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*The Magic Fish* by Marie-Louise von Motesiczky was the ‘catch of the day’ at Chiswick Auctions’ sale of *19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Paintings and Works on Paper, including Portrait Miniatures* on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March.

Selling for £15,000 (£18,750 inc. buyer’s premium) against a pre-sale estimate of £6,000-8,000, the painting established a new record price for the artist, and was the highest price in the sale. Overall the auction proved to be a ‘house best’ in this category realising a total of £266,000 hammer (£332,500 inc. buyer’s premium) against a combined low estimate figure of £222,550.

The large theatrical image of a semi-nude female on a chaise longue in a shuttered interior warding off a mysterious flying fish by Marie Louise von Motesiczky (1906-1996) was one of

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nine paintings by the artist offered, all of which sold for a combined hammer price of £37,500 (£46,875 inc. buyer's premium) against an aggregate pre-sale low estimate of £31,500.

The clean sweep followed a similarly strong result for von Motesiczky when Chiswick sold eight works by the artist in their equivalent sale in December; both consignments were from the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust.

Von Motesiczky (1906-1996) had emigrated to England from Austria with her mother just before the Second World War, and lived in Hampstead for over 50 years. Her wistful, often amusing and ever idiosyncratic style was informed by her upbringing in Vienna, German Expressionism, and in particular her life-long friendships with both Max Beckmann and Oskar Kokoschka.



Other consignments that defined the sale and contributed so emphatically to its success included seven oils from the estate of artist Louis Christian Hess, and a very representative showing of ten Cardinals, Cavaliers and Gentlemen of Learning from an extensive Private English Collection; a fine selection of some 60 portrait miniatures rounded off the sale.

Ishbel Gray, specialist in charge of the sale commented afterwards: *'We were thrilled with the results in a sale that was particularly wide-ranging featuring artists from the Antipodes to Russia, as well as a representative mix of especially attractive works from Europe. The majority of the consignments were from private sources and estates, and these were the lots that proved to be particularly sought after. The sale attracted immense and wide-ranging interest which resulted in a very diverse group of active bidders keen to secure lots on the day.'*

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As with von Motesiczky, painter and fellow Austrian Louis Christian Hess (1895-1944) was also influenced by German Expressionism, and coincidentally his acquaintance with Max Beckmann in Munich where he kept a studio. Consigned for sale by the artist's grandson, the highest price paid was for *Friend I* (lot 322), a portrait of a seated female figure from 1931 that combined Beckmann-esque brush strokes and palette with *neue sachlichkeit* cool; it realised £8,500 hammer (£10,625 inc. buyer's premium). In all, six of the seven works by Hess found buyers, the group totalling £18,000 hammer (£22,500 inc. buyer's premium).

At the more traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century end of the market the sale was well populated by paintings from an English Private Collection, a group that was distinctive for its strong showing of cardinal and cavalier paintings. Excellent examples by Jehan Georges Vibert (1840-1902), Andrea Landini (1847-1912) and Francois Brunery (1849-1926) – all masters in this very particular genre – contributed to the 100% sell rate for the 21 works consigned from this private source.

Top price was for Landini's *The Toast* (lot 358) a droll riff on the Holy Trinity, as two prelates in full ecclesiastical garb and their richly attired guest raise a glass as they stand around a table groaning with very earthly delights. The painting achieved £13,500 hammer (£16,875 inc. buyer's



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premium), and contributed to a combined total for the twenty-one works from this seller of £70,700 hammer (£88,375 inc buyer's premium) against a total low estimate of £68,000.



Other notably strong sections in the sale included continued interest in Czech works. Once again the work of the inscrutable Mikulas Medek (1926-1974) proved in top demand. Two abstracted heads executed on paper - *Visage rose* and *Visage bleu* from 1967 and 1970 - each estimated at £800-1,200 (lots 348 & 349) soared to ten times estimate selling for £9,500 and £9,000 (£11,875 and £11,250 respectively inc. premium).

Another artist in demand with work from the '60s was New Zealander Pat Hanly (1932-2004), whose three poetic oils evoking both apocalypse and salvation totalled £23,500 hammer (29,375 inc. buyer's premium) against a combined low estimate of £6,500.



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Rounding off the sale was a strong showing of Portrait Miniatures. It followed Chiswick Auction's extremely successful sale of the Comerford Collection of miniatures a year ago.

Leading the pack this time was a portrait miniature of Thomas Ashton of circa 1789, one of two miniatures by George Engleheart (1750/3-1829) in the sale (lots 429 & 430). Both of the same sitter, and meticulously documented in Engleheart's fee book of the late 1780s, they were snapped up by the same buyer for £3,200 and £2,600 hammer respectively (£4,000 and £3,250 inc. buyer's

premium). Elsewhere in the miniature section a nobleman from circa 1605 (lot 411) painted by Laurence Hilliard, son of the eminent miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard realised £3,000 (£3,750 inc. premium).



Suzanne Zack, specialist in charge of the miniatures said of the results: *Following the runaway success of the Comerford sale last year, I was very pleased that the miniature market remains so robust, with such a wide range of new buyers attracted to this ever fascinating and very rewarding specialist collecting category.*

Overall 51 of the 62 miniatures offered found buyers, making the sell rate a very buoyant 82%; the category totalled £39,000 (£48,750 inc. buyer's premium), against a combined low estimate of £33,550.

For more information and images contact the specialist in charge of the sale Ishbel Gray – [ishbel.gray@chiswickauctions.co.uk](mailto:ishbel.gray@chiswickauctions.co.uk).

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