

# CHRISTIE'S

## ALICE BAILEY HEAD OF SALE, ISLAMIC ART

*How did you come to be an Islamic Art specialist?*

I travelled around Turkey when I was eighteen and loved it. When I returned to Canada, I did a BA in History of Art specialising in Islamic Art and afterwards went to live in Istanbul for two years to study Turkish. I came to London to do an MA at SOAS and then worked for the British Museum and the V&A, as well as working for two private collectors.

*What does Islamic Art encompass?*

The term Islamic Art can be defined in two ways. First there is the art which relates to the religion of Islam and which is non-figural. This encompasses Qur'ans, prayer rugs and anything that relates to the mosque and the religion of Islam. Islamic art can also be defined as that which comes from Islamic countries and countries where Islam has been present at one time, for example in India, Central Asia, Andalusia as well as the Middle East. Our sale deals with all of the artistic production from these regions. Figural imagery, that is to say, images of people and animals have always been popular in the courts and palaces of regions under Islamic rule and secular art reflects this.

*With so many disparate cultures and tradition and pieces originating from many different countries, what is that binds a sale entitled 'Indian and Islamic Works of Art'?*

The Muslims first arrived in India at the end of the 12th century and ruled until the 19th century with the end of the Mughal Empire. This meant that the local art was influenced by the artistic traditions which were present in the Persian courts of Iran. Local Indian artisans echoed the Persian style – strong geometric designs found in the architecture and tiles – but they made the art their own using local materials such as sandstone and red marble. The language used at court in India until the 19th century was Persian.

*Many of the pieces in your sale are very old, such as the 3rd- 4th century Buddha Head to be offered this April. How do such pieces fit in with today's homes and lifestyles?*

I think if you are interested in history and in the artistic production of a culture your home is an ideal place to reflect this. This 18th century carved ivory casket with little glass bottles originates from Mughal India – it was the 18th century's answer to a lady's vanity case and would still look wonderful on a dressing table. We also have two 19th century Qajar illuminated and decorative wedding contracts from Iran which I think would make a lovely and unusual gift. Carpet weights and carved elephant head architectural lintels would look fantastic in the garden or in a conservatory.

*What does a collection such as that of the Library of the Late Djafar Ghazi to be offered this month, bring to a sale?*

This collection reflects the passion of a very focused individual who spent a lifetime amassing a very special collection – it is an extraordinarily comprehensive collection of rare Safavid, Ottoman, Qajar and Timurid manuscripts, miniatures and calligraphies which encompasses works by the most famous calligraphers and scribes to the virtually unknown.

*If you could travel back in time to an Islamic court, which one would you choose and why?*

I think it would have to be to the 16th century, to the Ottoman court in Turkey under Suleyman I. It was a wealthy time with high levels of procession and ceremony and wonderful food, which I would like to try! I would love to see old Istanbul as it was and to see the Iznik potters at work; to see how the court organised its artistic workshops; and perhaps to see how the group of jewel-drenched gold vessels in the Topkapi museum were made.

# TWO MINUTES WITH...

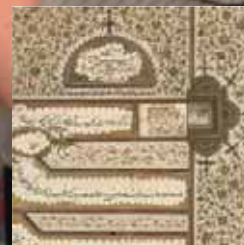
## ALICE RECOMMENDS...



A Safavid Turquoise Glazed Vase  
Kirman, 17th century  
£800 – 1,200



A Mughal Carved Ivory Casket  
India, 18th century  
£1,200 – 1,500



Two Illuminated Qajar Marriage Contracts  
Iran, 19th century  
£800 – 1,200

