

SOTHEBY'S VARIOUS-OWNER SALE OF IMPRESSIONIST AND MODERN ART PART I TO TAKE PLACE ON NOVEMBER 16, 1998 IN NEW YORK

-- Sale To Follow Auction of Paintings from the Reader's Digest Collection -- --Brancusi's Powerful Sculpture of La Muse Is One of the Most Sophisticated Renditions of the Series --

Sotheby's various-owner sale of Impressionist and Modern Art will take place in New York on November 16, 1998, immediately following the sale of paintings from the Reader's Digest Collection.

La Muse is among three polished bronze sculptures executed by Brancusi in 1917-18 based on the marble version of 1912 (now in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum) and the current example is the final version (est. \$8/10 million). In 1917, the great American collector of 20th century art John Quinn asked Brancusi to make a bronze (which is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston). Two bronzes followed, one currently in the Portland Art Museum, and the offered example, which was formerly in the Rothschild collection. In working on the present work Brancusi made major adjustments to the bottom edge, clarifying the form and opening up the back of the bronze to reveal a hollow shell. Brancusi kept this example in his studio for decades, continuing to polish and refine the surface of the bronze, until it was purchased by Herbert and Nannette Rothschild in 1953. Because of this gradual refinement, La Muse has an immaculate surface which seems to dematerialize as it reflects everything around it. The high regard in which Brancusi held the sculpture may be judged from his strong feeling about the correct title of the sculpture. As described by Judith Rothschild, "Brancusi had such (like Stravinsky) a clear use of words. The same way he distinguished between 'Muse' and 'La Muse', telling my parents that he called 'La Muse' not merely 'Muse' because he felt that piece embodied most of all what he was trying to do in the whole group of Muses."

Le Pont et le Barrage à Pontoise was painted by Cézanne during his final stay in the area in 1881 (est. \$8/10 million). The artist first went to Pontoise in 1872, enticed by the presence of Camille Pissarro who had lived and worked in the village since 1866. Painted long after Pissarro's lessons had been fully absorbed, Cézanne's own style emerges, resulting in a lyrical view of the river Oise and the bridge connecting two banks of the river. As Joseph J. Rishel has remarked in analyzing the period he spend in Pontoise in 1881, "It was to be his last stay in the region, a place where he painted some of his most beautiful pictures and, it is often maintained, reached artistic maturity."

Renoir painted Madame Grimprel au Riban Bleu in 1880, a time considered the culmination of the artist's pure Impressionist phase, and chose this charming portrait of Yvonne Grimprel, the grand- child of prominent banker Armand Grimprel, as his only submission to the 1882 Salon (est. \$4/6 million). The painting captures the mischievous charm of the young sitter with the lively brushwork and brilliant subtlety which marked the artist's finest work of the period.

Femme Nue Assise, dated 1913, is a prime example of Renoir's mature classicism of the last decade of his life (est. \$3/5 million). The seated bather poses with classical grace and harmony as she dries her left leg with her right hand and rests her other arm on the back of the chair. By cropping the chair and changing the format of the canvas from the square he used in the study for the work to vertical, Renoir virtually filled the canvas with the form of the bather. As John House observed, Renoir took increasing liberties with natural appearances in his later works, noting that "as one of his late models disarmingly remarked, he made her larger than she was; to give a sense of fullness and roundness to his forms, he often fused it into the single image varied angles of vision, creating a sense of the physical totality of the figure...As Renoir succinctly put it to Bonnard, 'one must embellish.'"

While Kandinsky's Weisser Klang (White Sound) from 1908 has obvious connections to the Stefan George poem of similar title, it is the emergence of the artist's distinctive personal style that is most significant (est. \$3/4 million). White Sound represents Kandinsky's early attempt to incorporate a more daring and expressive use of color, reflecting the direct impact of Fauve paintings on the artist. It reflects Kandinsky's experience during the previous year in Paris in a period during which the work of Braque, Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, van Dongen and others was receiving extraordinary attention.

Monet painted the landscape entitled Bords de la Seine, Un Coin de Berge during the summer of 1881 while living in Vétheuil and sold it to Durand-Ruel in October of that year (est. \$2.5/3.5 million). The artist's handling of the paint creates the dominant rhythms and patterns of the painting. Moreover, he adopts a vantage point and compositional format which allow him to fill more than two-thirds of the picture plane with long, flickering brushstrokes that provide the image with much of its energy and interest.

Renoir's pastel on paper Portrait of Cézanne from 1880 is a particularly moving testament of the friendship that linked the two artists who first met while studying at the Académie Suisse and later in the studio of Charles Gleyre (est. \$2.5/3.5 million). The lively portrait of the famously withdrawn and irascible artist was drawn in 1880, and shortly thereafter and for reasons that are not fully clear, Cézanne painted a faithful copy of the pastel identical in size. The offered portrait was acquired directly from the artist in 1899 by Victor Chocquet, who was one of the most devoted collector's of Cézanne's work. It is conceivable that Chocquet commissioned Renoir to draw the portrait.