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PRESS RELEASE - **LE LOTUS BLEU, A MASTERPIECE BY HERGÉ**  
 SALE - **21 NOVEMBER 2020, PARIS**

The auction house Artcurial is set to create a stir by revealing an exceptional item that is new to the market: the artwork by Hergé created as the initial cover design for the album *Le Lotus bleu* in 1936.

It will be presented across Europe from July onwards, starting at the Artcurial gallery in Monte-Carlo, before coming under the hammer on 21 November in Paris, estimated at 2 to 3 M€.

## PRESS RELEASE - LE LOTUS BLEU, A MASTERPIECE BY HERGÉ

PARIS - In its Comic Strip sale on 21 November 2020, Artcurial will reveal an exceptional and highly original item : the artwork by Georges Rémi, known as Hergé, designed for the cover of the 1936 album *Le Lotus bleu*.

Deemed too costly to reproduce with the four-colour technique used in 1936, the design was turned down by the publisher Casterman. This original artwork, new to the market, has been rediscovered today by Artcurial. Hergé gave it to the young son of publisher Louis Casterman. The boy kept it tucked away in a drawer, carefully folded in six.

This initial cover design for *Le Lotus bleu*, Tintin's fifth adventure and the album that marked a turning point in Hergé's career, is undoubtedly one of the most evocative covers of any of the young reporter's adventures. After becoming friends with Tchang Tchong-Jen, the only real person other than Al Capone to be incorporated into the adventures of Tintin, Hergé's style changed, becoming more assured.

This artwork in Indian ink, watercolour and gouache on paper is estimated at 2 – 3 M€ / 2.3 – 3.4 M\$. It will be presented across Europe, exhibited in Artcurial's gallery in Monaco from 15 July to 11 September, in Brussels from 22 September to 2 October and finally in Paris on 19 and 20 November, before coming under the hammer on 21 November at Artcurial.

The leader in this field, Artcurial currently holds eight of the top ten auction prices for work by Hergé, including the world record price for a comic strip drawing by any artist, achieved on 24 May 2014 for the inside cover pages of a Tintin album (2.6M€ / 3.6M\$). The sale of the rare and unique artwork for *Le Lotus bleu* promises to create a stir once again, for the delight of all fans of the 9th art.

*« This artwork is a genuine masterpiece encapsulating Hergé's genius and is probably the most beautiful Tintin album cover ever ! »*

Eric Leroy, Expert  
Comic Strips, Artcurial



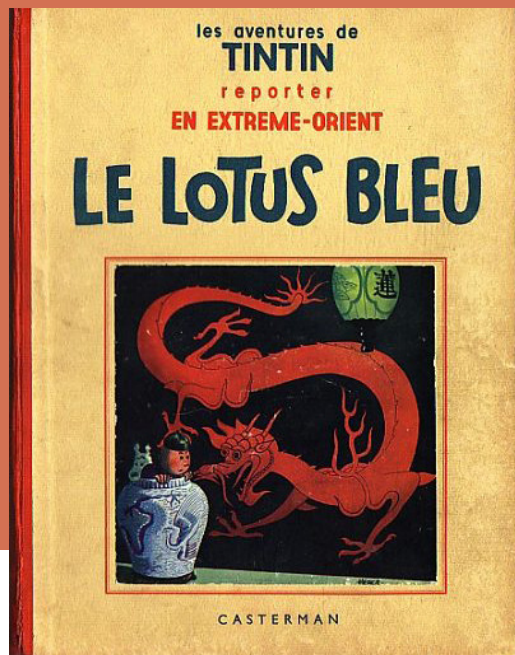
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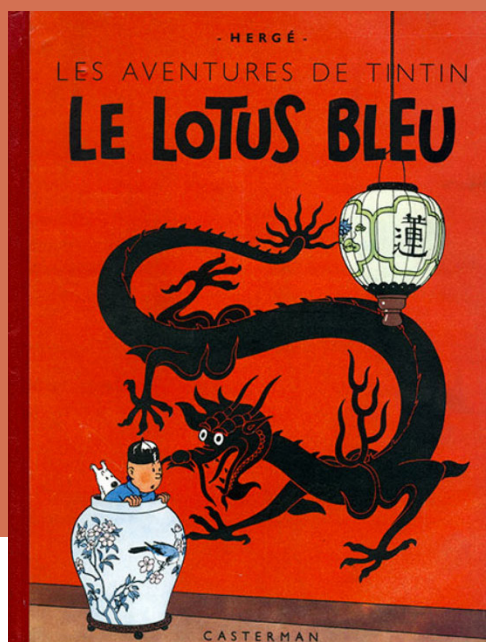
HERGÉ (Georges Rémi)  
The Blue Lotus (details)  
India ink, watercolour and gouache on paper for the initial cover of the album The Blue Lotus published in 1936.  
The publisher had to refuse this cover as it was too expensive to print at the time. This is a unique work.  
34 x 34 cm  
Estimate : 2 000 000 - 3 000 000 €



The first version of the original cover of *Le Lotus bleu* (1936)



Cover of *Le Lotus bleu* (1942), used for the 1946 colour edition and all subsequent editions



## *The friendship between Hergé and Tchang*

It was in 1934 that Hergé decided to send Tintin to China. Following four adventures in Soviet Russia, America, the Belgian Congo and Egypt, in the fifth album, Tintin took off for China. Unlike the previous four albums, in creating *Le Lotus bleu*, Hergé was careful to learn about the culture and history of the country, wanting to add a greater sense of realism. This led him to meet Tchang Tchong-Jen, the young graduate from the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. « *The meeting between Hergé and Tchang would have a big influence on the style of Hergé.* » explains Eric Leroy, Comic Strip expert at Artcurial. « *It allowed the artist to discover a remarkable fluidity and freedom evident in his treatment of light and dark, through the brushstrokes he used for form and space, expressing the evolution of Hergé's thinking and Taoism.* » The friendship between the two men gave a new dimension to the world of Tintin, enriched by a cultural understanding and a free and assured style.

This reference album, considered to be one of the finest in the Tintin universe, marked a turning point with a new considered and realistic approach developed by Hergé towards his young hero and the foreign countries he travelled to. « *It was at the time of Le Lotus Bleu that I discovered a new world* » he confided in 1989 (SADOUL, Numa, Interviews with Hergé, Tournai, Casterman). The career and work of Hergé can be divided into two phases of before and after *Le Lotus bleu*.

## *Le Lotus bleu, a breakthrough album for Hergé*

Published in 1936, *Le Lotus bleu* was the first Tintin album to achieve real success. A strong and continuous storyline along with the first colour « inset » illustrations contributed to this success. « *Hergé said that the comic strip was all about telling a story. This illustration for Le Lotus Bleu, probably the most beautiful cover of any of Tintin's adventures, encapsulates the mood of the album perfectly. The direct use of colour is rare in Hergé's work.* » explains Eric Leroy.

In *Le Lotus bleu*, Tintin sets out to break up the international opium trafficking ring in China, a country he knows nothing about. Accompanied by his new ally Tchang, a nod to Hergé's friend, the young detective succeeds in overcoming all the obstacles he encounters, with many wild adventures along the way. From July onwards, Artcurial invites all fans of the 9th art to come and discover this unique piece, fresh to the market.





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## USEFUL INFORMATION

**Viewing** in Monte-Carlo from Wednesday 15 July to Friday 11 September 2020  
in Brussels from Tuesday 22 September to Friday 2 October 2020  
in Paris on Thursday 19 and Friday 20 November 2020

**Sale** in Paris on Saturday 21 November 2020 at 2pm

Artcurial - 7, rond-point des Champs-Élysées - 75008 Paris

**HR images** available on request  
**Catalogue** available online at [www.artcurial.com](http://www.artcurial.com)

## UPCOMING AT ARTCURIAL

**19 July 2020 in Monaco** : sales *Hermès Summer Collection*  
and *Fine Watches*

**20 July 2020 in Monaco** : sale *Jewellery*

**21 July 2020 in Monaco** : sale *Le Temps est Féminin (Ladies Watches)*  
and *Artcurial Motorcars*

## ABOUT ARTCURIAL

Founded in 2002, multidisciplinary Paris based auction house, Artcurial confirmed its leading position in 2019 on the international art market scene. With three sale venues (Paris, Monte-Carlo and Hong Kong), Artcurial achieved an overall sales total of 203,1 M€ in 2019. Artcurial covers all the major specialist fields: From Beaux-Arts to Decorative Arts, Collectors' Cars, jewellery and watches, Fine wine and spirits. With a strong international bias, Artcurial maintains its presence abroad with offices in Milan, Vienna and Brussels, Monte-Carlo and Munich and representatives in Beijing and Tel Aviv, as well as twice-yearly exhibitions in New York. In October 2015, Artcurial held its first sale in Hong Kong and Morocco.

[www.artcurial.com](http://www.artcurial.com)

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