

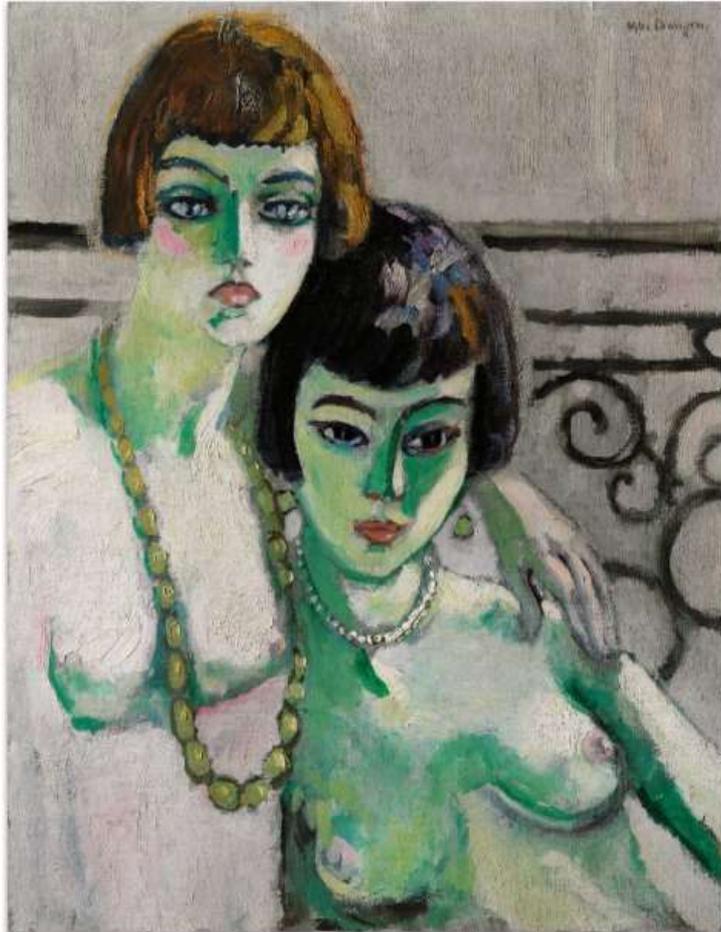
# Sotheby's

Press release Paris

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## Impressionist and Modern Art 23 March 2018



Kees Van Dongen, *Les Amies* (Estimate: €1,200,000-1,800,000)

**MODIGLIANI – VAN DONGEN –  
PISSARRO – LEGER**

**THE COLLECTION OF PHILIPPE BEMBERG**

**Paris, 12 March 2018:** Sotheby's will organise three sales during the week dedicated to Impressionist and Modern Art : Works on Paper (22 March), the collection of Arthur Brandt collection Part II (24 March), and Impressionist and Modern Art (22 March). This week is proposing a top-quality selection including the ***Portrait inachevé de Paul Alexandre* (Estimate: €1,800,000-2,500,000) by Amedeo Modigliani** – for the first time at auction –. Hitherto on loan to the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, this superb portrait had remained in the model's family until now.

## Modigliani and Paul Alexandre: an extraordinary relationship



The sale of the ***Portrait inachevé de Paul Alexandre* (Estimate: €1,800,00-2,500,00)**, painted in 1913, together with two drawings, also of Paul Alexandre, which had remained in the model's family until now, is an opportunity to pay tribute to the remarkable career of this visionary collector, who played a key role in launching Modigliani as an artist.

They met in November 1907, in the legendary Montmartre house in Rue Delta given over to young artists by Paul Alexandre and his brother Jean. A deep friendship grew up between the two men from the outset. Paul Alexandre was not only Modigliani's friend and confidant, but also provided his only financial support, buying hundreds of drawings and several major paintings in the space of a few years.

The ***Portrait inachevé de Paul Alexandre*** is one of a series of five portraits. This one, unfinished, is striking for its incredibly modernism, which sets it apart in Modigliani's output and shows how the painter's work already contained the seeds of every innovation in 20<sup>th</sup> century art.

Rarely exhibited in public, apart from a few prestigious exhibitions, in Korea and more recently at the Jewish Museum in New York (*Modigliani Unmasked*), this portrait is thus a revelation to viewers, shedding new light on the first works the artist produced in Paris.



## An ode to the flighty Roaring Twenties

Apart from this portrait now making its first appearance at auction, the selection features two works by **Kees Van Dongen**, *Les Amies* and *Portrait de Femme Assise*, painted during the 1920s (dubbed the "Cocktail age" by critics), when Van Dongen was a prominent figure in high society Paris.

*"I passionately love the life of my own time, so animated, so frenzied. [...] Yes, I love things that shine, precious stones that sparkle, fabric that shimmers, beautiful women that inspire carnal desire... and painting gives me complete possession of all of that, for what I paint is often the obsessive realisation of a dream or a fixation."* Van Dongen's words seem to directly echo the present painting, *Les Amies*, emblematic of the works produced by the painter in the 1920s, a decade qualified as the "Cocktail Epoch" by commentators of the period.

An ode to the light-hearted and hedonistic atmosphere of Paris in this era, ***Les Amies* (Estimate: €1,200,00-1,800,00)**, embodies the artist's feminine ideal. Already, a few years earlier, critics praised Van Dongen's talent in depicting women: "The women he paints [...] are deeply moving with their disturbing charm, the feline suppleness of their limbs, the provocative beauty of their forms and the mystery of their gaze. Van Dongen's art irresistibly attracts us because it is charged with passion and ardent sensuality. The voluptuous call of certain figures make us shake to the depths of our being." (in *Montparnasse*, issue of June 20th 1914).

When Van Dongen moved into a private mansion in Rue Juliette-Lamber, he held endless parties, eagerly attended by the whole of Paris high society. ***Portrait de femme assise* (Estimate: €600,000-800,000)** perfectly embodies this period of fashionable effervescence. The young elegant woman – probably Madame Dubonnet – is depicted here in a monumental format, in evening dress and enveloped in a sumptuous fur coat. As in his most famous works, the painter skillfully uses the electric lighting to sculpt the body and face of the female model, evocative of theatre lighting. The present painting demonstrates the painter's remarkable mastery of colour and material effects. The fauve colours of his beginnings have here given way to a more measured palette but the spontaneous brushwork and the originality of the green carnations are radically modern, testifying to the artist's continual innovation.



## Great masters of Modern Art

Other key names in 20<sup>th</sup> century art will also be in the spotlight at this sale. **Fernand Léger** is represented by a magisterial 1930 composition, *La Carte postale* (Estimate: €1,00,000-1,500,000), featuring human figures combined with with elements of the natural world, while works by **Auguste Herbin**, **Georges Valmier** and **Jacques Lipchitz** highlight the Cubist and geometric aesthetic.



## A family of patrons supporting artists The Collection of Philippe Bemberg

We can also mention an exceptional group of works from the **Collection of Philippe Bemberg**. The ten outstanding works Sotheby's is delighted to be presenting are a remarkable illustration of the collection built up over many years by the Bembergs, a family of German industrialists who loved art and French culture.



It contains major works by some of the key artists of Impressionism and the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde, like **Félix Vallotton**, **Edouard Vuillard**, **André Derain** and **Camille Pissarro** – including his *Le Pont royal, après-midi, temps couvert* (Estimate: €1,000,000-1,500,000). In this iconic work, the sky and water play an important role. The painter, at the peak of his mastery of the impressionist technique, captures the different light effects and the complex atmosphere of a

cloudy Parisian afternoon. He focuses on the details of urban life, portraying the Morris columns, carriages and passersby on the Quai Voltaire and the Pont Royal with precise brushstrokes. The perspective offered by the elevated hotel room plays a crucial role, as in all the series of Parisian scenes, the lines of the quays are intersected by the bridges and takes up again by the trees of the Tuileries Gardens..

## **Impressionist and Modern Art**

Exhibition from 17 to 22 March

Auction on **23 March**

## **Works on Paper**

Exhibition from 17 to 21 March

Auction on **22 March**

## **Arthur Brandt Collection**

### **Part II**

Exhibition from 17 to 23 March

Auction on **24 March**

(See dedicated press release)

*\*Estimates do not include the buyer's premium, and prices consist of the hammer price and the buyer's premium*

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