

# ARTCURIAL

Press release



## *A masterpiece by Chardin, 18th century French icon*

Sale  
23 March 2022, Paris

Artcurial and the Cabinet Turquin are delighted to present for sale, on 23 March 2022, a masterpiece of Western art, *The basket of Wild Strawberries* by Jean Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), coming from the Eudoxe Marcille collection.

PARIS – On 23 March 2022, the *Old Master & 19th Century Art* department at Artcurial and the Cabinet Turquin will present for sale a masterpiece by Jean Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), the *Basket of Wild Strawberries*.

Chardin painted approximately one hundred and twenty still lives and often depicted the same objects or fruits, in particular silver goblets, teapots, hares, plums, melons and peaches. This still life is the only one by the artist to feature strawberries as its main subject.

Exhibited by the artist at the Salon of 1761, rediscovered by François-André or Eudoxe Marcille a century later, before disappearing from public view until the 20th century retrospectives in Paris, this small canvas has become an icon of Western painting, combining a composition of great geometric simplicity with an exceptional quality of creation. Passed by unnoticed at the time it was painted, the *Basket of Wild Strawberries* has, over time, become one of the most famous and emblematic images of the French 18th century, regularly reproduced on the cover of catalogues dedicated to the artist.

A successor to the rare depictions of bowls of strawberries by Nordic and French 17th century painters, such as Jacob van Hulsdonck, Adriaen Coorte and Louyse Moillon, this painting bridges the two centuries, while leaning resolutely towards modernity.

Indeed, the subject here is almost less important than the representation of shapes and volumes, such as the cylinder of the glass and the triangle formed by the strawberries.

Chardin is above all admired for the silence in his works, the poetry that emanates from the representation of everyday objects, an invitation to meditate and a step back from the turmoil of his century. Everything is concentrated here, in an image that is unique for its time.

The painting presented here is directly comparable to the *Basket of plums* (Paris, the Louvre) and the *Glass of Water and Coffeepot* (Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Art), dating from the same period and both considered to be absolute masterpieces. Chardin was at the height of his career as an artist. The painter's virtuosity is apparent in the incredible transparency of the water in the glass, the representation of the fruit that is both precise and fluid, as a whole form, thrown into relief by the white marks of the two carnations whose stems break up the regularity.

The modernity of Chardin's still lives found an important echo at the time of Impressionism, notably with Fantin-Latour, Monet, Renoir ... And the rigour of his geometric compositions was seen again in the 20th Century in the work of Cezanne, Morandi, right through to Wayne Thiebauld.



Jean-Baptiste Siméon CHARDIN (1699-1779)  
*The Basket of Wild Strawberries*  
Oil on canvas  
Signed 'Chardin' lower left  
38 x 46 cm  
Estimate : 12 000 000 - 15 000 000 €

## *One of the masterpieces from the Marcille collection*

François Marcille (1790-1856) rediscovered 18th century painting which, during the first half of the 19th century, had been forgotten. He scoured flea markets with another great enthusiast, Louis La Caze, and they each built up their own collections. The Marcille Collection, comprising nearly 4,500 paintings, including 40 canvases by Boucher, 30 by Chardin and 25 by Fragonard, was divided by drawing lots and shared between his two sons Eudoxe (1814 -1890) and Camille (1816-1875).

The older brother demonstrated the same appetite for acquisitions and discoveries. Every Monday he welcomed enthusiasts such as the Goncourt brothers and the young Edgar Degas as well as associates of Doctor Louis La Caze. In March 1861 he became a member of the Museums Advisory Commission and was a member of the jury at the Great London Exposition. In 1865, he joined the jury for the annual Salons, first for engravings and then for paintings. In 1870 he became director of the Musée d'Orléans where he made a dynamic impact on the existing collection.

This painting has remained in the hands of Eudoxe Marcille's descendants until today.

It is one of the most important 18th century French paintings to remain in private hands, and is estimated to fetch between 12 and 15 million euros.

## *From Diderot to the Goncourt brothers, critics of Chardin*

*« This is a mysterious magic. There are thick layers of paint applied one on top of the other, and the effect rises to the surface from underneath. In other places, it looks like a vapour has been blown onto the canvas : elsewhere, a light froth has been sprayed. (...) Get up close, everything blurs, flattens and disappears ; move away and everything reforms and recreates itself »* Diderot, Salon of 1763

*« It is said of him that he has a technique that is his own...There is an incredible strength of colour, an overall harmony, a sharp and true effect, beautiful forms, a magic to make one despair, a mix in arrangement and layout. Step back, move closer, the same illusion, no confusion, no symmetry either, just a calmness and sense of repose. One stops in front of a Chardin, as if by instinct, like a traveller sits down, tired from his journey and barely noticing, in a place giving him a seat of foliage, silence, water, shade and cool. »* Diderot, Salon of 1767

*« But again, look at those two carnations : nothing but a streak of white and blue, a kind of silvery enamelled seedling in relief: step back a little and the flowers rise up from the canvas as you move away, the leafy design of the carnation, the heart of the flower, its delicate shadow, its crumples and tears, everything comes together and blossoms. And here is the miracle of the things that Chardin paints: modelled both as solid forms as well as contours, drawn with light, made, so to speak, from the colour's soul, they appear to detach themselves from the canvas and come alive, by some marvellous optical activity between the canvas and the spectator in space. »*

Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, «Chardin», *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, July 1863, p. 514 and seq.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Sale :  
Wednesday 23 March 2022 - 6.00 pm

Artcurial  
7 Rond-Point  
des Champs-Élysées  
75008 Paris

## PRESS MATERIAL

High resolution images  
available on request

Full catalogue on [artcurial.com](http://artcurial.com)

## PRESS CONTACTS

Press officer  
Déborah Bensaïd  
+33 (0)1 42 99 20 86  
[dbensaïd@artcurial.com](mailto:dbensaïd@artcurial.com)



**TURQUIN**  
EXPERTS EN TABLEAUX

### *About Artcurial*

Founded in 2002, multidisciplinary Paris based auction house Artcurial confirmed its leading position on the international art market scene in 2021. With three sale venues in Paris, Monaco and Marrakech, the auction house achieved an overall sales total of 169 million euros in 2021.

Artcurial covers all the major specialist fields including Fine Arts, Decorative Arts, Collectors' Cars, Jewellery, Watches, Fine Wines and Spirits...

With a strong international bias, Artcurial maintains its presence abroad with offices in Brussels, Milan, Monte-Carlo, Munich, Vienna and Spain. In October 2015, Artcurial held its first sale in Hong Kong and Morocco.

[artcurial.com](http://artcurial.com)

# ARTCURIAL