

**SANYU'S FINAL MASTERPIECE  
ONE OF THE ARTIST'S LARGEST NUDE PAINTINGS**

***NU***

**LEADS SOTHEBY'S HONG KONG MODERN ART EVENING SALE**

**- First Time at Auction Since Painting was Created  
More than Half a Century Ago -**

**Estimate upon request (Expected to fetch in excess of HK\$150 million)**



Sanyu, *Nu*, oil on masonite, 1965, 122.5 by 135 cm.

**MODERN ART EVENING SALE**

**Auction: 5 October | Hong Kong Public Exhibition: 3 - 5 October**  
Hall 1, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

**Grand Unveiling at Taipei Travelling Exhibition: 21-22 September**

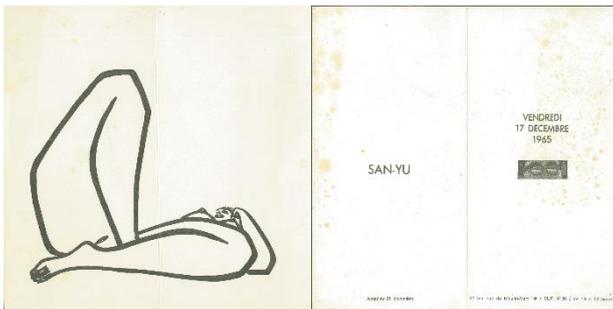
**Hong Kong, 16 September 2019** Sotheby's Hong Kong is proud to present **Sanyu's *Nu***, the ultimate masterpiece created by the Chinese émigré artist in France in the 1960s, at the **Modern Art Evening Sale** on 5 October. Painted at the height of his artistic maturity, this last nude by Sanyu is also the artist's final masterpiece and the definitive expression of his singular vision. Extensively illustrated in every catalogue of Sanyu's oil paintings, *Nu* was the cover

image of the invitation to the artist's final solo exhibition. Appearing on the market for the first time in more than half a century, this exceedingly rare work is set to cause tremendous excitement among collectors in Asia and beyond.

**Vinci Chang, Sotheby's Head of Modern Asian Art**, comments: "Sanyu's paintings began with floral motifs and culminated with female nudes. Throughout his life, the artist strove to distil his creative vision, a process that reached its zenith with *Nu*, his final masterpiece. This season, we are honoured to offer Sanyu's last nude painting, which has dazzled and captivated viewers for half a century, and to present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire a work that stands at the pinnacle of the artist's career."

## THE PEAK OF CREATIVITY

A legend in Asian art and a luminary in Western art history, Sanyu spent much of his life as a drifter in Paris. In the 1920s, he went to the city with fellow Chinese art students – among them Lin Fengmian, Wu Dayu and Xu Beihong. Together they wrote a glorious chapter for Chinese émigré artists in France. By the 1940s and 1950s, Sanyu had become revered in Paris, by Wu Guanzhong, Zhang Daqian, Zao Wou-Ki, and Chu Teh-Chun, among others. He remained a purist through to old age in the 1960s, disregarding critical judgement as he focused on the final chapter of his career.



Invitation for SAN-YU Exhibition at Lévy Residence in 1965.  
Image courtesy of The Li Ching Cultural and Educational Foundation.

On 17 December 1965, Sanyu mounted his last solo exhibition, hosted by close friends Mr. and Mrs. Lévy at their family residence on Rue du Moulin Vert. The opening was attended by a group that included Pan Yuliang, Zao Wou-Ki, Chu Teh-Chun and Shiy De-Jinn. Unfortunately, Sanyu died from an accident in his Paris apartment only a few months after the exhibition, making *Nu*, which was created in April 1965, his final masterpiece.

The importance of *Nu* in Sanyu's artistic career is undisputed. It was the cover image of the invitation to the Lévy Residence exhibition and the poster image for *Hommage à Sanyu*, an exhibition organised by the legendary dealer and collector Jean-Claude Riedel in his gallery in 1977. From the 1990s to the present, *Nu* has been illustrated in every catalogue of Sanyu's oil paintings. As **one of the largest paintings of a female nude by Sanyu**, *Nu* is much more ambitious than any of the works in the National Museum of History collection in Taipei, which also houses the eponymous oil sketch for the work. Due to its singular importance, *Nu* was the highlight of the major 2004 exhibition *Sanyu: l'écriture du corps* at the Musée Guimet in Paris.

## AVANT-GARDE PIONEER OF FEMALE NUDES

Sanyu's exploration of the female nude as a subject for his art seemed to accord with the 20<sup>th</sup> century Parisian art world, but was in fact also an extension of his Asian literati sensibilities. If in the West the human body was regarded as a manifestation of divinity, then in the East such a concept was found in natural landscapes. By combining the aesthetics of both traditions, Sanyu saw a path forward for each.

His nudes from the 1950s and 1960s began to show a radical new style, with painting on a monumental scale and the depiction of the female body in unconventional ways. *Nu* presents a surprising vision of a nude prostrate against a white, abstract background, her legs bent and folded in an L shape. Sanyu adopts a highly unusual angled perspective that exaggerates the nude's lower body and genitals. More than simply presenting the beauty of a woman's body, he exaggerates and transforms it into something akin to a traditional Asian landscape painting.

In *Nu*, Sanyu at once liberates the female nude from romanticism and eroticism, and creates a modernist interpretation of Asian landscape aesthetics. By exaggerating the nude's lower body, he toys with discomforting the viewer; and by openly presenting this area of the body which for thousands of years would have been considered taboo, he reveals the expressiveness of the human body at its fullest.



### ONE OF SANYU'S LARGEST FEMALE NUDE PAINTINGS

Before *Nu*, Sanyu had painted a similar composition on a smaller scale (46.5 x 49.5 cm) which he sent to Taipei in 1964 for his solo exhibition at the National Museum of History, where it remains today. Enlarged to a scale seven times the earlier work, *Nu* is more expressive, more mature in conception, and more visually impactful.

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#### IMAGE DOWNLOAD

Dropbox: <https://bit.ly/2IPMLGU> | Baidu: <https://pan.baidu.com/s/1BzCN46j75V-yxUgMFhY6xw> (Pin: uy6k)

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:****I) SOTHEBY'S HONG KONG AUTUMN SALES 2019 CALENDAR (*The schedule is subject to change*)**

Auctions	Category
4 Oct	Finest & Rarest Wines and Spirits Featuring The Magnificent Cellar of Park B. Smith A Glorious Burgundy Collection
5 Oct	Modern Art Evening Sale Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art Evening Sale The Distinguished Cellar of a Pioneering Collector
6 Oct	Modern Art Modern & Contemporary Southeast Asian Art Contemporary Art Evening Sale Moutarderie Nationale: The Gillion Crowet Collection Fine Classical Chinese Paintings
7 Oct	Contemporary Art Fine Chinese Paintings Magnificent Jewels and Jadeite
8 Oct	Important Chinese Art Important Watches

Selling Exhibitions	Category
10 Sep – 9 Oct	Hsiao Chin – Infinite Universe
3 – 7 Oct	Panorama: A New Perspective Old Masters / A Brush with Italy Barry Flanagan Selling Exhibition
3 – 8 Oct	Sotheby's Diamonds Sotheby's Wine Retail

**HONG KONG EXHIBITION AND AUCTION VENUE**

Hall 1, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (New Wing), 1 Expo Drive, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

**II) MODERN ART: ASIA TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS CALENDAR**

Date	City	Venue
4 – 5 Sep	Shanghai	Four Seasons Hotel
7 – 8 Sep	Beijing	Beijing Park Hyatt
21 – 22 Sep	Taipei	Hua Nan Bank International Convention Center

**III) FOR MORE NEWS FROM 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 presents auctions in 10 different salesrooms, including New York, London, Hong Kong and Paris, and Sotheby's BidNow program allows visitors to view all auctions live online and place bids from anywhere in the world. 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 advisory services of its subsidiary, Art Agency, Partners. Sotheby's presents private sale opportunities in more than 70 categories, including S|2, the gallery arm of Sotheby's Global Fine Art Division, and two retail businesses, Sotheby's Diamonds and Sotheby's Wine. Sotheby's has a global network of 80 offices in 40 countries and is the oldest company listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).

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