

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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**THE SCHOLAR'S EYE:
PROPERTY FROM THE JULIUS HELD COLLECTION**

**A CELEBRATED ART COLLECTION BUILT
ON A PROFESSOR'S MODEST SALARY**

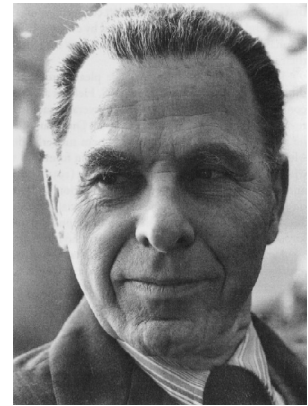


The Scholar's Eye: Parts I & II

January 27 and 30, 2009

New York – On January 27 and 30, Christie's will host a two-part sale of property from the celebrated collection of the late Professor Julius Held, one of the world's leading historians of Dutch and Flemish art. Entitled *The Scholar's Eye: Property from the Julius Held Collection*, the sale features an exceptional collection of drawings, paintings, and sculpture amassed during the professor's four decades of immersion in the study of art history. Highlights of the sale include paintings by Quentin Massys, Pieter Huys, Joachim Beuckelaer, Pieter Claesz, and Hendrik van der Borch, as well as drawings by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Marcantonio Franceschini, and Lucas Franchois II, among others. Over 250 items are included in the sale.

Held was born in Mosbach, Germany in 1905. He earned a Ph.D. from Freiberg University and worked under Max Friedländer at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum in Berlin. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1934 soon after the Nazi Party rose to power. In New York, Held began teaching art history, first at New York University and later at Barnard College and Columbia University. In art historical circles, Held was a towering figure, widely recognized for his scholarship and expertise on Rubens, Rembrandt, and Van Dyck. Among his many books and essays, his 1980 two-volume publication *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* stands as his landmark scholarly achievement. He retired from Barnard as chairman of the art history department in 1971.



Held's wide-ranging collection spans an enormous range from 16th century Old Masters to modern works by important artists he knew personally. His acquisitions were not lavish; rather, Held relied on his modest scholar's salary and connoisseurship skills to find good pictures by lesser-known artists and occasionally bartered works in exchange for those of greater rarity or value. At its peak, Held's collection reached nearly 1,000 items, a portion of which is now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Painting Highlights

The curious painting *Allegory of Folly* by Massys (pictured page one, right; estimate: \$300,000-500,000) bears a distinguished exhibition history in the U.S and has been widely referenced in scholarly essays exploring depictions of fools and jesters in art. Painted *circa* 1510, Massys's fool is a grotesque and smirking figure identified by the wen, or lump on his forehead, which was believed to contain a "stone of folly". The fool wears a hooded cape with the head of a rooster and the ears of an ass, and holds a finger to his lips in a gesture of silence. He carries a staff topped with the carved figure of a smaller fool dropping his trousers – an obscene gesture that was once painted over by a previous owner who found it overly shocking.

Still life with ham, lemon, a roll, a glass of wine, and others on a table is an excellent signed and dated example by 17th century artist Pieter Claesz (estimate: \$150,000-200,000). The artist deliberately chose the arranged items for their visual properties as well as their symbolic meanings. The white bread was a symbol of luxury at a time when most families ate coarse, dark breads. The lemon too, was an uncommon delicacy imported from Mediterranean climates at great expense. The gleaming glass roemer of wine may have symbolized Christ's sacrifice, or simply offered Claesz an opportunity to showcase his extraordinary painting talents.

Another exceptional still life is *A Market Scene*, the earliest signed and dated still life known by the 16th century artist Joachim Beuckelaer. Almost all of Beuckelaer's paintings contain both figural and still life elements and like Massys, his narratives are not explicit. With *A Market Scene* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000), three quarters of the painting is devoted to a monumental still life comprised of a flayed leg of beef, rabbits, and fowl laid out on a table, all in various stages of preparation. A barefoot kitchen maid in flowing dress approaches from the left, lending a dynamic energy to the scene. Beuckelaer's skill as a still life painter is clearly displayed throughout the composition, from the texture of the duck's feathers and the plucked skin of the chicken to the highlights on the wicker basket and the single glass that sits on the table.

The smallest painting in the sale is a jewel-like oil on copper portrait painted in the early 17th century by Frans Pourbus II, a master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke (pictured page one, center; estimate: \$20,000-30,000). Measuring just under three inches in size, the highly-detailed oval portrait depicts Marie de' Medici, wife of King Henry IV of France. In keeping with Held's scholarly interest in Rubens, it was Marie de' Medici who commissioned one of Rubens's best-known and most important works: the 24 paintings for Luxembourg Palace commemorating her husband's reign.

Drawing Highlights

Drawings make up the largest component of *The Scholar's Eye* sale, with many to be sold together in group lots. A major highlight is Prud'hon's *L'Innocence: A woman and a sleeping cupid*, a tender scene in black chalk and heightened with white (pictured at right; estimate: \$6,000-8,000). A preparatory work for a print, *Saint Jerome Reading* by Franchois (pictured page one, left; estimate: \$3,000-5,000) shows the influence of Rubens, a



contemporary and possibly a teacher of Franchois. Another preparatory drawing, this time for a painting commissioned by the Prince of Liechtenstein, is Marc Antonio Franceschini's *Latona turning the Lycian peasants into frogs*, a scene derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (estimate: \$4,000-6,000).

Auction: The Scholar's Eye: Property from the Julius Held Collection

Part I (lots 1 – 68)

January 27, 2009 at 2pm

Part II (lots 200-380)

January 30, 2009 at 10am

Viewings: Christie's Rockefeller Galleries

January 24-27, 2009

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global art sales in 2007 that totalled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. For the first half of 2008, art sales totalled £1.8 billion / \$3.5 billion. 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 conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales 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 \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai, Hong Kong and Zurich. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new 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

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Images available on request

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