

ART AND ENTERTAINMENT

Christie's sale of rediscovered da Vinci to fetch \$100M

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Exterior of Christie's New York auction house. Image credit: Christie's

By JEN KING

Auction house Christie's has been entrusted with the sale of the last-known painting by Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci still in private hands.

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On Nov. 15, during the auction house's Evening Sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art at its New York headquarters, bidders will have the opportunity to bid on da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" painting. Dated to around 1500, Salvator Mundi is one of fewer than 20 known paintings by da Vinci, and the only one in private hands as the rest are already in international museums collections.

"Salvator Mundi is a painting of the most iconic figure in the world by the most important artist of all time," said Loic Gouzer, chairman, Post-War and Contemporary Art at **Christie's**, New York. "The opportunity to bring this masterpiece to the market is an honor that comes around once in a lifetime.

"Despite being created approximately 500 years ago, the work of Leonardo is just as influential to the art that is being created today as it was in the 15th and 16th centuries," he said. "We felt that offering this painting within the context of our Post-War and Contemporary Evening Sale is a testament to the during relevance of this picture."

Lost and found

Prior to the Nov. 15 auction, Christie's will present the Salvator Mundi painting in exhibitions in Hong Kong, San Francisco, London and New York. Christie's presentation of the rediscovered da Vinci will be the first time the painting has been on view in Asia and the Americas.

Completed around 1500, Salvator Mundi, or Savior of the World, is an oil on panel painting of Christ, who is dressed in robes. In his left hand, the Christ figure holds a crystal orb and raises his right hand in benediction.

The first recording of da Vinci's Salvator Mundi was a register of the Royal Collection of King Charles I of England. The oil on panel painting is thought to have been hung in the private rooms of King Charles I's wife Henrietta Maria at her palace in Greenwich.



Salvator Mundi by Leonard da Vinci will be auctioned at Christie's Nov. 15. Image credit: Sotheby's

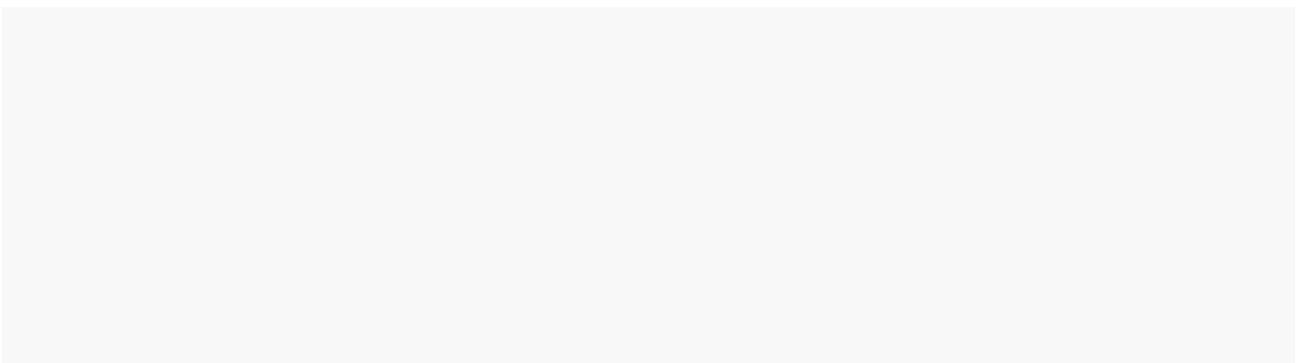
Later, the painting was in the collection of King Charles. In 1763, Salvator Mundi was recorded in a sale by the illegitimate son of the Duke of Buckingham, Charles Herbert Sheffield. The painting was a lot in the auction that sold Buckingham Palace to the king.

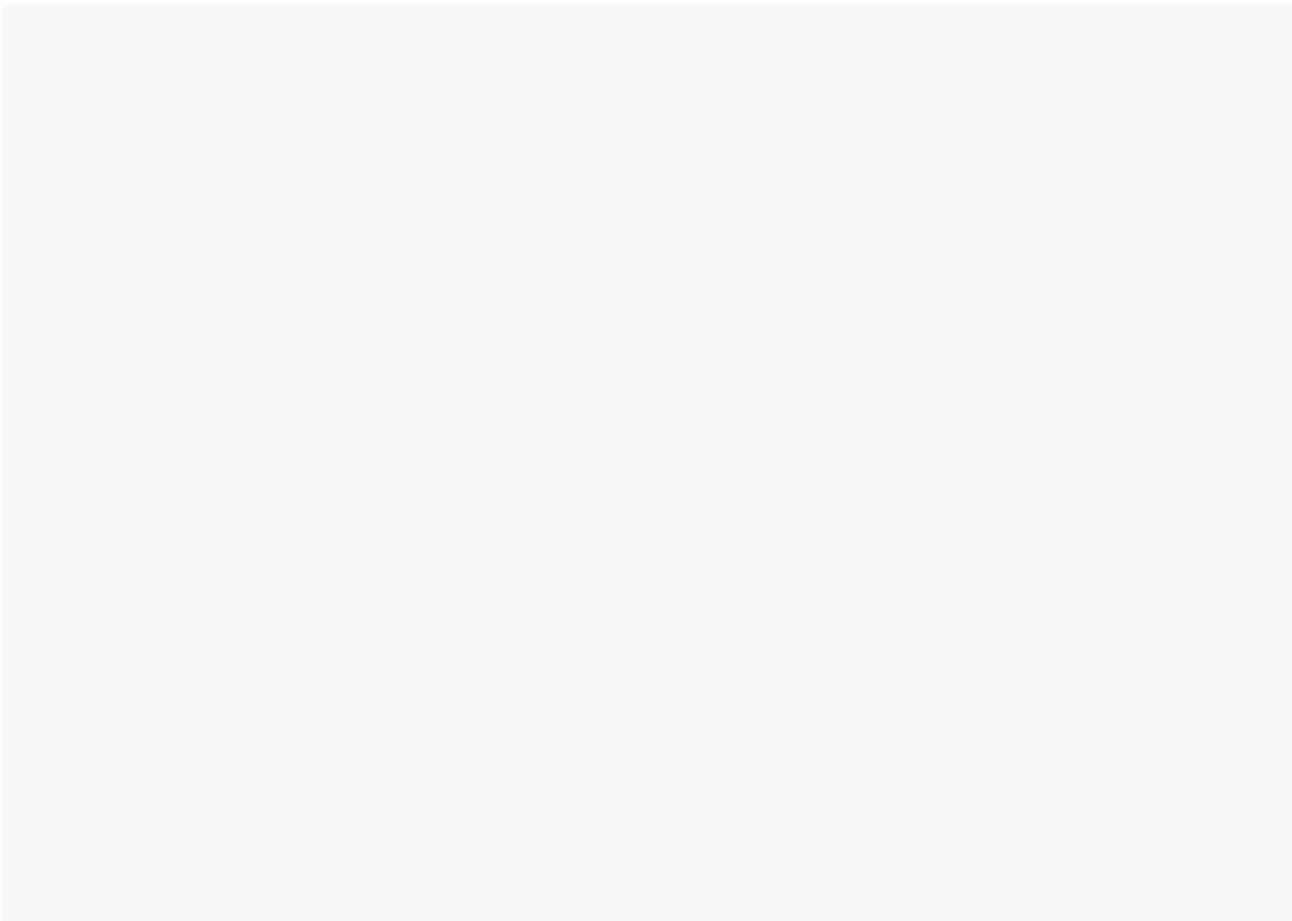
The painting's whereabouts between 1763 and 1900 are unknown.

In 1900, it was acquired by Sir Charles Robinson as a work by da Vinci's follower, Bernardino Luini, for the Cook Collection at Doughty House, Richmond. When Sir Charles acquired the painting, its history had been forgotten and Christ's face and hair were overpainted.

Then in 1958, the Cook Collection consigned the painting to auctioneers Sotheby's where it sold for 45 pounds, or about \$1,000 in 2017. Once again, Salvator Mundi disappeared until re-emerging in 2005 when purchased by an American estate at a regional auction house.

Starting in 2005, the painting underwent six years of research and inquiry to document its authenticity as a lost work of da Vinci. In 2011, Salvator Mundi was publicly unveiled at London's National Gallery during the "Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan" exhibit.





We are honoured to announce the greatest artistic rediscovery of the 21st Century, Salvator Mundi by Leonardo da Vinci to be offered in our Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening sale this November in New York. . This one of fewer than 20 paintings by the great master known to exist and is the last left in private hands. The work depicts a half-length picture of Christ as Savior of the World holding a crystal sphere in his left hand and offering benediction with his right. Find out more via link in bio. . Leonardo da Vinci, Salvator Mundi, oil on panel, 25 7/8 x 18 in. . Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale - 15 November at Christie's New York . #LeonardodaVinci #daVinci #oldmaster #rediscovery #art #artist #christies20thcentury #SalvatorMundi

A post shared by CHRISTIE'S (@christiesinc) on Oct 10, 2017 at 10:19am PDT

Due to the historical significance of the painting, Christie's estimates put Salvator Mundi's sale price in the region of \$100 million.

"The Salvator Mundi is the Holy Grail of old master paintings," said Alan Wintermute, senior specialists, old master paintings at Christie's, in a statement. "Long-known to have existed, and long-sought after, it seemed just a tantalizingly unobtainable dream until now.

"To see a fully finished, late masterpiece by Leonardo, made at the peak of his genius, appear for sale in 2017 is as close as I've ever come to an art world miracle," he said. "It has been more than a century since the last such painting turned up and this opportunity will not come again in our lifetime."

On the auction block

Contemporary artwork also fetches high prices at auction.

In May, for example, auction house Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sale in New York included a record-breaking work by Jean-Michel Basquiat.

After a 10-minute battle for the artwork, the Brooklyn-born artist's "Untitled" painting from 1982 was sold for \$110.5 million, fetching the highest price for any work post-1980 at auction. The buyer, Japanese ecommerce entrepreneur Yusaku Maezawa, plans to include the painting in his museum ([see story](#)).

Beyond art, auctions have been breaking records in other categories, driven partly by increased bidding audiences

thanks to digital channels.

Sotheby's sold the most-valuable earrings ever auctioned for \$51 million.

The pair of earrings were sold at Sotheby's Geneva auction where 400 pieces of jewelry were sold totaling more than \$150 million. The earrings, Apollo Blue and Artemis Pink, are a 14.5 carat blue diamond and a 16 carat pink diamond, respectively ([see story](#)).

Sales of this calibre always cause a media sensation, but the excited press gets consumers amped ahead of the auction.

"It is an honor to be entrusted with the sale of this mystical masterpiece," said Francois de Poortere, head of old master paintings at Christie's. "After centuries of hiding, da Vinci's Christ as Salvator Mundi stirred unmatched sensation in the art world when it was unveiled on the walls of London's National Gallery in 2011.

"We look forward to creating a similar sensation at Christie's sites worldwide over the next month, as we share what many call the 'Male Mona Lisa' – with our global community of collectors, art historians and the public," he said.

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