

THE HISCOX COLLECTION

20th Century British Art from Sickert to Damien Hirst to be sold at Sotheby's in London

A SIGNIFICANT PART of the sophisticated and much admired collection of 20th century British Art formed by Robert Hiscox, Chairman of Hiscox plc., one of the world's leading fine art insurance companies, is to be sold by Sotheby's in London on Thursday, December 3, 1998.

The 35 works span the entire history of British art this century. Beginning with O'Connor and Sickert at the turn of the century; Moore, Nicholson and Hepworth in the 1930s; Peter Lanyon in the second generation of Cornish artists; Freud, Auerbach and Kossoff from the School of London, the collection continues with Damien Hirst and Mark Francis who are today at the cutting edge of British Contemporary Art.

Susannah Pollen, senior director in charge of the sale, said: "For nearly 30 years, the Hiscox Collection has been admired within the art world for its sophistication and far-sightedness. There is nothing more exciting than to see the enthusiasm and discipline in one man's passion for collecting."

Hiscox plc. started acquiring works of art in the early 1970s at a time when few collections of 20th century British art were being contemplated by private individuals, let alone by enlightened companies. "I have always been afflicted by an overwhelming desire to acquire works of art of all shapes, sizes and denominations" Mr. Hiscox said. "My ambition was also to buy works by British artists alive and painting during my art-buying life."

"Most of us have to sit through turgid meetings and to have an interesting, thought provoking picture to wonder at is a great time passer."

With the support of his fellow directors, Robert Hiscox continued to buy art "as a committee of one". In 1991, the collection became publicly known when it was shown as part of the National Art Collections Fund exhibition The New Patrons. Subsequently, many of the works have been exhibited individually in the Royal Academy, London; The Tate Gallery both in London and Liverpool and in the Yale Centre for British Art in Connecticut.

"We have collected for nearly 30 years and the time has come to take stock", Mr. Hiscox said. "Some of the pictures have become valuable – probably more valuable than we can justify hanging on the office wall so- we have decided to sell a large part of the collection. Selling any of the works is agony. It seems easier to sell a large number than just one or two, as it avoids choosing the one or two."

"The joy is that we can continue to collect with the emphasis on contemporary works. Maybe in 30 years there will be another Hiscox sale when the next generation wants a new start", Mr. Hiscox added.

THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

The sale includes a major oil by the Irish artist Roderic O'Connor (1860-1940) entitled Still life with apples, jug and bowls, and described by Susannah Pollen as a work "which lies at the heart of O'Connor's international reputation."

Painted in the Breton town of Pont-Aven in 1894, the year of O'Connor's first meeting with Paul Gauguin, the painting illustrates the influence that the work of Paul Cézanne had on both artists at this time. However, in Still life with apples, jug and bowls, O'Connor goes beyond merely borrowing from Cézanne and develops his own unique style. The painting is estimated at £80,000-120,000. THE SCHOOL OF LONDON

One of the most admired paintings in the collection is Lucian Freud's portrait of his friend and fellow artist Frank Auerbach. Acknowledged by Freud himself as one of his best works, Elena Geuna, European head of Sotheby's Contemporary Art department, describes the painting as "a superb example of the artist's powerful handling of paint and extraordinary ability to capture the psychological intensity of his sitters".

Executed in 1975/76, this oil matches the intimacy of earlier depictions of two other of the artists's friends, John Minton and Francis Bacon, which Freud painted in 1952. The Auerbach portrait is estimated at £400,000-600,000. The sale also includes a painting by Auerbach himself, Head of E.O.W.II, an oil on board from 1964. The sitter was

Stella West, Auerbach's muse, lover and model, who became the subject of almost all his figure paintings from the late 1940s until the early 1970s. This work is estimated at £40,000-50,000.

Another important work from the School of London is Leon Kossoff's Willesden Junction-Autumn Afternoon, an oil on panel painted in 1971 and estimated at £80,000-120,000.

David Bomberg, the artist who taught both Auerbach and Kossoff is represented by a fine landscape entitled San Miguel, Toledo, Afternoon, painted during his stay in Toledo, Spain, in the autumn of 1929. The oil is estimated at £80,000-120,000.

THE ST. IVES SCHOOL

Art from the St. Ives School includes works by Ben Nicholson, his wife, Barbara Hepworth and Peter Lanyon.

Carnac, Red and Brown is a superb example of Nicholson's interest in the themes of "man in nature" and the qualities of earth, weather and light. The inspiration of the megalithic remains of Carnac in Brittany which Nicholson had visited in 1949 and in 1965, surface in this work of dramatic monumental power. An oil on carved relief dating from 1966, it is estimated at £200,000-300,000. Nicholson's wife, sculptor Dame Barbara Hepworth, is represented by Torso, a rare early work in marble from 1928. It is estimated at £60,000-80,000.

Peter Lanyon took up gliding in 1959 and the experience of flight added a completely new perspective on his interpretation of landscape painting. Cloud Base from 1962, one of Lanyon's last gliding paintings, is a work which summarises the artist's entire experience of flight, offering a vision of the relationship between land, the sky and mankind in it. It is estimated at £60,000-80,000.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

The Hiscox Collection also includes works by cutting-edge British artists. An example of one of Damien Hirst's famous series of Medicine Cabinets, My Way from 1990-91, questions the validity of both medicine and art and raises the traditional art historical themes of mortality and Vanitas. Its title derives from the Sex Pistols' version of Frank Sinatra's renowned song and suggests portraiture as one possible interpretation of this work. The cabinet is estimated at £80,000-120,000.

Mark Francis is represented by Cluster from 1994, a signature-style oil which illustrates his interest in both the microscopic and macroscopic worlds. The oil, which shows a cellular structure based on a blown-up photograph of bacteria, is estimated at £8,000-12,000.

The collection also includes work by other YBAs: Richard Billingham, Julie Roberts, Brad Lochore and Ian Davenport.

Further highlights from the Hiscox Collection include: Henry Moore's Reclining Figure from 1939, bronze, estimated at £50,000-70,000; Edward Burra's The Terrace, a watercolour and pencil from 1936-38, estimated at £30,000-40,000; Mark Gertler's Self Portrait with a fishing cap, an oil from 1914, estimated at £30,000-40,000 and Sir Jacob Epstein's The Tin Hat, one of only three portrait-sculptures of soldiers made by the artist during the First World War, estimated at £30,000-40,000 together with works by Oscar Nemon, Ivon Hitchens, Bill Jacklin, Fred Williams, Mary Newcomb, Gilbert & George and Sybil Andrews.