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Sotheby's to Offer One of the Most Famous Masterpieces in the World

EDVARD MUNCH'S THE SCREAM TO LEAD THE IMPRESSIONIST & MODERN ART EVENING SALE ON 2 MAY 2012 IN NEW YORK

Sotheby's is honored to announce that Edvard Munch's masterpiece **The Scream** will lead its Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale in New York on 2 May 2012. The iconic work is one of the most instantly recognizable images in both art history and popular culture, perhaps second only to the *Mona Lisa*. The present version of *The Scream*, which dates from 1895, is one of four versions of the composition and the only version still in private hands. It will be on view in London for the first time ever, with the exhibition at Sotheby's opening on 13 April. In New York, and also for the first time ever, it will be on exhibition at Sotheby's in advance of the sale beginning 27 April. The work is owned by Norwegian businessman Petter Olsen, whose father Thomas was a friend, neighbor and patron of Munch.



"I felt the great Scream in Nature"
– An excerpt from the artist's hand-painted inscription on the frame of the present work

"Munch's *The Scream* is the defining image of modernity, and it is an immense privilege for Sotheby's to be entrusted with one of the most important works of art in private hands" commented Simon Shaw, Senior Vice President

and Head of Sotheby's Impressionist & Modern Art department in New York. "Instantly recognizable, this is one of very few images which transcends art history and reaches a global consciousness. *The Scream* arguably embodies even greater power today than when it was conceived. At a time of great critical interest in the artist, and with the 150th anniversary of his birth in 2013, this spring is a particularly compelling time for *The Scream* to appear on the market. For collectors and institutions, the opportunity to acquire such a singularly-influential masterpiece is unprecedented in recent times."

Mr. Shaw continued: "Given how rarely true icons come to the market it is difficult to predict *The Scream's* value. The recent success of masterpieces at Sotheby's suggests that the price could exceed \$80 million."

"I have lived with this work all my life, and its power and energy have only increased with time," said Petter Olsen, the consignee of *The Scream*. "Now however, I feel the moment has come to offer the rest of the world a chance to own and appreciate this remarkable work, which is the only version of *The Scream* not in the collection of a Norwegian museum. My father Thomas Olsen was a friend of Munch, and acquired *The Scream* as well as many other works by the artist. He hoped that his collection would further Munch's international renown by lending to exhibitions abroad. In that tradition, proceeds from this sale will go toward the establishment of a new museum, art centre and hotel on my farm Ramme Gaard at Hvitsten, Norway. It will open next year in connection with the Munch 150th anniversary, and will be dedicated to the artist's work and time there. We are restoring his house and studio, and guests can stay in his home."

Mr. Olsen added, "I am concerned as an environmentalist about man's relationship with nature, and I feel *The Scream* makes an important statement about this."



"I was walking along the road with two Friends /
the Sun was setting – The Sky turned a bloody
red / And I felt a whiff of Melancholy – I stood /
Still, deathly tired – over the blue-black / Fjord
and City hung Blood and Tongues of Fire / My
Friends walked on – I remained behind / –
shivering with Anxiety – I felt the great Scream in
Nature – EM"

– The artist's hand-painted inscription on the
frame of the present work (pictured pg. 4)



As the defining image of the Expressionist movement, *The Scream* stands as a pivotal work in the history of art. Munch created the image in the mid-1890s as the central element of his celebrated Frieze of Life series. The powerfully-rendered, blood-red sky presents the viewer with the reality of Munch's experience at the moment he is gripped by anxiety in the hills above Oslo. Like his Dutch contemporary Vincent van Gogh, Munch's desire was to paint a new form of reality rooted in psychological experience, rather than visual. It is this projection of Munch's mental state that was so artistically innovative – a landscape of the mind, whose impact is still felt in the art of today.

An icon of global visual culture, *The Scream* is instantly recognizable – from Beijing to Moscow to New York. Since its creation at the turn of the 20th century, the provocative work has only gained relevance and impact over time. The haunting composition stands as the visual embodiment of modern anxiety and existential dread, referenced by everyone from Andy Warhol to *The Simpsons*. Edvard Munch and *The Scream* have been the subject of countless books, scholarly articles, films and museum exhibitions.

Munch created four versions of *The Scream*. The prime example, worked in 1893 from tempera and crayon on board, is in the National Gallery of Norway; another pastel version from the same year is thought to be a preliminary sketch for the work, and is owned by the Munch Museum in Oslo; the present work from the Olsen Collection, created in 1895 from pastel on board, most closely follows the prime composition in the National Gallery; and a later version in tempera and oil on board, thought to be completed in 1910, is also in the collection of the Munch Museum. In addition, Munch created a lithograph of the image in 1895, which helped initiate the process of its mass proliferation.

Of the four versions of the work, the present *The Scream* is distinguished in several remarkable ways: it is the most colorful and vibrant of the four; the only version whose original frame was hand-painted by the artist to include his poem detailing the work's inspiration (pictured pg. 4); and the only version in which one of the two figures in the background turns to look outward onto the

cityscape. This version has never before been on public view in either the UK or US, except briefly in the National Gallery in Washington D.C. decades ago.

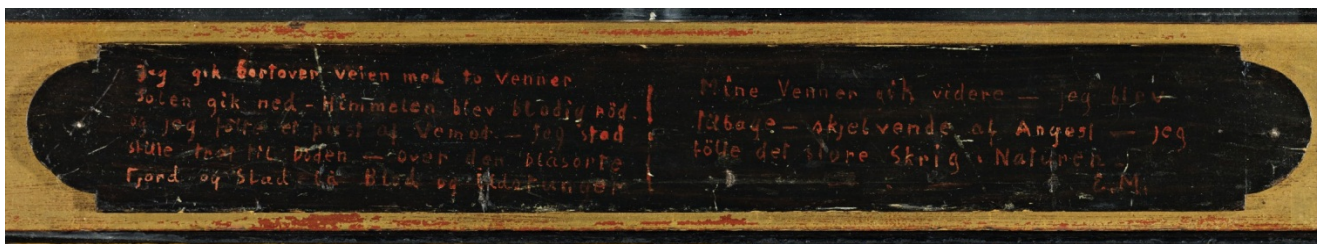
The Scream has been in the collection of the Olsen family for over 70 years. Thomas Olsen (pictured pg. 4), scion of the great ship-owning dynasty, was a collector and supporter of Munch from the late 1920s. Olsen and the artist were neighbors at Hvitsten in Norway, where the young businessman's role grew from friend to patron and eventually to protector of his works.

After Hitler rose to power, Munch found himself among the artists whose work was declared degenerate by the Nazi regime and his works were stripped from the collections of the great federal and state galleries across Germany. Olsen was instrumental in rescuing 74 of these de-accessioned art works from Germany, thus saving them from probable destruction. Of the Munch works that Olsen successfully rescued from the Nazis, he presented Tate Britain with Munch's *The Sick Child* and the Oslo City Hall with *The Tree of Life*, both in 1939, because after conversing with Munch he knew that the artist felt the need of recognition in Western Europe, especially so after the advent of Hitler. Before Olsen and his family fled Norway for Great Britain in May 1940, he transported his collection – including the present work – to Vaagaa in central Norway, where it was stored in a neighbor's hay barn until Norway's liberation in 1945.



Thomas Olsen
(1897 – 1969)

The Scream's cultural resonance has been underscored further by two high-profile thefts. In 1994, at the start of the Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway, two thieves entered the National Gallery of Norway and fled with the museum's 1893 version of *The Scream*. A successful sting operation brought the work back to the museum later that year, unharmed. A decade later, masked gunmen stole Munch's 1910 version of *The Scream* as well as his *Madonna* from the Munch Museum, also in Oslo. Both works were recovered two years later, and were back on exhibition in 2008.



The artist's hand-painted inscription on the frame of the present work

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