

## The Latest Market Trends in Impressionist & Modern Art May 2017, New York

The much-anticipated May 2017 evening auctions of Impressionist and Modern Art, followed immediately in the same week by Contemporary Art, brought many surprises—mostly positive—new trends in auction house strategy and questions about how the auction houses and market will proceed.

### AUCTION SUMMARY

<p><b><u>Christie's, May 15, 2017:</u></b></p> <p><u>Impressionist &amp; Modern Art Evening Sale</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sale total: <b>\$289,178,500</b></li> <li>- % sold by lot: <b>78%</b> (43/55 lots)</li> <li>- % sold at a <b>hammer price above the high estimate: 18%</b> (10/55)</li> <li>- % sold at a <b>hammer price within the estimates: 36%</b> (20/55)</li> <li>- % sold at a <b>hammer price below the low estimate: 24%</b> (13/55)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Sotheby's, May 16, 2017:</u></b></p> <p><u>Impressionist &amp; Modern Art Evening Sale</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sale total: <b>\$173,840,000</b></li> <li>- % sold by lot: <b>72%</b> (36/50 lots)</li> <li>- % sold at a <b>hammer price above the high estimate: 16%</b> (8/50)</li> <li>- % sold at a <b>hammer price within the estimates: 30%</b> (15/50)</li> <li>- % sold at a <b>hammer price below the low estimate: 26%</b> (13/50)</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Christie's, May 17, 2017:</u></b></p> <p><u>Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sale total: <b>\$448,062,000</b></li> <li>- % sold by lot: <b>96%</b> (68/71 lots)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Sotheby's, May 18, 2017:</u></b></p> <p><u>Contemporary Art Evening Sale</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sale total: <b>\$319,199,000</b></li> <li>- % sold by lot: <b>96%</b> (48/50 lots)</li> </ul>

### Christie's Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale

Christie's launched the May 2017 sale week with a solid sale of 55 works of Impressionist and Modern Art totaling \$289 million, their strongest sale in the category in seven years. The auction was led by a rare and very fine Brancusi sculpture, *La muse endormie*, for which a third-party guarantee was secured shortly before the sale. After a prolonged bidding war between at least eight parties, the work sold to former Sotheby's auctioneer Tobias Meyer for \$57 million, a new auction record for the artist, which vastly exceeded its high estimate of \$35 million. The evening's second highest price was achieved by Picasso's 1939 painting of Dora Maar, *Femme assise, robe bleue*, which sold for \$45 million, representing an impressive profit for the seller, Dimitri Mavrommatis, who acquired the work from Christie's in 2011 for \$29 million.



Other works were also energetically pursued, including some mediocre examples, such as Picasso, *Femme assise dans un fauteuil* from 1920, which brought \$30.5 million (estimate \$20-30m) and Braque, *Le Guéridon* from 1911, which earned \$10.1 million (estimate \$4-6m).

Braque, *Le Guéridon*

Ultimately, 12 lots, 22% of the sale, failed to sell leading to an ordinary 78% sell-through rate. Unsold were lesser examples of School of Paris artists, such as Soutine and a Brancusi work on paper, and B-quality Impressionist works by Degas, Renoir, Pissarro and Cassatt, which may have been better placed in the day sale.

Seven works were guaranteed by third parties or by Christie's. With the exception of Monet, *La route de Vétheuil, effet de neige*, which hammered at its low estimate of \$10 million almost certainly going to the guarantor, the guaranteed lots sold well, indicating profitable bets by the guarantors who partake in a negotiated share of the profits, unless they end up owning the work.

Participation from Asia was visible with Picasso, *Femme assise, robe bleue* and Monet, *La berge du Petit-Gennevilliers, soleil couchant* going home with Chinese buyers, who also bid on works by Chagall and Renoir.

### Top Lots, Christie's Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale



Brancusi  
*La muse endormie*  
Sold for:  
\$57,367,500  
Estimate: \$25-35m



Picasso  
*Femme assise, robe bleue*  
Sold for:  
\$45,047,500  
Estimate: \$35-50m



Picasso  
*Femme assise*  
Sold for:  
\$30,487,500  
Estimate: \$20-30m



Chagall  
*Les trois cieres*  
Sold for:  
\$14,583,500  
Estimate: \$8-12m



Léger  
*Nature morte*  
Sold for:  
\$11,447,500  
Estimate: \$10-15m

### Sotheby's, Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale

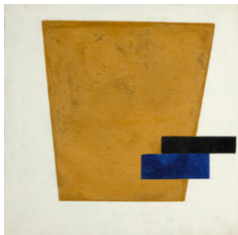
Sotheby's evening sale of Impressionist and Modern Art did surprisingly well, bringing in \$174 million, within their pre-sale estimate, adjusted for the last-minute withdrawal of their headline work, a sublime early Schiele masterpiece from 1909. The sale was led by a Suprematist painting by Kazimir Malevich from 1915 that did better than expected selling for \$21 million (estimate \$12-18m). Though it was the second highest price achieved in the sale, the muddy Monet *Le bassin aux nymphéas* (estimate \$14-18m) sold at the low, suggesting that this went to the guarantor. Max Ernst's sculpture, *Le roi jouant avec la reine* from the collection of the late Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell headed the sale's strong sculpture offerings and sold for \$16 million (estimate \$4-6m). Another cast of the work sold at auction in 2002 for \$2.4 million.

Of the sale's 50 lots, 14 carried irrevocable bids from third parties, however, at the time the catalogue was published, 10 of these were guaranteed by Sotheby's, who subsequently off-loaded the risk and upside profit share to third parties. Though this strategy helped assure Sotheby's of their reasonable but not stellar 72% sell-through rate, it meant that in the days before the sale the specialists were focused on securing irrevocable bids rather than encouraging many bids. The downside of this narrow focus was evident in the 28% buy-in rate and, further, the 26% of the sale that sold at hammer prices below the low estimate. Of the lots with irrevocable bids, three sold above their high estimate, suggesting these guarantors took home sizable payouts, but seven of the guaranteed lots sold at or below their low estimates, suggesting these guarantors wound up with art rather than cash.

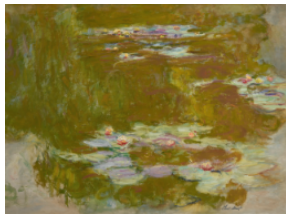
Sculpture sold well with 10 of the 11 sculptures finding buyers. Additionally, a rare library by Diego Giacometti sold for \$6.3 million (estimate \$2-3m), a new record for the artist.

Unlike at Christie's the night before, Sotheby's appeared to lack activity from China. This was partially due to the absence of Sotheby's Chairman Patti Wong who was in Geneva for the Magnificent Jewels sale taking place the same day. While the Geneva Jewelry auction sold a pair of mismatched pink and blue diamond earrings for a record \$57.4 million, the scheduling of so many major sales in the same week, given that Impressionist and Modern Art, Contemporary Art, and Jewelry used to each have their own week, and directly on the heels of New York art fairs Frieze and TEFAF, makes us wonder if the convenience of having everything viewable in such a short period, also leads to oversaturation. The depth of collectors at the tip-top of the market is thin; is it smart to spread their attention across so many buying opportunities at once?

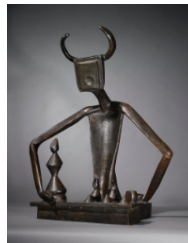
### Top Lots, Sotheby's Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale



Malevich  
*Suprematist Composition*  
Sold for:  
\$21,162,500  
Estimate: \$12-18m



Monet  
*Le bassin aux nymphéas*  
Sold for:  
\$15,987,500  
Estimate: \$14-18m



Ernst  
*Roi jouant avec la reine*  
Sold for:  
\$15,987,500  
Estimate: \$4-6m



Picasso  
*Tête d'homme*  
Sold for:  
\$10,925,000  
Estimate: \$8-12m



Giacometti  
*Buste de Diego*  
Sold for:  
\$10,925,000  
Estimate: \$10-15m

### Christie's, Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Christie's May 17 sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art totaled \$448 million—the biggest sale of the week—and sold a very impressive 96% of the 71 lots offered. Third parties guaranteed 38 lots, or 54% of the sale, and Christie's guaranteed one. Of the guaranteed lots, 25 were from the collection of Emily and Jerry Spiegel.

### Top Lots, Christie's, Post-War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale



Twombly  
*Leda and the Swan*  
Sold for:  
\$52,887,500  
Estimate: \$35-55m



Bacon  
*Three Studies - George Dyer*  
Sold for:  
\$51,767,500  
Estimate on request



Basquiat  
*La Hara*  
Sold for:  
\$34,967,500  
Estimate: \$22-28m



Lichtenstein  
*Red and White*  
Sold for:  
\$28,247,500  
Estimate: \$25-35m



Warhol  
*Big Campbell's Soup Can*  
Sold for:  
\$27,500,000  
Estimate on request

## Sotheby's, Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Sotheby's May 18 sale of Contemporary art totaled \$319 million, much better than the estimated \$212-268 million, and matched Christie's with a remarkable 96% sell-through rate. Sotheby's or third parties guaranteed 18 lots, 36% of the sale. The surprising level of success was primarily due to Basquiat, *Untitled* from 1982 selling for \$110.5 million, nearly double its unpublished estimate of \$60 million. The buyer was Japanese collector Yusaku Maezawa who has now twice paid record prices for Basquiat. He set the prior record a year ago paying \$57 million for another untitled 1982 painting.

## Top Lots, Sotheby's, Contemporary Art Evening Sale



Basquiat  
*Untitled*  
Sold for:  
\$110,487,500  
Estimate on request



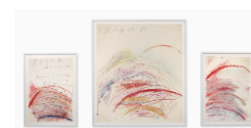
Lichtenstein  
*Nude Sunbathing*  
Sold for:  
\$24,000,000  
Estimate on request



Richter  
*Abstraktes Bild*  
Sold for:  
\$15,425,000  
Estimate: \$12-18m



Rauschenberg  
*Rigger*  
Sold for:  
\$12,275,000  
Estimate: \$8-12m



Twombly  
*Six Scintillans*  
Sold for:  
\$8,337,500  
Estimate: \$5-7m

## PRIVATE SALES

For Impressionist and Modern Art, except for the top sliver of quality, which can do exceptionally well at auction in the present market, selling privately is a safer way to assure your price, provided it is in line with the market. If you do decide to sell at auction in an evening sale, we recommend that you take a guarantee, but don't let the auction houses shop the work around too much; overexposure can dampen excitement among would-be bidders for a fresh work. Furthermore, ask that your work be placed in the first half of the sale, which tends to sell better.

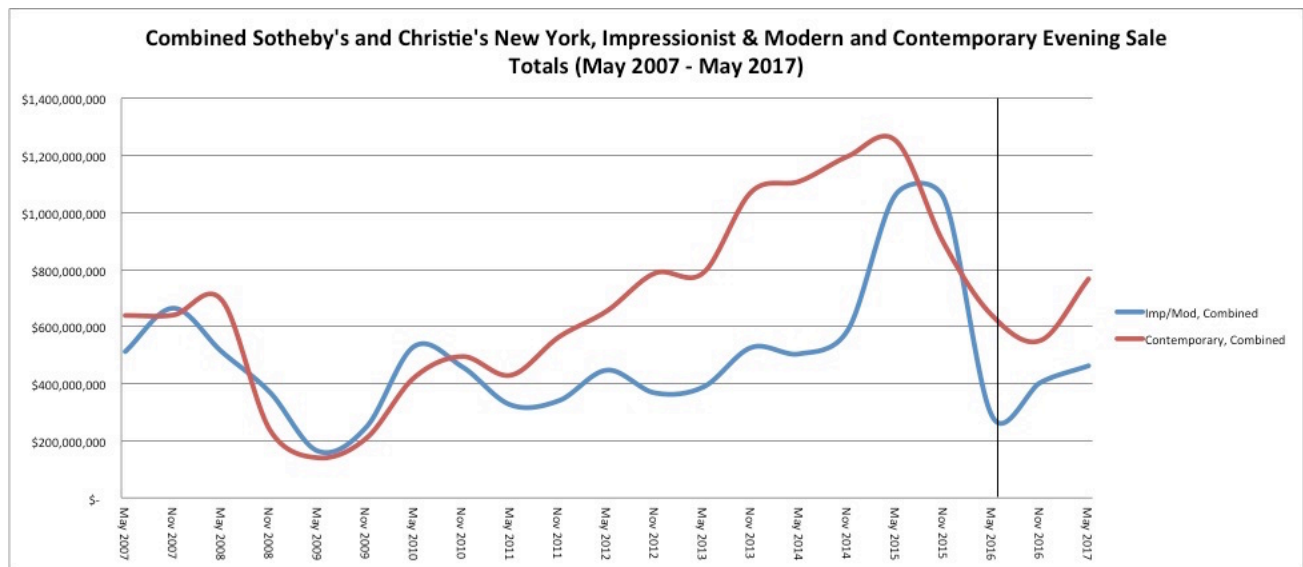
## QATAR MUSEUMS

To add to its Museum of Islamic Art, designed by I.M. Pei and its National Museum of Qatar, designed by Jean Nouvel, Qatar has just selected Pritzker Prize winning architect Alejandro Aravena and his firm, Elemental, to design the building for the Art Mill project.

More information on the following link: [HTTP://WWW.ARCHDAILY.COM/871327/ELEMENTAL-SELECTED-TO-DESIGN-ONE-OF-QATARS-LARGEST-CULTURAL-CENTERS-DOHAS-ART-MILL-ALEJANDRO-ARAVENA](http://www.archdaily.com/871327/elemental-selected-to-design-one-of-qatars-largest-cultural-centers-dohas-art-mill-alejandro-aravena)

## SALE CATEGORY COMPARISON

The market peaked in 2015, bolstered then by big guarantees and precariously slimmed margins for the auction houses. In 2016, Sotheby's and Christie's reduced promises, liabilities and sale totals, but in doing so, reset their profitability from the sales. At the same time, major global events, from the Brexit referendum to the U.S. presidential election, brought a shadow of uncertainty to the market. This season, enthusiasm was back along with coveted lots and substantial guarantees. This climate tends to boost the more speculative Contemporary segment more quickly than Impressionist and Modern Art, though both categories have climbed in value.



Source: Seydoux & Associés, 2017

## ARTICLES RELATED TO THE MAY 2017 IMPRESSIONIST & MODERN ART SALES:

<http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/2206891/christies-stellar-season-opener>

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-57-million-brancusi-leads-best-christies-impressionist-modern-sale-seven-years>

<https://nyti.ms/2rkzhzga>

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/christies-sale-gets-new-yorks-spring-auctions-off-to-a-strong-start-1494904664>

<https://news.artnet.com/market/sothebys-impressionist-modern-sale-173-million-962471>

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/sothebys-propels-auction-week-1494971200>

<http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/2212709/sothebys-solid-night>

<http://www.artmarketmonitor.com/2017/05/17/sothebys-scrambles-and-saves-its-173m-imp-mod-sale/>

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