

Pricey Picasso among collection to be auctioned

Christie's says privately held works have a total value of \$150 million

Reuters

LONDON — Christie's will offer a private art collection valued at more than \$150 million in May, the auctioneer said this week, including a Picasso that is estimated to be worth \$70 million to \$90 million U.S.

The collection, belonging to leading U.S. art patrons Frances and Sidney Brody, was described as "one of the most valuable ever offered at auction" and aims to tap strong demand at auction for rare works of art coming from private holdings. "As witnessed at the

recent London sales of impressionist and modern art, the appetite among major collectors for top-quality works of great rarity and exceptional provenance continues to reach new heights," said Edward Dolman, CEO of Christie's International.

"We have no doubt that the calibre of this collection will ignite collector interest worldwide and yield exciting results in the sale room this May."

The highlight of the New York sale on May 4 is Pablo Picasso's *Nude, Green Leaves, and Bust* from 1932, which is expected to fetch up to \$90 million.

The Brodys acquired the depiction of the artist's mistress Marie-Therese Walter in the 1950s from Picasso's dealers.

A preview of the May auction will be the first time the Picasso work has been publicly displayed

for more than 50 years.

Other major works include Henri Matisse's *Nu au coussin bleu* (1924), estimated at \$20 to \$30 million, and Alberto Giacometti's *Grande tete de Diego* (1954), which is estimated at \$25 to \$35 million.

The body of works formally titled *The Collection of Mrs. Sidney F. Brody* began when Sidney, a Los Angeles real-estate developer, gave his wife Frances a Henry Moore

sculpture for Christmas.

"Sid put it under the Christmas tree. And well, by then I guess we were hooked," she recalled in a later interview.

Frances died in 2009 at the age of 93.

A portion of the proceeds from the auction will go to Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, Calif., of which she was a patron in later life.

Exhibit shines light on Victoria art



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Down at the Legacy Gallery (and Café) a bold experiment is writing a new art history of Victoria. An exhibit titled *Regarding Wealth* is on show, based on 14 paintings from the Michael Williams Collection. The exhibit is the subject, and the result, of work by students of Carolyn Butler-Palmer's curatorial course in the Department of History in Art at the University of Victoria.

First, a bit about the Michael Williams Collection. Williams was an entrepreneur whose real estate holdings in Victoria included many artists' studios, as well as the popular Swans Hotel and Pub. He was passionate about art, in particular local art. He lived next door to the Fran Willis Gallery and was usually first in the door when a new show was hung. And in many cases he was able to drive a hard bargain with his tenants, choosing fresh work directly from the artists. He used the art he bought to decorate his business premises, effectively "buying it for 50-cent dollars."

In this way, he diligently gathered more than 1,100 sculptures and paintings, and displayed them constantly and publicly. After his death in 2000, Williams left them all — and the business and real estate — to the University of Victoria. At once, a new history of contemporary art in Victoria, parallel and distinctly different from that collected by the Art Gallery of



Retired, a 1983 oil on canvas painting by Vicky Marshall, is one of the works from the Michael Williams Collection on display at the Legacy Art Gallery and Café until May 2.

Greater Victoria, was created.

The university then created the Williams Legacy Chair in the History in Art department and in 2008 hired Carolyn Butler-Palmer to curate and interpret the Williams Collection. Trained in art history as well as folklore studies, she at once set her students to work on community-based research, with last year's *Flaneurs* show. This year they focused on the issues of social justice.

A preliminary list of 33

artworks was selected from the collection, which reflected Williams's humanitarian ideals and his interest in the homeless and "insecurely housed." Collecting art is usually seen as an activity of the wealthy, yet Williams's sympathies and support extended to the Apple Tree Gang, who had their headquarters under the Johnson Street Bridge. He was certainly aware that many artists are among the very poor. The final exhibit includes 14 paintings. These include some from

Victoria's previous generation — Max Bates, Richard Ciccimarra and Jack Kidder — and Vancouver's New Romantics of the 1980s — Angela Grossman and Vicky Marshall. Williams's Chinatown protégés Glenn Howarth, Noah Becker and Michael Lewis are prominently featured, as is the unique genius of Norval Morrisseau. The compelling visionary portraits of Ken Flett might be the hit of the show.

Butler-Palmer's students were each asked to compile

a research portfolio on one of the artworks, and the resulting dossiers are a vital part of the show. Normally, art history students can do their research about Monet or Da Vinci in the library or online. In this case, the students found they had to engage in original research, collecting oral histories from artists, dealers and people associated with the issues with which the paintings are concerned. "There's so little written on any of these artists," Butler-Palmer

noted. That is about to change.

Each portfolio is a unique blend of biography and thematic engagement. The enthusiasm of the 20 students — senior undergraduates and post-graduates — for the task is obvious. It has already resulted in a valuable resource file on each artwork and has created an inspiring engagement for these future art historians. Nothing dry and theoretical here!

With the research behind them, the students broke into four groups to create the exhibit. One group was in charge of the installation. A second team created labels and text panels. A third took the public relations detail, making posters and invitations, and handling interviews in print and on television. They also conducted a free-form seminar, the "conversational café." This included some community spokespersons and took place last Sunday afternoon at the Legacy. The fourth group has created a web-based exhibit, which will be part of the legacy of this show at regardingwealth.uvic.ca (the site is not active yet, but keep checking).

Art historians too often overlook the creative manifestations of their own community. The details of the local history can be forgotten overnight and then evaporate like the morning dew. Thus, it is very satisfying to me to find that the University of Victoria, aided by the foresight of Michael Williams, is doing something positive to change this.

I encourage you to visit this show. Prepare to sit down in the café, pick up one of the research portfolios and learn a little about Victoria's history in art.

Regarding Wealth: Works from the Michael C. Williams Collection at the Legacy Art Gallery and Café, 630 Yates St. at Broad, 250-381-7670 or www.legacygallery.ca, until May 2.