

CHRISTIE'S

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The Important Russian Art Sale Presents



A Jewel of the Silver Age

Valentin Serov's *Portrait of Maria Zetlin*

Property from
the Municipality of Ramat Gan sold
to Benefit the Ramat Gan Museums

Christie's London, 24 November 2014

London – Christie's is delighted to offer Valentin Serov's masterwork *Portrait of Maria Zetlin* (1882-1976) (estimate: £1,500,000-2,500,000) in their auction of **Important Russian Art** on 24 November. Sold to benefit the Ramat Gan Museums in Israel, this extraordinary portrait depicts Maria Zetlin, the doyenne of Russian émigré life in Paris, and appears on the market for the first time in history.

Moshe Abramowitz, Vice Mayor of the city of Ramat Gan and Meir Aharonson, Chief Curator and Artistic Director comment: 'Over fifty years ago, Ramat Gan Municipality promised the Zetlin family that the Collection would be well-presented so that it would occupy its rightful place in the city's cultural life. In order to fulfil this promise, the Municipality wishes to upgrade the exhibition space and improve its visibility and accessibility to a wider audience. Ramat Gan has learned from leading Museums in the world that the results of a successful sale can significantly benefit and safeguard the future of Museums. The Zetlin Collection is solid and important; selling one work in order to benefit the Collection as a whole is the correct thing to do within the Museum sphere. The Collection includes other important works by seminal Russian artists and four other works by Valentin Serov, including another portrait of Maria Zetlin. The proceeds of the sale will be used to upgrade the presentation of the collection, enlarge the exhibition space, and benefit the cultural and artistic future of the city of Ramat Gan.'

Alexis de Tiesenhausen, International Head of the Russian Art Department comments: *‘Portrait of Maria Zetlin (1882-1976) is, without doubt, the most exquisite Serov that I have handled during my career at Christie’s. The devastating elegance and poise of the sitter, captured in Serov’s unique silvery tones, epitomises the mastery of Russia’s preeminent portraitist. Painted in 1910 in Biarritz, this commission was undertaken at the apex of Serov’s career, one year before his untimely death. In the same year Serov completed other major works, including iconic portraits of Ivan Morozov and Ida Rubenstein held in The State Tretyakov Gallery and The State Russian Museum respectively. Portrait of Maria Zetlin (1882-1976) was shown in landmark Russian Art exhibitions in Malmö (1914), Brussels (1928), London (1935) and Prague (1935); and, at Serov’s request, represented the artist’s oeuvre at the 1911 international art exhibition in Rome where it was hailed a portrait of ‘unique tonal beauty’. Portrait of Maria Zetlin (1882-1976) has never before appeared at auction and in a market where the appearance of true masterpieces is increasingly rare, I am thrilled to be presenting such an exceptional portrait this November.’*

Maria Samoilovna Zetlin (née Tumarkina) (1882-1976) and Mikhail Osipovich Zetlin (1882-1945) met in Paris in political exile and were married in 1910. The Zetlins briefly returned to Moscow following the October Revolution only to immigrate to France in the early 1920s. The Zetlins’ flat on avenue Henri Martin in Paris became one of the best-known literary salons of the Russian expatriate community and attracted writers, artists and politicians, including Pablo Picasso, George Braque and Diego Rivera.

Educated in Germany and Switzerland and with a doctorate in Philosophy, Maria was an intellectual foil to Mikhail, a successful and influential poet, editor and publisher. Having published poetry under the pseudonym ‘Amari’, Mikhail Zetlin also edited the poetry section of the magazine *Sovremennye Zapiski* in the 1920s and 1930s and later founded a new literary and political magazine, *Novy Zhurnal*, dedicated to the writers, poets and philosophers of Russia’s Silver Age.

A recognised beauty, Maria Zetlin was painted by a number of prominent artists of the time, including Léon Bakst, Sergei Chekhonin and Alexandre Iacovleff. By the late 1920s, the Zetlins had formed a significant collection of Russian Art, comprising works by some of the most significant Russian artists of the 20th Century, including: Natalia Goncharova, Léon Bakst, Boris Grigoriev, Petr Konchalovsky, Dmitry Stelletsky, Mikhail Larionov, Alexandre Benois and Valentin Serov. In 1941, in the midst of World War II, the Zetlins fled to New York only to be reunited with their art collection after the war. The majority of the collection remained in the family until 1959 when it was donated to the Municipality of Ramat Gan.

The Important Russian Art Sale
Christie’s London, 24 November 2014

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The complete eCatalogue for the sale will become available online nearer to the sale.

PUBLIC EXHIBITION:

Friday, November 21, 9am-4:30pm
Saturday November 22, 12pm-5pm
Sunday November 23, 12pm-5pm

AUCTION:

#1571, Russian Art
24 November, 2014

About Christie’s

Christie’s, the world’s leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie’s history. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie’s has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated

auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 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. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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Images available on request

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