

# CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER IMPORTANT BILL TRAYLOR WORK FROM THE COLLECTION OF ALICE WALKER OUTSIDER ART, 17 JANUARY 2020



**Bill Traylor (circa 1853-1949)**

*Man on White, Woman on Red / Man with Black Dog (double-sided), 1939-1942*  
tempera and graphite on repurposed paper  
18 7/8 x 24 in.

**Estimate:** \$200,000-400,000

**New York** – Christie's announces it will offer Bill Traylor's *Man on White, Woman on Red / Man with Black Dog (double-sided)*, from the collection of Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Alice Walker, as a highlight of the Outsider Art sale on January 17 (estimate: \$200,000 – 400,000). This rare painting was a gift from filmmaker Steven Spielberg to Alice Walker after the conclusion of filming *The Color Purple*, a film adaptation of Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel focused on the lives of African-American women in the 1930s.

**Alice Walker**, writer, poet, and activist, remarked: "After Steven Spielberg completed filming *The Color Purple*, in 1985, he gave me as a gift, *Man on White, Woman on Red*. He was hopeful (he said with a smile) that when I saw the film, I didn't feel like the angry *Woman on Red*. I answered (with a laugh) "I hope so too." On my first viewing – a private one in San Francisco – I did have some reservations. But I soon came to realize that overall Steven's *The Color Purple* is a masterpiece. I've enjoyed having this extraordinary artwork by Bill Traylor on my wall; but my spirit tells me that it is time for it to find a new home."

**Cara Zimmerman**, Head of Sale, Outsider Art at Christie's, commented: "We are honored to present this superb work by Bill Traylor at auction for the first time, marking an exciting and unique opportunity for collectors. The provenance of the work creates an interesting conversation between Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Traylor's art, as both consider a similar moment in American history – hers looking back, and his from a contemporaneous perspective. Additionally, this work includes an exciting rediscovery: its double-sided nature had been concealed for many years. It was recently unframed for the first time since the mid-1980s, revealing the *Man with Black Dog* work on the reverse."

*Man on White, Woman on Red / Man with Black Dog (double-sided)* is an exceptional and large-scale work which reveals insights to Bill Traylor's artistic process. The underdrawings beneath *Man on White, Woman on Red* demonstrate Traylor's compositional approaches, working process, and concerns with space and line. *Man on White, Woman on Red* includes a red-painted background, a technique he employed rarely and is almost contemporary in its color play. The bold rendering of the oversized

dog with red tongue and ferocious teeth on *Man with Black Dog* indicates it was possibly created as part of a series of works in which the artist experimented with dogs similarly rendered with these features.

#### ABOUT BILL TRAYLOR (1853-1949)

Born into slavery in 1853, self-taught artist Bill Traylor only began to make work in 1939, around the age of 86. Having spent his entire working life on plantations and farms, in 1928 he moved to the state capital of Montgomery, where he would begin to draw for the first time. Life in Montgomery proved difficult: although he sought employment, painful rheumatism left Traylor unable to work. With no income except a small public stipend, he became homeless, sleeping in the backroom of a funeral parlor at night, and spending the day camped out on the city's Monroe Street. Daily life on Monroe Street, and his memories of plantations, inspired Traylor's art. Working in pencil, tempera or colored pencil on repurposed card and paper, his subjects include people he saw on the street, animals and livestock, and found objects.

#### Note to Editors:

- The world auction record for Bill Traylor is *Woman Pointing at Man with Cane*, circa 1939-1942, which was sold at Christie's New York on January 18, 2019 for \$396,500, well above its estimate of \$40,000-60,000.

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#### Public Exhibition:

*Christie's Rockefeller Center*

11 Jan, 10am - 5pm

12 Jan, 1pm - 5pm

13 Jan, 10am - 5pm

14 Jan, 10am - 5pm

15 Jan, 10am - 5pm

16 Jan, 10am - 5pm

**Auction:** 17 January 2020 | 10am

#### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had auction sales in the first half of 2019 that totalled £2.2 billion / \$2.8 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.

*\*Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

*\*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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*Images available on request*

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