

CHRISTIE'S

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AN EXCEPTIONAL EYE: COLLECTIONS OF A FREE SPIRIT PARIS – 10 & 11 DECEMBER



Paris – On 10th and 11th December, Christie's Paris will offer works from an outstanding collector whose life was driven by his passion for art and collecting. Having grown up in the French countryside, his interest for insects and minerals began at a very early age. As an adult, he would go on to collect wonders of the world including butterflies from Indonesia, fossils, meteorites, and an exceptional dinosaur skeleton.

With a continued thirst for knowledge and discovery, he undertook classes in art and culture, followed by employment as an assistant to an expert in rare and ancient books such as atlases and portolan charts. It was here that he likely developed his interest areas such as Latin America, Africa and Asia.

For more than ten years he successfully indulged in the antiquarian profession but his adventurous soul pushed him towards new horizons. By this time, he had collected a few treasures from the 18th century, which were then complimented by works from true artisans, including chiseled bronzes and sculpted marbles.

Aesthete and scholar, he recognized the upcoming turn of the early 1910s which marked the beginning of a new era. He was then deeply moved by the quality of a marble panel by Léon Indenbaum or a cabinet by Gaston-Etienne Le Bourgeois, both realised for Jacques Doucet in 1913. He was also interested in works by the German expressionists, from August Macke to Egon Schiele, as well as the delicacy of Eileen Gray's creations.

Curious and insatiable, he was passionate about creations from all around the world and from all periods of times.

Cécile Verdier, President of Christie's France: "It is an absolute joy for Christie's to present this wonderful collection revealing the very private world of this discreet collector. A passionate character with a keen interest in all cultures, he wove very personal threads between the arts, in accordance with his specific tastes and his culture: moving from one discovery to the next, straddling eras, continents, techniques and civilisations, he had no hesitation in collecting a Jean Besnard art deco mask alongside Pre-Columbian masks and an Alberto Giacometti Medusa mask.

With an eagle eye and a commitment to his own themes, he consistently selected pieces of impeccable quality. It is this inquisitive, enthusiastic approach, a mix of impulsiveness, meticulous research and insistence on quality that shines through in this sale, shattering any conventional interpretation that might suggest a mere compilation of major works.

By developing so many deeply personal yet ultimately universal affinities between the pieces, he managed to create a contemporary, art-lover's cabinet organised around the various rooms in his house".

Jean-Louis Gaillemain, art historian: "The bold presence of a rhinoceros skeleton in the middle of the living room has the effect of shattering the conventional and the customary; this staging, which fosters a surprising and powerful discourse between the objects, reveals the taste and interests of the master of the house".

Amongst the many specialisms, we will draw particular attention to around thirty pieces from the Art Deco period: several masterpieces make up this collection, like an exceptional pink marble bas-relief by Russian sculptor Léon Indenbaum, commissioned by the great fashion designer and art collector Jacques Doucet in 1913, after he came across Indenbaum's work at the Salon des Indépendants. *Musiciens et Antilopes (Musicians and Antelopes)*, which was completed in 1914, was destined for the walls of the dining room in his apartment at 46 Avenue du Bois in Paris (€800,000-1,200,000), the testing ground for his future "studiolo" in Neuilly. The wonderfully delicate, elegant scene seems to have been plucked from an ancient world that is difficult to pinpoint. Our collector detected Pre-Columbian sources of inspiration in the design, particularly in the Mayan profile of the figure sitting on the right. At the time he acquired this work, he had already started a large collection of Mesoamerican items. This bas-relief is regarded as the artist's masterwork.



Created at the same time, in a style just as precise, skilled and refined, the Gaston-Etienne Le Bourgeois cabinet also once belonged to Doucet's Avenue du Bois collections. It was specially ordered for the boudoir of Mrs. Jacques Doucet. The shape of the furniture, reduced to a simple pattern of rectangles, draws the viewer into frontal, almost two-dimensional contemplation of the decoration on its doors, rather like a bas-relief or a painting (estimate: €180,000-220,000). It is undoubtedly the craftsmanship of the bas-relief sculpture, the panels depicting palm branches and the handles like animal carvings in ivory, that appealed to our collector.

At the same Salon in 1913, Jacques Doucet also met Eileen Gray, who was taking part for the first time. She was presenting a series of lacquered decorative panels, including her famous and enigmatic *Aum Mane Padme Aum (Hail the Jewel in the Lotus)* decorative panel, which caught the attention of the arts patron and the critics. The latter emphasised the beauty of her lacquers and the modernity with which Eileen Gray had revived the genre. Following the fair, Gray's

career took off and there was a resurgence in the use of lacquer. A variant of this historic panel dated 1913 is presented here in its original frame, lacquered by Seizo Sougawara, a Japanese lacquer master under whom Gray trained before beginning a real collaboration with him that continued until 1927 (estimate: €300,000-500,000).

A superb armchair by Carlo Bugatti is also set to go under the hammer (estimate: €70,000-100,000). With its anthropomorphic silhouette, this unique piece of furniture produced in 1902 is a perfect demonstration of our collector's interest in Man, here reduced to his structure. Of course, one cannot fail to associate it with the rhinoceros' skeleton displayed in the middle of the living room! This armchair has elements that we regularly find in the artist's work: parchment, vellum and copper. A veritable sculpture, it also shows off his perfect mastery of the technique of covering wood with parchment. Here, the entire structure of the furniture disappears under the material. This technique, designed and developed entirely by Bugatti himself, emphasises the design of the furniture and so gives it a very modern, sculptural feel.

Fully realised, his exceptional talent would come to light at the First International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin, in 1902. There, he presented his famous suite of four rooms completely covered in parchment, with integrated decoration, including the "Snail Room". Whilst his unprecedented creation sparked a lively debate amongst jury members and the public, the modernity of his vision was ultimately recognised, and he was awarded the Diploma of Honour.



The Art Déco section also includes a lacquer panel by Jean Dunand created around 1925, from the former collection of Hélène Rochas. Depicting nine monkeys arranged in a frieze in front of a luxurious geometric decorative background, this panel, which is more than 240 cm in length, illustrates the refinement, sophistication and modernity of Jean Dunand's work that impressed Hélène Rochas and,



subsequently, our collector (estimate: €80,000-120,000).

This selection of works also includes some thirty pieces by Jean Royère, Paul Dupré-Lafon, Maurice Dufrène and Jacques Quinet.

Ever drawn to the human figure and, at the same time, intrigued by artistic devices, our collector was a keen admirer of German and Austrian expressionism. Several works will be offered for sale, such as a double-sided painting by August Macke, the leader of the group *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider). The front is titled *Pierrot mit Tänzerpaar* (Pierrot with a Dancing Couple) and the back is titled: *Badende Frauen* (Women Bathing). This exceptional painting, another work from the early 1910s, was completed a year before the artist's premature death at the age of 27 (estimate: €1,800,000-2,500,000).





Two double-sided drawings by Egon Schiele produced between 1909 and 1912 are part of our collection, including the *Portrait de Madame Dr. Horak* ("Portrait of Madame Dr. Horak") produced in 1910 (estimate: €220,000-320,000), a year after the *Neukunstgruppe* (New Art Group) was founded. It was also during this period that Schiele worked with Josef Hoffmann, who co-founded the Vienna Workshop (Wiener Werkstätte) in 1903.

A magnificent plaster sculpture by Alberto Giacometti, *Composition dite Cubiste II*, produced in 1926-1927 (estimate: €1,000,000-1,500,000), completes the modern art selection. This was a period when Giacometti had been working for some time in Emile-Antoine Bourdelle's studio, but his creations were becoming more and more stylised and avant-garde, like this sculpture.

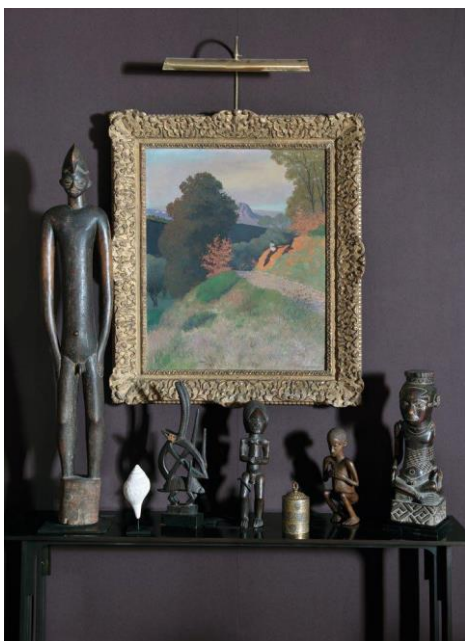
This evolution can certainly be attributed to the artist meeting two other sculptors around the same time, who were also close to Cubism, namely Jacques Lipchitz and Henri Laurens. Laurens developed a special relationship with Giacometti that would continue through the years. Later, he created works that were exhibited in the Jean-Michel Frank gallery, like our *Tête de Gorgone II*, produced in 1936 (estimate: €80,000-120,000).



Our collector was passionate about nature, insects and preserved specimens from an early age, creating his own cabinet of curiosities containing fossils, meteorite fragments, dinosaur skeletons and other extraordinary objects that would later give this collection its unique character. An exceptional woolly rhinoceros skeleton dating from the quaternary period (estimate: €60,000-80,000) takes pride of place majestically in the middle of the living room, whilst a cave bear skull (estimate: €3,000-5,000) sits atop a

low table by Jean Royère. A whole room of the house is dedicated to entomology: its walls are covered with different-sized boxes containing countless species of butterflies (he caught butterflies for many years), beetles and other insects (estimate: €10,000-15,000 for the 111 boxes that make up this lot).





Our collector, who liked to explore and learn about all cultures, was also attracted to African, Oceanian and Pre-Columbian art, equally enthused by the human representation and illusions of masks: a male Senufo statue from Ivory Coast (estimate: €70,000-100,000) and a Kanyok figure from the Democratic Republic of Congo (estimate: €40,000-60,000) are placed alongside a 19th century Tibetan butter lamp. Standing almost a metre high, this chased silver and chased copper lamp is decorated all over with Buddhist symbols from Vajrayana Indian iconography or tantric Buddhism (estimate: €70,000- 90,000). Also featuring in the sale are two beautiful 18th century Japanese stamps by Kitagawa Utamaro (circa 1753-1806).



Following the resounding success at Christie's of the sale of the Portier collection, with 100% of lots sold in 2016, collectors will have another opportunity to admire the work of this great Japanese master (estimates: €40,000-60,000 and €30,000-50,000).



Lastly, the European decorative arts, with which our collector began his journey through the art world, illustrate his eclecticism. A precious Venetian baroque mirror (estimate: €30,000-50,000) faces a wonderfully imaginative Napoleon III design by the Maison Escalier de Cristal. The delicate marble inlay of a Neapolitan mirror offsets the sober mahogany of a Directoire chest of drawers with an uncompromising design. The neo-classical lines of Louis XVI armchairs by the brilliant carpenter, Delaisement (estimate: €30,000-50,000) echo the baroque lines of an 17th century refectory table formerly housed at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (estimate: €8,000-12,000). One of the masterpieces is most certainly the spectacular Louis XVI-era astronomical clock, which combines innovation, technical prowess and aesthetics (estimate: €70,000-100,000). For our collector, it chimed with the spherical feet of the nearby Jean Royère coffee table.

Sale: Tuesday 10 December at 6pm and Wednesday 11 December at 2:30pm

Exhibition: Saturday 7 December to Tuesday 10 December, 10am to 6pm. Wednesday 11 December, 10am to 12pm. Opening Sunday 8 December, 2pm to 6pm.

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**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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