

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S PROUDLY PRESENTS THE STRONGEST ARRAY OF THE ART OF THE SURREAL EVER OFFERED AT AUCTION



London - Christie's proudly announces the strongest array of *The Art of The Surreal* ever to be offered at auction, which will be sold on the evening of 6 February 2013. Joan Miró's rare work *L'Echelle de l'évasion*, (The 'Ladder of Escape') - which comes to the market for the first time in almost 60 years and has not been seen in public for over half a century (estimate: £5-8 million, *illustrated top left*) - leads the highly anticipated upcoming sale, which presents landmark works by the leading names of the Surrealist movement, from René Magritte and Max Ernst to Paul Delvaux and Óscar Domínguez. Estimates range from £30,000 to £8 million, with a pre-sale estimate of £30,400,000 to £46,120,000, representing a 50% increase on last year's record breaking pre-sale low estimate and reflecting the exceptional quality of the works offered and the dynamic growth in market demand for this movement. Combined with the *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* - please click [here](#) for separate release - Christie's *Evening Auctions* on 6 February have a total pre-sale estimate of £97,870,000 to £145,830,000.

Olivier Camu, Deputy Chairman, Impressionist and Modern Art, Christie's: *"This pioneering movement of 20th century art now commands the attention of the global art market, with Christie's auctions attracting new collectors each year from around the world and from other collecting areas, notably Contemporary art. We have witnessed a remarkable growth in demand since we held the inaugural standalone Dada and Surrealism sale in 1989 and established the first annual Art of the Surreal Sale in 2001. Surrealist and Dada art - and specifically the works in this sale - provide an unparalleled bridge for collectors: for those who love Impressionist and Modern Art the works break new boundaries and look forcefully and creatively ahead; for collectors who love contemporary art they showcase the daring, challenging and innovative explorations of the artistic masterminds who set the foundations and context for many of the greatest contemporary and classic post-war artists. They sought, as André Breton its founder (1924) and chief spokesman stated, 'to resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a 'super-reality.' The breadth and depth of the exceptional quality of works in this sale highlight that Christie's is the house of choice for the best examples to come to the market in this field."*

- Painted in December 1939, *L'Echelle de l'évasion* (The 'Ladder of Escape') by Joan Miró (1893-1983) is one of two pivotal works with this title which he executed at this significant period in his career (estimate: £5-8 million, *illustrated top left*). The other one, a gouache from January 1940 - which is one of the very first of the artist's *Constellation* series - is now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The 'Ladder of Escape' was an important and much repeated motif throughout much of Miró's work from the early 1920s onwards. Seemingly bridging two worlds, the ladder often served as a potent metaphor for the artist's own 'escape' from 'reality' into the world of his art. Executed whilst living in Normandy, France, during the months of the so-called 'phony war' of 1939 when France anxiously awaited the German invasion, *L'Echelle de l'évasion* is the culmination of a series of new works marking Miró's flight from the grim realities of Europe's present circumstance. It was amidst the relative stability and rustic calm of the Normandy countryside that he was able to focus his energies and experience on the creation of an intensified vision that embodied several of his favourite themes: birds, women and, above all, the night sky. In the wake of Franco's victory, Miró sought an art that would deliberately invoke a universal sense of the mystery and magic of life, aiming to create an art whose inventiveness, originality and playfulness would sparkle and shine in direct contrast to the encroaching darkness and tragedy that he and many others now felt surrounding them. One of the very last of nine paintings executed on burlap, known as the Varengeville II series, *L'Echelle de l'évasion* is among the most colourful and densely worked of these pictures.

The 'escape ladder' in this work is shown leading to a world with no dividing lines, where both macrocosm and microcosm are intertwined. Its realm is one where surface and image have combined, where, in complete contrast to the external 'real' world of violence, discrimination and division of this time, sky and earth, birds and people, abstraction and figuration, along with the domains of the conscious and the unconscious, are all seemingly interrelated and interwoven within the field of the creative act. Miró saw this act of concentrating on such a holistic vision as both one of political defiance and of artistic survival.



- Miró's sculptures were the crowning achievement of his late career. His monumental *Femme* (*Femme debout*) is a powerful celebration of fecundity, primal instincts and the creation of life (estimate: £3-5million, *illustrated left*). Conceived in 1969, it has not been seen in public for over two decades, having been in a private New York Collection for over 30 years. It is one of a small group of large-scale bronzes inspired by Miró's first experiments in sculptural modelling almost two decades earlier. *Femme* began as a table-top sized figurine in clay, which Miró created when he was making ceramics with Josep Llorens Artigas in Barcelona in the late 1940s. Reminiscent of a Neolithic fertility goddess, *Femme* presents large conical breasts, protruding buttocks and a tear-shaped recess, which is a typically Miró-esque emblem of her sex. The work can also be read as an enlarged human face, a duality that illustrates Miró's metamorphic understanding of what he termed humankind's 'true reality,' where forms give birth to other forms,

constantly changing into something else, creating a universe of signs and symbols in which figures pass from one realm to another. Like much of the artist's work, *Femme* departs from representation and reality in an attempt to stimulate the imagination. Miró is one of those very few artists who mastered everything he tried - painting, murals, printmaking, costume design, poetry, sculpture and ceramics. *Femme* is one of seven casts that is signed by the artist, and it is the first of three artist's proofs from that edition; he was involved in every stage of its production. Additional casts of *Femme* are held in the collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

- Offered at auction for the first time, *Les Nymphes des eaux* (The Water Nymphs) is one of a group of dark, foreboding and extraordinarily ambient paintings that Paul Delvaux (1897-1994) made in the years running up to the Second World War, it is also one of the most elaborate, complex and detailed compositions in the artist's entire oeuvre (estimate: £3-5 million, *illustrated page one, top right*). Belonging to a series of works that are among the most powerful of any in Delvaux's career, it is a fascinating visual compendium of many of the central themes running through the artist's dream-like landscapes of the late 1930s. Painted in 1938, the year that Delvaux first came to prominence on the Surrealist scene, *Les Nymphes des eaux* is part a group of paintings from this vital period dominated by female nudes seeming to materialise like organic blooms from the landscape. It is centred on a group of naked female bathers apparently frolicking or languishing amidst the choppy windswept waters of the North Sea, establishing the painting as an extraordinary exercise in dramatic and unsettling contrasts. They are light, joyous, relaxed, energised and erotic pictorial elements that infuse what would be an otherwise bleak and somber coastal landscape with a powerful and uncanny sense of mystery and optimism. In the foreground the fluid waves are shown lapping against the hard-edged rectangles of paved concrete slabs, while the shoreline is bordered by red-brick industrial buildings that include a blast furnace pumping smoke into the sky. Alone on the shore by the furnace stands the single figure of a man in a suit. Tiny, almost forgotten amidst the parade of powerful voluptuous female figures, his inclusion is nonetheless a forceful one. Delvaux saw such figures as *'elements of a reality that is transmuted by the way I situate them...their intrusion into my paintings, particularly alongside female figures - naked women - is partly intended to create a shock, a shock that results precisely from that very juxtaposition.'*

- A remarkable group of nine works by René Magritte (1898-1967) - the largest array by the Surrealist master to be offered since Christie's *Harry Torczyner* sale in 1998 - is led by *Le plagiat (Plagiarism)*, 1940, which unites nature, beauty and mystery (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated right*). Never before offered at auction, it has been in a private Belgian collection since it was painted. This is an incredibly rare work as while many of Magritte's motifs were revisited in a string of pictures, he created only one other oil painting titled *Le plagiat*, in 1942 in a vertical format. This work shows the elective affinities which underpinned the greatest of his paintings: a bunch



of cut flowers has been shown in a vase, yet instead of the flowers themselves, the viewer sees a related subject, a blooming landscape in a cut-out silhouette. Next to the white vase is a nest with three eggs, an enigmatic presence in the interior view which again allows the outdoors to invade an indoor space. First exhibited in a Salon in Liège in 1940, the year it was painted, *Le plagiat* was acquired from the exhibition by Ernest van Zuylen, a member of a wealthy merchant family who was both a keen supporter of the arts and a prolific photographer. Magritte painted this original, first version of *Le plagiat* in January 1940, shortly before the invasion of Belgium but after the beginning of the Second World War. This was a moment of incredible international tension, not least for an artist associated with a subversive view of the world and with political statements that one could imagine would not sit well with any occupying forces. While some artists, especially among the Surrealists, sought to channel, express or address this tension, Magritte instead sought to create a slender ray of light, a beacon of hope. A meditation on beauty, *Le plagiat* shows a room filled with a bunch of flowers which itself becomes a form of window or portal opening up to a lyrically idyllic landscape. Magritte continued to channel positive feelings in his work throughout the Occupation, following the invasion which occurred only months after *Le plagiat* was painted.

- A miraculous apparition dominates *Tous les jours* (Everyday), painted by René Magritte (1898-1967) in 1966 (estimate: £1.8-2.5 million, *illustrated below*). Having joined an important private collection only a year after it was

executed, it has remained in the same collection – from which it is now offered - for over 40 years. Against the backdrop of a dramatic, largely barren, landscape are the eyes, nose and mouth of a man, hovering in the air and bracing the viewer with an uncanny gaze. *Tous les jours* was one of a group of pictures that Magritte created during this period, exploring the concept of emptiness and combining it in several cases with the tradition of portraiture which he had gleefully disrupted and undermined throughout his career. The face of the subject appears



almost discernible, despite being fragmentary, in part due to the striking scale of the nose. In this sense, Magritte has conveyed an impressive but certainly ambiguous sense of realism through this deliberately absurd composition. Such isolation of facial features first appeared in Magritte's work only shortly before this picture was painted in *Le paysa ge de Baucis*, which had emerged as his solution to one of his visual quandaries: how to represent the space between a woman's hat and her dress. In 1966 he found the solution in male form noting: 'I have discovered how to paint the *emptiness* between a hat and a man's suit without suggesting "The Invisible Man" 'by including floating facial features - the eyes, nose and mouth - which articulate and dramatically highlight the 'emptiness.' In *Tous les jours*, emptiness is pushed to a new extreme as the face is shown against a vast background, rather than hanging within the context of a human head and body. The contrast between the flesh and the rock-strewn scrub and mountains of the landscape adds a textural dimension to the tension between these disparate elements thrusting them into bolder relief. A face appearing in such fragmentary form appears to relate to Magritte's earlier series, in which the eyes and mouth of a woman appeared in the midst of strings of pearls.

- A further important work by Magritte *Ceci n'est pas une pomme* (This is not an apple), 1964, (estimate: £1-1.5 million) leads a group of four works in *The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale* which are offered from the former collection of the **Scheringa Museum of Realist Art**, Holland, as agreed by the Administrator of DS Art B.V., part of the DSB Group, and Deutsche Bank (lots 104,105,106,107). The auctions of *Impressionist and Modern Art* and *Art of the Surreal* in London in February will present 20 works from the total 220 works of art offered at a series of auctions, which started in Amsterdam and New York in autumn 2012 and continue in London, New York and Hong Kong throughout spring 2013.

- *Machine à coudre électro-sexuelle* is one of Óscar Domínguez's (1906-1957) masterpieces, dating from 1934-35, at the watershed point just after the exciting beginning of his association with André Breton and the Parisian Surrealists (estimate: £1.3-1.8 million, *illustrated right*). Offered from a private European Collection, this picture is filled with the unique atmosphere of sexuality and brutality that characterise the greatest of Domínguez's paintings, reflecting on his own troubled life and character while chiming perfectly with the weird and warped world of the Surrealists. The importance of *Machine à coudre électro-sexuelle* is reflected in its extensive exhibition history, beginning just after it was painted, which has led to it being one of the artist's most recognised works. It is a mark of the importance



of this picture that it was initially owned by Eduardo Westerdahl, the main figure in the small Surrealist movement that had grown in Domínguez's native Canary Isles and the publisher of the *Gaceta de Arte* which was one of the central focal points for the avant-garde in the Canary Isles and beyond. The relationship between this painting and the Parisian Surrealists is clear from the theme itself which appears to be Domínguez's own twisted re-imagining

of the celebrated phrase, 'Beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table' taken from the *Chants de Maldoror*, poems by the 19th century writer Isidore Ducasse, the so-called Comte de Lautréamont, which were considered a vital precursor of the Surrealist spirit. When Domínguez joined the Surrealists in Paris, he reinvigorated the movement. One of the great pioneers of the objet surréaliste, he was also the inventor of the *decalcomania* technique that would result in some of Max Ernst's greatest paintings and which was wholeheartedly embraced by André Breton.



- *À l'intérieur de la vue* is one of an important and sustained series of paintings of bird-like figures within eggs bearing the same mysterious title that Max Ernst (1891-1976) made in 1929 and out of which the artist's own personal archetype the bird-man 'Loplop' was seemingly born (estimate: £1– 1.5 million, *illustrated left*). Loplop was a bird-like creature who would ultimately play a central role in Ernst's work of the 1930s taking on many different forms within it. Usually male, though sometimes androgynous, Loplop was what Ernst later described simply as the "Bird Superior, a private phantom very much attached and devoted to me." Loplop made his earliest appearances in Ernst's work in his collages of the late 1920s, and was soon recognised by the artist as a kind of alter-ego or mystic guide to the netherworld of his unconscious imagination. Birds always played a

profound part in Ernst's imagination. Throughout his life, the artist grew increasingly to look like one, and as a child, the bizarre death of his pet parrot at precisely the same moment his sister was born had a profound and long-lasting impact on him. Paralleling the birth of Loplop from the unconscious creative acts of the artist, here, within this simple graphic device of a drawn egg-shape, a group of bird-like forms each drawn with a single line appears to be growing from the wandering graphic path of Ernst's line, while also collectively rendered as if caught in various or gradual stages of evolution. At the heart of Ernst's practice in this respect was what he once referred to as a 'seeing into' forms and then hatching' them 'out' through the practice of making them. It was a practice that, as he acknowledged early on with respect to his collages, had its roots in Leonardo da Vinci's observation that the random patterns of clouds or cracks and marks in a wall can prompt the imagination to see into these forms other new figures and forms.

Elsewhere in the sale other works are led by Yves Tanguy's (1900-1955) *L'Arc volant* (The Speeding Bow), 1945, which bridges the boundaries between abstraction and figuration, landscape and still-life, Surrealist dreamscape and automatist form (estimate: £900,000-1.2 million, *illustrated right*). The roll call of further key artists featured includes: Salvador Dali, Francis Picabia, Giorgio de Chirico, Jean Arp, Kay Sage, Konrad Klapheck, Wifredo Lam, Roberto Matta and Victor Brauner. [Please click here](#) for the complete e-Catalogue.



Notes to Editors:

Pre-sale estimates for Impressionist, Modern & Surrealist works offered in the February auctions:

<i>Impressionist & Modern Evening Auction</i>	6 February	£67,470,000-£99,710,000
<i>The Art of the Surreal Evening Auction</i>	6 February	£30,400,000- £46,120,000
<i>Impressionist & Modern Works on Paper</i>	7 February	£5,366,500-7,858,500
<i>Impressionist & Modern Day Sale</i>	7 February	£10,006,000-14,636,000
<i>Impressionist & Modern, South Kensington</i>	8 February	£1,493,800-2,175,500
	TOTAL:	£114,736,300- 170,500,000

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Images available on request

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