

Art Market | Auctions and fairs

OBJECT LESSONS

Animals are the stars of this month's auction highlights, with a Husain horse painting, a Tanning portrait of Max Ernst's soulful dog, and a Fini cat mask. By **Carlie Porterfield**



Maqbool Fida Husain, *Untitled (Horses)* (1971)

South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art,
Christie's, New York, 17 September

Estimate: \$100,000 to \$150,000

↑ Six months after a painting by M.F. Husain exceeded auction house expectations and shattered multiple records, another of the beloved Indian Modernist's works is going up for sale. In March, Christie's sold *Untitled (Gram Yatra)* (1954) for \$13.7m (including fees), nearly quadrupling its high estimate and

setting records for both modern Indian art and for an Indian painting at auction. That remarkable sale reflects the rapid growth of India's art market, which has been buoyed by the country's fast-expanding economy. Now, *Untitled (Horses)*—a painting featuring one of Husain's recurrent subjects—is heading to auction at Christie's New York. In a 2007 publication, Husain was quoted as saying: "Horses are a childhood fascination for me... There are so many different stories in history related to horses from varied cultures. Horses are beautiful animals... It could be regarded as a mix of power and grace. That is how I depict my horses—charging like a dragon in the front, and graceful and elegant from the back."

Leonor Fini, *Embroidered Cat Mask* (around 1960)

Weinstein Gallery, Independent 20th Century, New York, 4-7 September

Estimate: \$475,000

← Although best remembered as a painter, Leonor Fini also designed costumes and sets. This embroidered cat mask will be on view at New York's Independent 20th Century fair. Few of Fini's masks have survived, and this one is considered among the most significant examples. While Fini took commissions for theatre and ballet productions to support herself financially, this particular mask came from her personal collection. It was created for her own use and has rarely been seen by the public. Fini was fascinated by masks and often wore her own designs to masquerade balls in Paris. "What prompts us to wear costumes is the need to enter a different space—the need to step out of ourselves, to look for ourselves, perhaps to find ourselves," Fini once said, according to the gallery. Also famously fond of cats, Fini is said to have kept as many as 23 at one time.



Dorothea Tanning, *Katchina and Her Soul* (1951)

Pauline Karpidas, London Collection,
Sotheby's, London, 17 September

Estimate: £300,000 to £500,000

→ In 1946, the American artist Dorothea Tanning married the German-born artist Max Ernst. Tanning became increasingly inspired by Ernst's dog, Katchina, and the Pekingese soon became a frequent muse, recurring in her work as both motif and surrogate for Surrealist ideas about animals and the subconscious. (Katchina was also beloved by Ernst's previous wife, the collector Peggy Guggenheim, who left with two of Katchina's puppies following their divorce.) *Katchina and Her Soul* is one of multiple works in which Tanning depicted the dog. In the 1978 short film *Insomnia: The Paintings of Dorothea Tanning*, directed by Peter Schamoni, the artist reflected: "I had a dog once whose ancestors lived in the Tibetan monasteries... I convinced myself that the dog knew the great questions and even some of the answers. I could make myself see magic in this dog. Its face began to appear in my pictures and looked so right that, pretty soon, it was hard to make a picture without it. That dog became a state of mind." According to Sotheby's, *Katchina and Her Soul* was previously owned by Tanning's friend, the American art restorer Gloria de Herrera.



Alberto Giacometti, *Small Head of Elsa Schiaparelli* (around 1935)

David Lévy, FAB Paris, Paris,
20-24 September

Estimate: around €100,000

↑ This small bronze serves as a physical reminder of the collaboration between two of the most memorable figures of the Années Folles interwar period in Paris. Alberto Giacometti sculpted this depiction of the Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli after being introduced to her by their mutual friend, the interior designer Jean-Michel Frank. Giacometti later created jewellery pieces for Schiaparelli, a leading figure in the Parisian fashion scene. He also collaborated with Frank to produce lamps, candlesticks, vases and chandeliers for Schiaparelli's showroom on Place Vendôme and her private residence. This small bronze—measuring just 1.65in high—remained in Giacometti's personal collection until his death in 1966. It then passed to his brother, fellow artist Diego Giacometti, who bequeathed it to his former partner Nelly Constantin. She later passed it on to her son, Johnny, who had worked as Diego's assistant. The sculpture is part of a group of nine works by the Giacometti brothers that passed through the hands of Nelly and Johnny and will be shown at FAB Paris on the stand of Brussels-based dealer David Lévy.