


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<1713/c>	observations in hindsight, in many ways the results of the two Old Master pictures sales in London were predictable before they took place. Of the two, Christie's not only offered the better quality sale, but also presented their material with more conviction. Christie's might occasionally be blamed for 'too many notes' at least with regard to minor lots (see lot 18 in the present sale) but their catalogues are undoubtedly superior at the present time. Sotheby's 9 December sale totalled £10.8 million with premium, 63% sold by lot, 73.8% by value, Christie's on 11 December £14.9 million with premium, 67.4% by lot, 83% by value. Examples of underpresenting lots at Sotheby's included lot 9, 'Three figures at a table' by a follower of Caravaggio, which found its own price at £105,000 (\$168,000, est. £20,000-30,000); lot 12 'Christ in the house of Martha and Mary' by Vasari, 'the cheapest Vasari I've ever seen', was one comment, which made £9,000 (\$14,400); and lot 92, 'The Annunciation', a late work by Procaccini which made £92,000 (\$147,200, est. £20,000-30,000). Other failures must simply be ascribed to over-estimation: Lorenzo Lotto's 'The penitent St Jerome in the wilderness' (lot 39, est. £150,000-200,000); School of Zeeland circa 1620 'Portrait of a family seated at a table' (lot 13, est. £120,000-180,000); Jan Breughel the Elder 'A wooded landscape with huntsmen shooting Duck' (lot 33, est. £60,000-80,000); and Canaletto 'The Grand Canal ...' (lot 79, est. £1-1.5 million). Lack of confidence in the 'Portrait of Michael Wohlgemut' attributed to Durer resulted in failure at £380,000 (est. £600,000-800,000) while Sotheby's must have considered themselves unlucky not to find a buyer for the rare Garofalo 'Calumny of Apelles' (lot 41, est. £200,000-300,000), an important but difficult canvas. There were of course successes. A charming Wouwermans 'Hawking Party in a hilly Landscape' soared away from its £50,000-70,000 estimate to make £230,000 (\$368,000), while the Mountbatten Koninck (lot 20) compared favourably with the one at Christie's (lot 101, unsold) and made £900,000, bought by Hubner. A private buyer bidding in the room purchased two appealing lots, a large 'Allegory of Abundance' (lot 73) by Domenico Piola (£180,000; \$288,000) and a Venetian 'Masked Ball' by Giovanni Antonio Guardi (lot 80) for £305,000 (\$488,000; est. £180,000-200,000). Considered a bargain was the impressive Roman School early seventeenth-century 'Still-life with
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	
	<p>basket of fruit</p> <p>and two Children', one of a group of works by this yet unnamed artist, which made £215,000 (\$344,000, est. £200,000-300,000). The merited success of the Goya 'Bullfight. Suerte de varas' is now well known, selling within estimate to the Getty for £4.5 million (\$7.2 million). Less assured was the fate of Christie's cover lot, de Hooch's 'Courtyard of a House in Delft' (lot 104). Known to have been offered privately by Christie's in the recent past, it was also thought by some to compare unfavourably with the National Gallery, London, version. Noortman of London demonstrated their confidence in the work by paying a world record £4 million</p>

	<p>(\$6.4million, est. £4.5-6.5 million). Elsewhere Christie's seemed to have the luck that Sotheby's lacked. Considered uninspired, highly-priced and in less than perfect condition by some, Andrea Previtali's 'Portrait of a young Gentleman' (lot 6) still went to £150,000 (\$240,000) while 'The Piazza San Marco, Venice' attributed to Francesco Guardi (lot 24) reached £130,000 (\$208,000) against an estimate of £30,000-40,000. The obviously poor condition of the lower half of lot 50, Hans Memling's 'Virgin and Child enthroned' was also forgiven, and the panel sold for £170,000 (\$272,000, est. £200,000-300,000). There was surprise among dealers in the room that the fine and large pair of Lacroix de Marseille 'Morning' and 'Evening' (lot 34) failed to find buyers: 'too big' was one verdict, which seemed to be justified by the success of a smaller pair two lots later (£120,000; \$192,000). Not dissimilar in mood, a beautiful, mint 'River Tagus at Dawn' by Jean Pillement (lot 38) made a record for the artist at £100,000 (\$160,000, est. £30,000-50,000). Again not unknown to the market, having been previously estimated at £500,000-700,000 by Sotheby's then offered to the Louvre, the first of the Rubens, 'Portrait of Madame de Vicq' (lot 56), was nonetheless an outstanding work which narrowly failed to sell at £950,000 (est. £1-1.5 million), and sold after the sale. Of the remaining Rubens, lot 57 'The Marriages of Constantine and Faustina and of Constantia and Licinius' made a new record for an oil sketch at £680,000 (\$1.08, est. £500,000-700,000). For many the highlight of the sale was the last of the Rubens, 'The Entombment', formerly in the Demidoff collection and unseen since 1921. Hung just above the auctioneer's head, the canvas dominated the room, selling</p>
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