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1. *Paysage* by Théodore Rousseau – £19,000 at Sworders.
2. *Roof Tops* by Robert Léopold Leprince – £17,000.
3. *Le Pont des Arts* by Henri-Joseph Harpignies – £4200.

pictures, always a strength of Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, were clearly a favourite collecting category for the couple and the two top prices at the auction came for small landscapes by French artists.

Rousseau's rolling hills

A Théodore Rousseau (1812-67) work on paper showing rolling hills in the countryside drew strong competition against a £1500-2000 estimate.

Simply titled *Paysage*, the 4¼ x 13in (11 x 33cm) oil on paper laid on board had previously been part of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Following its deaccession it had featured in one of Baer's early exhibitions of Barbizon School pictures at Hazlitt, held in the summer of 1956 (it also featured in another show at the gallery in 1961). In terms of its condition, it had a small abrasion to the upper right corner but no signs of significant damage or restoration were apparent.

Although the artist can make six-figure prices for larger canvases or panels, this small oil sketch was

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never likely to be in that category. But with some elegant handling and deft painterly touches, it found admirers that translated into active bidding on the day, sailing over the top estimate before being knocked down at £19,000. Acquired by a private London buyer on the phone, it fetched a good sum for such a diminutive work on paper by the artist.

In a similar vein, *Roof Tops* by Robert Léopold Leprince (1800-47) was an elegantly conceived landscape by the artist who exhibited at the Paris Salon from 1822-44, receiving his first medal in 1824.

Signed and dated 1815 on the back, the 5 x 12¼in (12 x 31cm) oil on board was an earlier work made when the artist was just a teenager, showing his precocious talent and the rigorous academic training he received from his father, the painter and lithographer Anne-Pierre Leprince.

While the artist is probably less well known than his brother Auguste-Xavier Leprince (1799-1826), his views of the Italian Campagna and the forests around Fontainebleau do have appeal. This one was not only seemingly the earliest work to have emerged at auction but also had a more experimental composition with the chimneys prominent to the foreground.

The condition was good but not perfect with some varnish, surface dirt

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Gwen John drawing high

Modern British pictures featured prominently among the works dispersed by Sworders this autumn from the collection of Sir Jack Baer.

The top picture from the consignment was a portrait sketch by **Gwen John (1876-1939)** that was offered at the Essex firm's Modern and Contemporary Art sale on October 4.

Depicting Chloë Boughton-Leigh, the 8 x 6in (20 x 15cm) pencil and grey wash was one of numerous sketches of the sitter who was part of John's intimate circle, along with her sister Maude. Her full name was Ellen Theodosia Boughton-Leigh and she had studied at the Slade where John was a student between 1894-7.

Larger painted portraits of the sitter by John can be found in collection at the Tate Britain as well as Leeds Art Gallery, while she was also the model for John's *Woman Holding a Flower* now in Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

This sketch at Sworders had remained with the artist and was part of her estate when she died. It was shown at the Gwen John memorial exhibition at London gallery Matthiesen in 1946 (where it was believed to depict a different sitter, Fenella Lovell). The exhibition did much to establish her posthumous reputation. It had then appeared at another retrospective dedicated to the artist organised by the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1968.

Since then, however, prices for John have risen greatly and, more recently, she has benefited from the commercial boost for works by leading female artists. It has also been suggested that a certain erotic element in some of her portraits of women (John had a number of same-sex relationships) has led to extra interest on the current market.

In any case, this drawing of one of John's most important sitters was always likely to exceed the £3000-5000 estimate.

On the day, after a strong competition, it was knocked down at £45,000 to a private London buyer – an



Above: *Portrait of Chloë Boughton-Leigh* by Gwen John – £45,000 at Sworders.

auction record for a drawing by the artist (source: Artprice).

Elsewhere in the Baer collection, decent bidding emerged on a small **Eliot Hodgkin (1905-87)** painting that overshot a £6000-8000 pitch and sold at £13,000. It too was knocked down to a private London buyer.

The Berkshire-born artist was a cousin of abstract painter Howard Hodgkin and had a life-long fascination for depicting plant forms.

The 4 x 5in (10 x 13cm) signed tempera on board here dated from 1953 and was a trademark example of his highly detailed studies of small natural objects, such as turnips, lemons and eggs, that he began to focus on from the 1930s onwards. This one depicted tulip and iris bulbs.

The artist was one whose work was regularly sold by Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, with this study featuring as part of the gallery's 1999 exhibition *Eliot Hodgkin - Painter & Collector*.

The price at Sworders was a solid mid-range sum for the artist.

Overall, the Baer collection contributed 25 pictures to Sworders' Modern and Contemporary Art sale which together raised a hammer total of £147,500. All bar one lot sold.



Left: *Tulip and Iris Bulbs* by Eliot Hodgkin – £13,000 at Sworders.