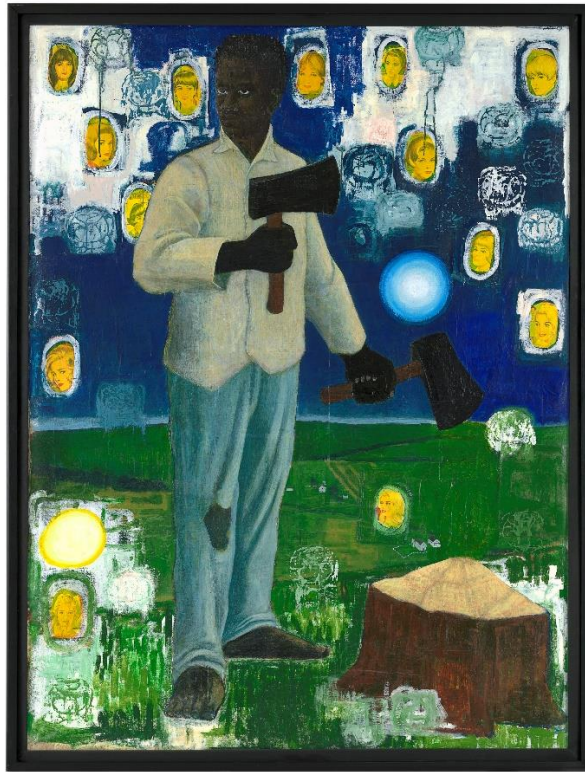


CHRISTIE'S

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KERRY JAMES MARSHALL'S POIGNANT PAINTING ***NAT-SHANGO (THUNDER)*, 1991** TO BE OFFERED IN CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK 21ST CENTURY EVENING SALE IN MAY



Property from the Collection of Greg Kucera and Larry Yocom
KERRY JAMES MARSHALL (b. 1955)
Nat-Shango (Thunder)

Acrylic, paper collage and printed paper collage on linen
73 ½ x 55 ¾ in. (186.7 x 141.6 cm.)

Executed in 1991.
\$6,500,000–8,500,000.

"You can't be born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955 and not feel like you've got some kind of social responsibility. You can't move to Watts [in Los Angeles] in 1963 and grow up in South Central near the Black Panthers' headquarters and see the kinds of things I saw in my developmental years and not speak about it." – Kerry James Marshall

NEW YORK – Christie's is pleased to present **Kerry James Marshall's** powerful ***Nat-Shango (Thunder)*, 1991** in its upcoming **21st Century Evening Sale** at Christie's New York on **11 May** (estimate \$6.5-8.5M). *Nat-Shango (Thunder)* is an early example of the revolutionary portraits of Black figures that have established the artist as one of the most insightful and significant chroniclers in contemporary art. His paintings not only confront the place of the Black subject in the art historical canon—from the Renaissance to 20th century American Abstraction—they also reassess important figures from Black history, and demonstrate their continued relevance today.

Marshall's richly configured paintings—such as *Nat-Shango (Thunder)*—weave together multiple layers of the lived Black experience, referencing figures from Yoruban culture, the lives of enslaved Africans, the later American civil rights movement, and the contemporary Black diaspora. During his 40-year career as both an artist and a teacher, Marshall has influenced generations of young artists, and has been a catalytic leader in the emergence of Black figurative painting as a dominant artistic movement of the new century.

Paula Saracino Fendi, Christie's Associate Vice President and 21st Century Art Specialist, said, *"The current generation of critically acclaimed artists contributing to the contemporary debate about race and identity are doing so because of Kerry James Marshall's pioneering work. As an example, Jordan Casteel's depiction of the chromatic richness of Black skin can be seen in direct dialogue with Marshall's monochromatic renderings. He has not only played his own important role in recontextualizing the debate surrounding race, but has also enabled a new, younger, and perhaps more vociferous, generation to make their own voices heard in shaping the current inflection point in American history."*

In *Nat-Shango (Thunder)*, the life-sized figure of a man stands front and center, wielding an axe in each hand. Dressed in a pale shirt and a pair of tattered pants, he is barefoot next to the stump of a tree, perhaps a metaphor for the lost potential of entire generations of enslaved people. Scattered throughout the composition are an assemblage of enigmatic heads, a series of portraits of young white women taken from covers of the popular Harlequin romance novels. In close proximity to the figure of Nat Turner, these two motifs confront issues regarding beauty, race and sexuality.

Ana Maria Celis, Senior Vice President and 21st Century Art Specialist, added, *"The whole scene is bathed in a rich twilight—provided by the solar eclipse that Turner believed to be a sign from God to start his rebellion—saturating both the deep blue sky and verdant green fields with an eerie luminosity. With dawning light on the horizon, the setting with its pristine white farmhouse surrounded by picket fencing is strangely at odds with the lived experience of the enslaved people forced to work the land."*

The painting is Marshall's re-telling of the story of Nat Turner, a Virginia preacher who was hanged in 1831 for leading an insurrection of fellow enslaved people. Turner believed he had been divinely chosen to lead his people out of bondage, but the impact of 'Turner's Rebellion', as it became known, led to increased restrictions for the Black population. Nonetheless, Turner was regarded as a martyred hero, and an inspiration to those who followed. Unlike most traditional history paintings, *Nat-Shango (Thunder)* is not only a retelling of the past; it also reflects the complex nature of the debate surrounding race, one which resonates as deeply today as it did in the 19th century.

The title *Nat-Shango (Thunder)* speaks to another important component of the Black experience—shared African heritage. The title references the Shango of Thunder, Fire, and Storms, an important figure in the Yoruba pantheon of Orisha spirits. Shango was a mortal warlord king of the Oyo Empire, before dying and transcending into the heavens to become an orisha. Yoruba religious beliefs were part of the litany of songs, histories, stories and other cultural engagements that traveled with the enslaved peoples of west Africa on their journey to the New World.

Nat-Shango (Thunder) will be on view at Christie's Los Angeles from 27-28 April before traveling to New York for exhibition at Rockefeller Center ahead of [Christie's 20/21 spring auction series](#).

For viewing times and details, please contact Christie's locations below.

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