

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | King Street | 17 June 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ROSSETTI SCHOLAR VIRGINIA SURTEES TO SELL COLLECTION AT CHRISTIE'S

TRIPLE PORTRAIT OF MAY MORRIS
BOUGHT IN 1951 FOR £285
NOW VALUED AT £700,000-1,000,000 LEADS SALE



King Street, London – Virginia Surtees, the author of the definitive catalogue raisonné of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), will be offering her private collection of pictures and drawings, including important works by the Pre-Raphaelites, in the Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite and British Impressionist Art sale at Christie's on 17 June 2014. The collection is led by a triple portrait of May Morris, the daughter of William and Jane Morris entitled *Rosa Triplex* or *The Triple Rose*. It was bought by Virginia Surtees in 1951 for £285 and is now estimated at £700,000-1,000,000. Works by William Holman Hunt, William James Webbe, Edward Lear,

Hercules Brabazon Brabazon, Alice Boyd and William Morris are among the 35 works from the Surtees Collection.

Harriet Drummond, International Head of British Drawings and Watercolours at Christie's, commented: "Virginia Surtees is one of the most important experts associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Her catalogue, published in 1971 by the Oxford University Press, is still the key reference book for the artist, and more than 40 years later has never been superseded. It is an honour for us to be entrusted with the sale of such a prestigious collection. At the age of 97, she felt this was the time to let others share the pleasure that she has had over the years as the custodian of these wonderful works of art." Virginia Surtees has already gifted several paintings and drawings to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the British Museum, Bristol City Art Gallery and her collection of papers to the Durham County Record Office.



Cecil Beaton, 1953



Virginia (shown above in a portrait by Cecil Beaton) and her sister, Evangeline Bruce (wife of David Bruce, the American Ambassador to Great Britain 1961-69), were the daughters of Edward Bell, an American career diplomat. Much of their childhood was spent in Peking, where they took walks with their nanny along the Great Wall of China. Rossetti had drawn Virginia's great-grandmother, the actress Louisa Ruth Herbert (1831-1921) and her portrait in oil by James Rannie Swinton is included in the sale with an estimate of £3,000-5,000. Virginia developed her interest in Rossetti through her friendship with Sir Sydney Carlyle Cockerell (1867 -1962), secretary to William Morris and subsequently Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (1908-37); the Rossetti catalogue is dedicated to his memory. Virginia Surtees' personal and literary papers provide a record of a life lived among leading artists and writers, including Cecil Beaton, who requested to take her photograph, the actor Robert Eddison, Dame Margot Fonteyn, E. M. Forster, John Gielgud, L.S. Lowry and Viscount Montgomery of Alamein.

The triple portrait of May Morris wearing a 'crimsony silk dress' has an impeccable provenance having been owned previously by Frederick Craven and Graham Robertson, both important Pre-Raphaelite collectors. The picture was last at Christie's in 1949 where it was sold in Graham

Robertson's sale for £220 to the Leger Galleries where it was purchased by Virginia Surtees. Two other works by Rossetti are also included in the sale, *Ruth and Boaz* (illustrated on page 2 £60,000-100,000) and *St John comforting the Virgin at the foot of the cross* (£15,000-20,000).

Pictures by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) *The Stairs at Rochester Tower*, (£10,000-15,000) and a study of *Sheep on Mount Zion* (£15,000-20,000) by William James Webb (fl.1853-1878) are also included in the collection (shown below).



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The complete e-Catalogue will be available to view online from June 2014 at www.christies.com/calendar

Christie's

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.

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