

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S SUPPORTS NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE ACQUISITION OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS' PORTRAIT OF *MAI* FOR THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY AND GETTY



LONDON - The National Portrait Gallery and the Getty Museum's innovative collaboration to jointly acquire Joshua Reynolds' *Portrait of Mai* (Omai) for £50 million, has secured one of the most enduring icons of British art for the Public, in negotiations closely supported by Christie's.

Sir Joshua Reynolds' spectacular *Portrait of Mai* (Omai) holds a pivotal place in global art history, depicting the first Polynesian to visit Britain, and is widely regarded as the finest portrait by one of Britain's greatest artists. Known as "Omai" in England, Mai (ca. 1753-1780) was a native of Raiatea, an island now part of French Polynesia, who traveled from Tahiti to England with Captain James Cook. He spent the years 1774-76 in London, where he was received by royalty and the intellectual elite, and indeed became something of a celebrity. Mai returned to his homeland in 1777 and died there two years later.

Ruth Cornett, Senior Director of Christie's Heritage and Taxation, said: *"We are delighted to have played our part in these historic negotiations to secure this masterpiece for two great institutions in the UK and US."*

John Stainton, Deputy Chairman of Old Master Pictures, said: *"Reynolds' magnificent portrait of the young Tahitian Mai is among the most important paintings executed in Britain in the 18th Century and we are proud to have been closely involved in the negotiations that have ensured its future on public exhibition."*

The painting will first be exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery when it reopens on 22 June.

Notes to Editors:

In 2016, the first ever joint Museum acquisition was made by the Louvre and the Rijksmuseum, for the portraits of *Maerten Soolmans and his wife Oopjen Coppit* by Rembrandt van Rijn, in a sale facilitated by Christie's. For 50 years, Christie's Heritage & Taxation Advisory Service has built up extensive experience, helping negotiate transactions and provide creative solutions that have resulted in over 10,000 objects of importance being acquired by public museums, galleries or institutions, including private treaty sales or in lieu of inheritance tax or other death duties.

PRESS CONTACT: Emma Cunningham | +44 (0) 7881 843447 | ecunningham@christies.com

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