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ART MARKET

## April, Photographs Revive The Market

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richard\_avedon\_marilyn\_monroe\_new\_york

The market of photography has gone a long way since the first pioneering auction organised by Philippe Garner at Sotheby's, back in 1971. Although this sector developed quite slowly, it now stands on fertile grounds where photographic works – definitely more accessible and democratic than contemporary art – have gained economic strength. A remarkable development which was made in the period following the economic crisis of the early Nineties and then continued in the new millennium achieving great exploits in 2007, year of a record-breaking sale in this sector: *99 cent II* by Andreas Gursky was sold for 2.5 million euros.

Afterwards, the recent economic crash had a strong impact on all the art departments (especially the secondary ones), but with the retrieved positive climate even photography ended last year with important achievements: a 59.9% increase in 2010 compared to 2009 (data from *Mps Photographs Index*).

Now the positive trend of this sector will have to be extended in 2011 and this will be done starting with the appointments scheduled in April. Indeed, in the next days the most influential auction houses will "challenge each other" to the beat of the hammer to offer their collectors marvellous photos, realised by historicised masters as well as more contemporary artists.

The first to start is Sotheby's New York with *Photographs* to be held on 6th April. With a catalogue featuring over 170 pieces, the honour of the highest estimate goes to *Avedon/Paris* by Richard Avedon: a portfolio of

eleven photos, valued altogether between 150 and 250 thousand dollars. A high-sounding figure for “normal” fashion photos, though recently the quotations for the American photographer have risen significantly, especially after the record achieved with *Dovima with Elephants* (841 thousand euros), on 20th November 2010 at Christie’s Paris.

Another star of Sotheby’s auction is Peter Beard, artist, activist, writer and man-about-town who, through his photos dedicated to animals, leads the spectator into an exotic, distant, crude and chaotic world, ruled by the law of nature. Sotheby’s is offering nine works by this adventurous and rebel spirit, including *Maureen Gallagher and a Night feeder at Hog Ranch* (estimate 120-180 thousand dollars) and a particular portrait of Francis Bacon in his studio (estimate 80-120 thousand dollars)

Also unmissable at a photograph auction is the name of Ansel Adams, famous artist for his black and white photos of US National parks, very evident subjects in the lots proposed by the New York auction house: *Mount Williamson, Sierra Nevada from Manzanar, California* (estimate 100-150 thousand dollars), *Dunes Oceano* (estimate 70-100 thousand dollars) and *Winter Storm Yosemite Valley – Clearing Winter Storm* (estimate 30-50 thousand dollars).

Other fascinating works are *Untitled* (estimate 100-150 thousand dollars) and *Solarized Male Torso* by Man Ray (estimate 70-100 thousand dollars), but also *Dunes, Oceano* by Edward Weston (estimate 70-100 thousand dollars) and *Cuzco Children, Peru, December 1948* by Irving Penn (estimate 60-90 thousand dollars).

The latter US artist can be considered one of most fortunate photographers of the market in 2010, year when he set his record at Christie’s (*Woman in Moroccan Palace*, sold for 329,650 euros). In the wake of his previous success, in April Irving Penn is also the star of Christie’s *Photographs*. Indeed, the photographer is present at auction with seventeen works, including *Cuzco Children 1948* (estimate 250-350 thousand dollars), *Black and White Vogue Cover* (estimate 100-150 thousand dollars) and *Mermaid Dress (Rochas), Lisa Fonssagrives-Penn, Vogue, 1950* (estimate 80-120 thousand dollars).

Besides Penn – the New York sale – scheduled on 8th April at Rockefeller Plaza – is presenting another beautiful photo by Richard Avedon which immortalises Marilyn Monroe (estimate 200-300 thousand dollars), but also *Peru* by Robert Frank (estimate 100-150 thousand dollars) and *Memphis (Tricycle)* by William Eggleston, a photo realised between 1969 and 1970 and valued at 200-300 thousand dollars.

After Christie’s turn, the New York Photographs continue with Phillips de Pury on 9th April. Star of the sale is Cindy Sherman, presented with a marvellous photo which comes from the Metro Pictures of New York and is valued by experts at 200-300 thousand dollars. On this occasion the sale is offering a work by Irving Penn with a much lower estimate: *Woman in Palace (Lisa Fonssagrives-Penn), Marrakech, Morocco* (estimate 80-120 thousand dollars).

A delightful image which immortalises the US photographer’s wife and highlights Penn’s typical style, which communicates through the brightness of light and white, the round plasticity of things, the balance of shapes and lines, the harmonious combination of chromatic effects and the subtle and intelligent play of visual metaphors, which make Penn’s images a concentration of creativity.

Another noteworthy photographic work is *Untitled* by Florian Maier-Aichen (estimate 80-120 thousand dollars), but also *Flag* by Robert Mapplethorpe (estimate 70-90 thousand dollars), *Statue, Los Angeles* by David LaChapelle and *A Jewish giant at home with his parents in the Bronx* by Diane Arbus (both estimated at 60-80 thousand dollars).

The April sales dedicated to photography end at Bonhams in Dubai with the *Photographs and Orientalist Art* auction. On 13th April the Royal Mirage Hotel will be hosting the sale of 85 photographic works, realised by great artists but also by emerging oriental artists. Star of the auction is Shirin Neshat with *Mystified* (estimate 35-45 thousand dollars), an image realised in 1997 which highlights the Iranian artist’s poetics: an artistic analysis on the social, political and psychological meaning of being woman in contemporary Islamic societies.

Other highlights of Bonhams’ session include *Goddess of the Desert* by Halim Al-Karim (estimate 35-45 thousand dollars) and *Walls of Gaza II* by Laila Shawa (estimate 35-40 thousand dollars). But also *The Library of St. Florian Abbey* by Ahmet Ertug (estimate 35-40 thousand dollars), *Consolation* by the Turkish artist Nazif Topcuoglu and *Euphoria* by Steve Sabella (both estimated at 14-18 thousand dollars).

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