

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON | 23 OCTOBER 2023

## FOLLOWING THE SUCCESSES IN LONDON AND PARIS, CHRISTIE'S PRESENTS THE SAM JOSEFOWITZ COLLECTION: GRAPHIC MASTERPIECES BY REMBRANDT VAN RIJN

75 RARE WORKS WILL BE OFFERED ACROSS TWO SALES  
ON 7 DECEMBER 2023 IN LONDON AS PART OF CLASSIC WEEK AT  
CHRISTIE'S



*Self-Portrait leaning on a Stone Sill* (1639, estimate: £80,000-120,00) and *The Shell* (1650, estimate: £80,000-120,000)

**London** – Following the launch of a series of sales dedicated to The Sam Josefowitz Collection in October, Christie's is honoured to present 75 Rembrandt prints, which will be offered across two sales on 7 December in Christie's London. Old Masters Part I will include five highly important subjects, representing different aspects of Rembrandt's unrivalled skill as a printmaker. This will be followed by the Evening Sale of The Sam Josefowitz Collection: Graphic Masterpieces by Rembrandt van Rijn. Seen together, the works in the sales will form a survey of the different genres, periods and working methods of Rembrandt's printed *oeuvre*. Sam Josefowitz was one of the greatest print collectors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the sale represents a rare opportunity to acquire works with esteemed provenance. The prints will be on display at Christie's Rockefeller Center in New York until 29 October and in Amsterdam from 24 to 27 November. Highlights will be on view in Beijing from 5 to 6 November. All 75 prints will be exhibited in London from 1 to 6 December.

**Tim Schmelcher, International Specialist, Prints and Multiples, Christie's London:** "No other collector in the 20<sup>th</sup> century put together such a comprehensive collection of Rembrandt Prints as Sam Josefowitz did. Sam's interest in Rembrandt engravings began with a chance encounter on a flight from Paris to Geneva, where he met the prints dealer Ira Gale. Almost on a whim, he bought a couple of prints from him. From then on, Sam was hooked and began, with increasing ardor and knowledge, to acquire many of the finest and rarest Rembrandt prints to come on the market. He was fascinated by the virtuosity, imagination and deep humanity he found expressed in Rembrandt's etchings. The artist's unique way of printmaking, especially in his later years, resonated with Sam's scholarly approach to collecting: Rembrandt frequently printed the same plate in a variety of ways, by making subtle alterations to the composition, inking the plate differently or printing on different types of paper. Over the decades, Sam was able to find exceptional examples, at times in multiple impressions of the same subject, tracing those variations. It is quite simply the greatest ensemble of the artist's graphic oeuvre still in private hands."

### **Monumental Drypoints**

Dating from 1653 and 1655, respectively, few prints in European art history are considered of equal importance and are so unanimously admired as Rembrandt's *Christ crucified between the two Thieves*, commonly known as *The Three Crosses* (1653, estimate: £1,000,000-1,500,000) and *Christ presented to the people ('Ecce Homo')* (1655, estimate: £1,000,000-1,500,000), the two largest prints of his oeuvre. Executed entirely in drypoint, these two prints show the artist at his most ambitious, radical and experimental, combining highly expressive, sketch-like and seemingly unfinished passages with intricately described details. Both subjects are offered here in very rare, early states, before Rembrandt radically altered the compositions on the printing plates.

### **Saint Jerome in an Italian Landscape**

In Rembrandt's *Saint Jerome in an Italian Landscape* (1653, estimate: £500,000-700,000) we see Saint Jerome as an old man, sitting comfortably reclined in a pastoral landscape beneath a tree. The figure can only be identified as Saint Jerome by the lion standing behind him on a rocky outcrop, overlooking the landscape and guarding the saint's secluded spot. Rembrandt has omitted his other saintly attributes - the skull and the crucifix - and instead of the usual cardinal's hat, has given him a broad-brimmed sun hat. The scenery with the large farmhouse in the background is reminiscent of Titian's or Giorgione's Venetian landscapes. The brilliant, early example in this collection, printed on yellowish-brown Japan paper, seems bathed in the warm light of an Italian sunset.

### **Self-portraits**

Few artists depicted themselves as regularly as Rembrandt. Possibly unique in European art, he painted himself at least 40 times, and etched no fewer than 31 self-portraits. In 1639, aged 34, Rembrandt created the largest, and grandest of his self-portraits in print, *Self-Portrait leaning on a Stone Sill* (estimate: £80,000-120,000). It is offered here in a magnificent example of the second state. *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (1636, estimate: £50,000-70,000) is a double-portrait of Rembrandt and his wife Saskia. An impression of the first state, before Rembrandt removed the little accidental curved line on her forehead, it printed with exceptional sharpness and clarity, and a beautifully atmospheric plate tone.

### **Nocturnal Prints on Pattern of Christ**

More than any other plate in Rembrandt's oeuvre, *The Entombment* (circa 1654, estimate: £120,000-200,000) had been the object of his experimental approach to printmaking in the later years. Not only did he alter the plate drastically between the first and the second state, he also tried out different supports – from European paper to Chinese and Japanese papers to vellum. From one impression to another, Rembrandt manipulated each pull by leaving varying degrees of plate tone and wiping the tone selectively to modify the illumination and pick out different highlights. Of the later states, virtually no two impressions look the same.

### **Still life**

*The Shell* (1650, estimate: £80,000-120,000) is Rembrandt's only etched still life. The shell is depicted approximately life-size, and Rembrandt beautifully captured the structure and the sheen of its surface. With its undefined surroundings, theatrical lighting, and marked foreshortening, it attains a strange monumentality and an otherworldly, mysterious quality.

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