

Leonardo painting to stop in S.F. briefly

Rare work to be on view for 3 days before auction

By Charles Desmarais

One of the rarest works of art in private hands, a painting by the Italian Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci, will be exhibited in San Francisco for just three days next week. "Salvator Mundi," depicting Christ in a serene pose as "savior of the world," was painted around 1500 and lost for centuries. It has not been shown in the U.S. since its rediscovery in 2005.

The work will be displayed as part of a presale exhibition presented by the auction house Christie's, which plans to sell the painting in New York in November with a sale estimate "in the region of \$100 million." That price would set a record for sale of an Old Masters painting at auction.

The exhibition will be on view to the public at Minnesota Street Project from Oct. 18 to 20. It is apparently the first exhibition ever in the Bay Area of a painting by Leonardo. In 2008, the Legion of Honor presented a show of 15 drawings.

The painting is one of about 15 in existence that are widely accepted by scholars as works by Leonardo. Its history is almost as colorful as the

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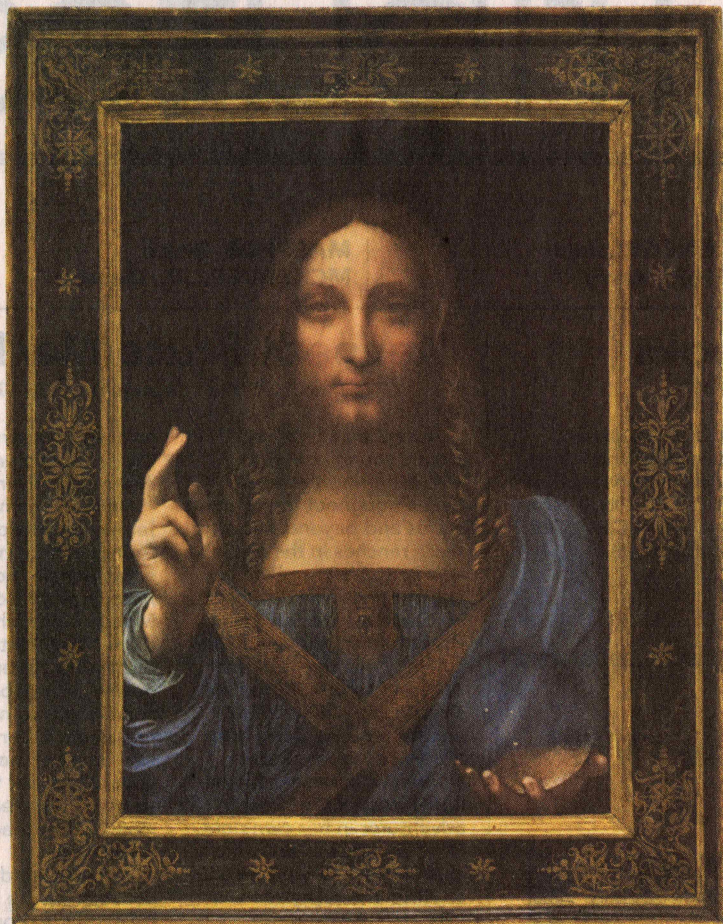
Christ figure's voluminous blue robe and vivid tones of flesh. Commissioned by King Louis XII of France and painted between 1506 and 1513, it passed through several noble British collections until it disappeared after a sale in 1763.

It resurfaced, at that time misattributed to a follower of Leonardo, in 1900, then was lost again until 1958 when it sold for just 45 British pounds. In 2005, it was purchased from a Louisiana estate sale for \$10,000 by a consortium of art dealers and investors who spent six years having the work cleaned and studied. It was unveiled as a work by the master in a 2011 exhibition at the National Gallery, London. The picture was sold for \$80 million in 2013 and

promptly resold for \$127.5 million to a Russian billionaire, Dmitry Rybolovlev.

A Christie's spokeswoman explained the auction house's considerably lower estimate via email. "There are no direct comparables for a work by this artist and of this art historical significance. Our estimate is considerably higher than any Old Masters painting previously sold at auction." She cited the 2001 sale of a work by Peter Paul Rubens at 50 million British pounds as the record. "We wanted to put an estimate on the work that would entice bidders."

By telephone, the spokeswoman said the work is being shown first in San Francisco because interest in the sale will be "beyond art collectors." She described potential buyers as



Christie's

"Salvator Mundi" (ca. 1500), one of the few known paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, will be on view in S.F. for three days.

Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art auction preview: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, Oct. 18-20. Free. Minnesota Street Project, 1275 Minnesota St., S.F. (415) 243-0825. www.minnesotastreetproject.com

"car collectors, science collectors — people who are interested in the rarest, most significant objects."

"San Francisco is the place where those people will be," she said.

The Leonardo work will be sold, suprisingly, as part of Christie's contemporary art sale. Other offerings to be shown in San Francisco include major works by Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and others. Andy Warhol's huge painting "Sixty Last Suppers," one of the artist's final works, will also be sold, but will not travel to the Bay Area.

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