

Press Release Paris

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Sotheby's to Offer One of the Greatest French Interior Scenes in Private Hands: NICOLAS LANCRET'S *WINTER*

From the celebrated *Four Seasons* series
— Last Seen In Public In 1889 —



Nicolas Lancret
Winter
Estimate \$1.5/ 2 million

Exhibition in Paris from 10 to 13 September
Auction in New York on 1 February 2018

PARIS, 12 September 2017 – Sotheby's is delighted to unveil Nicolas Lancret's *L'Hiver* (*Winter*), which will be exhibited publically for the first time in nearly 130 years in Paris before it is offered in our auction of Master Paintings on 1 February 2018 in New York

(estimate \$1.5/2 million). Known only from a black and white engraving, this early masterpiece of 1719- 21 has remained in the same collection since 1889 and is one of the most important discoveries of Lancret's work in recent history.

The painting is part of a cycle of *Four Seasons* commissioned directly From Lancret by the French diplomat Jean-François Lériget de la Faye at a momentous point in the young artist's career. While these works still exhibit the influence of his mentor, Antoine Watteau, their magnificent quality undoubtedly helped to establish Lancret's name as an independent master. Voluminous, sweeping fabrics fall softly on his figures' bodies and capture light in a way that exudes movement and gesture. With a transparency achieved through the application of refined glazes, Lancret conveys the nonchalant, voluptuous elegance of a winter's afternoon where time stands still.

In addition to its allegorical subject, *Winter* is one of the earliest known depictions of a *Régence* interior. Following the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the Baroque style associated with the King's regime fell out of favor with the aristocracy, who shifted their taste towards more intimate settings after the turbulence of his reign. Interiors were decorated with a more harmonious, feminine style featuring curved lines, damask fabric wall panels, and delicate, airy furniture. Lancret's drawing room in *Winter* shows a home in transition between these two eras: the stiff backs of the chairs and heavy tapestry that covers the table echo the previous Louis-XIV style, while the wall hangings, sinuous picture frames and curved lighting elements embrace the new *Régence* look.

Lériget de la Faye, who commissioned the four paintings, was a highly regarded French diplomat and distinguished connoisseur of the arts, and his support of the young Lancret was immeasurably important to the artist's early career. Upon Lériget's death, his heir sold the *Four Seasons*, where they entered the collection of the architect Pierre Vigné, called Vigné de Vigny. They were sold subsequently as one lot in his 1773 sale to the art dealer Louis-François Mettra; at some point thereafter, they were separated. *Spring* and *Summer* were acquired by the Empress Catherine the Great of Russia via the dealer Klostermann in 1782 and remain in the State Hermitage Museum. The location of *Autumn* during the 19th century is unknown, but it was recorded in the collection of Baron Edmond James de Rothschild (1845-1934) by 1924 and was later in the collection of the Homeland Foundation in Wethersfield House (Millbrook, New York) assembled by the American collector Chauncey Stillman.

By the 1880s, *Winter* was in the collection of the leading copper industrialist Pierre-Eugène Secrétan (1836-1899), who in the 1870s, famously donated 60,000 kilos of copper sheets to make the Statue of. After the copper crash of 1889, Secrétan staged an elaborate sale of his extensive art collection with the gallerist Charles Sedelmeyer, producing catalogues in French as well as English in order to attract both local and American bidders. This auction was the last public appearance of *Winter* until now; it was purchased at the Secrétan sale by a private collector and has remained in his family's collection until the present day.

AUCTION & EXHIBITION CALENDAR

PARIS
10-13 SEPTEMBER

HONG KONG
28 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER

LOS ANGELES
24-26 OCTOBER

LONDON
1-7 DECEMBER

NEW YORK
25 JANUARY – 1 FEBRUARY
Auction on 1 February 2018

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium and are net of any fees paid to the purchaser where the purchaser provided an irrevocable bid.

Images are available upon request

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