

# Marc Chagall



1887-1985 | RUSSIAN

*Esquisse pour tableau l'Opéra*

*M.S. Rau*  
FINE ART • ANTIQUES • JEWELS



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Oil on canvas | 1953  
Signed "Chagall Marc" (lower left) and signed and inscribed  
"Marc Chagall 1953, Pour Vava" (en verso)

Canvas: 17 5/8" high x 12 5/8" wide | 44.77 cm x 32.07 cm  
Frame: 26 1/2" high x 21 3/8" wide x 2" deep  
67.31 cm x 54.29 cm x 5.08 cm

“

You have to make  
drawing sing through  
color.

– Marc Chagall

”





This highly important oil on canvas, titled *Esquisse pour tableau l'Opéra*, offers a captivating glimpse into the fantastical world of the great Marc Chagall. Imbued with the dream-like quality that characterizes his best work, the painting pulsates with profound musicality. It also serves as the genesis of a powerful image and motif that would later emerge in Chagall's monumental ceiling painting for the Paris Opera House. Rich with history and the artists' love for Paris, this composition is both magical and enthralling.

Chagall's use of color creates movement and harmony, and this work in particular embodies his famed surrealist vision. Rendered in a vibrant palette of red, orange and blue, the composition features a woman in white dancing and floating above a depiction of the Paris Opera House. She is positioned beneath an image of three intertwined figures—Chagall's rendition of Carpeaux's famous sculpture, *The Dance*, now housed at the Musée d'Orsay. Chagall reimagines this iconic sculpture within a bluish-purple cloud, bringing it to life in his uniquely fantastical form.

The artist's rare use of orange and blue in this work is both intentional and ethereal. As complementary colors, orange and blue create a striking contrast when juxtaposed within Chagall's vibrant composition. Typically, Chagall reserved a predominance of orange for his Parisian scenes, showing a deep affection for the city. To add to its sentimentality, the artist dedicated this canvas to his beloved wife Valentina "Vava" Brodsky, noted by the inscription on its reverse, "Pour Vava," accompanied by a heart.

Chagall cherished this opera motif profoundly—after completing this remarkable composition, he revisited the image in another oil on canvas titled *L'Opéra*

in 1953, though the colors are less captivating. He later created a similar lithograph in 1954, also titled *L'Opéra*, which is heralded as one of his most vibrant and colorful lithographs, featuring bright red and green hues. Among the different versions of this famed image, our piece was chosen as the cover for the book, *Marc Chagall: The Ceiling of the Paris Opera* by Jacques Lassaigne. More than any other rendering of the motif, this great work represents Chagall in his purest form, using his language of color to evoke a deeply personal visual narrative of the themes he cherished most: music, the idea of home and history.

Marc Chagall is unquestionably one of the most celebrated artists of the 20th century, and his works have remained a prized highlight in museum collections and a coveted addition to the holdings of private collectors. This work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity issued by the Comité Marc Chagall, signed by the artist's granddaughter Meret Meyer, dated Paris 2023.





## PROVENANCE

Valentina (Vava) Lazarevna Brodsky, gifted from the artist in 1953

Thence by descent

Weinstein Gallery, California

Private Collection, Missouri, acquired from above circa 2007

M.S. Rau, New Orleans

## LITERATURE

Jacques Lassaigne, *Marc Chagall: The Ceiling of the Paris Opera: Sketches, Drawings and Paintings*, Praeger, New York, 1966, illustrated on cover



HT 426

Je, soussigné, Jean-Louis PRAT, agissant comme mandataire du COMITE MARC CHAGALL, certifie que l'Oeuvre reproduite au verso :  
Esquisse pour tableau " L'opéra ", Huile sur toile de 46 x 33 cm, - 1953 -, ( au dos : dédié sur le châssis à Vava en 1953 et signé ) ,  
signé en bas à gauche : Chagall Marc ,  
est une oeuvre authentique de Marc CHAGALL.

Pour le COMITE MARC CHAGALL.

*JL Prat* Paris, le 19 Avril  
1996

Jean-Louis PRAT

N° 96309

**NB . CE CERTIFICAT DOIT TOUJOURS ACCOMPAGNER  
L' OEUVRE CAR IL NE SERA PAS DELIVRE DE DUPLICATA**







Un certificat a été établi le 19 avril 1996 sous le numéro 96309 pour l'oeuvre reproduite au verso : *esquisse pour "L'Opéra" 1953*, 1953, huile sur toile de 46 x 33 cm, signée Chagall Marc en bas à gauche et dédiée, datée et signée "Marc pour Vava 1953 Chagall" au dos sur le cadre.

Il m'a été affirmé que ce certificat a été perdu.

C'est donc en remplacement de ce dernier et à titre exceptionnel que je soussignée, Meret MEYER, agissant comme mandataire du COMITÉ MARC CHAGALL, certifie de nouveau que c'est une oeuvre authentique de Marc Chagall.

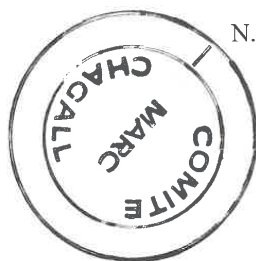
Pour le COMITÉ MARC CHAGALL,

*Paris, le 14 février*

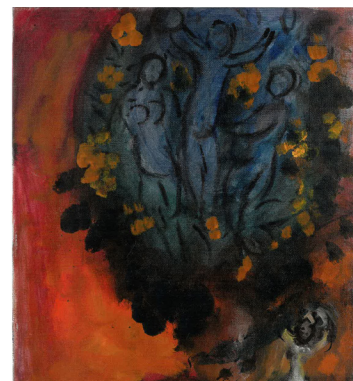
Meret MEYER

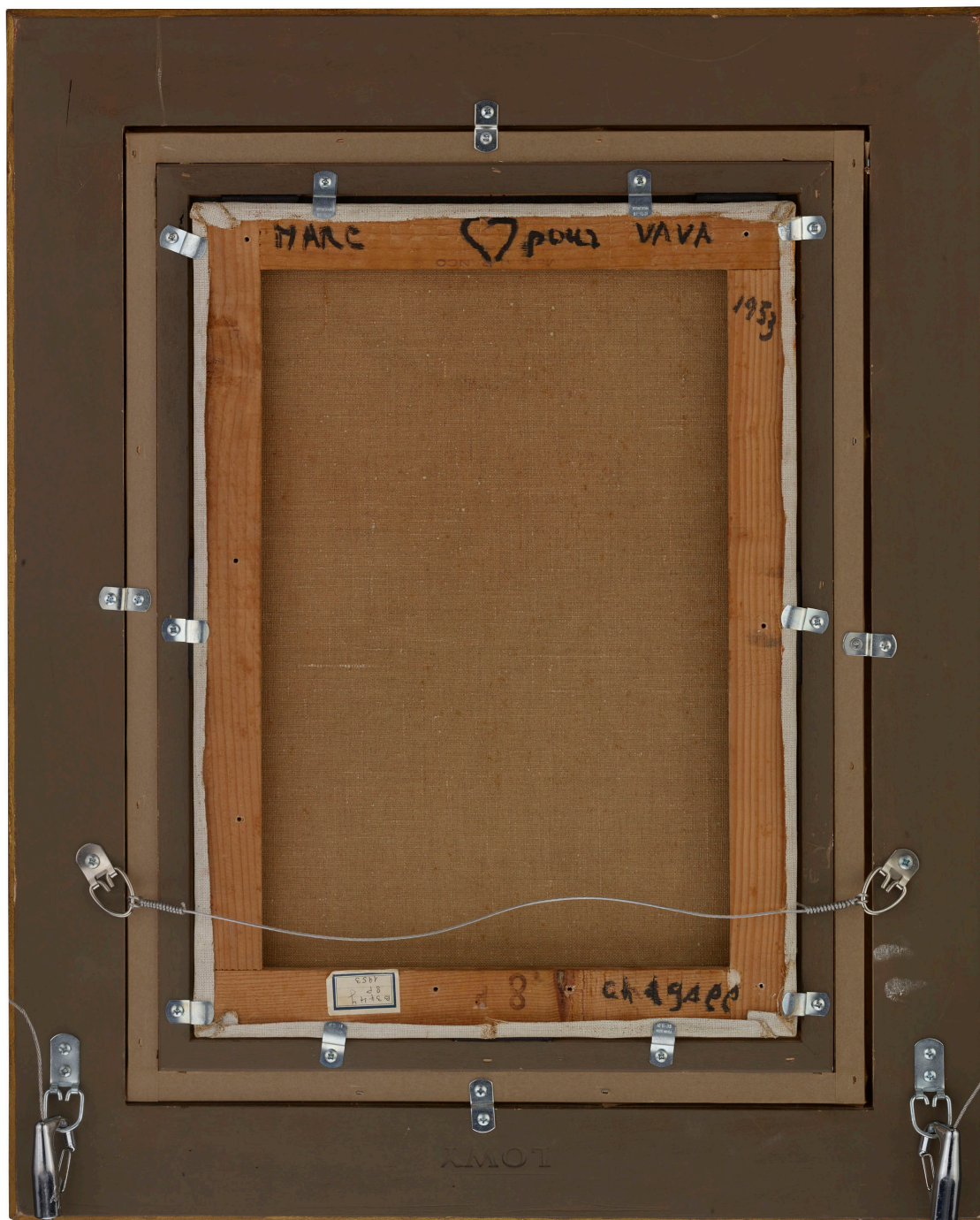
*Meret Meyer 2023*

N° 2023063



N.B. : Ce certificat doit toujours accompagner l'oeuvre car il ne sera pas délivré de duplicata.

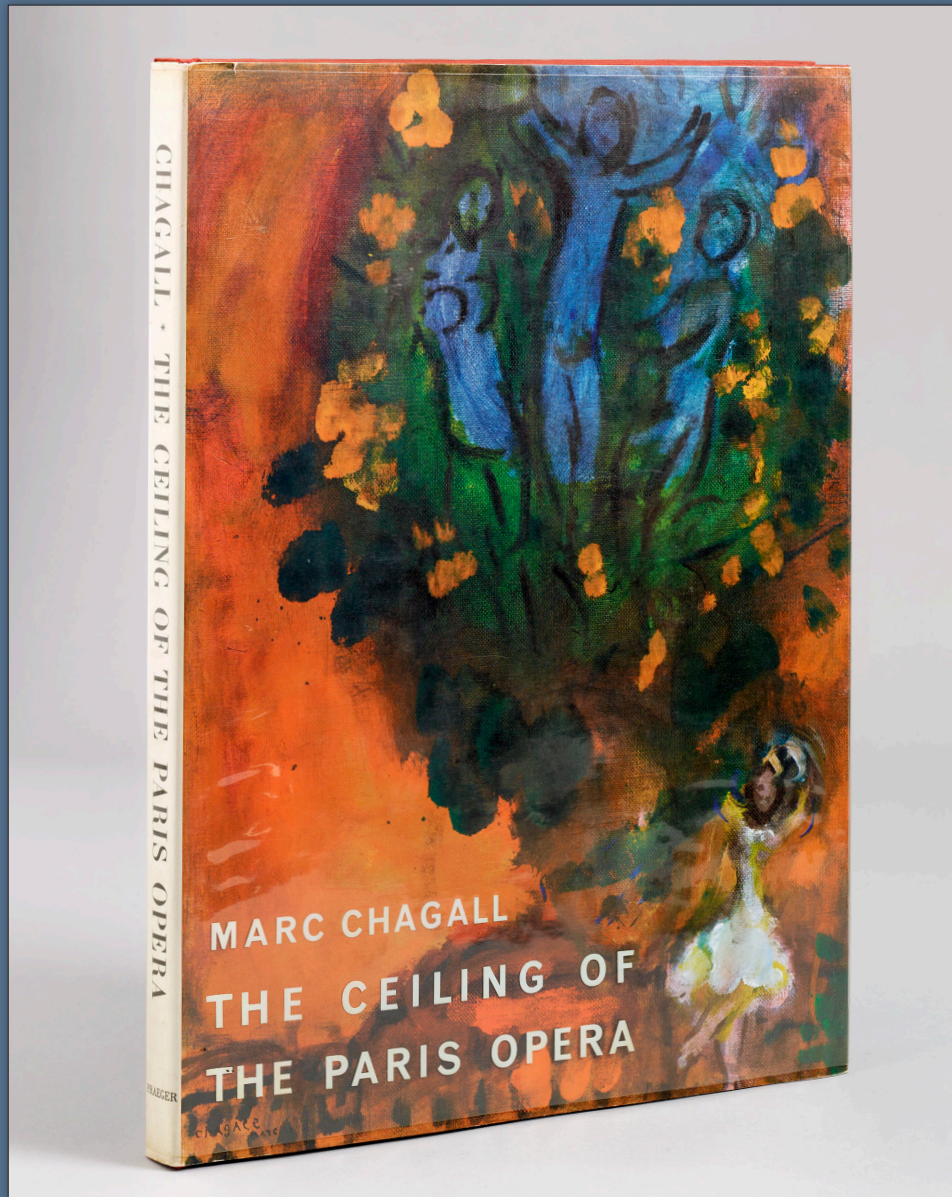




The back of the canvas bears a handwritten inscription from Chagall to his wife  
Valentina "Vava" Brodsky, accompanied by a heart







Jacques Lassaigne, *Marc Chagall: The Ceiling of the Paris Opera: Sketches, Drawings and Paintings*, Praeger, New York, 1966, illustrated on cover



MARC CHAGALL

THE CEILING  
OF  
THE PARIS OPERA

Sketches  
Drawings and Paintings

*JACQUES LASSAIGNE*

Translated by Brenda Gilchrist

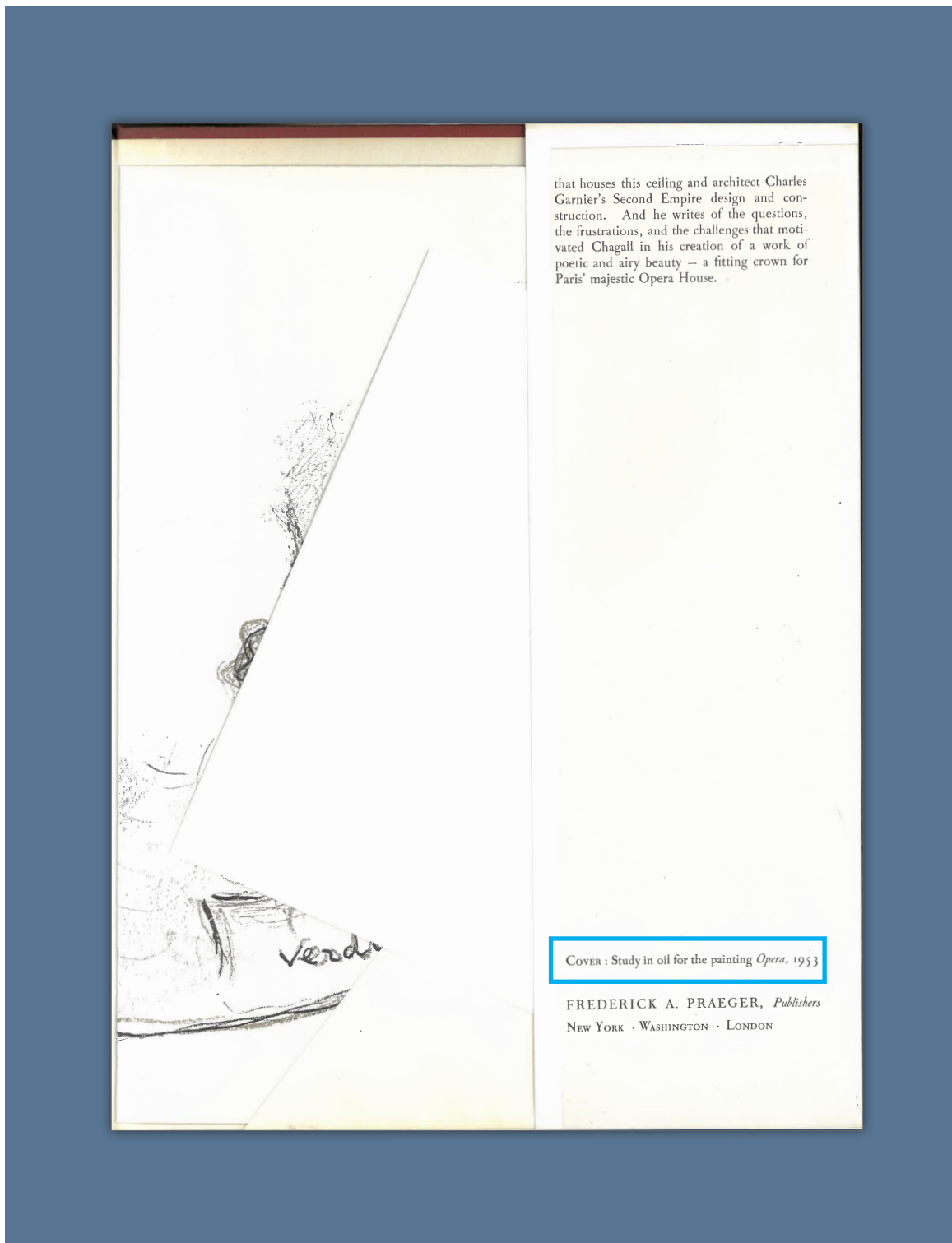
FREDERICK A. PRAEGER, PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK · WASHINGTON · LONDON

Jacques Lassaigue, *Marc Chagall: The Ceiling of the Paris Opera: Sketches, Drawings and Paintings*, Praeger, New York, 1966, illustrated on cover







Jacques Lassaigne, *Marc Chagall: The Ceiling of the Paris Opera: Sketches, Drawings and Paintings*, Praeger, New York, 1966, illustrated on cover



# AUCTION COMPARABLES



**Marc Chagall**  
*LE VILLAGE BLEU*  
oil on canvas  
Height 78 x Width 71 cm.  
Height 30.709 x Width 27.953 in.  
1955

**28 February 2018** *almost 7 years ago*  
**Sotheby's London**  
*Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00001]*

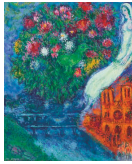
est. 1,500,000 - 2,500,000 GBP **3,650,900** GBP Ⓟ  
est. 2,068,394 - 3,447,324 USD **5,034,335** USD Ⓟ  
↑ 46% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*Noce et musique*  
oil on canvas  
Height 61.3 x Width 38 cm.  
Height 24.134 x Width 14.961 in.  
1939

**19 June 2012** *over 12 years ago*  
**Sotheby's London**  
*Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00043]*

est. 1,000,000 - 1,500,000 GBP **2,505,250** GBP Ⓟ  
est. 1,573,069 - 2,359,603 USD **3,940,931** USD Ⓟ  
↑ 67% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*La mariée de Notre-Dame*  
oil, india ink and ink on canvas  
Height 73 x Width 60 cm.  
Height 28.74 x Width 23.622 in.  
1968–1972

**30 June 2021** *over 3 years ago*  
**Christie's London**  
*20th/21st Century: London Evening Sale – [Lot 00031]*

est. 1,000,000 - 1,500,000 GBP **2,782,500** GBP Ⓟ  
est. 1,380,643 - 2,070,965 USD **3,841,640** USD Ⓟ  
↑ 85% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*VASE DE ROSES*  
oil on canvas  
Height 52 x Width 67.6 cm.  
Height 20.472 x Width 26.614 in.  
1929

**26 February 2019** *almost 6 years ago*  
**Sotheby's London**  
*Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00007]*

est. 1,500,000 - 2,000,000 GBP **1,815,000** GBP Ⓟ  
est. 1,987,808 - 2,650,410 USD **2,405,247** USD Ⓟ



**Marc Chagall**  
*Grand bouquet sur une table*  
oil and tempera on canvas  
Height 73 x Width 60 cm.  
Height 28.74 x Width 23.622 in.  
1978

**26 May 2022** *over 2 years ago*  
**Christie's Hong Kong**  
*20th/21st Century Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00029]*

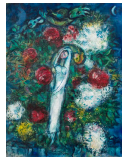
est. 12,000,000 - 18,000,000 HKD **17,850,000** HKD Ⓟ  
est. 1,528,681 - 2,293,022 USD **2,273,914** USD Ⓟ





**Marc Chagall**  
*Nature morte sur les toits*  
 oil on canvas  
 Height 45.8 x Width 55 cm.  
 Height 18.031 x Width 21.654 in.  
 1923

**13 November 2017** *about 7 years ago*  
**Christie's New York**  
*Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale Including Property from The Collection of Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass – [Lot 0057A]*  
 est. 1,400,000 - 1,800,000 USD **1,932,500 USD** (P)  
 ↑ 7% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*La mariée ou Les amoureux aux fleurs*  
 oil and ink on canvas  
 Height 62.7 x Width 48 cm.  
 Height 24.685 x Width 18.898 in.  
 1959

**28 May 2024** *8 months ago*  
**Christie's Hong Kong**  
*20th Century Evening Sale – [Lot 00004]*  
 est. 12,000,000 - 18,000,000 HKD **14,895,000 HKD** (P)  
 est. 1,536,235 - 2,304,353 USD **1,906,852 USD** (P)



**Marc Chagall**  
*Le bouquet au fond rouge*  
 oil on canvas  
 Height 55 x Width 46.5 cm.  
 Height 21.654 x Width 18.307 in.  
 1965

**03 February 2015** *about 10 years ago*  
**Sotheby's London**  
*Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00010]*  
 est. 500,000 - 700,000 GBP **1,205,000 GBP** (P)  
 est. 756,315 - 1,058,841 USD **1,822,719 USD** (P)  
 ↑ 72% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*Fleurs au-dessus des fiancés bleus or Les amoureux bleus*  
 oil, gouache and india ink on canvas  
 Height 74.4 x Width 46.4 cm.  
 Height 29.291 x Width 18.268 in.  
 1948–1951

**18 June 2019** *over 5 years ago*  
**Christie's London**  
*Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00007]*  
 est. 500,000 - 700,000 GBP **1,211,250 GBP** (P)  
 est. 627,195 - 878,073 USD **1,519,380 USD** (P)  
 ↑ 73% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*Arbre bleu*  
 oil on canvas  
 Height 61.3 x Width 50 cm.  
 Height 24.134 x Width 19.685 in.  
 1958

**06 November 2014** *over 10 years ago*  
**Christie's New York**  
*Impressionist & Modern Day Sale – [Lot 00335]*  
 est. 700,000 - 1,000,000 USD **1,445,000 USD**  
 ↑ 44% est



**Marc Chagall**  
*La nuit de la Saint-Jean*  
 oil on canvas  
 Height 72.5 x Width 59.7 cm.  
 Height 28.543 x Width 23.504 in.  
 1980

**11 November 2023** *about 1 year ago*  
**Christie's New York**  
*Impressionist & Modern Art Day Sale – [Lot 00801]*  
 est. 1,000,000 - 1,500,000 USD **1,381,000 USD** (P)





## Marc Chagall | *Village Street*

1930s

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 18<sup>1/2</sup> x 15 inches | 46 x 38.1 cm



**MFA/Boston**

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Boston, MA, United States



Marc Chagall | *Lovers among Lilacs*

1930

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 51<sup>3/4</sup> x 35<sup>1/4</sup> inches | 131.4 x 89.5 cm



The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
New York, NY, United States



Marc Chagall | *Angel over a Table with Flowers*

1930-60

**Medium:** Watercolor and gouache on paper mounted to board

**Dimensions:** 21 x 15<sup>9/16</sup> inches | 53.2 x 39.5 cm



The Art Institute of Chicago  
Chicago, IL, United States





Marc Chagall | *Les Amants au ciel rouge*

1950

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 25<sup>5/8</sup> x 26<sup>1/8</sup> inches | 65.09 x 66.36 cm



SFMO  
MA

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
San Francisco, CA, United States



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