FOR THE FIRST TIME AT AUCTION:
10 MODERN WORKS
FROM THE COLLECTION OF DINA VIERNY

Dina Vierny & Aristide Maillol at Banyuls-sur-Mer, 1943 © DR

Paris – In association with Sotheby’s Paris and in partnership with Stephane Connery, a selection of ten historic works from the private collection of Dina Vierny will be offered for auction by Artcurial at the Hôtel Marcel-Dassault in Paris on 2 December 2013.

Dina Vierny, who died in 2009, devoted her life to art. She left an exceptional legacy in the form of the Foundation she created in 1995, devoted primarily to the work of Aristide Maillol.

Four years after her death, Dina Vierny’s sons have decided to pay tribute to their mother by choosing to offer for auction iconic works from her personal collection by Maillol, Matisse, Dufy, Bulatov and Kabakov, hitherto kept within the family. These works retrace Dina Vierny’s extraordinary career as an artist’s model, a member of the Resistance, an art dealer and founder of the Musée Maillol in Paris.
Dina Vierny was born into a Jewish family in Moldova in 1919 but quit Stalin’s USSR with her family in 1925 and settled in Paris where, through her parents, she became acquainted with the members of the Russian intelligentsia.

Her encounter with Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) was decisive. She was only 15 at the time; he was 73. Dina became the key figure in his work: the ageing sculptor had found the perfect muse. Their collaboration was highly fruitful and lasted a decade (1935-44), yielding over three-dozen sculptures, dozens of drawings and a number of paintings, all reflecting the dialogue between physical perfection and mature artistic talent.

The auction includes three major works by Aristide Maillol that offer powerful evidence of Dina Vierny’s influence:

- *La Rivièrè*, in a lead casting from 1938 (est. €2.3 million)
- *a study for La Rivièrè* (est. €250,000-300,000)
- *L’Harmonie*, Maillol’s final work (est. €400,000-600,000)

During the French Occupation, Dina joined the American Resistance network Varian Fry, which helped anti-fascists, crossover into Spain. To protect his model, Aristide Maillol entrusted her to his friends Henri Matisse, Raoul Dufy and Pierre Bonnard. The sale also includes a set of four ink drawings of Dina by Henri Matisse (1869-1954) along with a portrait of her by Raoul Dufy (1877-1953).

In 1947, encouraged by Matisse, Dina Vierny opened a gallery at 36 rue Jacob, leading to an overnight success. She showed both famous and lesser-known artists, from Picasso to Poliakoff, Kandinsky, Laurens and the Naïve art of Bauchant. *Promoting the second Russian Avant-Garde would also be one of Dina Vierny’s great campaigns after World War II*. She helped artists she had discovered and actively supported, notably Erik Bulatov and Ilya Kabakov (both born 1933), to leave the USSR. The sale features works she acquired for her own collection such as Bulatov’s spectacular 1992 painting *La Liberté* (est. €600,000-800,000).

**Auction**
Monday 2 December 2013 at 8pm

**Viewing at Sotheby’s New York**
Saturday 2 November 10am – 5pm
Sunday 3 November 1pm – 5pm
Monday 4 November 10am – 5pm
Tuesday 5 November 10am – 5pm

**Viewing at Artcurial Paris**
Friday 29 November 11am – 7pm
Saturday 30 November 11am – 6pm
Sunday 1 December 2pm – 6pm
Monday 2 December 11am – 4pm

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‘I want to sculpt the impalpable’ – Maillol

‘At the age of 73, Maillol was no longer sculpting… he began sculpting again and, after me, did monumental sculpture’

(Dina Vierny in Histoire de ma vie racontée à Alain Jaubert, 2009, p. 53)

When Dina Vierny was jailed for her involvement in the Resistance, for helping those fleeing the Nazi regime escape to Spain, Maillol arranged for her release. In November 1943, when she left the prison at Fresnes after spending six months in incarceration, he was waiting for her. Accompanied by the founder Eugène Rudier, all three headed straight to Robert Couturier’s studio so Maillol could add the finishing touches to the definitive version of La Riviére – the same version now offered for auction.

**La Riviére was Maillol’s last monumental work.** It was the first time a sculpture had shown a female figure balanced precariously on her back, struggling to resist the inexorable current that is dragging her away, her face racked with terror. It is an allegorical portrayal of the troubled times of World War II, and a metaphor of History and Time. As a work of drama and movement, La Riviére is exceptional among Maillol’s oeuvre, which normally exudes calm, sensuality and stability.

**La Riviére was Maillol’s third monumental sculpture to be inspired by Dina Vierny after La Montagne (1937) and L’Air (1938).** La Riviére was initially a public commission to Maillol in 1938 for a monument in homage to his friend Henri Barbusse, the pacifist writer. Maillol began work on the sculpture in Marly in the Autumn of 1939, but was rapidly forced to abandon it: the project was cancelled after the outbreak of World War II. Maillol was deeply affected by the War, and sought refuge in his home village of Banyuls-sur-Mer until 1943. Yet the elderly sculptor was driven by the desire to complete one final monumental sculpture, and decided to continue with the work on his own account – engaging Robert Couturier to transfer the plaster to his own studio in Paris and continue the statue under Maillol’s handwritten directives. When Couturier was mobilized in May 1940, he left the sculpture in his studio, virtually finished.

**La Riviére was finally completed in November 1943. The cast to be offered for sale is one of the few still in private hands.** Eight copies of La Riviére can be found in public collections: in Paris (Tuileries Gardens, since 1964); Antwerp (Middelheim sculpture park); Brussels (Royal Museum); Hamburg (Kunsthalle); Zurich (Kunsthaus); and in three American museums (including the MOMA).
ARISTIDE MAILLOL

DINA SUR LA RIVIÈRE, PREPARATORY SKETCH (1938)

‘Maillo l always began by drawing. To him drawing played a fundamental, capital role’
(Dina Vierny in Histoire de ma vie racontée à Alain Jaubert, 2009, p.65)

Aristide MAILLOL

DINA SUR LA RIVIÈRE (1938)
pastel 80 x 125cm
est. €250,000-350,000

During the final years of his life Maillo l made some very large-format drawings of his youthful model Dina, which he kept preciously and refused to sell. ‘First of all, a sculptor must draw… a lot of drawings and, the day one of them makes sense, use it for a statue’, he liked to say.

This preparatory drawing for the monumental sculpture La Rivière portrays the work as Maillo l wished, with the female body in exactly the same position as the final statue. Maillo l sketched it in 1939. Apart from being a study, the drawing is a work of art in its own right, exceptional for its sensitivity and technical construction – the way the body occupies the space on the paper; the volume of each delicately revealed limb; the twisting of the torso; the folds of the breasts; and the light playing on the grain of the skin… All these sensual details reflect Maillo l’s interest in beauty and every nuance of life.

‘With Maillo l, drawing is a form of magic… Forms are constructed, intersect one another and proliferate without clashing, fixing themselves without staying in one place, in a balanced harmony that is never indifferent. All his drawings are a world in themselves, whose content is palpable and as grave as stone. The mathematics of their forms lend their beauty rigour through both outline and colour, set out on the warm ochre paper Boucher where the pastel is applied.’ (Dina Vierny in the catalogue to the exhibition Maillo l au Japon, 1976)
Aristide MAILLOL
L’HARMONIE (2nd state)

‘Maillo was an inventor. Maillo’s work, as André Gide said, “had no meaning.” It was the onset of modernity, like his pursuit of silence in sculpture or simplification of form.
Like rupture with movement.’
(Dina Vierny in Histoire de ma vie racontée à Alain Jaubert, 2009, p.80)

‘His goal was the search to create perfection’
(Dina Vierny in Histoire de ma vie racontée à Alain Jaubert, 2009, p.69)

Maillol began his last work in 1940. He would keep working on it for four years, making several versions. But he died in 1944 after a car accident, and left it unfinished.

L’Harmonie is the only sculpture in all of Maillol’s work that is not entirely born of his imagination. It is also a portrait: L’Harmonie gently echoes Dina’s features and derives inspiration from them. Maillol hardly ever did portraits; his bust of Renoir was a rare exception. Dina posed standing up. Maillol installed a desk for her so she could read during the lengthy modelling sessions.

As a sculpture of immobility, L’Harmonie appears as a testament, achieving a synthesis of all Maillol’s formal research.
HENRI MATISSE

Henri MATISSE
DINA WITH
FLOWER-PATTERNED
BLANKET (1941)
ink on paper 21 x 26cm
est. €40,000-60,000

Henri MATISSE
DINA LYING DOWN (1941)
ink on paper 20 x 27cm
est. €40,000-60,000

Henri MATISSE
DINA WITH
BRACELET (1945)
ink on paper 20 x 26cm
est. €40,000-60,000

Henri MATISSE
DINA TORSO (1949)
ink on paper 19 x 26cm
est. €40,000-60,000

‘Matisse, I am sending you the object of my work, so you can reduce her to a line’ – as Maillol wrote to Matisse when he sent him his model in 1941, judging that the Catalan region had become too dangerous for Dina.

Matisse was recovering from a serious operation, ‘resuscitated’ (as he put it) after several months in hospital. Dina posed for many drawings, and inspired Matisse with the desire to make a painting: ‘You resemble Manet’s Olympia: I’d like to paint you as Matisse’s Olympia.’ When Dina informed Maillol about his friend’s project, he anxiously summoned her back to Banyuls to resume the work in hand. ‘He was afraid I’d stay with Matisse for the rest of my life!’ said Dina; but the artistic collaboration between Henri Matisse and Dina Vierny was nipped in the bud.

‘I depend totally on my model, whom I observe in liberty before deciding on the pose best naturally suited to her’ wrote Matisse. ‘When I take a new model, I deduce the pose that suits her best, and to which I become a slave, while she is asleep’ (Notes d’un peintre sur son dessin, Le Point, July 1930, n° 21)

This luminous, accomplished series of ink drawings which Matisse made of Dina Vierny are full of his mature dexterity, and excel in lively outlines simplified to the extreme, capturing the ‘second life’ offered to the artist in wartime – as embodied and renewed by the youthfulness of the model he had been ‘lent’ for a short time by his friend Maillol.

Dina Vierny was shattered by Maillol’s sudden death in September 1944. It was Matisse who replaced him as the spiritual father Maillol had become to her, encouraging her to open her own Paris gallery, advising her to sell ‘the Boss’s finest drawing’ to finance the initial outlay, and supporting her unfailingly until his death.

Matisse offered this series of drawings to Dina Vierny.
‘Dufy is a superb character. A real glass of champagne!
You can’t stop laughing with him.’
(Dina Vierny in Histoire de ma vie racontée à Alain Jaubert, 2009, p. 121)

Maillol sent Dina to see Raoul Dufy every Sunday in Perpignan to perfect her painterly education. She learnt a great deal, and did some posing.

The sparse lines of this ink drawing exuberantly set the scene (with artist’s palettes and a faintly sketched sofa), with attention focused on the curvaceous body of the young woman, shown in the almost classical pose of a seated nude with crossed legs, her head resting on her hand, dreamy yet carefree.

The figure dominates the middle of the page, slightly to one side. The work is punctuated by dots of ink, like an airy, fantastical musical score. She is captured in a fleeting everyday moment, yet Dufy conveys a weighty human presence through eyes that are gently ironic and incisive, yet tenderly benevolent.

Dina had met Dufy before World War II at the famous ‘Marly Sundays’ held by Maillol. And it was on a visit to the artist in Vernet that Maillol, accompanied by their common physician, Dr Nicolau, fell victim to his fatal car accident.
Promoting the second Russian Avant-Garde was one of Dina Vierny’s greatest combats as an art dealer. The exhibition she staged in her gallery in 1973, L’Avant-garde russe à Moscou, was the first such show to be held in France. Dina’s choices would prove extremely pertinent: Kabakov and Bulatov are now the biggest names in Russian contemporary art.

Dina gave her artists unconditional support, buying and showing their works, including the two to be offered here, which reflect her moral engagement. Liberty II, painted by Bulatov in 1991, is a highly symbolic choice given that Dina had herself conquered liberty at great cost throughout her life. Taking Delacroix’s celebrated Liberty Guiding the People as his point of departure, Bulatov pursued his conception of contemporary art as a witness of history.

Bertrand Lorquin claimed in 2008 that Erik Bulatov was ‘one of the most brilliant students at the Surikov Academy; a career as an official Soviet artist beckoned. But he turned this down to pursue his own path. His painting, technically akin to Magritte, associates words and images. He superimposes the regime’s slogans on banal portrayals of Soviet life, and renews with the grand tradition of history painting, revisited by conceptual art.’

Erik Bulatov was the subject of a solo exhibition at the new National Museum Monaco this Summer.

It was thanks to Ilya Kabakov that Dina Vierny first got to know non-official or ‘non-conformist’ Russian artists (as they were known under Brezhnev) in Moscow in January 1969. Kabakov swiftly stood out through his rebellious, historically conscious installations, incorporating objects and paintings to form total art, sometimes combining painting, theatre and literature. He is represented at the sale by a large panel from 1982 entitled Look At Her! It was originally one of the elements from a temporary installation called Three Green Paintings.
DINA VIERNY: Biography

Pierre Jamet: Dina on the Road (1937) © DR

Pierre Jamet: Dina Vierny (1936) © DR

Dina & L’Harmonie (c.1943) © DR
Dina Aibinder is born in Kishinev into a middle-class Jewish family during the Russian civil war. She descends from 'a line of musicians since the dawn of time.' Her pianist father, who has 'a perfect ear,' had taken part in the Russian Revolution.

Her parents flee Stalin's USSR with the six-year-old Dina and head into exile — through Moldavia, Poland and Germany to France.

The family finally reach Paris, 'the second home of those who fight for the Rights of Man'. They settle in a flat in Rue Monge, and soon frequent a cosmopolitan array of intellectuals and artists from the diaspora. The little Russian girl quickly adopts a 'Paris accent' at the local school.

Architect Jean-Claude Dondel is struck by the resemblance between Dina and the figures of Renoir and Maillol. He tells Maillol, who writes to the young girl: 'Mademoiselle, I'm told you resemble a Maillol or a Renoir. I'll be happy with just a Renoir.' At Dondel's insistence Dina visits the sculptor in Marly, 'where everybody went.' She had been advised to 'speak to the most elderly-looking gentleman,' so addresses a man 'with a fine white beard.' He turns out to be Van Dongen, not Maillol! 'The ice was broken. Everyone laughed!' It would prove the decisive encounter of her life.

She is 15, Maillol 73. He immediately sees in her the incarnation of the ideal he has been looking for since he first began to sculpt. She is curious about his work and returns to pose, 'just to see,' announcing: 'Monsieur Maillol, I'll just stay half-an-hour.' But she keeps returning, and this youthful new model plays a key role in Maillol's work. Between young Dina and the man she calls Le Patron (Boss), unbreakable ties are formed. She will prompt his mature masterpieces; he acts as her protector, becoming her 'father' and the 'creator' who 'shows her the way.'

In between posing for Maillol, Dina studies chemistry, frequents the Jeunesses Révolutionnaires, and sings. She becomes friends with a young photographer called Pierre Jamet in the choir of the A.E.A.R. (Association of Revolutionary Writers & Artists). In 1936 she joins the group Octobre, founded by Jacques Prévert. In 1937, with the Front Populaire in full cry, she joins the C.L.A.J. (Secular Youth Hostel Committee) with Jamet, who takes some of the finest-ever photographs of Dina, glowing with joie de vivre.

Dina flees Paris and takes refuge with Maillol in his native village of Banyuls-sur-Mer. Soon after she joins the American Resistance network Varian Fry. Clad in the red dress in which Maillol liked to paint her, she waits for anti-Fascists outside cafés, then helps them escape across the border to Spain. She is arrested. Maillol comes to the rescue: with his lawyer's help, he insists Dina was just fetching oil from Spain! Dina is freed on the benefit of the doubt.

To protect Dina, Maillol seeks the help of his closest friends: Henri Matisse and Pierre Bonnard. She joins Matisse at Cimiez, on the heights above Nice, and Bonnard at Le Cannel, in the hinterland behind Cannes. Matisse sketches her in Indian ink and dreams about making her his Olympia. She inspires a sombre Bonnard Nude, an historic work finished in 1946. These new friendships will prove long-lasting.

In 1940/1 Dina stays frequently in Marseille, at the Villa Air-Bel, home to numerous artists and members of the Varian Fry network. She meets the Surrealists and becomes firm friends with André Breton.

Maillol recommends Dina to his friend Raoul Dufy, whom she had met briefly at Marly before the War. In his Perpignan studio she sees Dufy in new light. 'I'm the youngest of your old friends!' chuckles Dufy.

Dina is arrested in Paris, with other members of the Resistance, and imprisoned in Fresnes. She clings to life. She sings. After six months in jail Maillol manages to have her set free. That same year her father dies in Auschwitz.

While Dina is in Paris celebrating the Liberation, Maillol is involved in a fatal car accident in Banyuls-sur-Mer.

After the War Dina again teams up with her 'wonderful uncles' Matisse and Bonnard, whom she takes to the theatre and restaurant. At the Salon d'Automne she keeps a look-out while Matisse takes out his brushes and tubes to rework his paintings. She and Matisse ply the streets of Montparnasse, frequenting brasseries and going to see Marcel Carné's Les Enfants du Paradis.
1946 Her life accelerates. One day in St-Germain-des-Prés, at 36 de la rue Jacob, she pushes opens the door and asks to use the telephone. After she hangs up she tells her interlocutor she is looking for premises and he offers to cede his tenancy for 400,000 francs. The idea seems crazy. That evening she tells Matisse. ‘Very good!’ he retorts. ‘Sell a drawing by the Boss and open a gallery!’ Much needs to be done. Over bouillabaisse at La Méditerranée, Matisse convinces the famous architect Auguste Perret to take care of things. Backed by Matisse, and with the support of the gallerist Jeanne Bucher, Dina’s career as a dealer takes off.

1947 The Galerie Dina Vierny opens in January to immediate success. At 28, the muse takes flight: she has found her calling. Her eye is informed, curious and pioneering. Her taste is eclectic and free from prejudice. Confirmed artists rub shoulders with stars of the future: Maillol, Rodin, Matisse, Laurens, Picasso, Bauchant, Doucet, Kandinsky and Poliakoff, to mention only a few. She offers many artists unfailing support, including those of Russian origin – whether from Poliakoff’s generation or the generation born in the 1930s, whom she is the first to champion in France.

1959 Dina returns to her native Russia for the first time. She looks for her grandfather’s marble tomb, but it has disappeared; she learns that all the marble from the tombs in the Jewish cemetery has been used to make ashtrays for State shops. She sees the ravages caused by 40 years of Communism and tries to understand the nature of creativity in the absence of freedom; non-official artists are in hiding. It is the start of a decade-long quest.

1964 Dina fulfils one of Maillol’s dearest wishes: ‘Give me a garden and I will people it with statues!’ Helped by André Malraux she gives him the Tuileries, no less, installing eighteen sculptures offered to the State, including La Rivièrè.

1969 During several trips to Russia during the 1960s she discovers the leading figures of the Soviet underground: Kabakov, Yankilevsky, Bulatov… Meeting Kabakov was a revelation. ‘That evening I discovered a new world,’ she would recall, marvelling at his work and inventiveness. Kabakov introduces her to Erik Butalov. She understands what they are doing and they become ‘her’ artists, the ones she will defend. Dina mobilizes all her energy to show them in the West and arranges for their works to leave Russia in secret. Her goal: to mount a major exhibition in her Paris gallery devoted to this ‘second’ Russian avant-garde.

1972 As heiress to Maillol’s recently deceased son Lucien, she decides to create a Maillol museum. For twenty years her ferocious energy and unwavering optimism will fuel what she calls a ‘superhuman’ project. She began assembling works by Maillol ‘well before thinking about a museum. Some I found in the most unlikely places. To begin with I thought I would give them to another museum or just keep them’ she recalls.

1973 The landmark exhibition “L’Avant-Garde à Moscou” runs for six months. ‘It was not about selling but about promoting these artists’ she explains – defending and advocating human freedom through works Dina considered political. The exhibition revealed these artists to the world and was a tribute to a homeland she barely knew.

1975 Dina attacks another bastion of political censure: songs of the Gulag, mostly written by anonymous poets, and circulated clandestinely in the USSR; she learns them by heart then, back in Paris, makes a record of them.

1995 Alongside François Mitterrand she inaugurates the Fondation Dina Vierny/Musée Maillol in Rue de Grenelle. It soon becomes a leading Paris venue for modern and contemporary painting and sculpture.

2009 Dina dies 14 years to the day after the inauguration of the Fondation Dina Vierny.