

For Immediate Release

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A TREASURE-TROVE OF TAPESTRIES AND CARPETS



A Brussels Old Testament tapestry from *The Story of David*, depicting Saul offering armour to the young David. *Circa* 1525-1530, after a design by Bernard van Orley (estimate £130,000-200,000).

Bernard Blondeel & Armand Deroyan: Important Tapestries and Carpets

Christie's London

2 April 2003

London/Paris – Christie's announced today that the renowned Paris-based specialists, Bernard Blondeel and Armand Deroyan, will offer a superb collection of important tapestries and carpets in London on 2 April 2003. The carefully selected sale of over forty lots, *Bernard Blondeel & Armand Deroyan: Important Tapestries and Carpets*, marks the retirement of Monsieur Blondeel and celebrates an extraordinary partnership. The sale is expected to realise over £1.5 million.

Bernard Blondeel and Armand Deroyan are internationally recognised as being leading figures in their chosen fields, their names are synonymous for works of superb quality and condition,

chosen with exquisite, discerning taste. Important tapestries are the central focus of the sale. Examples dating from the late 15th century onwards span nearly 500 years of the art and provide an excellent opportunity for collectors to acquire the very best pieces to enjoy and decorate their homes.

Sometimes called the mobile frescoes of the North, tapestries are celebrated for their rich iconography and artistic originality. A unique union of artist designers, workshops and patrons, the tapestry gives a fascinating perspective on Western art history. Just as mural paintings decorated the walls of palaces and churches in Southern Europe, the great figurative tapestries served as monumental wall decorations. For many centuries, they were considered the most outstanding, monumental artistic expression of art in the Southern Netherlands and beyond. Symbols of power and wealth, tapestries were probably the most prestigious item in decorating terms and many of the greatest artists in Western history took pride in designing cycles for tapestries including Rubens and Raphael. Practically, they also offered protection against the cold and a further advantage is that they were mobile.

Tapestries retain their ability to transform any interior, classical or modern, at a stroke. The tapestries offered in this sale are in absolutely superb condition and are ready to hang in the stunning interiors of today's world. The technique of weaving a tapestry is, in itself, quite simple. The composition is built up by carefully following a model - the cartoon - which is a drawing, sometimes in colour, and of the same size as the eventual tapestry. The weaver traditionally viewed the models by slightly opening the warp threads while working. In original tapestry production, about three weavers worked on the loom at the same time working up in richly coloured, expensive silks and even gold and silver metal threads. The use of such materials often contributed to the fact that a tapestry series could be the most valuable item in a patron's collection. For a fairly uncomplicated design, a weaver could produce some seventy running centimetres per month. Generally, with an average width of five metres, a tapestry took seven months or twenty-one man-months to produce.

The Christie's sale, *Bernard Blondeel & Armand Deroyan: Important Tapestries and Carpets*, offers a select overview of the development of the tapestry form and on a wider scale also reflects the development of the history of Western Art. There are examples dating to the late Gothic period through the humanist Renaissance flowering and on to the courtly idylls of 18th century France and beyond.

Early examples of tapestries to be offered include an important Franco-Flemish allegorical tapestry from the series *The Ages of Man* depicting a Child at the Crossroads of Dignity, Power and Beauty (estimate : £120,000-180,000/€180,000-220,000). Dated *circa* 1510-1530, and possibly made in Tournai, this allegorical tapestry shows a boy on the threshold of manhood entering a throne room in which sits a figure emblematic of Power, who is attended by symbols of Beauty and Dignity. Over everything flies the fantastical figure of Free Will, for the boy has

to choose between Dignity and Beauty in order to achieve Power. The richly allusive nature of this tapestry and the growing sense of spatial perspective represents the last flowering of the late Gothic style, while looking forward to the greater naturalism of the Renaissance.

A magnificent Old Testament tapestry from weavers in Brussels depicts a moment from the Story of David when Saul offers his armour to the young David. Made in *circa* 1525-1530, after a design by Bernard van Orley (estimate : £130,000-200,000/€200,000-300,000). The noble, courtly bearing of the figures and the wonderfully lush borders relate to other famous sets of tapestries following the designs of Bernard van Orley, including the Hunts of Maximilian tapestries in the Louvre and the Battle of Pavia set in Naples.

Reputedly once part of the collection of King William I of Holland and dating to the second-half of the 16th century is an extraordinary Flemish tapestry whose entire surface area is embellished with decorative large-scale leaves and flowers creating a dramatic, almost abstract, design (estimate : £200,000-300,000/€300,000-500,000). Further demonstrating the development of composition during the Renaissance period, a late 16th century ‘Grotesques’ tapestry attributed to the workshop of Joosta van Herzeele, follows a design by Cornelis Floris which displays the same canopied structure of caryatid supports around a central architectural device (estimate : £70,000-100,000/€100,000-150,000). This tapestry also incorporates an amusing perspective view at its centre of an imaginary landscape with exotic animals.

A Spanish silvered metal thread, silk and wool *entre fenetre* panel, dated *circa* 1770 is attributed to the Royal tapestry manufacturer in Madrid of Santa Barbara (estimate : £30,000-50,000/€50,000-80,000). It is richly embroidered and in extraordinary condition, the colours retaining all their original vividness. The design is thought to have been executed by Guillermo (I) Anglois and José del Castillo and the tapestry has close similarities to a magnificent 77-piece ensemble woven for the grand bedchamber of Charles III in the new royal palace in Madrid.

Representing the creations of 18th century Brussels workshops is a superb pair of mythological tapestries by Hendrik II Reydamers (estimate : £65,000-90,000/€100,000-155,000 each). These finely woven tapestries retain spectacular colouring and render the landscape of mythology verdant and lush.

The painter Charles Coypel provided many of the designs for the famous Gobelins workshops. In the sale, a superb example by Gobelins, from the workshop of Michel Audran, after a design by Coypel, depicts Roland, or Angelique’s Wedding, from the *Tenture des Opéras* (estimate : £65,000-90,000/€100,000-150,000). Dated 1772 based on scenes from popular plays of the day. Tapestries from the royal Gobelins workshops are renowned for the fineness of their weave and the richness of the colouring, which are well represented in the fine tapestry.

The sale on 2 April concludes with a group of highly decorative carpets, all in superb condition. Examples include an Agra cotton carpet, India, late 19th century (estimate : £35,000-50,000/€100,000-150,000) and a Ziegler carpet, made in the Sultanabad district, West Persia also in the late 19th century (estimate : £80,000-120,000/€120,000-180,000).

Notes to Editors:

Exhibitions: New York 10 – 14 January 2003
 Paris 25 – 27 February 2003

Lecture & Catalogue:

The distinguished authority on Flemish tapestries, Guy Delmarcel, will contribute the introduction to the catalogue and will also give a lecture on tapestries at Christie's King Street on 31 March 2003.

Catalogues are available to purchase on 0207 389 2828

For further enquiries about the lecture please contact 0207 389 2205

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Images available on request

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Background Information

Bernard Blondeel was born in April 1950, in Antwerp (Belgium). After completing his studies in ethnology and sociology, he took over his mother's antique store in Antwerp in 1972. 1974 saw the first exhibition organized by Bernard Blondeel featuring Flemish tapestries. This marked the beginning of a long passion and has seen him stage numerous important exhibitions including *Five Centuries of Tapestries* at the Museum of Taiwan in 1988, *Tapestries of the Renaissance* at the Gallery Boccara in 1991, *Flemish Tapestries, Five Centuries of Tradition* at the Chateau de Vianden in 1995. Since 1975, Bernard Blondeel has participated in TEFAF Maastricht, which he co-founded. In 1986, he also exhibited for the first time at the Biennale des Antiquaires at the Grand Palais in Paris.

In 1996, his Paris gallery opened in association with Armand Deroyan. Having become one of the worlds leading specialists on both tapestries and archeology, he wished to take a broader, more active role in the art world, so agreed to become a member of the council administration of the National Antiques Union (Syndicat National des Antiquaires) and the president of Carre Rive Gauche.

Armand Deroyan was born in 1948 in Marseilles, where his Armenian parents moved after 1915. His father owned a shop which sold and restored Oriental carpets and Armand took responsibility for the family business at the age of 20, quickly developing the company.

After 90 years, the firm left Marseilles and moved to Paris near Drouot. He became associated with Bernard Blondeel and they opened a gallery at 11 rue de Lille, principally to sell tapestries.

Today after a fruitful and harmonious seven year collaboration, Bernard Blondeel and Armand Deroyan have chosen to follow their own respective passions. Mr. Blondeel will return to Anvers and concentrate on research and at 11 rue de Lille, Olivia and Armand Deroyan will continue to develop the 20th century carpet market from the gallery.

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