

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 20 FEBRUARY 2017

## THE COLLECTION OF THE LATE LORD WEIDENFELD GBE A LIFE OF IDEALS AND IDEAS



Lord Weidenfeld in his Chelsea home. © Photograph by Derry Moore

### ***'Why Waste A Good Idea?'*** - The late Lord Weidenfeld GBE

**London** – On 18 May Christie's London will present *The Collection of The late Lord Weidenfeld GBE: A Life of Ideals and Ideas*, an auction offering insight into the private world of a public man. George Weidenfeld, created Baron Weidenfeld of Chelsea in 1976, was well known and greatly respected as a publisher, philanthropist and social convener; what is less well known is that he was an avid and informed art collector. He was also one of very few clients to coax the revered antique dealer Geoffrey Bennison into taking on a decorating commission; Bennison decorated Lord Weidenfeld's Chelsea Embankment apartment at a time when both men were breaking new ground in their respective fields. So successful was Bennison's scheme that Lord Weidenfeld kept the apartment almost exactly as Bennison had arranged it for over 40 years; a series of rich, book-lined spaces conceived as a grand backdrop for entertaining and for his fascinating collection.

Lord Weidenfeld began collecting shortly after the war and continued to acquire significant works of art throughout his life, each chosen with great care and passion. The auction is a reflection of his multifaceted interests and enthusiasms and includes important Old Master paintings and drawings, an important group of 20<sup>th</sup> Century works on paper – with a strong concentration on artists from his native Vienna – together with sculpture, furniture, decorative arts and soft furnishings. The collection is expected to realise in excess of £1.4 million. Highlights of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century works on paper will be on view at Christie's London 23-27 February, ahead of the preview of the full collection in May.

Born in Vienna in 1919, Lord Weidenfeld left the city before the outbreak of the Second World War and settled in London, which he made his permanent home. In 1948 he co-founded the highly esteemed publishing house Weidenfeld & Nicolson, which published many landmark works of biography and literary fiction, including the British edition of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* in 1959. Lord Weidenfeld also held a number of diplomatic and philanthropic posts throughout his life including as political advisor and chief of cabinet for Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel, in 1949. He also believed in the strong link between Judaism and Christianity and promoted inter-faith understanding, notably creating The Weidenfeld Fund to support the relocation of Christian families and communities at risk to places of safety. Lord Weidenfeld bequeathed his personal library to the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, which is due to reopen in 2021.



The dining room of Lord Weidenfeld's Bennison decorated Chelsea apartment

## The Collection

A highlight of the auction is a study of a female model by Egon Schiele (estimate: £200,000-300,000, *illustrated below left*). Executed in 1918, the work is a bold depiction of female sexuality. Another highlight is Alberto Giacometti's *Femme debout* (recto) and *Deux têtes d'homme* (verso), which exhibits the artist's highly distinctive draughtsmanship (estimate £250,000-350,000, *recto illustrated below centre; verso illustrated below right*). Executed in 1947, *Femme debout* dates from a pivotal moment in the artist's career during which drawing dominated his work; this is one of the earliest in a series of standing figure drawings executed by the artist.



Left: Egon Schiele, *Study of a female model*,  
Centre: Alberto Giacometti, *Femme debout (recto)*, Right: Alberto Giacometti, *Deux têtes d'homme (verso)*

The collection also includes an impressive array of Old Masters Paintings, with a notable focus on Christian art including a number of interesting portrayals of popes. Highlights include Bernardo Cavallino's *St Dorothy* (estimate: £150,000-200,000, *illustrated below left*); *An Astrologer* by Luca Giordano (estimate: £100,000-150,000, *illustrated below right*); as well as a bust of Pope Urban VIII from the workshop of Gian Lorenzo Bernini (estimate: £30,000-50,000, *illustrated below center*).



Left: Bernardo Cavallino, *St Dorothy*, Centre: Workshop of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Bust of Pope Urban VIII*  
Right: Luca Giordano, *An Astrologer*

The sale also includes furniture and works of art collected by Lord Weidenfeld as well as decorative furnishings supplied by Geoffrey Bennisson. Highlights include a large 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese blue and white baluster vase fitted as a table lamp (estimate: £2,000-4,000, *illustrated below left*); Lord Weidenfeld's desk, circa 1820, attributed to Gillows (estimate: £40,000-60,000, *illustrated below center*), an architectural model, which adorned the desk (estimate: £800-1,200,



*illustrated below right*), as well as the brass bookcases created by Bennison that lined Lord Weidenfeld's study (to be sold in four lots with estimates ranging from £2,500 to £5,000).



Left: a large Chinese blue and white baluster vase mounted as a table lamp, Centre: a regency brass-inlaid Indian rosewood library table, attributed to Gillows, Right: a French grey-painted architectural model

---

**PRESS CONTACT:** Katy Griffiths | 020 7752 3121 | [kgriffiths@christies.com](mailto:kgriffiths@christies.com)

#### **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in 2016 that totalled £4 billion / \$5.4 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. 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.

Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai.

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

*Images available on request*

**FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:**

