

Oceania



Exceptional “Rapa” ceremonial Dance paddle from Easter Island

Six works from the Tristan Tzara collection
including a Maori canoe prow, for the first time on the market

An extremely rare Micronesian “Tapunau” mask

Paris, November 2019 – Sotheby’s is delighted to announce its forthcoming **Oceania** sale to be held on 4 December in Paris. This is the first various owners’ sale dedicated exclusively to the arts of Oceania. The 38 lots that comprise this sale have been chosen for their historical importance, remarkable provenance, and rare aesthetic quality. They will be featured in a catalogue that will shine a spotlight on the perspective of the first explorers, collectors, dealers and artists to develop a passion for this field in the early 20th century. Sotheby’s will offer works that previously belonged to James T. Hooper, Stephen Chauvet, Paul Guillaume, Nelson A. Rockefeller, André Breton, Maurice de Vlaminck and Tristan Tzara.

Exceptional *Rapa* ceremonial dance paddle, Easter Islands

Following the world auction record achieved in 2017 for a work from Easter Island, the sale will offer an exceptional ***Rapa* ceremonial dance paddle** with a unique history (**lot 10 – estimate upon request**). This museum-quality piece has notably been part of the collections of **Gustave and Franyo Schindler** and **Bernard de Grunne**, and has been exhibited in prestigious international institutions since the 1960s, first in New York in 1966 at the Museum of Primitive Arts for the exhibition of *Masks and sculptures from the Collection of Gustave and Franyo Schindler* and, more recently, at the Beyeler Foundation in the famous exhibition *La Magie des Images: Africa, Oceania and Modern Art*.



The *Rapa* corpus is one of the most refined within Pascuan art, bringing the abstraction of the human figure to its apex. The size and shape of this piece make it one of the most classic and significant among known examples.

Six works from the Tristan Tzara collection



It is exceptional to see works from the legendary collection of the founder of the Dada movement, **Tristan Tzara**, appear on the market – with six works once belonging to this visionary collector offered by Sotheby's Paris.

Appearing on the market for the first time, this **Maori canoe prow** of remarkable quality was first exhibited in 1930 (**lot 30 – estimate: €100,000-€150,000**). The canoe is one of the most emblematic elements of Maori culture, and its importance was attested by the very elaborate carving of the bow and stern. Here, the figure with its tongue sticking out is associated with *Marakiaau*, the divinity who lures enemy canoes and their crews into the depths.

This historic work, which dates from the end of the *Te Puawaitanga* era (1500-1800), exemplifies the highest degree of craftsmanship in Maori art.

Another work exhibited in early 20th century is this superb **Kanak figure**, which confirms the importance of African and Oceanic arts in the poet's life. It was presented at the Galerie Pigalle in 1930 as part of the famous *Exposition d'art africain et océanien* (**lot 33 – estimate: €60,000-€90,000**). Characteristic of Kanak art, this imposing sculpture stands out for its monumentality and power. It is a memorial work and represents a dignitary whose name it bore. It might have been planted near the hut of a deceased chief, beside a path, or in a place marked as forbidden.



Extremely rare Mortlock mask, Caroline Islands, Micronesia



It is extremely rare to see masks from Micronesia, where the known corpus is extremely small. The only examples found there are **tapunau masks**, made in the Mortlock Islands, which are distinguished by their austere, pared-back lines (**lot 18 – estimate: €250,000-€350,000**). The rarity of this mask is compounded by the force of its aesthetics, which create a strikingly modern impression.

As well as its undeniable artistic qualities, this mask is also important for its rich Western history. It came into the collections of the Liebenzeller Mission Museum before 1914 and tells the story of the many German expeditions that revealed the exceptional creations of these hitherto unknown regions, which exerted an instant fascination on intellectuals and artists.

Malangan figure, New Ireland, Bismarck Archipelago

From the former Paul Guillaume collection, this wonderful **Malangan figure** masterfully testifies to the eye of this collector and dealer who completely changed the way Westerners viewed African and Oceanic art (**lot 26 – estimate: €180,000-€250,000**). It reflects the major interest and fascination that the art of the Bismarck Archipelago aroused among artists and art enthusiasts in the early 20th century.



Its Western history responds to the symbolic importance of this work, an archetype of the art of New Ireland. Adopting a classical pose, the figure is impressive due to the sculptural size of the head and the refinement of the ornamentation. Boasting an imposing *kapkap*, an attribute of clan chiefs, it affirms the power and serenity of the ancestor.

Rare Livika drum, New Ireland, Bismarck Archipelago



Lastly, a **Livika drum belongs to one of the rarest corpora** of New Ireland. Today, only 50 or so of these instruments are recorded in museums and private collections (**lot 3 – estimate: €120,000-€180,000**). Each *livika* has its own name, which refers to one of the archipelago's native birds. They were kept hidden from women's view and were brought out to be played at funerals of prominent clan members and accompanied the vigil. These instruments had a strong symbolic value and brought to life the deceased's voice during ceremonies held in their honour. They were generally destroyed when their owner died.

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Sale on 4 December

Exhibition from 27 November to 3 December

About Sotheby's

Sotheby's has been uniting collectors with world-class works of art since 1744. Sotheby's became the first international auction house when it expanded from London to New York (1955), the first to conduct sales in Hong Kong (1973), India (1992) and France (2001), and the first international fine art auction house in China (2012). Today, Sotheby's has a global network of 80 offices in 40 countries and presents auctions in 10 different salesrooms, including New York, London, Hong Kong and Paris. Sotheby's offers collectors the resources of *Sotheby's Financial Services*, the world's only full-service art financing company, as well as the collection, artist, estate & foundation advisory services of its subsidiary, *Art Agency, Partners*. Sotheby's also presents private sale opportunities in more than 70 categories, including S|2, the gallery arm of Sotheby's Global Fine Art Division, and three retail businesses: Sotheby's Wine, Sotheby's Diamonds, and Sotheby's Home, the online marketplace for interior design.

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Images are available upon request

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