

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S TO CELEBRATE THE VISION OF JOHN FOWLER WITH A DEDICATED CENTENARY SALE

A Tribute to John Fowler: Furniture and Decorations
Thursday 14 September 2006, King Street



London – Christie's celebrates the centenary of the birth of one of Britain's most influential interior designers, John Fowler (1906-1977), with the auction *A Tribute to John Fowler: Furniture and Decorations* at King Street on 14 September. This sale will pay tribute to the exquisite style and legacy of John Fowler who, with his business partner Nancy Lancaster, reintroduced the styles of 18th century design and decoration to post-war Britain, creating the 'country house' look. When interviewed for *House & Garden*, Fowler said that '*A room must be essentially comfortable, not only to the body but the eye.*' The decoration must be '*well behaved but free from too many rules*', '*mannered yet casual and unselfconscious*'. This tribute sale will include approximately 500 lots of furniture, tapestries, sculpture, prints and works of art reflecting the taste and style of John Fowler, as well as including a selection of items designed by *Colefax and Fowler* including lamps, chairs and fabrics. Individual estimates in the sale range from £100 to £20,000.



Highlights of the sale include a Regency gilt-composition, black, red and gilt-japanned display cabinet-on-stand, early 19th century, which carries an estimate of £5,000-10,000 *illustrated left*. Further highlights include a pair of French ormolu and marble gueridons, 19th century, which are expected to realise £8,000-12,000 *illustrated right*, and which reflect Colefax and Fowler's use of both English and French pieces in the interiors Fowler created; and an Italian carved marble head of Flora from the 17th or early 18th century (estimate: £4,000-6,000).



John Fowler's early years in the design industry began at Thornton Smith, an antique and decorating business in Soho, where he learned the techniques of marbling and glazing, as well as painting Chinese wallpaper designs. He went on to join the painting studio of

Margaret Kunzer where he worked on objects for supply to Peter Jones department store. In 1934, he established his own small business at 292 Kings Road in Chelsea. The ground floor of the building was already inhabited and, as a result of living on the first floor, every day Fowler would have to wheel a mobile showcase into the garden in order to catch the eye of passing trade. The designer's ingenuity paid off and in 1938, he was asked to join the firm of Lady Colefax, a well-established decorator. The firm was later named *Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler* and was taken over by Nancy Lancaster at the end of the Second World War, resulting in a stormy yet successful partnership that fundamentally changed design in post-war Britain. Fowler and Lancaster were described by Lady Astor as 'the most unhappy, unmarried couple in England'.



Fowler and Lancaster's first joint project was for Nancy Lancaster's house Haseley Court in Oxfordshire, which was received to huge acclaim. Further renowned projects include Hambleton in Oxfordshire (for Viscount and Viscountess Hambleton – *illustrated left*), Daylesford in Oxfordshire (for Viscount Rothermere), Tynningham in East Lothian (for Lady Haddington), and Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire (for Lady Ancaster). The latter is still open to the public. Fowler also worked on projects at Buckingham Palace, Holyroodhouse, Chevening and Chequers. On his retirement in 1975, he went on to dedicate much of his time to properties owned by The National Trust; houses that he worked on include Clandon Park in Surrey and Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire. On his death in 1977, Fowler's house of 30 years, the Hunting Lodge in Odiham, Hampshire was left to the National Trust.

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Images available on request

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Notes to editors:

- Highlights from the sale of *A Tribute to John Fowler: Furniture and Decorations* on 14 September will be on view at Christie's salerooms at 8 King Street, London, SW1Y 6QT from 10 to 13 September. See www.christies.com for further details.

- The V&A will honour the centenary of John Fowler's birthday with a small exhibition charting his 50 year career creating classic English interiors. *John Fowler: Decoration in Detail* will be on view at the V&A Museum, London SW7, from 30 August 2006 to 21 January 2007.

- Christie's Furniture and Sculpture Sales in London realised a total of £37,200,488 million (\$65,993,666/€54,870,720) in 2005 establishing a 70% market share over the nearest rivals.