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Contact:

Gillian Leung (Hong Kong)

+852 2978 6736

gleung@christies.com

Belinda Chen (Beijing)

+8610 65006517

bchen@christies.com

**The Only Publicly Known Matching Pair of
Gold and Enamel Singing Bird Pistols
Attributed to Frères Rochat, circa 1820**

To be offered at Christie's *Important Watches* Spring Sale



Hong Kong – On Monday, 30 May 2011, Christie's will present a magnificent pair of matching gold and enamel Singing Bird Pistols, the highlight of the *Important Watches* sale in Hong Kong this Spring. Estimated at HK\$20 million to 40 million/US\$2.5 million to 5 million, the matching mirror-image pistols set with diamonds, agate and pearls, attributed to world-renowned craftsmen Frères Rochat, is the only publicly known pair of singing bird pistols in the world. This sale offers a singular collecting opportunity to acquire, not ONE but TWO of these museum pieces, at the same time.

THE SINGING BIRD PISTOLS

A stunning marriage of 19th century Swiss automata technology and exquisite craftsmanship, this pair of singing bird pistols epitomizes the creativity of watch makers in Europe to satisfy the ever-growing demands for clocks and automata by the Imperial court and its courtiers in China, as well as European aristocrats and royal families, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Barely a handful of **single** singing bird pistols are known in the entire world and they are found in the world's most prestigious museums and private collections. One single pistol is found in the Museum for Islamic Art in Jerusalem which houses the *Sir David Salomons Magnificent Collection of Clocks and Watches*. Another single pistol is recorded in the *Maurice Sandoz Collection* in Switzerland. The Patek Philippe Museum in Geneva, Switzerland owns two single pistols, one of which was purchased at Christie's in 1989. This pair on offer is the most advanced version of this type of singing bird pistols attributed to Frères Rochat and the only publicly known examples of the kind in a matching pair. Their stunning beauty and perfectly preserved condition render these pistols among the greatest rarities in the world of automated objects. As renowned Swiss watchmakers and historians Chapuis and Gelis so aptly wrote in their book *Le Monde des Automates (The World of Automats)*, still regarded today as the ultimate reference on automatons,

"Amongst the objects incorporating singing birds, these very fine pistols present the greatest difficulties, both in their conception and execution."

This pair of singing bird pistols was prominently displayed at the recent landmark exhibition *The Mirror of Seduction – Prestigious Pairs of Chinese Watches*, curated and held at Patek Philippe's world-famous museum in Geneva.

HISTORY & CRAFTSMANSHIP

Ever since the late 16th century, when the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci brought the first clocks to the Middle Kingdom, Chinese emperors were enamoured of these precious objects for the following three hundred years. Not only were they fascinated by the ability of these clocks to strike time, their appeal also laid largely in the extravagant and precious embellishments of the pieces with costly gems, diamonds and pearls, as well as in the functions of music, bells and mechanized automated features. These objects rapidly became valuable commodities and status symbols, accessible solely to the members of the ruling class.

European powers saw this infatuation as their chance to gain access to the highest reaches of the Chinese court by selecting clocks or watches as tributes or gifts. To satisfy the Chinese market, master goldsmiths, enamellers and technicians, from England, France and Switzerland respectively, combined their skills and artistry to manufacture increasingly lavish and whimsical timepieces and objects of fantasy in all guises.

The present pair is attributed to Frères Rochat, three brothers who worked in Geneva, Switzerland from 1800 to 1835. They were most famous for perfecting the highly complex singing bird mechanism and placing it in cages, mirrors and even pistols. The ingenuity of these pistols is beyond description: each pistol features a bird that shoots out of the double barrels, pivots, moves its wings and tail, and opens its beak to sing and then disappears again. With the spectacular combination of sumptuously decorated cases and exceedingly intricate movements, these matching pistols are the perfect example of such coveted decorative objects made for discerning dignitaries and royalty in China and Europe.

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IMAGE of the pair of *Singing Bird Pistols* can be downloaded here:

<http://cshk.myftp.org/Spring%202011%20Christie's%20Hong%20Kong%20Auctions/Watches/Singing%20bird%20pistols.jpg>

A video showing the *Singing Bird Pistols* in motion will also be available for viewing at www.christies.com in April.

In advance of the 30 May sale in Hong Kong, the pair of *Singing Bird Pistols* will be exhibited from 2 – 7 April at Christie's Hong Kong office and from 26 – 31 May at Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. A video of the *Singing Bird Pistols* will be on view in the following cities around the world:

Date	Location	Venue
23-24 April	Shanghai	Shanghai Club Ballroom, Waldorf Astoria
26-27 April	Beijing	Grand Hall, St. Regis Hotel
30 April – 1 May	Singapore	Artspace@Helu-trans
21-22 May	Taipei	Fubon Life Assurance Building

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2010 that totaled £3.3 billion/\$5.0 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai. *Estimates do not include buyer's premium