

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 22 OCTOBER 2019

CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER UMBERTO BOCCIONI'S *UNIQUE FORMS OF CONTINUITY IN SPACE*

FIRST TIME THAT A SCULPTURE BY UMBERTO BOCCIONI HAS
COME TO MARKET IN NEARLY 50 YEARS



“[Unique Forms of Continuity in Space] resonates across time. It even has a science fiction aspect—you can almost see Darth Vader [in it].” – Sir Norman Foster

New York – On November 11, Christie's will offer Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, conceived in 1913 and cast in 1972 (\$3,800,000-4,500,000) marking the first time in nearly 50 years that one of the artist's revolutionary sculptures has been offered at auction, since Christie's sold another cast from the edition in 1975. That example now resides in the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Max Carter, International Director, Head of Department, Impressionist and Modern Art, remarked: “In his brief life, Boccioni reimagined time, space and movement. Where other works of art are rooted in the past, *Unique Forms of Continuity of Space*—Boccioni's greatest achievement and one of the most important sculptures of the 20th century—was, is and will always be the future.”

An icon of Modernism, Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* stands not only as the culmination of the artist's pioneering form of Futurist sculpture, but also serves as a powerful visual embodiment of the Futurists' iconoclastic and revolutionary artistic aims. Conceived in plaster in 1913, in this, the artist's largest surviving sculpture,

Boccioni has taken one of the most revered subjects in the Western tradition of art—the human figure—and split it apart before reconstructing it in a complex, abstract structure of dynamic, interlocking facets and graceful planes that penetrate and activate the space surrounding it. Striding boldly forward in a pose of powerful and continuous motion, this seemingly indomitable figure presents a new conception of man, as well as sculpture, in the 20th-century: mechanical, forward moving and entirely modern.

The original plaster of the present sculpture is located at the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo. All of the bronze examples are posthumous. The two 1931 casts are at the Museo del Novecento, Milan and Museum of Modern Art, New York. The 1949 cast is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The 1951 cast was in the collection of Count Paolo Marinotti. The 1963 cast resides at the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo. A single 1972 cast is located at The Tate Gallery, London. The present sculpture is from an edition of ten numbered bronzes, cast in 1972 from the 1951 Marinotti example, six of which are in public institutions, including The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; New Orleans Museum of Art; Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art; and Hakone Open-Air Museum, Ninotaira.

Boccioni's aim in these works was not simply to depict or transcribe the image of a figure in motion, but to convey the sensation of this movement, "the throbbing of its soul" (J. Golding, Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, Newcastle, 1972, p. 8), capturing in visual form the range of simultaneous forces exerting themselves upon a body at the same time. As he wrote in the introduction to his first sculpture exhibition held at the Galerie La Boétie in Paris in June-July 1913—where *Unique Forms* was shown for the first time—he was seeking to depict, "not pure form, but pure plastic rhythm; not the construction of bodies, but the construction of the action of bodies."

It was with the fourth and final of this group of striding figures, the present *Unique Forms*, that Boccioni successfully achieved this aim, creating a work that embodied the concept of "continuity in space". The figure is so fluid, elegant and motion-filled it almost appears as if it could be leaping of the earth to become airborne.

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