

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S

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**RARE AND REDISCOVERED PAINTINGS LEAD
CHRISTIE'S OLD MASTER SALES, JANUARY 25-26**

**TWO-DAY EVENT INCLUDES A NEW SALE, *THE ART OF FRANCE*,
HIGHLIGHTED BY WORKS OF FRAGONARD**



HANS MEMLING (Seligenstadt 1430/40 – 1494 Bruges)
The Virgin Mary Nursing the Christ Child
estimate: \$6-8 million

New York — Christie's is pleased to announce its upcoming auctions of **Old Master Paintings** and **Old Master Drawings** on January 25-26, 2012, offering a superb selection of rarities, rediscoveries and masterpieces. The sales will be led by a graceful tondo painting of *The Virgin Mary Nursing the Christ Child* by **Hans Memling**, one of two works by this artist remaining in private hands, and a dazzling, light-filled oil sketch of *The Arrival of Henri III at the Villa Contarini* (c. 1744–45) by **Giovanni Battista Tiepolo**, a major work made to commemorate an historic event. The sales are also distinguished by the inclusion of works by **Peter Paul Rubens**, **Frans Hals**, **Thomas de Keyser**, **Gerrit Dou** and **Giuseppe Arcimboldo** that are fresh to the market, having come to light again after generations or having been recently authoritatively reattributed.

Adding to the occasion, Christie's will hold a specialized sale, **The Art of France**, at 2pm on January 25, focusing on French 18th century painting and including a rich selection of works by **Jean-Honoré**

Fragonard, among others (separate press release available). That same afternoon, at 5pm, Christie's will present a celebratory sale of **The Finest and Rarest Wines of France** (separate press release to follow). Comprising 216 works, the combined Old Master Paintings and The Art of France sales are expected to achieve in excess of \$60 million.

Rounding out these auctions, and offering collectors a range of prices on high-quality works, will be property from two distinguished private collections, the Collection of Robert H. Smith and the Collection of David E. Rust, to be sold in all sessions of the sales. An innovative real estate developer whose crowning achievement was the building of Crystal City in Virginia, Robert H. Smith served for ten years as president of the National Gallery of Art, Washington and assembled a truly remarkable group of Renaissance and Baroque bronzes and paintings.

David Rust, a collector, curator and connoisseur, is also remembered for his devotion to the arts and to the National Gallery in particular, where he worked for two decades as Chief Curator of European Art. Rust was, moreover, a discerning collector in his own right and his townhouse in Georgetown was home to a broad range of works of art including examples by twentieth-century British artists, bronzes by Rodin, 19th century French works, Italian and Dutch Baroque paintings and a trove of Old Master drawings, many of which he generously donated to the National Gallery. Fifteen paintings and drawing from this collection are offered in the upcoming Old Master sales.

Nicholas Hall, Joint International Head of Old Master and Early British Paintings, comments: *"Demand for top-quality Old Master works continues to rise among both new and experienced collectors and art dealers, and Christie's is proud to meet that demand with this unusually strong selection of paintings and drawings, almost all of which are fresh to the market. We are excited to feature a series of rediscovered Dutch and Flemish masterworks of the 17th century, which underscore the continuing sense of adventure in the Old Masters field. In addition, we have responded to the revival of interest in French Rococo art with a unique sale, 'The Art of France'."*

Leading the sale is an exceptionally well-preserved roundel painting of *The Virgin Mary Nursing the Christ Child* that has long been recognized as a work by **Hans Memling** (Seligenstadt 1430/40–1494 Bruges), the leading artist in Bruges in the last third of the 15th century (estimate: \$6-8 million). This devotional work in the artist's mature later style, remarkable for the quality of its execution, is stylistically linked to acknowledged masterpieces from the 1480s and 1490s by Memling, but unlike those paintings is one of the rare works by the artist in private hands. The Virgin and Christ Child are depicted against a gold background, recalling the traditional icons of early Christian art, and the small



circular format and intimacy of the subject would suggest a domestic function for the work.

Another leading work in the sale from the Collection of Robert H. Smith is *The Arrival of Henri III at the Villa Contarini* by **Giovanni Battista Tiepolo** (Venice 1696–

1770 Madrid) (estimate: \$4-6 million). Noble in composition, elegant in its protagonists, impressive in its display of silks and satins and overflowing with visual imagination, this painting depicts the lavish welcome accorded to Henri de Valois, soon to be crowned as Henri III of France, when he came to Venice in 1574. On that same journey, Henri III stopped at the Villa Contarini, west of Venice, and around 1744, the master of the villa commissioned Tiepolo to paint frescoes commemorating the event, which today are housed in the Musée Jacquemart-André. Yet this study, by the artist known for raising the oil sketch to the status of a collectible art form, retains its sparkle and freshness of touch.

In a sale remarkable for the number of works fresh to the market, a dynamic unpublished oil sketch by **Peter Paul Rubens** (Siegen, Westphalia 1577–1640 Antwerp), *The Assumption of the Virgin* is new to scholars and collectors alike (estimate: \$2-3 million). The account of Mary's physical ascent into heaven captivated Rubens throughout his career, and he returned to it repeatedly, producing seven altarpieces on the subject. Dated around 1620, when Rubens was the leading artist in Antwerp, it may have been used as a study for the artist's later altarpiece for the Church of the Carthusians in Brussels, now in the Lichtenstein Museum, Vienna.



Portrait of a Man, painted in the early 1630s by **Frans Hals** (Antwerp 1581/85–1666 Haarlem) adds to a sale packed with stunning rediscoveries (estimate: \$700,000-1,000,000). A work from The Collection of Elizabeth Taylor, most likely given to her by her father, the art dealer Francis Taylor, this lively portrait is an exciting recent addition to the known body of paintings by the celebrated seventeenth-century Dutch master Frans Hals. Previously thought to be by a follower of Hals, the painting was authoritatively attributed to the master himself in 2011 on the basis of first-hand examination by scholars and conservators. Formal characteristics link the work with

other paintings by Hals from the early 1630s, such as those in the National Gallery, London, and the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem. The painting, which had hung over the fireplace in Elizabeth Taylor's Bel Air home, will be offered as a special highlight of the upcoming Old Master Paintings sales at Christie's New York; the remainder of the film star's fine art collection will be offered at Christie's London on February 7 & 8.

Another thrilling rediscovery is **Gerrit Dou's** (Leiden 1613–1675) *A young lady playing a clavichord* (estimate: \$1-2 million). This important example of Dou's late work is well-documented in the literature on the artist, but its whereabouts were unknown for generations. Purchased in 1927 from Duveen Brothers by the family of the present owners, this scene of music-making in an opulent domestic setting, focused on an attractive and



elegantly dressed woman, is characteristic of the lighter palette and freer technique that Dou adopted after 1660.

An important new addition to the small corpus of accepted works by **Giuseppe Arcimboldo** (Milan (?) c. 1527–1593), the painting *A reversible anthropomorphic portrait of a man composed of fruit* is one of only three invertible portraits by the artist that are known to have survived and one of the very earliest examples of independent Italian still-life painting (estimate: \$3-5 million). This remarkable invertible panel, perhaps painted for Emperor Rudolf II, reads in one direction as a still life of various fruits arranged in a wicker basket, but when rotated 180 degrees is suddenly transformed into a composite head of a man.



A truly fresh to the market discovery is **Thomas de Keyser's** (Amsterdam 1596/97–1667) *Portrait of a Gentleman* (estimate: \$300,000–500,000). To be sold for the first time in almost ninety years, this exquisite work by the pre-eminent portrait painter in 1620s Amsterdam is monogrammed and dated 1627, the period when De Keyser was at the height of his artistic powers. The sitter, though unidentified, most likely came from the artist's circle of wealthy patrons, and according to one scholar may have been the artist Pieter Lastman, the teacher of Rembrandt.

Another highlight from the collection of Robert Smith is a pair of paintings by **Francesco Guardi** (Venice 1712–1793), *Capriccio with a ruined late gothic arch, with fishermen on a bridge* and *Capriccio with a classical ruined arch, river bank with fishermen, a temple beyond* (estimate: \$1.2-1.8 million). Dating from Guardi's mature period, these works are realized on a larger scale than most of his other examples of this type. Painted as pendants, these *capriccios* complement one another by presenting two ruinous landscapes with chronologically and stylistically distinct architectural features. In the two works, Guardi masterfully juxtaposes the architectural details of a late gothic groin vault with a classical triumphal arch, both artfully weathered by time.

Auctions:	<i>Old Master Paintings Part I</i>	January 25, 2012 at 10am
	<i>Art of France</i>	January 25, 2012 at 2pm
	<i>Wines of France</i>	January 25, 2012 at 5pm
	<i>Old Master Drawings</i>	January 26, 2012 at 10am
	<i>Old Master Paintings Part II</i>	January 26, 2012 at 2pm
Public Exhibition:	January 21-25, 2012	

About Christie's

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