

MOBILE

Sotheby's slips into consumers' pockets with new mobile app

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Sotheby's app logo

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International auction house Sotheby's is writing its next chapter with the launch of a mobile application for iPhone and iPad.

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The multinational corporation was established more than 270 years ago and continues to thrive, indicating a willingness to adapt to changes technological and otherwise, with the app being merely the latest step. An increased mobile presence is a necessary step in connecting with an increasingly mobile audience.

Digital witness

The homepage for Sotheby's app mirrors the Web site's landing page. It includes a series of recent articles or auction announcements on the top half of the screen, with links to full pages for upcoming auctions on the bottom half.

In addition to the homepage, the app includes tabs for "Stories", "Lots" and "Auctions." Stories is divided into articles, videos and slideshows; Lots is broken up into eras or types such as 20th century design, 19th century European paintings, Chinese works of art and more; Auctions lists the time, date, location and category, with a list of lots available on click through.

The app launched on the iTunes store on March 10. For comparison, auctioneer Christie's current app was first developed in 2009 and released version 5.0.3 on Jan. 5.

However, in December Sotheby's became the first major auction house to have an app for Apple TV. The brand broke new ground by partnering with the auto industry to auction off classic cars and offers five different channels through the app ([see story](#)).

While the Apple TV app is geared toward the young, generally affluent cord-cutting demographic, a mobile app is conducive to Internet-browsing habits that, while particularly pronounced among millennials, extends across all consumer segments.

Furthermore, Sotheby's has been proactive in adapting to the digital age in other ways. Last September, the auction house partnered with the Web-based platform Artsy for an online-only auction ([see story](#)).



Sotheby's app homepage

Prior to that, the brand has worked with eBay, further showcasing their digital marketing capabilities ([see story](#)).

Because many fine art auctions take place in-person, in part due to the works being offered, auction houses have a difficult task in escorting consumers down the purchase funnel and getting them into auctions. A strong mobile presence is an important part of reaching out, and having lots and upcoming auctions plainly visible will likely further boost interest.

The Sotheby's app can be downloaded for free from the [Apple App Store](#).

The times they are a-changin'

Although many auctions do not take place online, those in the ecommerce world of art sales are seeing rapid growth.

Christie's, for instance, has been investing in digital art sales for the past few years.

In 2014, the brand saw a 60 percent increase in digital art sales, and understanding the sales patterns of the previous year can allow Christie's to use past results to look toward and improve their future. The big increase evidenced a consumer trend toward digital sales even in sectors that at first glance would seem more resistant, and the tide has only continued to turn in that direction ([see story](#)).

With these changes also comes a change in the interest consumers have in different types of art. Accordingly, Sotheby's began the year by bolstering the talent at the top of its organization through the acquisition of art advisory firm Art Agency Partners.

With this more than \$50 million investment, Sotheby's is making the three managing partners behind AAP part of its team reporting directly to Sotheby's CEO Tad Smith, incorporating their expertise in areas such as private sales, estate planning and art investment. Sotheby's says this represents the first step in the realization of Mr. Smith's

strategy for the company, following the executive's appointment in March 2015 ([see story](#)).

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