

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## Leonardo da Vinci work breaks art auction records

November 16, 2017



Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" was on exhibition leading up to the sale. Image credit: Christie's

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By STAFF REPORTS

Christie's has sold a rare work by Leonardo da Vinci for \$450 million, making the painting the most expensive piece of art sold at auction.

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Da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" is one of less than 20 remaining works by the artist, creating a buzz of interest around the painting. Hailed as the "Male Mona Lisa," the painting sparked an almost 20-minute bidding war that led to a sale that far exceeded estimates.

Going, going, gone

Christie's was entrusted with the sale of the last-known painting by Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci still in private hands. Completed around 1500, Salvator Mundi, or Savior of the World in English, is an oil on panel painting of Christ, who is dressed in robes ([see story](#)).

Leading up to Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale on Nov. 15, the auction house hosted exhibitions of the Da Vinci painting in London, Hong Kong, San Francisco and New York. Almost 30,000 visitors made their way to see the painting, with lines wrapping around Christie's exhibition spaces.

Around 1,000 collectors, dealers, advisors, press and bystanders attended the New York sale, with thousands tuning in via a live stream.



*Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi." Image credit: Christie's*

The da Vinci painting was estimated at about \$100 million. In reality, the painting fetched \$450,312,500.

Prior to this sale, the most expensive artwork sold at auction was Pablo Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger (Version O)," which was sold for \$179 million. The highest price at auction for previous da Vinci sales was \$11.5 million, when Christie's sold his "Horse and Rider" in 2001.

"It is every auctioneer's ambition to sell a Leonardo and likely the only chance I will ever have," said Jussi Pykkänen, global president of Christie's, who presided over the sale. "It's the pinnacle of my career so far.

"It is also wonderful for an Old Master to be at the center of such attention," he said. "The excitement from the public for this work of art has been overwhelming and hugely heartening."

The Nov. 15 auction also included a number of other large sales. Andy Warhol's "Sixty Last Suppers" reached \$60.9 million, while Cy Twombly's "Untitled" was sold for \$46.4 million.

Christie's auction achieved a total \$785,942,250 in sales.

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