



PRESS RELEASE - **BALTHUS À CHASSY, THE FRÉDÉRIQUE TISON COLLECTION**
SALE - **8 DECEMBER 2020, PARIS**

On 8 December, Artcurial will offer an exceptional body of work by Balthus, one of France's greatest figurative artists of the post-war period. Coming from the collection of Frédérique Tison, the artist's model and muse, these works were all kept at the Château de Chassy in Morvan. The 150 drawings, watercolours and canvases were nearly all executed at Chassy between 1953 and 1961, making this sale a significant event. It is the first time that such an important body of work by Balthus has been presented for sale.

PRESS RELEASE - **BALTHUS À CHASSY, THE FRÉDÉRIQUE TISON COLLECTION**

PARIS – On Tuesday 8 December 2020, Artcurial will present for sale « Balthus à Chassy, the Frédérique Tison collection ». Dedicated to the French figurative painter Balthasar Klossowski, known as Balthus (1908-2001), the sale comprises some 150 works including watercolours, drawings and paintings. The majority of these date from the period 1953 to 1961 when Balthus left Paris to live at the Château de Chassy in Morvan, Bourgogne. It was a place that became a backdrop for his work and influenced his subject matter and his style. Coming midway through his career, this period at Chassy remained one of the most important, the « golden age » for his painting. Balthus led a frugal but highly productive life there.

Coming directly from the estate of Frédérique Tison (1938 -2018), the artist's model and muse, this is the first time that such a large body of work by Balthus has been offered since the collection of Henriette and André Gomès was sold at auction by Francis Briest in 1997.

The collection features mainly works on paper with landscapes, still lifes, figures and interiors. The preparatory sketches for major paintings have become works of art in their own right. The artist spent years studying his subjects in order to perfect every detail of his paintings. The quantity and the detailed nature of these studies demonstrate the thoroughness of the artist's creative process, with often a multitude of drawings made for a single detail of the final composition. The estimates range from 2 000 to 100 000 € and all works are listed in the artist's catalogue raisonné.

« Two important characteristics of Balthus's work are evident in this formidable collection : the sense of a captured moment in time seen through his eyes, and an uncompromising logic, in drawing after drawing, as he worked towards the final composition. »

Bruno Jaubert,
Director of the Impressionist & Modern Art department, Artcurial



BALTHUS, *Le vase bleu* - 1963 / 1964
Oil on canvas - 89 x 70 cm.
Estimate : 100 000 - 150 000 €



BALTHUS, *Study for «Jeune-fille assoupie»*
1954. Watercolour - 25 x 20 cm.
Estimate : 30 000 - 40 000 €



BALTHUS, *Study for «Paysage à la tour»* - 1957
Pencil - 31,5 x 48 cm.
Estimate : 5 000 - 7 000 €

Balthus (1908-2001), one of the most important French figurative painters

Balthasar Klossowki, known as Balthus, was born in Paris on 29 February 1908. Younger brother of the writer and illustrator, Pierre Klossowki, Balthus grew up in a family immersed in art and culture, his German-Polish father an art historian and his mother a Jewish German artist. During his adolescence spent in this artistic environment, he met many well-known figures, including André Gide, Pierre Bonnard and Maurice Denis. At the age of 14, he published his first book of drawings, entitled *Mitsou* and prefaced by his mother's lover, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Returning to Paris in 1924, following a ten-year period of exile in Berlin and Switzerland during and after the First World War, Balthus made regular trips to the Louvre to make copies of paintings by Nicolas Poussin. During a stay in Tuscany, he also made copies of work by Piero della Francesca and Masaccio, artists whose influence was later apparent in his own work.

Over the years, Balthus developed his own style and in 1934 he held his first exhibition at the Galerie Pierre Loeb in Paris, presenting seven works including *La Rue* (MoMa) and *La Toilette de Cathy* (Centre Pompidou). He painted the oil on canvas *La leçon de guitare* the same year. Two years later, Balthus exhibited the series *Les Hauts de Hurlevent* in London and also undertook numerous portrait commissions for high-profile sponsors such as André Derain and Miró. In 1937 he married his first wife Antoinette de Watteville with whom he had two children.

Between 1953 and 1961 he lived at the Château de Chassy, in Bourgogne and his ever-present muse during this time was Frédérique Tison. Over this eight-year period, the artist, inspired by the château and its surrounding landscape, produced almost a third of his known paintings here.

On 15 February 1961, André Malraux, who was at that time the Minister of Cultural Affairs and a friend of the artist, appointed Balthus as director of the Villa Médicis, the centre of the Académie de France in Rome. He occupied this post for sixteen years and had a significant impact on the institution, above all dedicating himself to its restoration. During a diplomatic visit to Japan, he met his third partner Setsuko, whom he married in 1967. She was the mother of his third child. At the end of the 1970s, Balthus moved to Rossinière in Switzerland with his family, and continued painting there until his death on 18 February 2001. He had received the Japanese Praemium Imperiale for his lifetime's work ten years earlier in 1991.

The discovery of Château de Chassy in 1953

The year 1953 marked a turning point in Balthus's life. He left Paris to install himself in the Château de Chassy in Bourgogne, with the help of various collectors and dealers including Alix de Rothschild, Henri Samuel, Henriette Gomes and Pierre Matisse. The château was an old feudal structure surrounded by ancient trees, standing alone in the middle of a hilly landscape. Having wanted to escape the hustle and bustle of Paris, the isolation suited Balthus, and he stayed there until 1961. Living an abstemious life, he enjoyed the most productive phase of his career.



BALTHUS, *Study for «La rue»* - 1933
Indian ink - 19 x 20 cm.
Estimate : 8 000 - 12 000 €



BALTHUS
*Study for «Le Passage du Commerce
Saint-Andri»* - Circa 1952-1954
Charcoal - 31 x 24 cm.
Estimate : 15 000 - 20 000 €



Balthus completes his Parisian works and begins working on large-scale interior compositions

Balthus spent the first two years at Chassy, between 1953 and 1955, finishing the final important works he had started in Paris. Amongst these were *Chambre* and *Passage-du-Commerce Saint André*, both dating from 1952-1954. Artcurial will offer preparatory sketches for these two major canvases that shed light on the artist's creative process. For *Passage-du-Commerce Saint André*, there are several studies of the overall scene in charcoal and pencil, with estimates between 2000 and 12 000 €, and a charcoal sketch of the small girl on the right of the composition (est: 15 000 - 20 000€). For *Chambre*, there is a study in Indian ink on paper dating from 1953 (est : 2 000 - 3 000€).

The period between 1953 and 1961, spent in Bourgogne at the Château de Chassy, allowed Balthus to break from Parisian life. It was, for him, a time of internalisation and a renewed contact with the natural world. Balthus was always highly sensitive to his surroundings. The places where he lived provided the backdrop for his work and influenced his style. The various rooms and their furnishings at the Château de Chassy provided inspiration for the interiors that he started to paint. The ground floor reception room became the subject of numerous paintings, notably *La Tireuse de cartes* for which Artcurial presents a book of five double-sided sheets containing sketches of different elements of this painting, including the fireplace, table, carpet and chair (est: 15 000- 20 000 €).

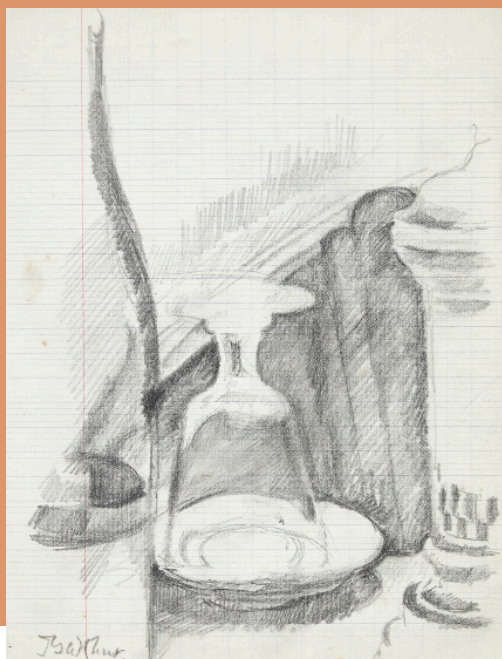
A sketchbook with eight drawings of the kitchen at Chassy, completed in 1953-1954 (est: 8 000 - 12 000€) is also on offer, along with a pencil drawing from 1954 of the *Nu devant la cheminée* estimated at 8 000 - 12 000€, and a study of a decorative element of the fireplace (est: 1 000 - 1 500€). Several preparatory drawings for *Sortie de Bain* of 1956 complete this group of work (estimates between 3 000 - 8 000 €).

His renewed relationship with nature

During this period, Balthus was inspired by the Morvan landscape and began to paint the fields and meadows he could see around him. All his landscapes correspond to views observed from different rooms in the Château de Chassy.

Artcurial will present several preparatory pencil sketches of *Paysage d'hiver* from 1954 and studies dating from 1956 for *Paysage à la Tour*, with estimates between 3 000 and 7 000€.

The *Jeune fille à la fenêtre* from 1955 was painted from a window in the west of the castle. This work shows Frédérique Tison looking through an open window with one leg resting on a chair. The sale includes a watercolour study in colour for this painting showing Frédérique Tison with the chair (est: 10 000 - 15 000€) and two other watercolours for the second *Jeune fille à la fenêtre* dating from 1957.



BALTHUS
Study for «*La phalène*» - Circa 1959
Pencil - 21,8 x 16,7 cm.
Estimate : 3 000 - 4 000 €

BALTHUS
Study for «*La tasse de café*» - 1959-1960
Pencil - 34,6 x 26,5 cm.
Estimate : 10 000 - 15 000 €

Still lifes for his interior compositions

Several preparatory still lifes for Balthus's large scale interior compositions will also be included in the sale. Amongst these, a study for the 1958 *Nature morte dans l'atelier* estimated at 25 000 -35 000 € and a selection of preparatory drawings for the painting *La Phalène* of 1959, showing the butterfly, lamp and also the glass on the right of the composition. The two studies of the glass are estimated at 3000 - 4 000 €.

Finally, while the majority of pieces in the sale of this collection were carried out during the « Chassy » years of 1953 to 1961, there are also some important studies from earlier and later periods. These range from the « Swiss » period to the time he lived in Rome between 1962 and 1970.

The oldest work is a study in ink for the 1925 painting *Jeune fille jouant au diabolo*, completed while Balthus lived in Switzerland. A portrait of Frédérique Tison in charcoal on paper dating from 1949 will also be offered, with an estimate of 30 000 - 40 000 €.

Amongst key pieces from the « Rome » period between 1962 and 1960, Artcurial will present the oil on canvas of a bouquet of flowers, *Le Vase bleu*, executed in the style of a fresco. Painted in 1963-4, it is estimated at 100 000 - 150 000€.

The sale catalogue, a dedicated publication on the graphic art of Balthus between 1925 and 1970, includes a tribute by the photographer Romain Barelier, in which he describes the personality of Frédérique Tison. Barelier was a close friend of the Tison family and spent his childhood summers at the Château de Chassy.

« My connection and attachment to Balthus and the Tison family date back to my birth at the Villa Médicis when my parents were resident there for the Grand Prix de Rome in sculpture. Balthus had just been appointed director by André Malraux ; Frédérique Tison was his partner and his muse. » Romain Barelier.

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USEFUL INFORMATION

Sale on Tuesday 8 December 2020, at 18.00

Artcurial - 7, rond-point des Champs-Élysées - 75008 Paris

HR images available on request
Catalogue available online at www.artcurial.com

UPCOMING AT ARTCURIAL

8 and 9 December 2020, at 2pm and 8:30pm : auctions

Impressionist and Modern Art I & II
Post-War & Contemporary Art I & II

ABOUT ARTCURIAL

Founded in 2002, multidisciplinary Paris based auction house, Artcurial confirmed its leading position in 2019 on the international art market scene. With three sale venues (Paris, Monte-Carlo and Hong Kong), Artcurial achieved an overall sales total of 203,1 M€ in 2019. Artcurial covers all the major specialist fields: From Beaux-Arts to Decorative Arts, Collectors' Cars, jewellery and watches, Fine wine and spirits. With a strong international bias, Artcurial maintains its presence abroad with offices in Milan, Vienna and Brussels, Monte-Carlo and Munich and representatives in Beijing and Tel Aviv, as well as twice-yearly exhibitions in New York. In October 2015, Artcurial held its first sale in Hong Kong and Morocco.

www.artcurial.com

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