

For Immediate Release

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INAUGURAL APRIL IMPORTANT OLD MASTER PAINTINGS SALE THE LARGEST EVER TO BE HELD AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK

Important Old Master Paintings April 6, 2006

New York - Christie's largest Old Master Paintings sale ever to be held in New York takes place on April 6. Expected to realize in excess of \$50 million, the auction is the first *Important Old Master Paintings* to be held in April and this significant international auction calendar change is heralded by the finest collection of works to be gathered by the New York department in its history.

Led by Turner's Venetian masterpiece *Giudecca, La Donna della Salute and San Giorgio*, which is expected to realize in excess of \$20 million, the inaugural 250-lot April sale includes a pair of Carlevarij's seascapes, an important group of still lifes, an impressive collection of gold-grounds - and works by Cranach, van Dyck and van der Neer.

Turner

Giudecca, La Donna della Salute and San Giorgio is the finest Old Master to be sold at Christie's New York since Pontormo's record-breaking *Portrait of a Halberdier* sold for \$35.2 million in May 1989 - and is the finest Turner to come to market in a generation. In 1984, *Seascape, Folkestone*, owned by the late Lord Clark of Saltwood, sold for \$9.05 million in London and still commands the highest price for a work by Turner at auction.

Consigned for sale by the St. Francis of Assisi Foundation, a New York State-incorporated not-for-profit institution, the work is a perfect example of one of Turner's Venetian subjects and was last seen at public auction at Christie's in 1897. With the current world auction record for a British painting standing at just over \$21 million for John Constable's *The Lock*, the re-appearance of the Turner has generated considerable excitement.

In 1840, Turner visited Venice for what would be his last time, and executed approximately 150 watercolors depicting the Italian city. On his return to London, he developed three oil paintings from these watercolors for the Royal Academy of Arts Exhibition of 1841. The loose and impressionistic style of these pictures collected both admirers and critics, but *Giudecca, La Donna della Salute and San Giorgio*, was hailed by the Art Union as ‘*a glorious example of colour, leaving, as usual, much to the fancy of the spectator; and absolutely extorting applause.*’

The work, which has been exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts no fewer than four times, was purchased from the 1841 Exhibition by Elhanan Bicknell for 250 guineas, before being sold at Christie’s in 1863 for 1,650 guineas. In 1897, the painting returned to Christie’s and was sold at auction for 6,800 guineas to Sir Donald Currie, before his grandson sold the work through Agnew’s to William Wood Prince in 1959 for an undisclosed sum. The painting returned to Agnew’s in 1992 when they negotiated its sale to a private collector, who in turn donated the picture to the St. Francis of Assisi Foundation in New York.

Carlevarijs Seascapes

A Capriccio of a Mediterranean Seaport with Austrian shipping, merchants and sailors (estimate: \$3,500,000-4,500,000) and *A Sea Battle with Sardinian and Venetian warships* (estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000) are the largest and among the most spectacular of works ever executed by Luca Carlevarijs, the founder of the 18th century Venetian school of view painting.

Exceptional for their allegorical content, they were conceived as representations of the rewards of peace and the destructive effects of war. One shows a prosperous seaport with a bustle of mercantile activity, the other a violent skirmish with an Ottoman galley ramming a Sardinian ship. Dated circa 1705, the rare and remarkable pair by one of the greatest of the Italian *vedutisti* is therefore placed in the middle of Carlevarijs’s decade of greatest creativity.

Still Lifes – Early Italian and Northern European

The 17th century is considered the golden age of still life painting, and although the Dutch, Flemish and Spanish specialists have been celebrated ever since, it was actually the Italians that pioneered this new and fruitful idea around 1600. The rediscovery of the Italian genius for depicting ‘*natura in posa*’ took place in the second half of the 20th century, with the early collectors led by the founder of the Lodi Collection. By 1983, when Italian still lifes were first exhibited in the United States, ten of the 46 works were lent from the Lodi Collection.

To be dispersed in four sales – April and October in New York and July and December in London – the appearance of this milestone collection marks the most important group of Italian still lifes

ever offered at auction. April highlights include masterworks from the Schools of Florence, Milan, Rome and Bergamo.

Two grey terracotta vases by Jacopo Ligozzi, the father of the Florentine still life school and employed by Francesco I de' Medici, is an exceedingly rare painting – and underscores Ligozzi's pride in his command of detail with characteristic strong, simple outlines (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). Fede Galizia was the leading still life painter in Milan and specialized in compact compositions that combine careful observations and monumental forms. An artistic prodigy, Galizia was showered with commissions for portraits and altarpieces and produced fewer than 20 still lifes, including the spectacular *Compote with Peaches, Apple and Grasshopper* (estimate: \$500,000-700,000).

Another woman painter, Giovanna Garzoni, ranks high among the rediscoveries of this field, and *A Plate of Figs* is a superb example of her inimitable style, combining liberties of perspective with a playful pointillism (estimate: \$250,000-350,000). By the middle of the 17th century most still life specialists had adopted a fanciful approach. Evaristo Baschenis of Bergamo was the most notable exception, and *Still Life with Musical Instruments* is an outstanding work by this rare master at the height of his powers (estimate: \$700,000-900,000).

As well as the Italian still lifes, there is a superb group of Northern works in this genre, including a botanical masterpiece by Georg Flegel depicting flowers, fruit and table utensils, circa 1610 (estimate: \$2,500,000-3,000,000). Other fine examples by Sebastian Stoskopff, Ambrosius Bosschaert the Younger, Hendrik de Fromantou and Rachel Ruysch are also included in the auction.

Italian Gold-Grounds

The acquisition of Italian gold-grounds, or primitives, has inspired American collectors since their first forays into the field. The collection of Edwin L. Weisl, a remarkable group of early Italian paintings, is to be offered this April and provides a fine continuation of the tradition of American collecting pioneered in the mid-19th century by James Jackson Jarves.

Weisl was particular admirer of the Sienese school; his collection includes *St. Augustine* by Sassetta, the only known element of the artist's masterpiece, the Borgo Sansepolcro altarpiece, left in private hands (estimate: \$1,200,000-1,800,000). Other Sienese panels include works by Martino di Bartolomeo, Giovanni di Paolo, Vecchietta and Benvenuto di Giovanni.

The emphasis on the Sienese school is well-balanced by two rare early Florentine panels: one the charming *Madonna and Child with eight saints* by Taddeo Gaddi, Giotto's only identified pupil (estimate: \$500,000-700,000); the other the magnificent *St. John the Baptist and a male saint* by

Bernardo Daddi (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). The beautifully preserved *Bishop Saint* by Pisan artist Francesco Neri di Volterra provides further counterbalance (estimate: \$200,000-300,000).

Apart from the Weisl collection is a delightful *Madonna and Child enthroned with patrons* by the Master of Monte Oliveto, an extremely rare and early panel painted circa 1315 by one of Duccio's most distinctive followers (estimate: \$200,000-300,000).

Auction:	Important Old Master Paintings	April 6 at 10am & 2pm
Viewing:	Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center	April 1 - 5

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Notes to Editors:

Christie's International Old Master Department announced an annual sales total of £127.5 million / \$230.8 million for 2005. This reaffirmed Christie's position as market leaders in both the Old Master Pictures and Old Master Drawings categories, with a 53% market share over the nearest competitor in the Old Masters Category as a whole.

The April Move

One of the most radical changes to the way business in Old Master paintings has been conducted in recent years, the move away from the traditional January New York auction date brings Old Masters in line with the other Christie's International painting departments in its strategy of putting a reasonable space of time between sales. It allows the International Department to work in close cooperation, both in the gathering and selling phases of each major London and New York auction.

Christie's New York / London Old Master Paintings Calendar 2006

April 6 – New York

July 7 – London

October 17 – New York

December 8 - London

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Images available on request
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