

November 9, 2022  
By Eileen Kinsella

## Here's Your Guide to the Priciest and Most Sought-After Artworks for Sale During New York's \$2.1 Billion Fall Auction Marathon

Led by the Allen Collection, the fall season ahead is set to break more than a few records.



Large Interior, W11 (after Watteau) by Lucian Freud (estimate on request: in excess of \$75,000,000) during a photo call to present the highlights from the estate of the philanthropist and co-founder of Microsoft, Paul G. Allen in London, United Kingdom on October 14, 2022. Photo by Wiktor Szymanowicz/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images.

This auction season is poised to become one of the biggest, if not the biggest, in art-market history.

We know, we know. We've said this a few times before. And it seems all the more outlandish considering the headwinds facing the economy at large. But as always, the art market is operating on a different wavelength than other sectors. And the blockbuster-packed collection of the late Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen, which is expected to rake in more than \$1 billion on its own, leaves little room for doubt.

Three of Allen's works—a Georges Seurat, a Van Gogh landscape, and a Cézanne—have estimates above \$100 million each. Two others, a Gustav Klimt and a Paul Gauguin, carry estimates of at least \$90 million each. All of the proceeds will go to charities that Allen supported during his life (although the

specific recipients have not been disclosed). The collection is backed by a guarantee, which means it is certain to sell.

Even before the main auction week arrives on November 14, then, the fall sales may have already surpassed \$1 billion. Attorney Thomas Danziger, who specializes in art law, said the dominance of the Allen collection could have scared away other consignors. "It's like surfing next to a tsunami," he said.

But there is no shortage of blue-chip offerings. Sotheby's secured a massive contemporary-art collection from connoisseurs Sherry and Joel Mallin, a trove of modern classics from the late CBS founder and MoMA donor William Paley, as well as a dedicated sale from the estate of entertainment attorney David Solinger, the former president of the Whitney Museum. Phillips, meanwhile, has one of its highest estimated evening sales in years.

Last fall, seven works were estimated to sell for more than \$40 million. This season, that figure has ballooned to 12 (nine of which are from the Allen collection). It's worth noting that in November 2019, zero works carried such lofty expectations.

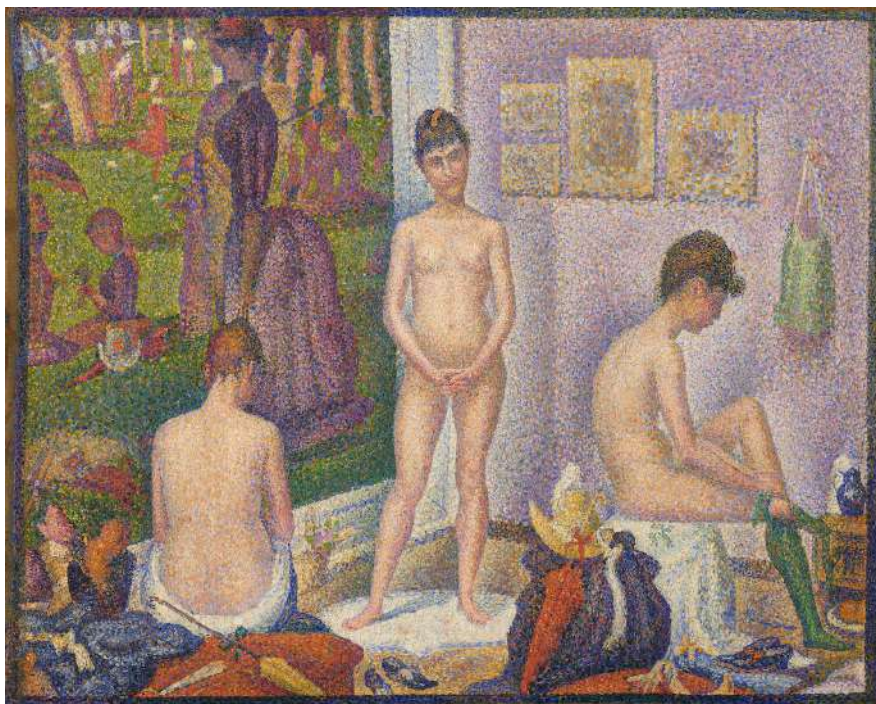
"Global economic forecasts may be as cheerless as the Twitter corporate cafeteria, yet the art market roars on," Danziger said. "While conventional wisdom has it that rocky economic times are not good for the auction market that is clearly not the case this November."

Has economic volatility sparked any unusual opportunities? Not exactly. "I hear some collectors asking me for deals, because of inflation and volatility in the market," art advisor Lisa Schiff told Artnet News. "What I tell them though is that the deals have been around, but people only pay attention to the hyped-up stuff." She points to a Christopher Wool at Sotheby's, a suite of Matthew Barney "Cremaster" photos, a slew of late Warhols, and a Ruscha gunpowder work as examples of lots on offer next week that may not be on trend now, but are solid bets for the future.

Altogether, the evening sales are estimated to deliver an eye-watering \$2.1 billion to \$2.9 billion. For comparison, evening sales this past spring notched \$2.4 billion and the fall 2021 season came in at \$2.3 billion.

Read on for a breakdown of the jam-packed sale schedule and a look at the top lots.

**Wednesday, November 9**  
**Visionary: The Paul G. Allen Collection at Christie's**



Georges Seurat, *Les Poseuses, Ensemble (Petite version)* (1888). Image courtesy Christie's.

When: 7 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 60

Presale estimate: \$1 billion to \$1.4 billion

Star lot: The aforementioned Georges Seurat, *Les Poseuses, Ensemble (Petite version)* (1888), has been described as the most important work by the artist in private hands. (That is all the more notable considering Seurat only made 47 paintings in the first place.) It will undoubtedly smash the artist's current \$35 million auction record, set way back in 1999 for an 1884 oil from the collection John Hay Whitney at Sotheby's.

Unlike most sophisticated collectors who tackle a specific subsection of art history with laser focus, Paul Allen identified trophy works from across 500 years of cultural production. Offerings range from [a round Botticelli Madonna](#) (estimated at \$40 million) to a monumental Lucien Freud portrait (\$75 million).

The sale—which is essentially guaranteed to become the most expensive private collection ever sold at auction—will be split across an evening event on November 9 and a day auction on November 10. Thirty-five out of the 60 lots in the evening sale now have third-party guarantees, meaning they have essentially been presold to outside buyers.

Keep an eye out for sought-after works by Francis Bacon, Jan Breughel, Alberto Giacometti, Georgia O'Keeffe, Edouard Manet, Jasper Johns, and David Hockney.

**Monday, November 14**  
**The David M. Solinger Collection Evening Auction at Sotheby's**



When: 5:30 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 23

Presale estimate: \$86.7 million to \$117.9 million

Star lot: This vibrant 1950 Willem de Kooning collage, estimated at \$18 million to \$25 million, has been featured in several important exhibitions, from the Museum of Modern Art's traveling survey in 1968–69 to the "Abstract Expressionism" exhibition at London's Royal Academy in 2016–17.

Alberto Giacometti's *Trois hommes qui marchent* (Grand plateau), which Solinger first spotted at the artist's studio in Paris, is also worth watching. It is estimated at \$15 million to \$20 million. Solinger, a television and advertising attorney, was a friend to many of the artists in his collection. The works remained in his possession until his death in 1996. Other highlights include paintings by Jean Dubuffet, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso.

## Modern Art Evening Auction at Sotheby's



Pablo Picasso, Guitare sur une table, (1919). Image courtesy Sotheby's.

When: 6:30 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 46

Presale estimate: \$237.2 million to \$295.3 million

Presale estimate for equivalent sale in November 2021: \$202.35 million to \$282.15 million

Star lot: Picasso's *Guitare sur une table* is described by Sotheby's as epitomizing "the artist's bold stylistic evolution in the years following the First World War." It carries an unpublished estimate of \$20 million to \$30 million but is a guaranteed top-seller since it also has an irrevocable bid. The canvas is part of a group of works from the collection of the late media magnate William Paley that have been on loan to MoMA since his death in 1990. They will be sold to benefit the museum's digital and technology initiatives as well as strategic acquisitions. A classic Piet Mondrian grid painting, *Composition No. II* (1930), also has a third-party backer and a lofty asking price in excess of \$50 million.

**Tuesday, November 15**  
**20th Century and Contemporary Art Evening Auction at Phillips**



Cy Twombly, *Untitled* (2005). Image courtesy Phillips

When: 6 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 46

Presale estimate: \$118.5 million to \$165.3 million

Presale estimate for equivalent sale in November 2021: in excess of \$100 million

Star lot: Phillips is on track for one of its strongest seasons ever, thanks in part to a powerhouse Cy Twombly abstract that was, ironically, once in the collection of Christie's owner Francois Pinault. It has an in-house guarantee and an estimate of \$35 million to \$45 million, which accounts for just under a third of the sale's overall low estimate. Jean-Paul Engelen, president of Americas, points out that 80 percent of the lots in the sale have never been offered at auction before. One of Mark Grotjahn's signature thickly painted circus paintings, *Untitled (Circus No. 12 Face 44.30)* (2014), is another top lot, carrying an estimate of \$8 million to \$12 million. Bidders can also expect the usual fireworks for younger, sought-after names like Anna Weyant and Avery Singer.

**Wednesday, November 16  
The Now Evening Auction at Sotheby's**



Cecily Brown, *Eyes Wide Shut* (2001). Image courtesy Sotheby's.

When: 6 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 23

Presale estimate: \$32.4 million to \$47.2 million

Presale estimate for equivalent sale in November 2021: \$36.6 million to \$53.2 million

Star lot: Work by Yoshitomo Nara and Cecily Brown lead this sale-within-a-sale focused on new art. (The previous two iterations have both been 100 percent sold.) Nara's monumental *Light Haze/Study* (2020), depicting one of his cartoonish, anime-style heads with giant eyes, is estimated at \$9 million to \$12 million. And the asking price of \$4 million to \$6 million for Brown's jumpy, energetic canvas could break her current record of \$6.8 million, set in 2018. Other buzzed-about stars with work in the sale include Toyin Ojih Odutola, Nicolas Party, and Salman Toor, whose *Four Friends* (2019) was prominently featured in a Whitney Museum solo show. Its estimate is \$300,000 to \$400,000.

## Contemporary Art Evening Auction at Sotheby's



Andy Warhol, White Disaster (White Car Crash 19 Times) (1963). Courtesy of Sotheby's.

When: 7 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 39

Presale estimate: \$249.2 million to \$316.6 million

Presale estimate for equivalent sale in November 2021: \$89.2 million to \$126.6 million

Star lot: Buckle up for what is sure to be another wild market ride for Andy Warhol, whose *White Disaster* [White Car Crash 19 Times] (1963), has an estimate of \$80 million. The massive canvas, once owned by Swiss dealer Thomas Ammann, marks the first time in nearly 10 years that one of Warhol's "Death and Disaster" paintings has come to market. Meanwhile, *Untitled* (circa 1979), a cool blue canvas by Willem de Kooning, is being sold by the artist's family with a \$30 million to \$40 million estimate, backed by an in-house guarantee. It has never hit the market before.



**Thursday, November 17  
20th Century Art Evening Auction at Christie's**



Mark Rothko, Untitled (1969). Image courtesy Christie's.

When: 5:30 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 70

Presale estimate: \$297 million to \$445 million

Presale estimate for equivalent sale in November 2021: \$324.3 million to \$471 million

Star lot: Another Willem de Kooning abstract from the late 1970s, Untitled III, is the highest-estimated lot, with an asking price in excess of \$35 million. It's followed by a fiery-red Mark Rothko color block painting from 1969 with an estimate of \$15 million to \$20 million. As a reflection of how high the Rothko market has soared in recent decades, the same work realized \$308,000 when it last sold at Sotheby's in May 1988. The current low estimate is nearly 50 times that price.

## 21st Century Art Evening Auction at Christie's



Jean-Michel Basquiat, Sugar Ray Robinson (1982). Image courtesy Christie's.

When: 8 p.m. EST

Lots on offer: 21

Presale estimate: \$116 million to \$174 million

Presale estimate for equivalent sale in November 2021: \$151.6 million to \$230.4 million

Star lot: Expect bidders to duke it out over this Jean-Michel Basquiat portrait of prize fighter Sugar Ray Robinson. The asking price is in excess of \$35 million, a territory that does not seem hard to reach considering that 10 other Basquiat works at auction to date have exceeded it. The painting is closely followed by Jeff Koons's shiny silver bauble, *Jim Beam – J.B. Turner Train* (1986), a classic example from the artist's 1980s heyday, which is estimated at \$15 million to \$20 million.