

# CHRISTIE'S

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# 20ÈME SIÈCLE

**Paris** – On the 17 and 18 October, Christie's will present its 20<sup>th</sup> century auctions including the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Avant-Garde sale which will present a selection of exceptional works realised by some of the most important icons of the last hundred years' Art History.

The 46 lots offered during this sale have a global estimate between 40 and 50 million euros.

**Paul Nyzam and Antoine Lebouteiller, Head of the Avant-Garde sale:** "We are pleased to team up for this 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Avant-Garde sale. Included in the art market's most dynamic week in France, this sale will offer some exceptional works, carefully selected and often never presented at auction, ranging from 1914 to 2007. Among the artists who had a special relationship to the French capital, we can mention **Pablo Picasso, René Magritte, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger** along with **Nicolas de Staël, Pierre Soulages, Wols, Jean Dubuffet** and **Zao Wou-Ki**. By combining the efforts of the Impressionist, Modern, Post-War & Contemporary Art departments, we have the ambition to present the best of the last century's artistic creation to numerous connoisseurs who will be in Paris during FIAC week."



The highlight of this sale is a masterpiece by **Nicolas de Staël** from 1952 titled *Parc des Princes* and coming from the family of the artist. Estimated between 18 and 25 million euros, this painting will probably set a new auction record for the artist. Completed in the spring of 1952, this large-scale painting (200x350cm) marks the zenith of the series of soccer players, which Nicolas de Staël painted after attending the France-Sweden match with his wife, on the evening of 26 March 1952, in the renowned Parisian stadium. The detachment with which he viewed his models led him to a deliberate schematisation of the subject. This brief but nonetheless intense period of creation marked a turning point with the artist using a more colourful chromatic palette whilst moving away from the impasto that had characterised his work thus far. De Staël was at the peak of his career and the resulting works were a stunning synthesis between abstraction and figuration. In this way, he brought an innovative and original response to the 20<sup>th</sup> century's pictorial and esthetical issues. This exceptional painting was widely/ abundantly exposed and illustrated since its creation : it was on the cover of the catalogue of the biggest exhibition ever dedicated to Nicolas de Staël, in the Pompidou Center in 2003.

**Pierre Martin-Vivier, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Arts International Director:** "It is an honour for us to present this work that belongs to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's Art History in Paris during FIAC week. *Parc des Princes* is a masterpiece by de Staël, a work that challenged the pictorial idiom of the post-war period. We believe that the art market will respond with the same enthusiasm which drives us."

### ***Face to face***

#### **From Léger to Magritte, from Picasso to Poliakoff : 20<sup>th</sup> Century's great masters**

A group of 9 lots coming from an important private European collection are also included in the sale: **Max Ernst, Maurice Estève, Fernand Léger, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Serge Poliakoff, Gaston Chaissac and Yves Klein**. Globally estimated at 5 million euros, this collection will certainly attract international connoisseurs present in Paris during FIAC week. The top lots of this collection include an early work by René Magritte executed when the artist was only 30 years old (*Le Prisonnier*, estimated €600,000-900,000) and an important *Mousquetaire* by Pablo Picasso (€3,000,000- 5,000,000) from 1967.

The musketeer is one of Picasso's iconic subjects of his later work. This theme allowed Picasso to escape the limitations of contemporary subjects by using the character of the nobleman, and therefore inspiring himself from the painting's Golden Age, the Renaissance. By reflecting the influence of Velasquez, Rembrandt and Rubens on his work, Picasso is showing his interest in Art History's Old Masters. The musketeers could be self-portraits of Picasso himself. Indeed, if the subject of his later work was inspired by the Renaissance's famous painters, his style and self-portraits found their origins in the work of the most famous Dutch painter: Van Gogh.



The richness and spontaneity of his brush strokes and the energetic work employed on the *Mousquetaire, Buste* are clearly evocative of Van Gogh's style. John Richardson commented on this precise aspect of Picasso's work : "Van Gogh, like Cézanne earlier in Picasso's life, was sacrosanct [...] The surface of the late paintings has a freedom, a plasticity, that was never there before; they are more spontaneous, more expressive and more instinctive than virtually all his previous work" (J. Richardson in *Late Picasso, Paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints 1953-1972* (exhibition catalogue), The Tate Gallery, London & Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, 1988, pp. 31-34)

Christie's will also pay tribute to **Pierre Soulages**, who is turning 100 this year and whose painting, *Peinture 186x143 cm, 23 décembre 1959*, sold by Christie's in New York for €9,200,000, is currently exhibited at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier. Two paintings by the artist will be presented: an *outré-noir* from 2007 (€1,500,000-€2,500,000) and another artwork from 1955 coming from a private American collection (€600,000-800,000). The first one, *Peinture 263x181cm, 29 décembre 2007*, alternates between matte and shiny zones, flat surfaces and profoundly textured folds, constituting one of the highlights of the artist's picture research regarding the paradoxical potential of the black color to become a source of light.



**Zao Wou-Ki** maintained, even in his most abstract works, an anchoring in reality, as *6.2.89*, a spectacular work estimated between €1,000,000 and €1,500,000, illustrates it. The artist is mixing both French and Chinese influences to create his unique work: "Although the influence of Paris is undeniable in all my training as an artist, I also wish to say that I have gradually rediscovered China. [...] Paradoxically, perhaps, it is to Paris that I owe this return to my deepest origins." he recalls in an interview for *Panorama chrétien* in 1961. In

his work, *6.2.1989* (corresponding to the execution date of the painting), the artist is distancing himself from the agitated and violent hurricanes he used to paint in the 60s and 70s to operate a major shift in his style, going back to his origins by inspiring himself from the traditional work with Chinese ink to produce a subtly nuanced and vibrantly transparent painting. This figurative painting of a Chinese landscape of mountains and water recalls the Song dynasty's paintings and is a true invitation to escapism for its spectator.



Among others works included in the sale, there is an historical painting by **Hans Hartung**, T1948-43 (500,000 - 700,000) which sale coincides with the retrospective consecrated to the artist at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris. (1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020). Further highlights include an important painting called *Terre de Sienne* (estimated between 800,000 and 1,200,00 euros), realised by the German painter **Wols**, a rare artist presented at auction who had a crucial influence on the French abstraction of the After-War years. Acquired in 1948 by its current owner, this painting never seen on the market reveals how specific Wols' art is.

“If only the sun were to come out tonight” (« The Egret », *Clair de Terre*, André Breton, 1923). André Breton's words have not gone unheard for Magritte, whose painting *Landscape with Rider* (€1,000,000-1,500,000), delivers an eminently poetic (art) work. Executed in 1967, the year of Magritte's death, this painting is the last occurrence of his most recurring pattern, *L'Empire des Lumières*. In this series, the artist encourages the spectator to adopt a new perspective by juxtaposing two familiar but profoundly paradoxical elements: day and night. It is then to our great surprise and admiration that the great beauty of the simplest things is being revealed in front of our eyes. For the very last time, the artist puts his final touch down on this almost finished painting, thus revealing, in a moving atmosphere, the secret process of his painting's execution process. This artwork coming from a prestigious private European collection has not been seen on the market for more than 20 years.



The “Avant-Garde” sale will also include two beautiful Baule works. The first one is a 18,1-inch statue of a seated Baule woman (€600,000-€900,000). This sculpture is most likely one of the most refined pieces of work known to this day. Being one of its kind, this statue embodies and represents the perfect balance between the traditional esthetical and moral ideal usually showcased in the classical Baule art. This statue belonged to the modern art dealer Myron Kunin. The second work, on the other hand, comes from the important Helena Rubinstein collection to whom the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac will pay tribute in November. It is an astonishing Baule mask that disappeared from the market for almost 30 years after its sale in 1990. This beautiful mask mixing both abstraction and naturalism was executed by a great Baule master (€300,000-500,000).



## MODERN ART – 18 OCTOBER 2019

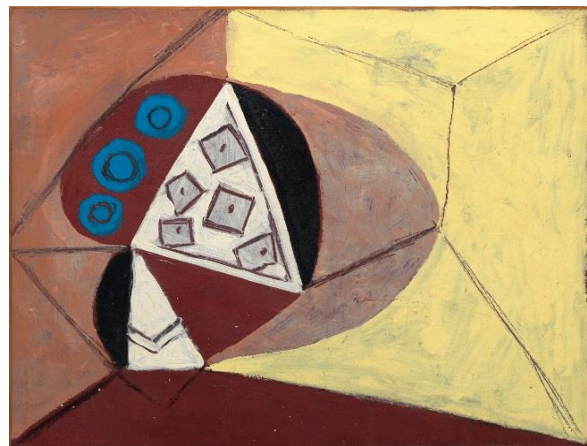
The next day, on October 18th, the Impressionist and Modern art department will present their Modern Art sale comprising 170 lots estimated at 9.5 million euros.



The top lot of sale is an important *Eve, petit modèle* by Auguste Rodin coming from the former collection of Paul Belmondo, the father of famous French actor Jean-Paul Belmondo. This sculpture, originally exhibited at the Musée Rodin, marked a turning point in Rodin's career as it diverts from the classical academic canons to a far more expressive approach, featuring his maturing. Eve's posture attests the sculptor's creative genius: huddled up on herself, she seems to protect her body now fragile, revealing her transgression and her fall. She is the reflection of both sensuality and shame, petrified in an attitude of profound remorse. According to art critic Kenneth Clark who owned one "Every inch of the skin is alive, and certain areas, such as the shoulders, have the energy which only Donatello could be said to have equaled" (*The romantic rebellion: romantic versus classic art*, London, 1974, p. 349). (€700,000-900,000)

**Valerie Hess, Head of Sale:** 'Christie's is proud to have been entrusted by sculptor Paul Belmondo's family with the sale of this beautiful Alexis Rudier cast of Auguste Rodin's *Eve*. This iconic subject matter epitomizes the sensuality, elegance and modernity that are so characteristic of the great master of early 20th century sculpture's unparalleled talent.'

The Modern Art sale will also comprise a very important artwork by Picasso. *Le Comptoir*, estimated between €600,000 and €900,000 is a beautiful tribute from Picasso to his partner, Françoise Gilot. This extremely intimate painting uses a polysomic language giving the artwork multiple levels of meaning in which cherries, these sensual delicacies proposed by Picasso to Françoise Gilot, recall their first encounter at the restaurant Le Catalan in Paris in May 1943: "He got up and came over to our table," Françoise recalled. "He brought with him a bowl of cherries and offered some to all of us, in his strong Spanish accent, calling them cerisses, with a soft, double-sound" (*Life with Picasso*, New York, 1964, p. 14). After this, Picasso integrated cherries in his still lives to symbolize his feelings for Françoise Gilot who, around the end of the war, progressively replaced his former muse, Dora Maar. *Le Comptoir* was probably executed during the year 1946 and represents a fruit basket like a maternal womb, inside of which a new life grows. In this specific case, it is Françoise's, who was then pregnant with their first son, Claude. *Le Comptoir* and the shadows it contains are an allusion to both the iconic portrait of Françoise, *Femme-fleur* and to the outlines of her rounded belly.





A beautiful group of about 15 artworks, called “From Renoir to Picasso, exclusive 20<sup>th</sup> century artworks from a prestigious French collection” will be offered in this sale, including a painting by Joan Miró which is very representative of the great Spanish master’s work: *Personnages devant la lune*. In 1944, year of a creative rebirth exceptionally abundant for the artist, Miró marks his return to oil painting by leaving an important place to the apparent texture of the canvas used as a raw material. After four years of realizing works on paper, he uses smaller framed canvases as witnesses of the artist’s personal vocabulary and the theater of a universe with undeniable cosmical dimensions. In this work (estimated €250,000-350,000), the painter gives birth to a dream-like world, out of time. The pictograms seem to refer to a rupestrian and primitive painting’s heritage, which fundamentally says something about humankind: at the epilogue of a destructive and murderous war putting a whole generation in a terrible loss of landmarks, this painting seem to operate a return to the origins, to a state of nature. The stars and other nebulae refer to the universe, the intangible, what stays, while the “characters don’t reveal anything but the possibility of human participation to the whole. They do not express any feelings, any human passion; they only admit their brutal, inexplicable, irreducible and almost sacrilegious existence” (J. Dupin, *Miró*, Paris, 1961, p. 354). From this harmonious microcosm composed by Miró, a vibrant energy and an important poetic charge emerges and gives to this apparently easy and almost childlike artwork, a strong feeling of freedom to contextualize in the apocalyptic historic situation giving birth to this work.

**Sales:**

**Avant-Garde : Tuesday 17 October 2019 at 7 p.m.**

**Modern Art : Wednesday 18 October at 2 p.m.**

Exhibition: From 12 to 18 October from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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**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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