

# AGUTTES

## AUCTION HOUSE AGUTTES ANNOUNCES A REDISCOVERED MASTERPIECE BY SANYU

*Potted peonies in a blue and white jardinière*  
estimated €2,500,000-3,500,000

TO BE AUCTIONED ON **11 MARCH** AT **DROUOT**

Expert: Charlotte Reynier-Aguttes

Aguttes is pleased to announce the auction of a masterpiece by renowned Chinese painter Sanyu (1901-1966). The painting is from a private collection assembled from the late 1930s and was acquired directly from the artist in the late 50s. It has remained in the hands of the heirs of the original owner, Comtesse Locatelli until April 1990 when bought by a Spanish private collector who kept it until recently. This painting stands as a major piece in Sanyu's career, for it highlights one of his favourite themes – potted flowers –, its bright and contrasting colours and its size. *Potted peonies in a blue and white jardinière*, unseen for 70 years, is estimated between €2,500,000 and €3,500,000.

Sanyu was born in 1901 in a province of Sichuan and showed great talent for art from an early age. His father encouraged his creativity and enabled him to take calligraphy lessons with Zhao Xi, an outstanding scholar at the prestigious Hanlin Academy. Keen on learning about the Western avant-garde, he moved to Paris in 1923. There, he was captivated by the incandescent art scene and quickly sought to reinterpret traditional Chinese painting.

He attended classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, an avant-garde academy that encouraged the freedom of creative expression. Its students included several famous Western artists, such as Amedeo Modigliani and Alberto Giacometti. He was a brilliant with an inquisitive mind and formed connections with numerous figures of his time.



Within the environment of the École de Paris, he learned to combine aspects of his traditional Chinese education in calligraphy with the foundations of Western modernism, developing a style that united both the Eastern serenity and Western aesthetics. Largely influenced by Fauvism, he adopted its principles of composition and colour while integrating subjects from the Chinese culture into his work. In line with a long Asian pictorial tradition, he painted flowers in pots, vases or baskets. The result was an uncluttered, serene style where the simplicity and fluidity of line and gesture captured the essence of his subject.



SANYU (1901-1966)  
*Potted peonies in a blue and white  
jardiniere, 1950s*  
Oil on hardboard, signed lower right  
43 1/4 x 31 3/8 in.

Provenance:  
-Collection Comtesse Matilde  
Locatelli, Calle Recoletos, 13, Madrid,  
Spain. Acquired directly from the  
artist.  
-Collection Xavier Regas Pages in  
Madrid on 18 May 1971. By descent,  
offered by the latter.  
-Private collection, Spain. Acquired  
from the latter on 14 April 1990.  
-Private collection.

Estimate: €2,500,000-3,500,000

The 1930s were a very productive period where his work was noticed by an art dealer with a keen eye, Henri-Pierre Roché (1879-1959), famous because of his active support for various modern artists like Picasso, Picabia, Brancusi, Man Ray and Dubuffet. Roché brought the artist out of the shadows and gave him the financial means to devote himself to his work. Sanyu's productions in the 30s are highly recognisable because of their reduced palette. Pink was the predominant colour, whether for bodies, flowers or animals, set against opalescent white or inky black backgrounds. Though pink was in vogue in the 1930s, the choice of this shade was significant for Sanyu. He had married a comrade he had met in Paris in the drawing class at the Grande Chaumière and was going through a very happy period on the material, creative and emotional levels. His flowers, painted with firm, vigorous lines in frequently contrasting colours, brushed delicately gave life to the composition.

The theme of flowers is omnipresent in Sanyu's art: he endlessly explored it in various versions throughout his career. Through these bouquets of flowers, Sanyu does not only propose the aestheticism of a still life; he also summons a cultural and spiritual reflection between East and West. As in the rest of his work, we can see changes in the pictorial treatment of his floral compositions. The development in the use of colours goes hand in hand with an increasingly powerful stylisation. The strokes become more incisive; the forms more graphic. The artist moves away from a direct representation of reality, creating more expressive works where the very essence of the subjects is intensified.

From the 1940s to the 1950s, shades of brown, jade green or China blue began to appear in Sanyu's work, but he continued to contrast saturated colours with softer tones. His forms became simpler and the contrasts more marked, and he began play with different scales and points of view. His nudes became even more graphic, his flowers more stylised and his animals more symbolic, lost in vast natural expanses. Also, from the late 1940s onwards, an ever-growing disproportion between the plant and the pot containing it can be seen: it seems far too narrow to support the imposing spread of the flowers, which stretches out and elongates in the space. In order to admire them, viewers are forced to look at them from bottom to top, which creates an undeniable feeling of grandeur and admiration. In the 1950s, his flower paintings became a means to transform his solitude into a spiritual, joyful image.

Unlike his contemporaries Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian, who had decided to return to China in the late 1920s and rapidly saw their ground-breaking work hailed and recognised, Sanyu had chosen to remain in Paris to continue his artistic quest. This decision cost him the recognition he could have had in China. His work remained misunderstood and known only to very few people during his lifetime. However, starting in the late 1990s, his work was gradually rediscovered, and several international retrospectives were dedicated to him. Today, Sanyu's work has finally been acclaimed by the art world.



**PUBLIC AUCTION - DROUOT - SALEROOM 2**  
Wednesday 11 March – 2:30pm

**PUBLIC EXHIBITION - AGUTTES**  
**164 BIS AVENUE CHARLES DE GAULLE - NEUILLY-SUR-SEINE**  
From 24 February to Thursday 5 March  
10am/1pm and 2pm/6pm  
*except on Friday afternoon and on Week-end*

**PUBLIC EXHIBITION - DROUOT - SALEROOM 2**  
Monday 9 and Tuesday 10 March – 11am/6pm  
Wednesday 11 March – 11am/12pm

#### PRESS CONTACTS

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Interviews and images upon request



#### About Aguttes

Aguttes is the fourth largest French auction house and the first one to be independent, with no outside shareholders. Founded in 1974 by Claude Aguttes and now run with two of his daughters—Philippine Dupré la Tour and Charlotte Reynier-Aguttes—the auction house has a team of 60 people. In 2018 the company passed the symbolic €50-million auction milestone, a result never before achieved by an independent auction house in France. In 2019, Aguttes totalled €66 million. With an international saleroom located in western Paris and representative offices in Brussels, Lyon and Aix-en-Provence, Aguttes stands out for its personalised service and responsiveness. The auction house is positioned on the valuation and auction of exceptional works and major French collections. In 2019, thanks to its international buyers (who amount to 70% of all buyers), it has held 76 auctions above €100,000, 4 sales of million-euro lots, and 15 world records. Aguttes is positioned as the alternative to art market leaders in its 15 specialised departments: Asian painters, Old Masters Paintings & Drawings, Asian art, Russian Art, Classic Cars, Jewellery & Fine Pearls, Collector Watches, Rare Books & Manuscripts, Contemporary, Modern & Impressionist Art, Design, Furniture & Decorative Art, Wine & Spirits.

#### 拍行介绍

AGUTTES奥古特作为法国第一家独立拍卖行（资本由唯一股东持有）1974年由Claude Aguttes先生建立，今天在他的两个女儿Philippine Dupré la Tour女士、Charlotte Reynier-Aguttes女士的辅佐和支持下早已成为在法国艺术拍卖市场上的主要参与者。公司由60人组成团队组织拍卖。2018年以五千万欧元成交额，创造了法国独立拍行的历史最好记录。2019年这一纪录被刷新，奥古特拍行获得六千六百万欧元成交额的好成绩。

奥古特拍卖行落户于巴黎近郊塞纳河畔讷伊二十余年，并在布鲁塞尔、里昂和普罗旺斯等城市设有分行。拍行以专业人性化的服务和及时快速的反应力而闻名。拍行的目标旨在推广和增值重要的法国艺术品收藏。根据2019年的年度报告，70%的竞买人为国际买家，其中76场拍卖超过十万欧元成交量；4场超百万欧元成交量和15项单品艺术国际成交纪录。

作为行业领头企业，奥古特拍行拥有15个专业部门：亚洲绘画；古典大师油画及素描；亚洲艺术和俄罗斯艺术；古董汽车；珠宝&珍珠；腕表；古籍善本及名人手迹；当代艺术；现代艺术&印象派；设计；家具&家居；红酒真酿。请务必咨询我们的专业意见再售卖您的收藏！

#### About Drouot

Founded in 1852, Drouot is the largest auction place in the world ever since. The institution now gathers 60 auction houses and hosted 1504 live and online auctions in 2019 that totalled €372M. Each year, Drouot welcomes over 600,000 visitors, who browse through the 15 salesrooms which feature the works of art from over 21 categories, from antiquities to street art. The Drouot Group includes several branches, including Auctionspress which publishes the weekly Gazette Drouot and Drouot Digital, the e-commerce platform that offers 'live' services (auction streaming and live bidding) and online-only sales.