

Archaeology & Middle East Arts
HENRY DE MONTHERLANT'S
DREAMED ANTIQUITY

Auction on 7th November 2017 at 3:30pm, in Paris



Masque dit « de Conflans », from a military helmet, Roman art, 1st-2nd century, bronze, previous Henry de Montherlant collection, estimate: €60 000 - 80 000 / \$66 000 - 88 000

Exhibition

From Friday 3rd to Monday 6th November 2017

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Paris – On 7th November 2017, Artcurial will organize its second auction of the year dedicated to archaeology and to Middle east arts. This sale will be led by a collection of antiques with a prestigious provenance: that of the French writer Henry de Montherlant (1895-1972). Looking back to ancient times, the writer had a close embodiment of ideal culture and values that struck his imagination, and fuelled his work. For him, these values were embodied in these ancient sculptures that he loved to collect. 38 of his Roman and Greek statues will be auctioned. They were a part of the decor of his Parisian apartment.

The ensemble includes Greco-Roman marbles, such as a female statue representing a nymph or a Diana huntress estimate: €100,000 – 120,000/ \$110,000 – 132,000) or *Grande tête de Déméter* (estimate €60,000 – 80,000/ \$66,000 – 88,000) alongside important Roman bronzes such as a military masque discovered in Conflans (estimate: 60,000 – 80,000 € / 66,000 – 88,000 \$).

Furthermore, the auction will present a monumental Egyptian granodiorite Sphinx, glasses and bronzes from the Shlomo Moussaieff collection as well as important tiles in the chapter devoted to Islamic arts.

« The dispersion of the Henry de Montherlant collection highlights his passion for Antiquity, thanks in particular to significant pieces, including the Conflans bronze masque.

In 1954, the writer expressed the wish to be buried with this mask. The Department of Cultural Affairs refused to grant his last wish.»

Mathilde Neuve-Eglise, specialist



Selection of artworks from Henry de Montherlant's collection

Archaeology & Middle East Arts department, Artcurial

Henry de Montherlant, A passion for Antiquity

Henry de Montherlant, born on 21st April 1895 in Paris, is a passionate writer from the age of seven. As an only, much loved and pampered child, he receives a rigorous religious education. In 1904, the book *Quo Vadis?* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, depicting a love story between the patrician Marcus Vinicius and Christian Callina, sparks his desire to become a writer. This novel will deeply mark his life and will provide him with the themes that he will address frequently in his work such as friendship, Rome and suicide. He reads Barrès, Nietzsche and Plutarch, works in which Henry de Montherlant finds an ideal of courage and ancient virtues.

The First World War erupts, the writer is assigned to the intelligence service. In 1919, he becomes "secrétaire général de l'Œuvre de l'Ossuaire de Douaumont". Impressed by the example of the Homer's Greeks who proclaim that when fighting they will not retain any hatred for the enemy, he will remain faithful to the values of respect for the opponent in combat his entire life. He wishes for the ossuary to be dedicated to the glory of mankind. Patriot without being a nationalist, he describes in *Le Songe*, published in 1922, the courage and the friendship of combatants. In 1924, *Chant funèbre pour les morts de Verdun* is published, where he compares the values of war, that the soldiers live on the field of battle, to those of the peace.

In 1925, he leaves for ten years of travel in the Mediterranean; in Italy, North Africa and Spain where he becomes an avid bullfighting spectator. In addition, as early as the 1940's, the theatre takes an important place in his work. Among his most famous plays: *La Reine morte*, *Fils de personne* and *Malatesta*. In 1960, he was elected to the French Academy, without even having submitted candidacy, given André Siegfried's seat. At the age of 77, blind and paralysed, Henry de Montherlant commits suicide on 21st September 1972. His ashes will be scattered in Rome on the Forum and in the River Tiber.

Writer and passionate about by the Antiquity, Henry de Montherlant constituted a collection of antiques throughout his life, symbols of the values that he held dear and that he transcribed in his works. According to testimonials, his Parisian residence resembled a museum. Among the forty antiques that Artcurial will disperse on November 7th will include the following Hellenistic inspiration marbles: a female statue representing a nymph or a Diana huntress (estimate: €100,000 – 120,000/ \$110,000 – 132,000) or *Tête de femme* (estimate: €40,000 – 50,000/ \$44,000 – 55,000).

The Roman period will present a child's bust or a marble funeral urn, and the bronze Conflans Masque representing the frontal piece of a parade or burial military helmet. Discovered in Meurthe-et-Moselle in 1908, it is one of the most momentous discoveries of Roman archaeology in the East. In 1954, Henry de Montherlant announces on television that he has this Roman mask in his possession and wishes to carry it to his grave, placed on his face. After his suicide in 1972, Lorrain archaeologists mobilize against his wish, to save this archaeological gem from oblivion. His dying wish is refused (estimate: €150,000 – 200,000/ \$165,000 – 220,000).



Henry de Montherlant in his Parisian residence, surrounded by his works © DR



Female statue representing a nymph or a Diana huntress, Hellenistic period, marble, forme collection Henry de Montherlant, estimate: 200 000 - 300 000 € / 220 000 - 330 000 \$



Tête de femme, Roman period, 2nd century BC, marble, previously in the Henry de Montherlant collection, estimate : €40,000 - 50,000/ \$44,000 - 55,000



Photography of the Masque de Conflans by Brassai © DR

Egyptian and Islamic art

A monumental Egyptian granodiorite sphinx will complete this auction. A fine example of the Ptolemaic period, this sphinx was purchased in 1986 by eminent gallerist Heidi Vollmoeller (1916 - 2004) and has remained in the same family since.

Islamic art will also be represented by a tile covered in Kufic inscriptions, dating from 1st quarter of the 13th century. This significant tile comes from the former Hakky Bey collection dispersed in Paris in 1906. The technique of metallic lustre allowed ceramists to recreate the effect of precious metals (estimate: €14,000–16,000/\$15,400 – 17,600).



Significant lustred epigraphic tile, Kashan, Ilkhanid art, early 13th century, provenance: previous Hakky Bey collection, estimate: €14,000 - 16,000/ \$15,400 - 17,600

ABOUT ARTCURIAL

Founded in 2002, Artcurial, a multidisciplinary auction house based in Paris, reinforcing its leading position in the market of the international art in 2016. With 3 sale venues in Paris, Monte-Carlo and Hong Kong, the House totals 210.1 million euros in sales volume in 2016, doubling its turnover in 5 years (+10% compared to 2015).

It covers the whole spectrum of major specialties: Beaux-Arts to decorative arts, collector automobiles, jewellery, collector timepieces, fine wines and spirits... Resolutely turned toward the international market, Artcurial asserts its network abroad with representation offices in Brussels, Milan, Monte-Carlo, Munich and Vienna as well as a presence in Beijing and Tel Aviv, and biannual exhibitions in New York. In October 2015, Artcurial organised its first sale in Hong Kong and in Morocco.



HD photos upon request

Dollar estimate provided for information purposes only

Catalogues available on line at www.artcurial.com

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