



Matthieu Fournier selling *The Penitent Magdalene* by Gian Giacomo Caprotti known as Salai (lot n°44) for 1 745 000 € / 2 076 550 \$ including premium during the Old Master & 19th Century Art sale on 18 November 2020  
WORLD RECORD AUCTION PRICE FOR THE ARTIST

PRESS RELEASE - RECORD FOR SALAI, PUPIL OF LEONARDO DA VINCI  
SALE RESULTS FOR 18 NOVEMBER 2020 IN PARIS

**On Wednesday 18 November, an important discovery in the history of art came under the hammer of Matthieu Fournier: the *Penitent Magdalene* by Leonardo da Vinci's closest collaborator, Gian Giacomo Caprotti, better known as Salai. Identified by art historians, this oil on panel, one of very few works attributed to Salai, is imbued with an intimate understanding of Leonardo's technique. This coveted masterpiece sold for 1,7 M€ / 2 M\$ including premium, a new world record price for the artist.**



PARIS - On Wednesday 18 November, the Old Master and 19th Century Art department at Artcurial caused a stir when it sold an exceptional painting, the *Penitent Magdalene* by Salai, Leonardo de Vinci's closest collaborator. Identified by art historians, this oil on panel is an important discovery, one of very few works recognised as being by his hand, and its style reflecting a close connection to the technique of the master, Leonardo da Vinci. With Matthieu Fournier holding the auction behind closed doors, this highly coveted masterpiece sparked an intense battle between telephone bidders, and finally changed hands for 1 745 000 € / 2 076 550 \$ including premium, setting a new world record auction price for a work by the artist.

### *Record for Salai, privileged pupil of Leonardo da Vinci*

Gian Giacomo Caprotti, who was known as Salai, entered Leonardo da Vinci's workshop at the age of ten, on 22 July 1490, Mary Magdalene's Day («il dì della Maddalena»). This precise date was recorded by Leonardo himself, in the margin of Manuscript C, conserved at the Institut de France. Salai remained close to his master for more than 25 years, accompanying him on all his travels. «Thief, liar, stubborn and glutton» («Ladro, bugiardo, ostinato, ghiotto»), he was given his name Salai, meaning little devil, by Leonardo, for the many foolish acts he committed, always pardoned by the master with a certain paternal patience. A workshop boy, model, manager of money, agent, lover, Salai spent his life close to Leonardo, carrying out a variety of tasks without ever renouncing his role as apprentice and eventually artist; he was appointed teacher from 1515.

During the many years he spent with Leonardo, Salai learnt to assimilate better than anyone the brilliant technique of his master. He became one of the most influential popularisers of the Leonardo model, through the production of copies and variations of Leonardo's masterpieces. Salai also created his own artworks that reflected what he had learnt from the master and interpreted with a certain autonomy. The *Penitent Magdalene*, sold by Artcurial on 18 November, bears witness to Salai's privileged relationship with the master of the Italian Renaissance. The style of Leonardo is clearly recognisable in the way Salai portrayed the hands and face of his Mary Magdalene.



Lot n°44: Gian Giacomo CAPROTTI known as SALAI  
*The Penitent Magdalene*, circa 1515-1520  
Softwood panel  
Sold 1 745 000 € / 2 076 550 \$ including premium

## PRESS CONTACTS

Head of PR  
Anne-Laure Guérin  
+33 (0)1 42 99 20 86  
alguerin@artcurial.com

Press assistant  
Aurélia Adloff  
+33 (0)1 42 99 20 76  
aadloff@artcurial.com

## 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](http://www.artcurial.com)

# ARTCURIAL