck. For lack of space in his cramped studio, Giacometti had to leave the huge *Deux chevaux* outdoors in his courtyard, where the plaster eventually broke down and dissolved in the rain. The smaller dog and cat were thankfully preserved and cast in bronze.

The plaster version of Alberto Giacometti’s *Le Chat* was first shown publicly in the artist’s premiere solo exhibition in Europe, at the Galerie Maeght, Paris, in 1951; it remains in the collection of the Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti, Paris. Casts from the bronze edition are located in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Fondation Marguerite et Aimé Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence; the Museum Berggruen, Berlin; and the Stiftung Alberto Giacometti, Zürich.

Note to editors: *In conjunction with the Impressionist & Modern Art department, Christie's Design will also present Alberto and Diego Giacometti: Masters of Design, which will take place during our marquee 20th Century Week on Monday, 12 November 2018. This sale includes 27 lots of design created by both Giacometti brothers, representing their crucial contribution to the field of decorative objects, lighting, and furniture.*

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.

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