

CHRISTIE'S

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DAVID HOCKNEY'S 1969 DOUBLE PORTRAIT ***HENRY GELDZAHLER AND CHRISTOPHER SCOTT*** TO LEAD CHRISTIE'S POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING AUCTION IN LONDON

6 MARCH 2019

The Final Work to be Sold from The Collection of Barney A. Ebsworth



'It's a watershed painting', said Geldzahler. 'In this picture David finally gave up the idea of being a "modern artist" and decided, instead, to be the best artist he could be' (H. Geldzahler, quoted in P. Richard, 'The Painter and His Subject', The Washington Post, 30 March 1979, p. 8).

LONDON – On 6 March 2019, Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction will be led by David Hockney's intimate yet monumentally-scaled 1969 portrait of *Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott*, from the collection of Barney A. Ebsworth (estimate in excess of £30 million). Standing among Hockney's most celebrated works, *Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott* will mark a fitting conclusion to the collection of Barney A. Ebsworth, which has thus far achieved a running total of \$323,508,250. The painting will be unveiled and on view in New York from 8 to 12 February before going on view in London from 2 to 6 March 2019. The Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction is a key part of 20th Century at Christie's, a season of sales taking place in London from 22 February to 7 March 2019.

Marc Porter, Chairman, Christie's Americas, remarked: *"It is an honour to present Hockney's double portrait of Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott, which is not only an extraordinary example from the artist's most celebrated series, it is also a poignant representation of one of the 20th century's greatest curators. Hockney captured Geldzahler at a particularly decisive moment when the curator was organizing his most revolutionary exhibition. Officially titled New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970, the exhibition received such a high degree of fanfare that it would soon become universally known as Henry's Show. 2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of that survey, which would ultimately alter the course of both Geldzahler's career and art history as we now know it, making the sale of this painting extremely timely. Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott was among Barney Ebsworth's most treasured works of art, and marks one of the rare exceptions to Mr. Ebsworth's rule of only acquiring the work of American Artists. The stunning success that this collection has achieved thus far, speaks to the collector's remarkable eye for quality, and this work absolutely epitomizes that."*

Katharine Arnold, Head of Evening Sale, Post-War and Contemporary Art, Christie's London, continued: *"David Hockney's double portraits are undoubtedly some of the finest paintings the artist ever realised. Created on a 7 by 10 foot format, these paintings invite the viewer to enter the intimate settings of some of Hockney's closest friends. In Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott, we meet the celebrated curator and his partner in their 7th avenue apartment in New York City. What strikes me as extraordinary is Hockney's use of naturalistic technique. Here Hockney has mastered paint to conjure up glass in four different ways: the glass window looking out onto the cityscape, Geldzahler's neat reading spectacles, the modern glass table with a beautiful glass vase of tulips. Reflection, transparency and light are Hockney's subjects. Structured like a devotional triptych, the intimately observed composition comprises a blush pink Art Deco sofa from Geldzahler's living room, the view from Scott's study, the glass table from Hockney's studio in London and the signature vase of tulips, often interpreted as symbolising the artist himself. An unspoken narrative exists between the two lovers, which adds the element of human drama so characteristic of Hockney's greatest work. Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott will appear at auction for the first time since 1992 and follows the record set for Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures) in New York in November."*

Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott is a glowing meditation on human and visual relationships. Hockney's closest friend Henry Geldzahler – the legendary curator, critic and king of the New York art world – dominates the centre of the composition, framed by soaring skyscrapers. Christopher Scott, his then-boyfriend, hovers to the right like a fleeting apparition. Painted in 1969, it is the third work in the career-defining series of seven *double portraits* that Hockney created between 1968 and 1975. With four held in museum collections, these seven-by-ten-foot canvases represent the culmination of the artist's naturalistic style. Another example from this series, *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, was sold at Christie's New York in November 2018 for \$90.3 million, setting a new world auction record for any work by a living artist.

Though focused on Geldzahler and Scott, the work ultimately celebrates the relationship between Geldzahler and Hockney: two artistic giants at the heights of their powers. Geldzahler stares out from the canvas like an icon at the centre of an altarpiece, observing the painter's every move. Hockney's return gaze is palpable in the work's sharp, clear perspective, and seemingly affirmed by the addition of tulips – his favourite flower, and a deeply personal motif. The pair met in Andy Warhol's studio in 1963, and quickly became friends. At the time of the painting, Geldzahler – a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art – was working on his landmark exhibition *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970*, which quickly came to be known as "Henry's Show". This revolutionary survey of contemporary American art would ignite his career, leading one journalist to describe him as 'the most powerful and controversial art curator alive'. 2019 will mark the 50th anniversary of Geldzahler's landmark exhibition. Hockney, too, was on the brink of international acclaim, buoyed by the success of the double portraits that he had already completed.

The work's provenance, along with its extensive exhibition history, is exceptional. In 1969, it was unveiled in Hockney's solo show at André Emmerich Gallery, where it was described as 'truly amazing' and 'totally hypnotizing' by *New York Magazine* (J. Gruen, 'Open Window', *New York Magazine*, 12 May 1969, p. 57). It was acquired from the gallery that year by Harry N. Abrams, the renowned art book publisher and distinguished collector, and remained

in his family collection until 1992. Under this stewardship, it was featured in a number of significant exhibitions, including *Pop Art Redefined* – one of the earliest shows at the newly-founded Hayward Gallery in 1969.

In 1997, it became one of the final pieces to enter the prestigious Ebsworth collection, offering a rare British addition to one of the world's greatest assemblages of 20th century American art. Long admired by the collector, it took its place alongside Edward Hopper's 1929 masterpiece *Chop Suey*, as well as important works by artists such as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Georgia O'Keeffe. For twenty-two years, the painting hung in Ebsworth's home, and starred in notable museum shows – most recently Hockney's eightieth birthday touring retrospective originating at the Tate Britain, London (2017-18).

In an auction world first, the sale of the Ebsworth Collection marks the first time an art auction at this price level has been recorded on a blockchain. Christie's and Artory, a leading art-centric technology provider, partnered to create a secure digital registry for the sale of the Ebsworth Collection, in the spirit of the innovation and entrepreneurship that guided Mr. Ebsworth career. The introduction of this technology for this sale continues Christie's legacy of leading the industry by introducing technology innovations in the context of major collections, for the ultimate benefit of our clients. David Hockney's *Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott*, will be recorded along with all other lots sold as part of the Ebsworth collection. Further details of the collaboration are [included here](#).

ABOUT BARNEY A. EBSWORTH

Born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1934, Barney A. Ebsworth was an entrepreneur and his success was self-made. He founded Clipper Cruise Line, among other cruise lines, the Intrav luxury travel business and was an angel investor in the stuffed-animal phenomenon Build-A-Bear Workshop. Ebsworth's passion for art originated during his station with the US Army in France in 1956, when he made weekly trips to the Louvre.

Mr. Ebsworth was a renowned collector who gave generously over the years to the Seattle Art Museum as well as to many other museums and charitable institutions, including gifts of major early American works. He also devoted substantial time and financial resources in support of these institutions, including serving on the Board of the Seattle Art Museum. Ebsworth was named as one of the 'World's 200 Greatest Collectors' and 'America's Top 100 Collectors', and served as a board member or trustee for the Seattle Art Museum, the Honolulu Museum of Art, the St. Louis Art Museum, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park, St. Louis, and the Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis.

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Public Exhibition:
New York: 8-12 February 2019
London: 2-6 March 2019

Auction:
Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction
London | 6 March

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in the first half of 2018 that totalled £2.97 billion / \$4.04 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. 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.

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