

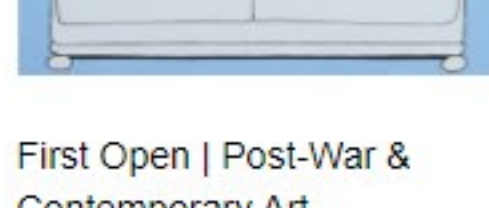


## Fresh finds at First Open: 5 artists to collect before year's end

6 December 2022

POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART | AUCTION PREVIEW

Highlighted sale



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From Ernie Barnes to Belkis Ayón, Christie's First Open highlights today's most significant and in-demand artists

**Christie's First Open, from 1-14 December**, is dedicated to the cutting edge. Presenting established names alongside new and emerging practitioners, the sale features diverse offerings from modern masters as well as contemporary artists who are changing the game, all at accessible price points.

With an emphasis on art's relationship to culture, the works offered tell a story of representation, and relationship to the canon. Often, it is through their unorthodox sense of style that these artists stand out, making sense of the world around them in experimental ways. They redefine art history, but more importantly they bring into question what the face of contemporary art should look like.

### 1 Bob Thompson *Trees and River*

Bob Thompson rose to critical acclaim in the late 1950s for his complex, vibrant paintings. Like many of the artists included in this sale, he noticed a gap between the historically European canon of art history and the Black experience. Emigrating to Europe in 1961, he settled in Ibiza with his wife.



Bob Thompson (1938-1988). *Trees and River*, 1980. Oil on canvas. 7 3/4 x 12 1/2 in (19.7 x 31.8 cm). Estimate: \$20,000-30,000. Offered in [First Open | Post-War & Contemporary Art](#) on 1-14 December 2022 at Christie's online

Often his works pay homage to well-known compositions by artists like [Francisco de Goya](#) and Piero della Francesca, reconfiguring them using distorted perspective and vivid colour. This is what makes *Trees and River*—painted in 1960, the year after he left university to pursue art as a career—profoundly resonant.

The intimate composition emphasises his process of intensely studying the Old Masters while simultaneously imbuing the canvas with his own perspective. The result is a work of startling contrasts, where the human figures jump out in deep yellows, while his New York School influence can be found in the scribbling and rapid brushwork of the background.

### 2 Lynne Drexler *Meadow Fog*

Lynne Drexler's abstract paintings are often compared to those of [Yan Gogh](#), her textured landscapes echoing the Dutch master's impastoed compositions. However in her later work, like *Meadow Fog* from 1980, the blocks of colour she harnessed to great visual impact became more defined. Separated by white space, her shapes imply rather than convey a landscape, reducing it to its most essential elements.



Lynne Drexler (1928-1999). *Meadow Fog*, 1980. Oil on canvas. 36 x 29 in (91.4 x 73.7 cm). Estimate: \$30,000-50,000. Offered in [First Open | Post-War & Contemporary Art](#) on 1-14 December 2022 at Christie's online

In this work, the fog takes the form of circles rendered in pastel tones, amid trees and verdant bushes. Using a window as a framing device, she brings the viewer into her studio on Monhegan Island, off the coast of Maine. Looking through the fog, one feels how the cloaking of this meadow renders a familiar sight otherworldly.

### 3 Belkis Ayón *La Sentencia*

Much of Belkis Ayón's work is thematically keyed to Abakuá, a fraternal association that began in Nigeria and was brought to Haiti and Cuba in 19th century, which she depicts through her characteristic practice of collography—a printmaking method where a variety of materials are applied to a substrate and used as the basis of a print.

Both of these aspects are central to her work *La Sentencia*, made in 1993 in her native Cuba.



Belkis Ayón (1967-1999). *La Sentencia*, 1993. Collograph on paper. 36 x 26 1/4 in (91 x 67 cm). \$15,000-20,000. Offered in [First Open | Post-War & Contemporary Art](#) on 1-14 December 2022 at Christie's online

Given the difficulty of procuring art supplies—the Soviet Union fell two years prior, complicating Cuba's relationship to global supply chains—she would attach materials of different textures, like food scraps, acrylic and paper, to cardboard before painting it and running it through a printing press. From there she would paint over the print or engrave it, resulting in the ethereal textures presented here.

In her studies of Abakuá, Ayón disrupts the male-dominated mythology by introducing a female voice, often mixing in Christian symbology in the process. She rejects the patriarchal structure of Cuba making women the central characters in her work, highlighting their silence by depicting them without mouths.

### 4 Danielle Orchard *Girl Removing Her Shirt Study*

The Brooklyn-based painter Danielle Orchard's contemporary twist on figure painting has made her one of the most sought-after artists in recent years. Since she entered the fold at Perrotin gallery in 2021, acquiring one of her works has become notoriously difficult.



Danielle Orchard (b. 1985). *Girl Removing Her Shirt Study*, 2017. Oil on canvas. 18 x 14 in (45.7 x 35.6 cm). Estimate: \$15,000-20,000. Offered in [First Open | Post-War & Contemporary Art](#) on 1-14 December 2022 at Christie's online

*Girl Removing Her Shirt Study*, from 2017, traces her map of influences, from artists of the Renaissance to the Analytical Cubists. The work reveals her sketchbook-style roots in its playful, almost abstract composition, while demonstrating a technical mastery of harsh, theatrical lighting in the portrayal of the central female figure.

Like many of the artists included in First Open, she repurposes techniques from art history to new ends, addressing the relationship between narrative and the nude, the female body and the painter's gaze, and the physical work and its audience.

### 5 Ernie Barnes *Bookin'*

Since making waves at Christie's [20th Century Evening Sale](#) in the spring, Ernie Barnes' work has been the talk of the art market.

Depicting bodies in motion, Barnes' paintings masterfully explore the intersection of raw physicality and culture.



Ernie Barnes (1938-2009). *Bookin'*, c. 1970s. Acrylic on canvas, in artist's frame. Canvas: 30 x 15 in (76.2 x 38 cm); artist's frame: 35 x 18 in (89 x 45.7 cm). Estimate: \$80,000-120,000. Offered in [First Open | Post-War & Contemporary Art](#) on 1-14 December 2022 at Christie's online

*Bookin'*, painted in the 1970s, is framed with found wood—an homage to his father, who kept the family picket fence in pristine condition even in difficult times, that recurs throughout Barnes' oeuvre. It features a woman in a colourful dress walking on an armful of books. Rendered in his characteristic style that highlights the free movement of the human body, the figure's musculature and posture are the centre of attention, evoking a lively, swinging gait.

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