

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | 16 DECEMBER 2013  
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## PROPERTY FROM THE ESTATE OF ERIC MARTIN WUNSCH Collection Features Old Master Paintings, American Furniture, Silver and Chinese Export Art



**New York** – Christie's is honored to present Property from the Estate of Eric Martin Wunsch in a series of January sales including *Silver* on January 23, *American Furniture* on January 24, *Chinese Export Art* on January 27, and *Old Master Paintings Part I* on January 29. Eric Martin Wunsch was a New York collector with an assiduous appetite for learning about art and antiques who was revered for his eclectic mix of treasures. He was an active and important member of a number of public institutions such as the New York State Museum and the Brooklyn Museum, where he donated works, and examples of his 17<sup>th</sup> century European paintings and drawings have been extensively exhibited in museums both in Europe and North America. Wunsch was also a founding member of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the U.S. Department of State and the Friends of American Art at Yale University Art Gallery, as well as a trustee of the Willard Clock Museum. From American furniture and silver to Dutch painting, the collection is comprised of 59 lots, and is expected to realize in excess of \$4.5 million.

John Hays, Deputy Chairman of American Furniture and Decorative Arts at Christies, comments: *“For Martin Wunsch, collecting art required two key elements. First, the ability to determine the truly exceptional work of art and second, the ability to deploy a strategy to acquire this art. Martin excelled at both. Relying upon the methodical and objective skills acquired during his training as an engineer at MIT, Martin formed one of the most revered and important art collections of the late twentieth century.”*

## AMERICAN FURNITURE

The American Furniture auction on January 24 will include 17 lots from the Wunsch Collection. A Chippendale carved mahogany scallop-top tea table leads the group (illustrated right; estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000). Iconic in design and masterful in execution, this scallop-top tea table epitomizes the virtuosity of mid-eighteenth century Philadelphia craftsmen. The Philadelphia “pie-crust” tea table stands as one of colonial America’s most acclaimed forms and this example, with fluted column, carved ball, acanthus-leaf carved legs and ball-and-claw feet, is among the most elaborate



to survive. It is believed that the carver of this piece was Richard Butts. This is based on the carved ornament, which also appears on forms carved by John Pollard, who, in 1773, formed a partnership with Butts. The table was previously part of the remarkable collection of Mrs. Charles Hallam Keep, who loaned it to the pioneering exhibition benefitting the Girl Scouts in 1929.



Also hailing from the collection is a carved walnut compass-seat side chair (illustrated left; estimate: \$200,000-300,000), a supreme testament to curvilinear design, as well as a powerful expression of Philadelphia’s Queen Anne style. From the rounded stiles to the incurvate compass seat and cabriole legs, the chair is a symphony of curves, the rear seat rail being the only right-angle in the entire form. The design is further enlivened by the masterful carved embellishments and a solid splat with dramatic walnut grain. Made for the Reynell-Coates family of Philadelphia, the chair was part of the renowned twentieth-century

collection of Mr. and Mrs. Walter B. Robb of Buffalo.

Exquisitely proportioned, this diminutive chest-of-drawers illustrates the most refined craftsmanship from mid-eighteenth century New York (illustrated right; estimate \$100,000 – 150,000). The pronounced serpentine shaping to the front and sides is beautifully enhanced by the carved details seen in the fluted corners, rocaille-and-leaf carved legs and ball-and-claw feet. Construction and decorative features relate this chest to two similar examples, both of which have carving attributed to London-trained émigré Henry Hardcastle and one of which is signed by cabinetmaker Thomas Brookman, individuals who may have made or trained the maker of this chest.



## SILVER

Leading works of Silver from the Estate of Eric Martin Wunsch include a large silver brandywine bowl, circa 1690, made in New York by Cornelius Vander Burch (1652-1699), (*illustrated right*; estimate: \$150,000-250,000). American brandywine bowls were produced solely in Colonial New York and harkened back to those made in the Netherlands, underscoring the continuity of Dutch culture in the city. The bowl is one only twenty examples known to survive.



Marked by Paul Revere Jr., a pair of silver sauceboats (*illustrated left*; estimate: \$150,000-250,000) are two of four that were commissioned by the merchant Moses Michael Hays, one of Revere's major patrons and only Jewish client, in Boston, circa 1780.



A rare pair of silver chafing dishes, which were made circa 1715 by Boston's leading silversmith at the turn of the 18th century, John Coney (1655-1722), will

also be among the highlights of the sale (*illustrated right*; estimate \$120,000-180,000). These are one of only two pairs of chafing dishes by Coney, and the other is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The dishes are engraved with what is likely the family crest of

merchant Thomas Hutchinson, exemplifying Coney's great skill as an engraver. Engraved heraldic decoration on American silver was unusual in this period, and these chafing dishes are a particularly fine example.



## CHINESE EXPORT ART



Among the three works of Chinese Export Art from the Estate of Eric Martin Wunsch is a rare Chinese 'Order of The Cincinnati' plate, circa 1785 (*illustrated left*; estimate: \$20,000-30,000). Major-General Henry Knox first proposed a Society of the Cincinnati in a letter written at West Point on 15 April 1783, believing that the American patriots' achievements were akin to those of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Roman Lucius Cincinnatus, who turned from farmer to soldier, vanquished his enemies and then returned to his farm. In May 1783 at a gathering of American army officers on the Hudson River the familiar insignia of the Society was decided; soon afterward it was formally designed by Major Pierre L'Enfant. Some six months later, the British having surrendered, the first American ship sailed to China, and General Knox's aide-de-camp, Samuel Shaw, was on it. On that first journey Shaw commissioned the well-known Society of the Cincinnati porcelain that ultimately graced President Washington's dining table.



## OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

Christie's January 29 sale of Old Master Paintings Part I, will feature five Dutch Golden Age paintings from the Wunsch Collection and highlighting the group is *A traveler at rest* by **Frans van Mieris I** (Leiden 1635–1681) (illustrated left;



estimate: \$1,500,000–2,500,000). This captivating small-scale oil on copper picture (8 ½ x 7 in.) is a masterwork by the renowned Leiden *fijnschilder* (fine painter), Frans van Mieris I. The painting depicts a red-haired bohemian traveler, a subject that is part of a long tradition in Netherlandish art and fascinated the artist, appearing elsewhere in his oeuvre. The luminous copper support allowed Van Meiris to depict seemingly countless minute details such as the individual hairs in the fur of the traveler's bag and the pieces of woven straw covering the bottle, which he rendered with meticulous, jewel-like precision. Van Mieris' extraordinary ability to depict various textures is all the more impressive given the subdued palette of brown, gray and white tones, which also serves to emphasize areas of color such as the patch of blue sky at right and the red of the traveler's hair. In 1857, this work was included in the groundbreaking *Art Treasures* exhibition in Manchester, a seminal event fundamental to transforming the study of art into an academic discipline in England.

Another highlight among the paintings is *Peasants playing cards in an interior* by **David Teniers II** (Antwerp 1610–1690 Brussels) (estimate: \$400,000–600,000). This impeccably preserved oil on copper depicts card-players, a subject Teniers represented frequently throughout the course of his prolific career, often employing the compositional grouping seen here. Yet the virtuoso brushwork of this painting suggests that Teniers conceived of it primarily as a technical tour de force meant to impress the viewer with his painterly skill, evident in details such as the hairs on the chin of the man in the blue cap, the stub of a candle above the fireplace and the reflection of the Raeren jug at lower left. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this painting hung at Blenheim Palace, residence of the Duke of Marlborough, before being sold by George Spencer- Churchill (1844-1892), 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough, in the storied Blenheim sale of 1886.



Other works from the Wunsch Collection include *Peasants drinking and playing tric trac in an interior* by **Abraham Diepraam** (Rotterdam 1622-1670) (estimate: \$300,000 – 500,000), and *Portrait of a Gentleman, half-length* by **Circle of Hans Holbein the Younger**, which will be included in the Renaissance sale on January 29 (estimate \$200,000-300,000.)

*Note to Editors:*

Christie's is honored to announce that the presentation of the second annual **Eric M. Wunsch Award for Excellence in the American Arts** ceremony will be held at their Rockefeller Center Galleries on January 22, 2014. This year's award recognizes the remarkable dedication and contributions towards preserving American Decorative Arts by three major collectors and philanthropists: Linda H. Kaufman and her husband, the late George M. Kaufman, and Richard Hampton Jenrette. Christie's will host the award ceremony on behalf of the Wunsch Americana Foundation, which created the award to continue the legacy of renowned collector Martin Wunsch and to encourage greater scholarship and appreciation of American Decorative Arts. To read more about the Award, see the full [press release](#).

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Christie's has a global presence of 53 offices in 32 countries and 11 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Christie's has recently led in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and The United Arab Emirates, with successful sales, exhibitions and initiatives held in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

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*Images available on request*

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