

## INSIDE ART

# Partners Create a Superdealership

By Carol Vogel

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When was the last time an expert from a top auction house dispensed with longtime allegiances and joined forces with someone from the enemy camp? In the fiercely competitive world of Sotheby's and Christie's, such an occurrence is rarer than a prized Vermeer.

But for months now there have been rumors that a new powerhouse partnership was in the works, one that would replace Giraud, Pissarro, Ségalo, the superprivate superdealer that pulled off so many big transactions and whose business began winding down soon after Franck Giraud, one of its partners, announced that he was leaving to "explore options inside the art world and out."

The players making up this new venture, however, had been something of a guessing game.

Here's the scoop: The firm is called Connery, Pissarro, Seydoux, and its partners include Stéphane C. Connery, who resigned from Sotheby's in May after having been one of its biggest business generators as worldwide director of private sales, and Thomas Seydoux, who left Christie's the same month after having been one of its most respected rainmakers in private sales as chairman of Impressionist and Modern art. The Pissarro partners in the firm are Lionel, a great-grandson of the painter Camille Pissarro who specializes in 19th- and 20th-century art and who was a partner in Giraud, Pissarro, Ségalo for its entire 10-year existence, and his wife, Sandrine, who besides working on private deals on her own has also organized and developed a vast archive of the Pissarro family, which is available to scholars.

Both Mr. Connery and Mr. Seydoux said they believe that the business has changed and that the old-boy networks, once binding, are no longer quite as strong. "Mutual friends sat us down together," Mr. Connery said in a telephone interview. "There is a huge advantage to having the experience of one auction house and another. We complement each other. Plus, Thomas is so well ensconced in Europe, and I've been doing the same thing in the States for over 15 years, so there's a great synergy."

Making the partnership more interesting still is their range of connections. The Pissarros and Mr. Seydoux are known for their strong ties to prominent French and Swiss collectors as well as artists' families, while Mr. Connery has an impressive lineup of American clients and contacts.

"As international heads at Sotheby's and Christie's, Stéphane and I were in the driver's seat for many years," Mr. Seydoux said. "We have experienced firsthand the exponential demand for private sales."

The Pissarros and Mr. Seydoux will be based in Paris and Mr. Connery in New York. All the players specialize in Impressionist and Modern art. When asked whether they were planning to expand into contemporary, Mr. Connery replied, "It's early days, but anything is possible."

## POLLOCK PAINTING ...

Sometimes a Pollock is just a Pollock, but the drip painting up for auction in November belonged to the artist's shrink.

In the early 1970s Sidney Kohl, a businessman from Milwaukee, and his wife, Dorothy, decided to put together a collection of Abstract Expressionist art. Working with John Lloyd Taylor, then director of exhibitions and collections at the Milwaukee Art Museum, they drove around the country looking at art and meeting artists like Helen Frankenthaler. Now the couple, who live in Palm Beach, Fla., are selling eight works at Sotheby's in New York on Nov. 13. The paintings are expected to bring a total of \$80 million to \$100 million.

Top among the group is Jackson Pollock's "Number 4, 1951," created with layers of red, blue, yellow, green, ocher and silver. It is estimated to sell for \$25 million to \$35 million. "There hasn't been a drip painting on canvas at auction for years," said Tobias Meyer, Sotheby's director of contemporary art worldwide.