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LE MELON ENTAMÉ CHARDIN, 1760

Sale on 12th June 2024



Jean Siméon CHARDIN (Paris, 1699-1779), *Le melon entamé*, 1760, Oval canvas, 57x52 cm

Estimate: €8,000,000 - 12,000,000

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*“Chardin asks us to take our time,
to look at his paintings slowly.”*

Pierre Rosenberg, 1979

Paris – On the 12th June, all eyes will be on a masterpiece by Jean Siméon Chardin from the **Marcille and Rothschild collections** – estimated at **€8,000,000 - 12,000,000**. The painting is in free circulation, making it available to collectors worldwide.

A MASTERPIECE BY THE ARTIST:

Le melon entamé is one of the artist's most important works that remains in private hands. For **Pierre Etienne, Christie's International Director of Old Master paintings**, "*Le melon entamé is an instance of pure pictorial poetry, a moment suspended in time that encapsulates all of Chardin's magic: the balance of composition, light, colour, and shape.*" The painting was first exhibited at the annual Salon held by the *Académie de Peintures et de Sculptures* in 1761, alongside its pendant, [*Le bocal d'abricots*](#), (now in the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto) and the famous *Panier de Fraises*, acquired in February 2024 by the Louvre.

These three treasures were noted by the artist **Gabriel de Saint-Aubin** during the Salon, who sketched them in the margins of his copy of the exhibition catalogue.

The oval, almost circular format of *Le melon entamé* highlights the intimate nature of the scene as experienced by the viewer. Rare in the artist's oeuvre, this form was chosen by Chardin for a specific reason; it becomes, as is the case in this painting, an extension of the composition. In a sense, *Le melon entamé* is an ode to roundness. **This shape is rarely used by the artist**, and as **Pierre Rosenberg** stated in his 1979 exhibition catalogue, it is "**amongst the finest.**"

AN EXCEPTIONAL PROVENANCE:

Following the 1761 Salon, *Le melon entamé* was part of several prestigious collections, acquired by collectors who either played an essential role in rediscovering the painter and the establishment of his legacy, or whose names are a mark of excellence in the fields of art and collecting across all domains.

The MARCILLE collection:

The name Marcille when associated with a work by Chardin is a mark of the highest quality. *Le melon entamé* was one of thirty paintings by Chardin in this renowned collection, passed down from father to son. The "clairvoyant" collector François Martial Marcille (1790-1856) was, in the early 19th century, the first person who recognised and rediscovered all that was best of the eighteenth century and its major works of art at a time when these had been entirely forgotten. Chardin would become his artist. After François' death, his sons Camille Marcille (1816-1875) and Eudoxe Marcille (1814-1890) – both excellent collectors in their own right – divided his collection between them. Most importantly, they grasped the significance of the group as a whole, of which the organised public exhibitions, thus helping to restore Jean Siméon Chardin to his rightful place in art history.

The ROTHSCHILD collections:

Le melon entamé was amongst the lots sold following Camille Marcille's death in 1876, where it was acquired by Stéphane Bourgeois, an art dealer acting on behalf of Baroness Nathaniel de Rothschild (1825-1899). Like Marcille, the Rothschild name is the mark of a dynasty of collectors who in every domain epitomise refinement, erudition, and flawless taste.

INFORMATION

Maîtres Anciens : Peintures-Sculptures Sale, 12 June

Public viewing from 16 to 22 April and from 8 to 12 June, Christie's, 9 avenue Matignon, 75008 Paris

Exclusive press preview on Tuesday 16 April at 10am with Pierre Etienne, Christie's International Director of Old Master paintings.

Tour : The painting will be displayed in New York, Hong Kong in May and in Brussels ahead of the Paris exhibition.



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