

CHRISTIE'S

MEDIA ALERT | HONG KONG | 17 October 2019 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEADING THE MASTERPIECE MARKET THIS SEASON

CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER

FIVE NUDES BY SANYU

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF 20TH CENTURY ART

The Largest Painting Featuring Female Nudes, and the Greatest Number of Figures in Any Painting by Sanyu



SANYU (CHANG YU, FRANCE/CHINA, 1895 - 1966)

Five Nudes

signed 'Sanyu' and signed in Chinese (lower right)

oil on masonite

120 x 172 cm. (47 1/4 x 67 3/4 in.)

Painted in 1950s

Hong Kong – Joining the strong line-up of masterpieces this season by **Zao Wou-Ki**, **Léonard Tsuguharu Foujita** and **Kim Whanki**, Christie's will present for auction one of the most important works of 20th century art by Chinese-French artist Sanyu. The offering of this groundbreaking masterwork, ***Five Nudes***, will mark a defining moment for the auction market, and will be presented as the leading highlight of the 20th Century and Contemporary Art Evening Sale.

Five Nudes is the largest painting featuring female nudes that Sanyu ever created, and features the greatest number of figures within a single composition; no other piece by Sanyu depicts as many human subjects. The depiction of standing figures within Sanyu's oeuvre is also exceedingly rare. According to the artist's catalogue raisonne, there are 56 known oil paintings by Sanyu that feature the female nude, and of these, only seven depict standing figures; aside from ***Five Nudes***, all of the other six compositions depict either a pair or single figures.

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As described by art historian Chen Yanfeng in his book *San Yu – Overseas Chinese Fine Arts Series*, “The number of nude paintings Sanyu created after World War II are few, and in the entire world there are no more than ten such works. **Five Nudes** is the only large work painted around 1955; the deep red and bright yellow background illuminates the pale skin of the figures, who pose seductively as “muses”, with neither the exaggerated proportions of the figures Sanyu painted in the thirties, nor an overly figurative realism. The bold black lines create a naive, primitive appeal unique to Sanyu’s late works.”

A pioneer and trailblazer, Sanyu was among the first generation of Chinese artists to study abroad in France. After his arrival in Paris in 1921, he attended classes at the Academie de la Grande Chaumière and frequented the cafes of Montparnasse, where he mingled with other artists and forged his own artistic style. Unlike his compatriots Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian, Sanyu never returned to live in China, and his achievements went largely unrecognized during his lifetime until after his passing in 1966.

In 2011, **Five Nudes** not only set a new price record for Sanyu’s works, but it also broke the existing auction record for any oil painting by a Chinese artist. The work represents a major auction milestone in the history of the Asian art market, but more importantly, the painting itself embodies the full realization of Sanyu’s artistic talents at the very peak of his career. Christie’s is proud to be entrusted with the sale of this magnificent masterpiece of 20th century art, and look forward to presenting it to the public in Hong Kong this autumn.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Auction Date: 23 November 2019

Auction Location: Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, No. 1 Expo Drive, Wanchai, Hong Kong

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About Christie’s

Christie’s, the world’s leading art business, had auction sales in the first half of 2019 that totalled £2.2 billion / \$2.8 billion. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie’s offers around 350 auctions 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 also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie’s has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

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**Estimates do not include buyer’s premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer’s premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

Images available on request

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