

For Immediate Release
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CHRISTIE'S

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**FRANCIS BACON'S
MOST SEDUCTIVE
FEMALE PORTRAIT
TO BE OFFERED
FOR THE FIRST TIME
AT CHRISTIE'S
POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART
EVENING AUCTION**

**London, King Street
14 February 2012, 7pm**



London - On February 14 Christie's will offer the extraordinary *Portrait of Henrietta Moraes* in their evening auction of Post-War & Contemporary Art in King Street, London. Having remained in the same private collection for almost thirty years, this rare painting depicts the artist's close friend and model Henrietta Moraes and comes to auction for the first time (estimate upon request; 65 x 56in. / 165 x 142cm. ; illustrated above right).

Francis Outred, Christie's Head of Post-War & Contemporary Art, Europe:

'Searing with raw colour and texture, Portrait of Henrietta Moraes is one of the most seductive and sexually charged paintings I have ever encountered by Francis Bacon. The carefully constructed mood through colour is forcefully invaded by the extraordinary swipes of the loaded brush, which create the woman's voluptuous figure. This juxtaposition of the sheer beauty of colour with the brutal physicality of paint is what makes Bacon's art so remarkable. Executed in 1963, this painting was undertaken in a landmark year, which saw the artist perfect his technique. It followed a period of intense experimentation in which Bacon investigated the properties of paint and the architecture of the human form. This turning point is widely acknowledged; 3 out of the 7 large-scale paintings created in 1963 now form parts of major international museum collections including The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art Humlebæk, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff and the Tate Gallery, London. In the same year, Bacon also created a small-scale triptych Three Studies for Portrait of Henrietta Moraes (1963) currently held in the Museum of Modern Art. In a similar manner to the MoMA painting, Portrait of Henrietta Moraes is built up from a ground of papal red, which acts as a silhouette both in image and metaphor. The work has only had two owners since the day it was made, one of which was the important collector and post-War industrialist Willy Schniewind and the other being the present owner, a distinguished New Yorker who acquired the work in 1983. Portrait of Henrietta Moraes has not been seen in the public eye for fifteen years and I am very excited to be presenting this important piece of British art in London'.

Portrait of Henrietta Moraes was painted by Francis Bacon towards the end of 1963, the year after his breakthrough retrospective at the Tate Gallery, London in 1962, and the same year as his first major American exhibition at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. For many years, the work formed part of the Schniewind collection of important post-War paintings, the present owner acquiring it from the family in 1983, almost thirty years ago.

Portrait of Henrietta Moraes represents part of the pantheon of great paintings by Bacon executed in 1963, the majority of which are now housed in major international museum collections. Over the preceding four years, Bacon had devoted himself to investigating the properties of paint, technique and undertaking studies of the human nude; a subject that he had rarely dared consider in his early career. Standing out proudly from a vivid lilac ground, Henrietta lies undressed in all her voluptuous glory on a simple ticking mattress. For Bacon, this visceral quality and the sheer physicality of his model's body was a source of constant rapture. Indeed he returned to Moraes as a subject for numerous paintings over the course of his career including *Three Studies for the Portrait of Henrietta Moraes* (1963) held in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In *Portrait of Henrietta Moraes* Bacon imbues the painting with a striking passion, as if carried over from the intensity of his own personal life. This was the year that Bacon embarked upon his all-consuming love affair with George Dyer, immortalising his partner in his first painting.

Whilst Bacon had often considered the figure of the male nude, his depictions of Moraes were the first to seriously consider the female form. As David Sylvester once observed: "Bacon's lack of personal erotic interest in naked females did nothing to prevent these paintings from being as passionate as those of the malebodies that obsessed him". Moraes herself was a notorious *bonne vivante*, a regular fixture at the artist's favourite haunt, the Colony Room, Soho. The muse to a number of contemporary British artists, she was once the lover of Lucian Freud and appeared as the sitter in his *Girl in a Blanket* (1952). Bacon only ever depicted friends and never painted his subjects from life, preferring to use photographs instead. For *Portrait of Henrietta Moraes*, Bacon commissioned John Deakin, his friend and feted photographer to take a now renowned series of images that he would translate into his paintings.

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Images available on request
Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING AUCTION

AUCTION:

Christie's London - 8 King Street
Tuesday 14 February 2011, at 7pm

VIEWINGS:

Christie's London - 8 King Street
Saturday 11 February 12noon - 5pm
Sunday 12 February 12noon - 5pm
Monday 13 February 9am - 7.30pm
Tuesday 14 February 9am - 4pm

ABOUT CHRISTIE'S

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2011 that totaled £2.0 billion/\$3.2 billion. In 2010 it achieved global auction and private sales of £3.3 billion/\$5.0 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 450 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 \$100 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More 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.*