

# CHRISTIE'S

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## CLASSIC WEEK

### *THE ASTOR COLLECTION FROM TILLYPRONIE*

THE FINEST COLLECTION OF SPORTING AND ORNITHOLOGICAL ART

TO COME TO THE MARKET IN OVER 20 YEARS

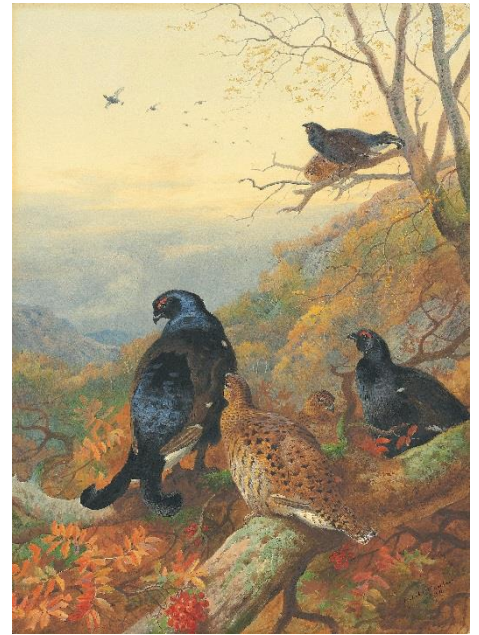
A HIGHLIGHT OF CHRISTIE'S CLASSIC WEEK, DECEMBER 2017



Tillypronie (*left*) and H.M. Queen Elizabeth II planting a tree at Tillypronie, 1960 (*right*)

**London** – Christie's will present *The Astor Collection from Tillypronie*, the finest collection of sporting and ornithological art to come to the market in over 20 years, as part of December Classic Week 2017. The auction will reflect the Astor family's thoughtful collecting interests and includes one of the most comprehensive selections of works by ornithological artist Archibald Thorburn, along with a younger generation of artists such as Claire Harkess, Steven Porwol, Darren Woodhead and Jonathan Sainsbury, many of whom have been hosted at the historic Tillypronie estate in Scotland. The collection also presents sculpture, furniture and decorative arts and will be offered at Christie's London on 15 December 2017, along with an online-only sale that will be open for bids from 4 to 18 December 2017.

**Harriet Drummond, International Head of Department, British Drawings & Watercolours at Christie's:** "I have known the Astor Collection at Tillypronie since the 1980s. The much-celebrated selection of paintings by Archibald Thorburn is magnificent, the finest and largest I have ever seen. Assembled by a keen sportsman and naturalist, advised by Aylmer Tryon of the eponymous leading London sporting art gallery, it is pitch perfect - the best put together by the best. Dominated by paintings of Red Grouse, Blackgame, Ptarmigan and Partridge, and executed at the height of the artist's skills, the collection also includes letters, sketches and studies of the trees and plants found around Tillypronie from the heather to the rhododendron. It is Thorburn's technical skill, his attention to detail and accuracy - providing authentic landscapes and plants for his depictions of birds, that made his work not only compelling in his lifetime but also today. No collector, admirer or enthusiast should miss the opportunity presented by the Astor Collection."



**Archibald Thorburn (1860-1935),**  
*Blackgame in the glen*  
 Estimate: £70,000–100,000

Since Lord and Lady Astor bought Tillypronie in 1951, the celebrated collection of paintings, sketches, studies and bronzes has been a central element of the spectacular sporting estate. It is one of the greatest assemblies of paintings by Archibald Thorburn, along with an impressive array of works by George Edward Lodge. Throughout the auction, birds are the central motif that unites the artists, depicting a variety of British species including black and red grouse, ptarmigan, capercaillie, pheasant, partridge, duck and geese as well as birds of prey. Highlights include Thorburn's atmospheric *Blackgame in the glen* (estimate: £70,000–100,000, *illustrated above right*), and *A frosty dawn*, dating from 1927 (estimate: £50,000-70,000, *illustrated below*), which demonstrates his extraordinary handling of lighting and ability to capture the movement of birds. A wider interest in sporting art is evident in works such as *Monarch of the Glen*, a ten-point stag with three hinds, painted in 1901 (estimate: £12,000–18,000).



**Archibald Thorburn (1860-1935),**  
*A frosty dawn*  
 Estimate: £50,000-70,000

From 1900 until his death in 1935, Archibald Thorburn was the most sought after and successful ornithological artist of his day and his complete mastery of the field has led to his continued influence today. First trained by his father, the Scottish miniaturist Robert Thorburn (who painted Queen Victoria), Thorburn honed his skill by studying from nature, filling multiple sketchbooks with his studies of birds in their natural habitat. Even after he moved South of the border, he would return to Scotland every year to paint. His first major opportunity came when he took over from JG Keulemans as the painter selected to complete Lord Lilford's exhaustive survey *Coloured Figures of the Birds of the British Isles* (1885-1897) for which he painted 268 watercolours.





**John James Audubon (1785 – 1851)**  
*Frigate Pelican*  
Estimate: £7,000–10,000

When Philip Astor took over stewardship of the estate in 1984, not content with simply inheriting his father's inimitable collection, he looked to expand and diversify, creating the wide-ranging and comprehensive collection of sporting art from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The auction presents works by contemporaries of Thorburn and Lodge such as George Morrison Reid Henry and John Cyril Harrison, alongside double elephant size aquatinted plates, from John James Audubon's *The Birds of America* 1827-38, one of the finest ornithological works ever completed, recording every native bird then known, including *Frigate Pelican* (estimate: £7,000-10,000, *illustrated left*). The theme continues with the next generation of bird painters, born in the 1890s, including the wildlife artists Philip Charles Rickman, who was instructed by Lodge, and Donald Watson who was a close friend of Lodge and painted similar Scottish landscapes. More recently artists active after the second world war were acquired with the likes of Simon Turvey, Emma Faull and Keith Brockie, along with a younger group of artists such as Claire Harkess, Darren Woodhead, Alastair Proud and still life painters Donald Clark and



**Terence Lambert (b. 1951)**  
*Studies of red grouse in flight*  
Estimate: £800–1,200

Jonathan Wolstenholme. Terence Lambert's graphic pencil *Studies of red grouse in flight* (estimate: £800–1,200, *illustrated right*), skilfully depicting the shape and movement of the birds in flight, illustrates Philip Astor's continued curation of The Tillypronie collection, opening conversations between 19<sup>th</sup> century ornithological artists and their contemporaries today.



**H.M. Queen Victoria (1819-1901)**  
*A stag shot by John Brown*  
Estimate: £6,000–10,000

In 1852, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria purchased the nearby estate of Balmoral and it was Queen Victoria who laid the foundation stone of Tillypronie, which was built in 1867 by Sir John Clark, the son of the queen's physician, Sir James Clark. Throughout its 150 year history, Tillypronie has continued to host notable guests from Harold Macmillan, later Earl of Stockton, to Neville Chamberlain and other political titans, American diplomats and men of letters such as Henry James, along with members of the royal family. A watercolour by Queen Victoria depicting a stag, shot by her confidant John Brown (estimate: £6,000–10,000, *illustrated left*), will be offered in the sale. Alongside this superb selection of sporting art, *The Astor Collection* will present a beautiful array of silver, decorative arts and furniture, capturing the atmosphere of the Tillypronie estate. Highlights include *The Astor Challenge Cup*, an Edward VII silver tankard by Elkington and Co. (estimate: £500–700), a regency mahogany library table *circa* 1815 (estimate £2,500–4,000), along with a leather and oak cartridge case by James Purdey & Sons (estimate: £1,500–2,500).

## **\*Notes to editors**

[Eugène Delacroix's \*Le 28 juillet – la liberté guidant le peuple, 1830\*](#) to star in Christie's Classic Week.

More information on Christie's Classic Week will be available over the coming weeks.

## **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in first half of 2017 that totalled £2.35 billion / \$3 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie's offers around 350 auctions 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 also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

*\*Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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*Images available on request*