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Philippine Star Lifestyle



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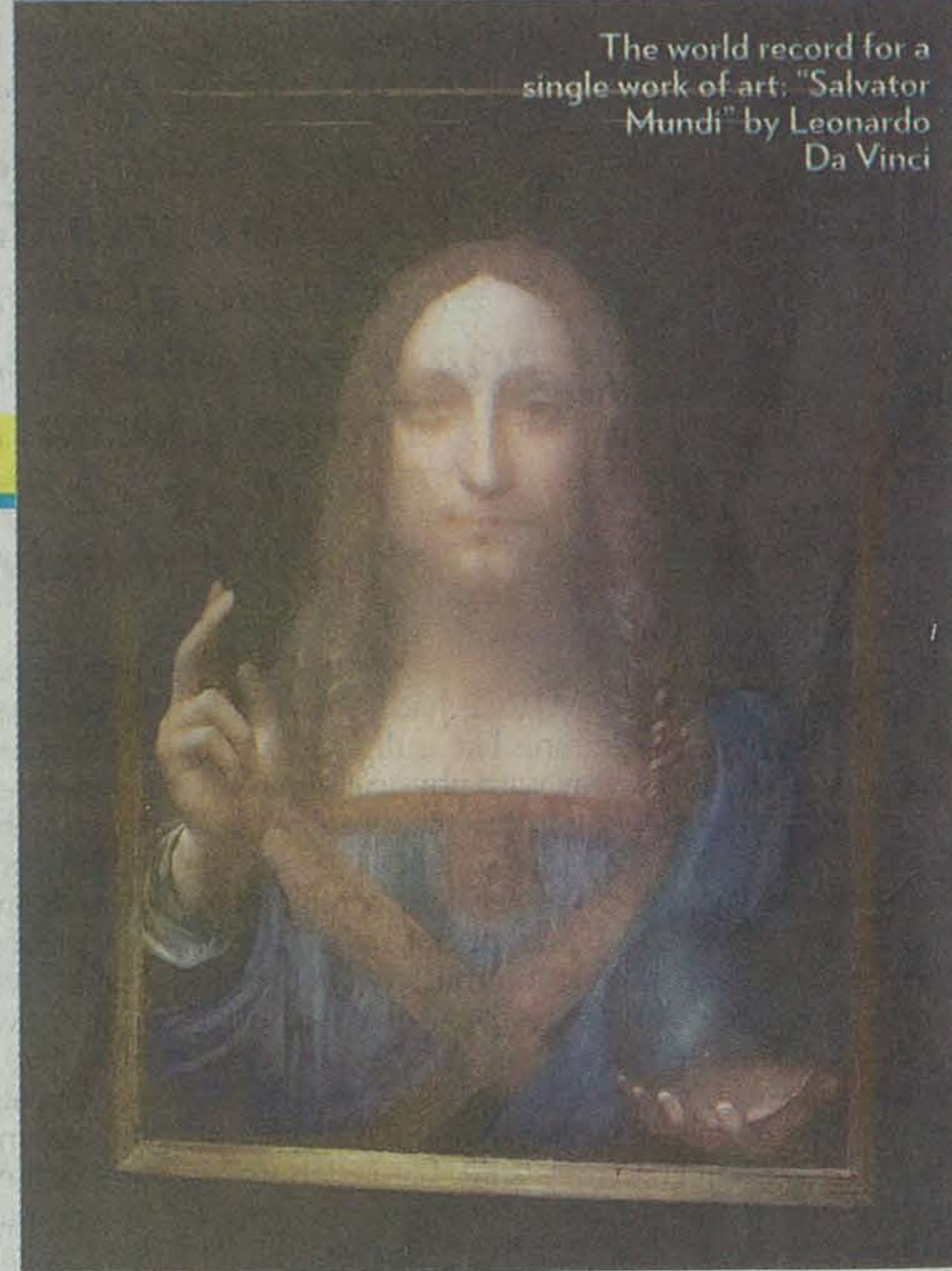
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A VISIT TO CHRISTIE'S AUCTION HOUSE, AND A GLIMPSE OF THE \$450 MILLION DA VINCI

By MANNY GONZALEZ

By accident, I was in Barcelona last month to witness the tragicomedy of Catalunya's abortive and indeed infantile attempt to secede from Spain. And also by accident, I was in New York for a visit to Christie's Auction House, and a glimpse of the \$450 million Da Vinci ► **F2**

The Da Vinci painting has had a long odyssey. It reappeared in the early 20th century, by then heavily overpainted and attributed not to Leonardo but an unknown imitator. In 1958, the painting was sold at auction for £45 (then about \$200)!



The world record for a single work of art: "Salvator Mundi" by Leonardo Da Vinci

F2

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F1 ◀ A VISIT TO CHRISTIE'S AUCTION HOUSE, AND A GLIMPSE OF THE \$450 MILLION DA VINCI

during a one-week window when ordinary people could view "Salvator Mundi," which on Nov. 15, became the most valuable painting ever sold at auction in the history of the world, fetching US\$400 million (\$450 million with auction fees paid by the buyer). To drum up interest, the famous auction house Christie's had sent the painting on a round-the-world tour, visiting Hong Kong, London, and San Francisco, before its final public appearance in New York, where the auction was held.

Tipped by a friendly New York native, some friends and I only had to wait in line a few minutes before being allowed into a darkened chamber to see the masterpiece upclose.

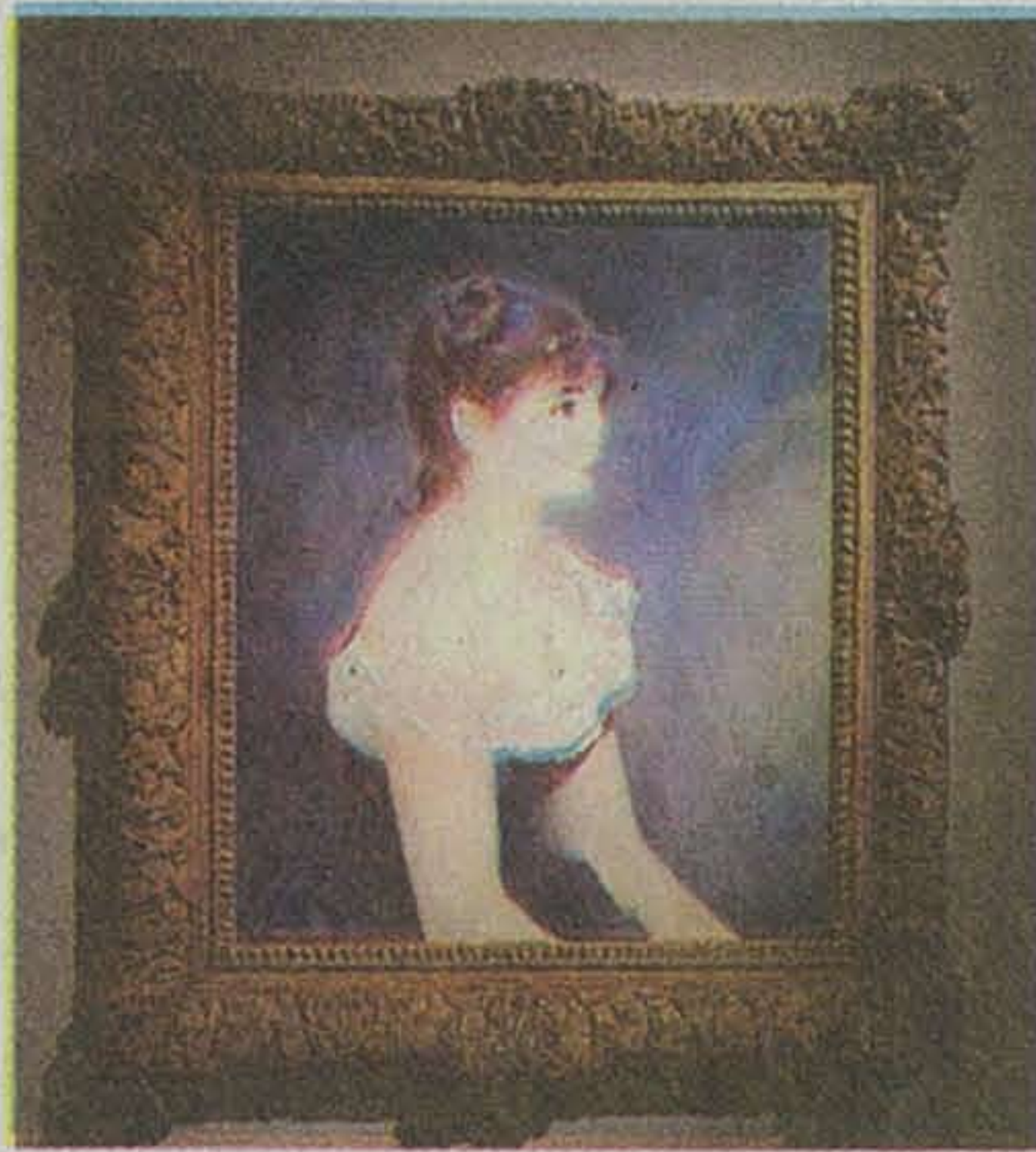
To be perfectly honest, much of what we saw was a sea of heads, but eventually the crowd thinned enough for a close-up look.

The painting has had a long odyssey. It is thought that Leonardo Da Vinci painted "Salvator Mundi" around the year 1500 for King Louis XII of France. It wound up a century later in England, passing through various owners until it disappeared from the documentary record in the mid-1700s. It reappeared in the early 20th century, by then heavily overpainted (new paint over the original work) and attributed not to Leonardo but an unknown imitator.

In 1958, the painting was sold at auction for £45 (then about \$200)!

It disappeared again.

In 2005 the painting resurfaced in the US. The new owners, a group of art dealers, spent two years removing the overpainting and restoring the original work, and another eight years assembling expert opinions to validate that it



This Renoir is valued at about \$5 million. There is a more affordable one for only \$2 million.

was, indeed, a Da Vinci. (This is now the majority opinion, though there are some dissenters.)

With such a story, it was bound to attract a lot of interest. Christie's confidently predicted that it would come close to or beat the previous record sale (about \$180 million for a Picasso). Few expected \$450 million.

A lot of other works changed hands on Nov. 15, and I'm glad I had the opportunity to see some of them. There was, for example, a work called "Dewy," by Lisa Yuskagave. A brilliant, invigorating (if you catch my drift) watercolor which depicts a part of the human female anatomy, it was expected to sell for only \$20,000 to \$30,000. Unfortunately, I cannot show it in a general-circulation publication. Sorry about that. Just think of the title.



Almost every work by Joan Miro (not as in Joan of Arc, the first name is Catalan spelling for Juan) is instantly recognizable because of his distinct style.



An artwork by Tomas Moran in the style of Joseph Mallard William Turner, the British Impressionist. A steal at only around \$50,000.

Norman Rockwell was a much-beloved magazine illustrator (as was the Philippines' Amorsolo) who painted idealized images of



There are so many paintings up for auction that this Norman Rockwell, valued at \$2 million, is hung between elevator doors.

everyday Americana (early to mid 20th century). There were several Rockwells up for auction, at expected sale prices ranging from \$1 million to almost \$8 million.

Numerous Impressionists were represented. Though Renoir is best-known for his open-air landscapes and dancing figures, he also did portrait studies, of which there were two in the gallery.

Much of the art even approached affordability. I thought seriously about a couple of paintings by American painter Thomas Moran, which for only around \$50,000 emulated the luminosity of JMW Turner's Venetian paintings (value unknown, probably at least \$20 million each). I was all for bidding on it, until cooler heads prevailed, and I was reminded that my credit-card limit is only \$5,000.

With some works of art, you have to think hard to see the meaning. But there are some which spare you the effort.

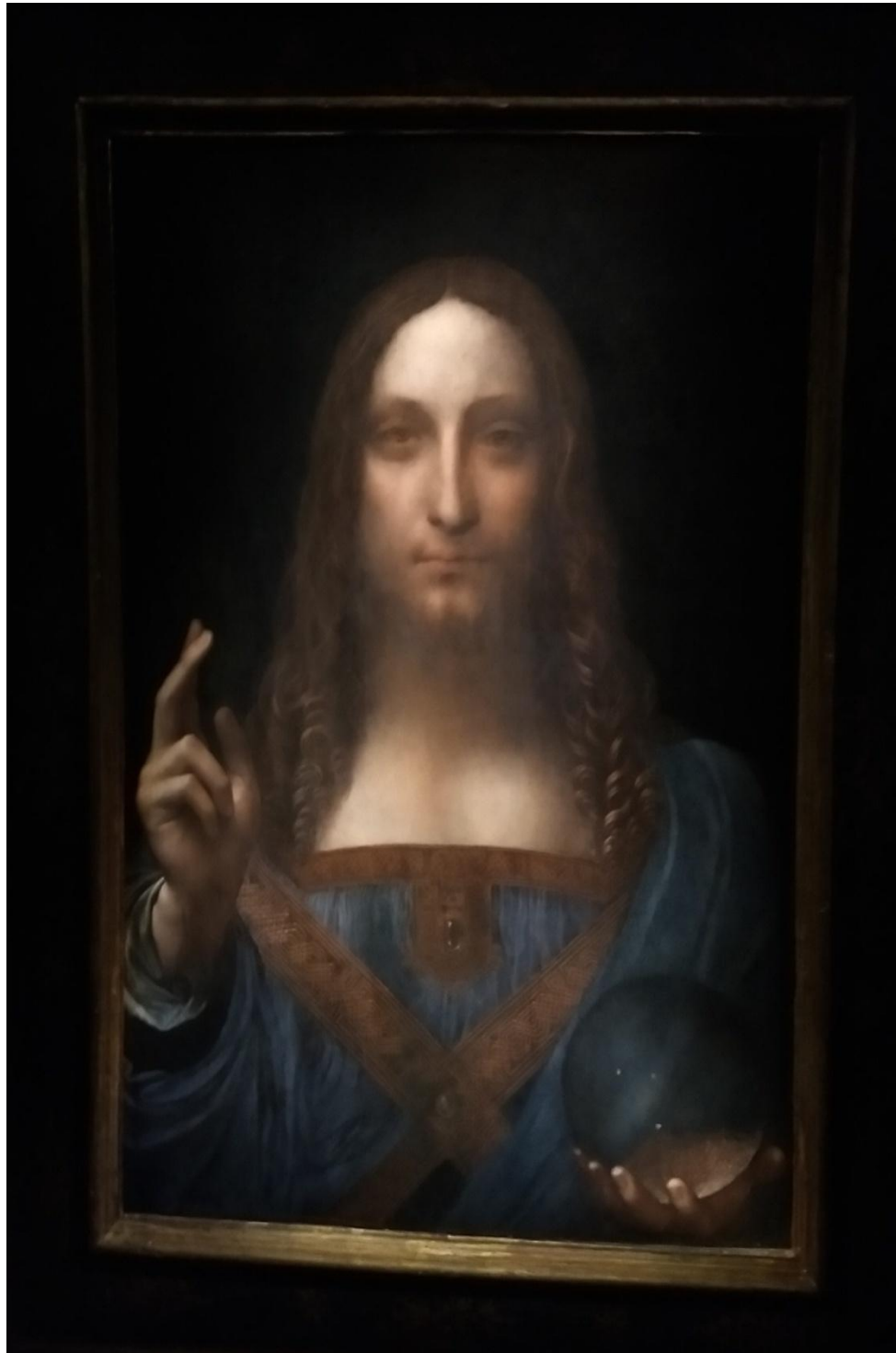
And, because Catalunya was still on my mind, I took notice of a truly spectacular work by Catalan artist Joan Miro, which was valued at \$18 million.

And that was my brush with the world's most valuable painting during an exciting week in the art world of New York. The name of the "Salvator Mundi" buyer so far hasn't been revealed. But at these levels it's unlikely to be a public museum. So it is very possible that the painting will not be seen publicly again in your lifetime.

Manny Gonzalez is a resident shareholder at Plantation Bay Resort & Spa, and part-time foreign correspondent.

A Visit to Christie's Auction House, and a Glimpse of the US\$ 450 Million Da Vinci

By Manny Gonzalez, Resident Shareholder at Plantation Bay Resort & Spa, and part-time foreign correspondent



The World Record for a Single Work of Art

By accident, I was in Barcelona last month to witness the tragicomedy of Catalunya's abortive and indeed infantile attempt to secede from Spain.

And also by accident, I was in New York during a 1-week window when ordinary people could view *Salvator Mundi*, which on November 15, 2017, became the most valuable painting ever sold at auction in the history of the world, fetching US\$ 400 Million (US\$ 450 Million with auction fees paid by the buyer). To drum up interest, the famous auction house Christie's had sent the painting on a round-the-world tour, visiting Hong Kong, London, and San Francisco, before its final public appearance in New York, where the auction was held.

Tipped by a friendly New York native, some friends and I only had to wait in line a few minutes before being allowed into a darkened chamber to see the masterpiece close up.

To be perfectly honest, much of what we saw was a sea of heads, but eventually the crowd thinned enough for a close-up look, which led to the photo shown above.

The painting has had a long Odyssey. It is thought that Leonardo Da Vinci painted *Salvator Mundi* around the year 1500 for King Louis XII of France. It wound up a century later in England, passing through various owners until it disappeared from the documentary record in the mid-1700s. It reappeared in the early 20th Century, by then heavily overpainted (new paint over the original work) and attributed not to Leonardo but an unknown imitator.

In 1958, the painting was sold at auction for £45 (then about US\$ 200)!

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In 2005 the painting resurfaced in the US. The new owners, a group of art dealers, spent two years removing the overpainting and restoring the original work, and another eight years assembling expert opinions to validate that it was, indeed, a Da Vinci. (This is now the majority opinion, though there are some dissenters.)

With such a story, it was bound to attract a lot of interest. Christie's confidently predicted that it would come close to or beat the previous record sale (about US\$ 180 Million for a Picasso). Few expected US\$ 450 Million.



Inside Christie's, the author, pretending to understand Art.

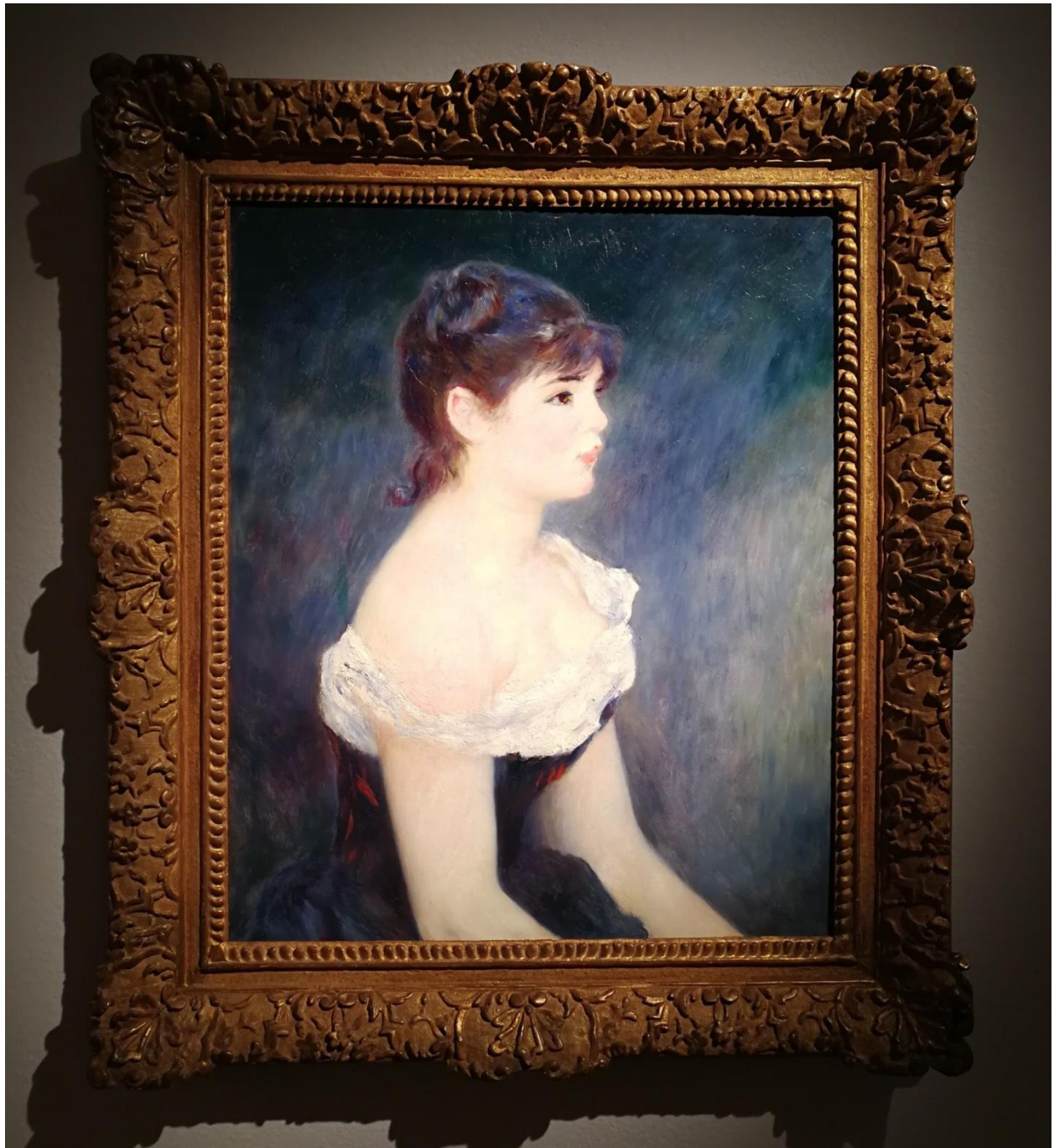
A lot of other works changed hands on November 15, and I'm glad I had the opportunity to see some them. There was, for example, a work called *Dewy*, by Lisa Yuskagave. A brilliant, *invigorating* (if you catch my drift) watercolor which depicts a part of the human female anatomy, it was expected to sell for only US\$ 20-30,000. Unfortunately, I cannot show it in a general-circulation publication. Sorry about that. Just think of the title.

Norman Rockwell was a much-beloved magazine illustrator (as was the Philippines' Amorsolo), who painted idealized images of everyday Americana (early to mid 20th Century). There were several Rockwells up for auction, at expected sale prices ranging from US\$ 1 to almost 8 Million.



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Numerous Impressionists were represented. Though Renoir is best-known for his open-air landscapes and dancing figures, he also did portrait studies, of which there were two in the gallery.



This Renoir was valued at about US\$ 5 Million. There was a more affordable one for only US\$ 2 Million.

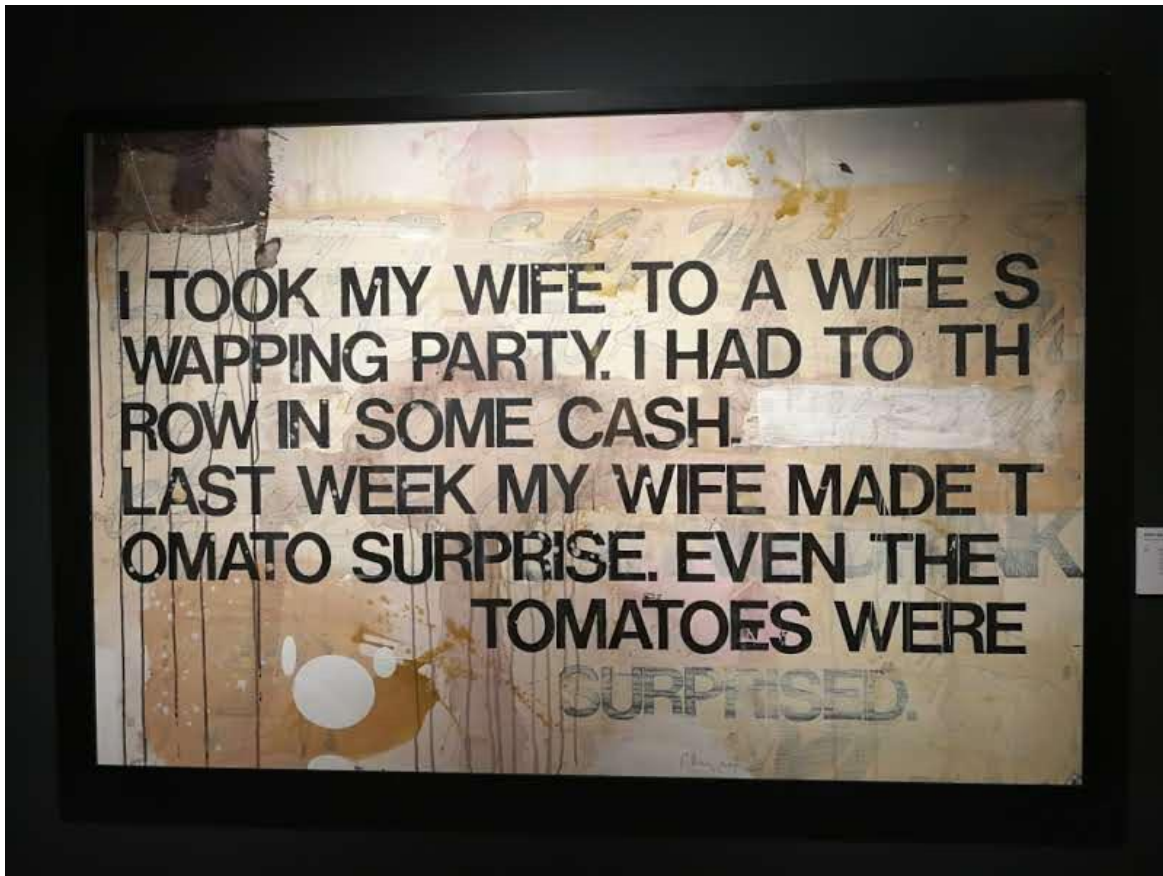
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By Thomas Moran, in the style of Joseph Mallard William Turner, the British Impressionist. A steal at only around US\$ 50,000.

With some works of art, you have to think hard to see the Meaning. But there are some which spare you the effort.



The author didn't recognize the name of the artist who did this, but (being divorced) can sympathize with the sentiments of the artist.

And, because Catalunya was still on my mind, I took notice of a truly spectacular work by Catalan artist Joan Miró, which was valued at US\$ 18 Million.



Almost every work by Joan Miro (not as in Joan of Arc, the first name is Catalan spelling for Juan) is instantly recognizable because of his distinct style.

And that was my brush with the world's most valuable painting, during an exciting week in the Art World of New York. The name of the *Salvator Mundi* buyer so far hasn't been revealed. But at these levels it's unlikely to be a public museum. So it is very possible that the painting will not be seen publicly again in your lifetime. Better enjoy the photo above. And if you want to see my photo of *Dewy* (very sharp, high def), come visit me in Plantation Bay Resort & Spa.



For friends only: Dewy.