

Christie's, October 19, 2015

# CHRISTIE'S

## Up close and personal

by Jude Hull

Specialist Jude Hull introduces six photographers behind some of the 20th century's most powerful portraits ahead of Photographs: The Portrait.

**Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879)**



Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), Sappho, Mary Hillier, 1865. Untrimmed albumen print. Sold for: £6,250 on 22 May 2015 at Christie's in London.

Julia Margaret Cameron's experimental portraits of family and friends have left a long lasting legacy on the history of photography, despite its relative shortness. Gifted a camera by her daughter in 1863, she was utterly captivated by the potential of the medium, which would become her focus for the next 11 years. Inviting those close to her to be her subject — including the Poet Laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson and the astronomer Sir John Herschel — she created an ethereal body of portraits that made reference to historical and legendary figures, un-rivaled to this day.

**Irving Penn (1917-2007)**



Irving Penn (1917-2003), Mother and Child with Tweed Overall, Cuzco, Peru, 1948. Gelatin silver print, mounted on board. Estimate: £8,000-12,000. This work is offered in Photographs: The Portrait online sale, 13-22 October

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The success of Irving Penn's portraits lies in the respect with which he treats all of his subjects: From still lifes of food, to photographs of cigarettes, nudes and high fashion models, everything he depicts is portrayed as important. His subjects are photographed isolated in his studio, always closely cropped and devoid of all but the most essential props — the removal of context elevating them to the status of muse. This photograph, from a series of portraits taken in the city of Cuzco in a makeshift studio, is reminiscent of the early ethnographic portraits of Edward S. Curtis. The solemn pose of the mother and child is emphasized by the minimal studio setting, which draws our gaze to their clothing and expressions.

### Cindy Sherman (b. 1964)



Cindy Sherman, Untitled (#410), 2003. Chromogenic print. This work is number 4 from the edition of 6. Estimate: £180,000-250,000. This work is offered in A Visual Odyssey Selections from LAC (Lambert art Collection)  
Staged by Jacques Grange on 14 October at Christie's in London

No discussion of portraiture would be complete without identifying the artist's natural inclination to turn the camera on themselves as a subject — and no photographer has explored this concept quite so extensively as Cindy Sherman. Playing dress up as imaginary characters from films or history, she comments on the constructs of different female archetypes in contemporary culture. Often unsettling or disturbing, her images challenge not only the construction of these roles, but also the medium's potential for pushing the boundaries and questioning the reality of portrait depiction.

### Katy Grannan (b. 1969)



Katy Grannan, Carolyn & Catherine b. 1982, 2004. Pigment print, printed 2005. This work is number 1 from the edition of 6. Estimate: £5,000-7,000. This work is offered in Photographs: The Portrait online sale, 13-22 October

Katy Grannan has achieved international recognition for her intimate and sensitive portraits of strangers and those on the margins of society. The work on offer in this sale comes from the series Mystic Lake, executed in 2004, which saw Grannan photograph people who responded to a newspaper advertisement for her to take their portrait. She asked them to position themselves as they would like to be photographed — the result being highly natural and intimate images. This innovative approach has secured her a place as one of the most important contemporary photographers creating portraits today.

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### August Sander (1876-1964)



August Sander (1876-1964), Three young farmers on their way to a dance, Westerland, 1914. Gelatin silver print, printed later by Gunther Sander. Sold for: £104,500 on 22 May 2015 at Christie's in London

August Sander's lifelong project was to document the people of his native home, near Cologne. Like the greatest portrait photographers, his lens turned to all those around him, in every walk of life. In 1929 he published his first book, entitled *Face of our Time*, which cemented his status as one of the greatest German portrait photographers of all time.

Over the years, Sander produced images that captured the lives of farmers, tradesmen, women, artists, professionals and the working classes. His images are intimate and revealing, inviting you to share the perspective and the context of the people he depicts. The approach was relatively controversial for the time and, in the 1930s, resulted in his portraits being banned by the National Socialist Party, which claimed they did not live up to the Aryan ideal. Despite this, his portraits have lived on in the public imagination, precisely because they so honestly captured a generation at a crucial moment that would change the course of history.

### Diane Arbus (1923-1971)



Diane Arbus (1923-1971), Child with a toy hand grenade in Central Park, N.Y.C., 1962. Gelatin silver print. Sold for: \$785,000 on 11 May 2015 at Christie's in New York

Diane Arbus was fascinated by the obscure and freakish. Concerning herself almost exclusively with the portrait, she is unequivocally one of the most important portrait photographers of all time. Much of her artistic work was done on assignment, with some of her more offbeat subjects including nudist camps, beauty pageants or high society on the upper east side of her hometown Manhattan. Regardless of their social differences, all of the photographer's subjects are depicted directly in front of the camera, an angle that gives no room to hide, revealing as much of the sitter as possible. Often, the simplicity with which individuals are portrayed in her work is testament to Arbus's skill in engaging with and relating to all manner of people. She did not take advantage of that position, rather she bestowed nobility and individuality on both the weird and wonderful, never failing to engage the viewer.