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THE ART MARKET WEEKLY

# Sandro Botticelli at Paris auction – how much of this painting is by the hand of the master?

Sandro Botticelli is one of the best-known names in the lexicon of art history and his Birth of Venus in the Uffizi is one of the world's most famous art images. Later this month a painting by the Renaissance master and his studio goes under the hammer at the Drouot auction centre in Paris.



'Vierge à la Grenade', a work catalogued as 'Sandro Botticelli and studio' that is offered by Audap & Mirabaud at the Drouot in Paris with a €500,000-600,000 estimate.



- Anne Crane
- 08 Nov 2017

*Vièrge à la Grenade*, will be sold by the firm of Audap & Mirabaud on November 29 as part of a mixed discipline sale of drawings paintings, ceramics, furniture and works of art.

The oil on poplar panel depicts the Madonna holding the Christ Child and a pomegranate (a fruit packed with symbolic connotations in paintings of the period). It closely resembles the central group in a [multi-figure tondo](#) of the same name including six angels dated to c.1487, which is in the Uffizi and fully attributed to Botticelli.

The tondo was popular enough its day to generate further commissions of the subject from the artist.

The Audap & Mirabeau panel, which was originally rectangular in format, now measures 3ft x 2ft 11in (90.5 by 59cm) including an addition to the upper section. The auction house says that the finesse of the faces in its work suggests they were probably painted by Botticelli himself.

### *Collaborations*

Like many Renaissance masters, Botticelli had a workshop with assistants who collaborated with him on commissions. Paintings viewed as solely the work of the Florentine master surface rarely.

In market terms value tends to be determined by the extent to which a painting is viewed as by the hand of the master and that of his studio. Accordingly, Audap & Mirabeau's work carries a relatively cautious €500,000-600,000 guide.

The auction record for a painting regarded as an autograph work by Botticelli stands at a premium-inclusive \$10.44m paid at Christie's in New York in January 2013 for the Rockefeller Madonna.

The *Vièrge à la Grenade* to be sold in Paris does, however, come with a 19th century provenance and is fresh to the market having not been in seen in public since 1913. It was acquired in the late 19th century by Frederick Richards Leyland, an enthusiast for Renaissance painting and a patron of the Pre-Raphaelites whose collection was dispersed at Christie's in 1892.

The painting's next owner was Edouard Aynard of the Château de Charnay near Lyon. Aynard, another art lover and a collector, was a banker, a député of the Rhone Department, president of the Museums' acquisitions committee in Lyon and a benefactor of the city's Musée des Beaux-Arts.

Aynard's collection was dispersed in 1913 at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris, where *Vièrge à la Grenade* was described as 'attributed to Botticelli'. The painting was then acquired by the grandfather of the current owner and vendor.