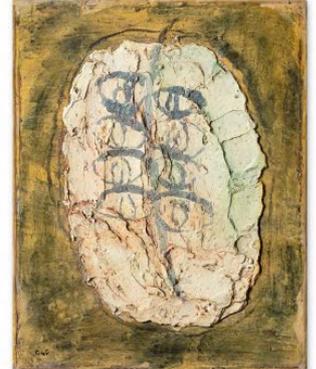


Time Capsule Collection of Seldom Seen Paintings  
Held in The Same Family Collection For 70 Years

*Wols, Fautrier And Dubuffet*  
*Provide a Snapshot of The Artworld of Post War Paris*

Announced for Sotheby's Cross Category Evening Sale to be held in London  
Together with the Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Auction in Paris  
Both on 25 March



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*“Paintings from the immediate post-war years in Europe come to the market all too rarely, so it is always a special moment when completely fresh works by the leading propagators of the Parisian avant-garde emerge. Painted by Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier and Wols, all four works tell the tale of post-war Paris, through the sparkle of hope in Dubuffet’s portrayal of two lovers, and Wols and Fautrier’s visceral response to the atrocities they had witnessed first-hand during the war.*”

*Hailing from one collection and created within four years of one another, these compelling works not only reflect the creative flourishing towards the end of the war and just after, but they stand at the absolute epicentre of the Parisian intelligentsia. Pivotal to this moment in history was Galerie Drouin where all – bar one – of these paintings were exhibited during the forties. These shows were legendary at the time, and still are today, so to find four works that were acquired absolutely contemporaneously with these events is a very rare moment.”*

**Oliver Barker, Senior Director and Chairman of Sotheby's Europe**

**January 2021, London:** The first works to be announced for Sotheby's Spring Marquee auctions are four seldom seen and rare paintings by Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier and Wols from a European private collection. Executed between 1944-1947, these works were created and acquired at a time when all three artists remained relatively unknown. Fully immersed within the Parisian artworld of the fifties, the consignor's late father became acquainted with Michel Tapié, infamous art critic and pioneer of “*Un art autre*” (meaning art of another kind), who helped put this collection together.

The Wols belongs to the artist's first series of paintings, the Dubuffet was painted just one year after the artist's first solo exhibition, and the two works by Fautrier are part of his breakthrough *Otages (Hostages)* series painted secretly during World War II. None have been exhibited in public for over 30 years.

All are united by their connection to Galerie René Drouin, one of the most important galleries in post-war Paris. First set up with Leo Castelli in 1939, the gallery was re-established after the Second World War to champion the artists and creativity that emerged from the horrors of the last six years.

Fautrier's *Tete d'otage N. 15* was unveiled in the artist's breakthrough exhibition at the gallery in November 1945, shortly after details of the concentration camps emerged; the Dubuffet was shown at Galerie Drouin as part of the second-ever exhibition of his work in 1946, and the Wols was displayed there in 1947 as part of the artist's inaugural show of oil paintings. Both Wols and Dubuffet had attended Fautrier's 1945 exhibition, and the experience left an indelible impression on their work (more details below).

Together, the pieces provide a window onto artistic production in post-war Paris, a period which is often overlooked, as the focus of the artworld swiftly shifted to New York. However, while many artists and intellectuals, as well as collectors and dealers, fled Europe for a safe haven in the United States, the physical and moral devastation brought on by the war led to a renewed cultural production in Paris.

Sotheby's London Evening Sale on 25 March will once again cross categories and geographies (following in the footsteps of last summer's "Rembrandt to Richter" sale), and will be paired with a Paris auction of Impressionist & Modern art which will take place on the same day (echoing the format of October's Modernités/Contemporary sale).

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### ***A Closer Look at the Paintings:***

#### **Jean Dubuffet's *Le Cavaliere aux Diamant* (1945), est. £2.5-3.5 million**

Hailing from the very earliest years of the artist career, *Le Cavaliere aux Diamant* was included in the artist's second-ever exhibition, staged by Galerie Drouin in 1946. The show stirred enormous controversy for its brutish primitive compositions and the entire show sold out within days of its opening.

This hopeful work counterbalances the angst, pain and horror depicted by many of Dubuffet's contemporaries at the time. It depicts two young lovers in each other's arms, marking the moment of the couple's engagement. Dubuffet incorporated a piece of mirror for the female's engagement ring, replicated in her earrings too.

Pending Government guidance, the Barbican will host *Jean Dubuffet: Brutal Beauty* in the Barbican Art Gallery in spring. It will be the first major survey of his work in the UK and is sponsored by Sotheby's.



#### **Wols, *La Turquoise* (1947), est. £1.2-1.8 million**

Like many other German artists, Wols was sent to a concentration camp during World War II and was later forced to flee from the advance of the German troops. He found refuge in France and held his first solo show of watercolours with Galerie René Drouin in 1945. *La Turquoise* is from his first series of paintings and was included in an exhibition at Galerie René Drouin in 1947. A painting of the same title resides in the [Centre Pompidou](#).

Very little is known about the artist today. He died very young at just 38 from complications with food poisoning, and is recorded to have painted just 80 canvases, 25 of which have so far appeared at auction. In 2019, Sotheby's made a record result for the artist when *Vert Strié Noir Rouge* (*Green Stripe Black Red*) sold for £4.5 million, versus the £400,000-600,000 estimate. The canvas was also first exhibited at Wols' landmark exhibition at Galerie Drouin in 1947.



Jean Fautrier *Corps d'otage* (1944), est. £500,000-700,000 and *Tete d'otage no.15* (1945), est. £350,000-450,000

Both canvases hail from the artist's *Otages* (*Hostages*) series, the body of work which cemented the artist's reputation as a formidable and important practitioner. *Tete d'otage N. 15* was exhibited as part of Fautrier's landmark exhibition at Galerie René Drouin, November 1945, which followed the first published reports and photographs of the concentration camps. Fautrier had witnessed the horrors of war first-hand following a brief imprisonment by the Nazis. He painted these works during the occupation but did not sign nor date them until the exhibition for fears of recrimination.

Dubuffet attended Fautrier's show and was deeply moved by the purity and directness of his abstract works: "*Fautrier's exhibition made an extremely strong impression on me. Art had never before appeared so fully realized in its pure state. The word 'art' had never before been so loaded with meaning for me.*" Thereafter, Dubuffet sought to emulate the rawness in Fautrier's paintings, experimenting with materiality and rejecting traditional Western ideals of beauty and skill that had prevailed before the war. So too did Wols, whose *oeuvre* came as a direct expression of his troubled mind after the war.



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#### About Sotheby's

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