

For Immediate Release

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***MELLENDEZ STILL LIFE OF BERRIES AND BREAD LEADS THE OLD MASTER
PAINTINGS SALE AT CHRISTIE'S IN NEW YORK***

Important Old Master Paintings

January 23, 2004

New York – The sale of Important Old Master Paintings, taking place at Christie's in New York on January 23, offers a varied ensemble of works, showing different techniques, subjects matters and styles as they developed throughout the ages and in different countries. The sale has a strong grouping of paintings from private collections, including those of Mr. and Mrs. Leo S. Bing, Phoebe Cowles, Mrs. Russell B. Aitken, Peter Glenville and Hardy William Smith, Nelson Grimaldi Seabra and Goddard and Brigitta Lieberon, as well as from estates such as Martha Frick Symington, Countess Alicia Spaulding Paolozzi and Halsted B. Vander Poel. Many of the paintings have not been seen for over 100 years.

A superb still life Arbutus berries on a plate, apples, a wood barrel and bread rolls on a wooden table by the Spanish artist Luis Egidio Meléndez (1716–1780) from the collection of Phoebe Cowles (estimate: \$1,500,000–2,000,000) leads this season's sale. Meléndez was born in Naples and moved on to Madrid where he became the assistant to Louis-Michel van Loo, court painter to King Philip V. It was in the 1760s that he became a specialist in the still life genre, and a large number of his works adorned the walls of the King's summer residence, the Palacio Real in Aranjuez. A combination of Neapolitan still-life painting and 17th century Spanish influences, Meléndez' works nevertheless went beyond purely imitating these styles. His representation of the solidity and texture of the fruits, vegetables and objects he chose to depict has a strength of its own and is emphasized by the dark backgrounds and Caravaggesque light that appear in his work. The force

and beauty of his still lifes are striking, and Goya, among many other painters, was one of the artists who were fascinated and intrigued by his work.

*From the same collection comes *The Madonna and Child with Saint Anne and an Angel* by Carlo Saraceni (ca. 1579-1620) (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,500,000). Saraceni, born in Venice but working in Rome, never betrayed his Venetian heritage and his work often excelled in rich coloring and Caravaggesque light. The offered painting is arguably Saraceni's most famous composition and the only autograph version of five replicas. He did several small cabinet works in copper, a material that he used to convey pure, crystalline light and jewel-like coloring. The theme of the passage of time, symbolized by Saint Anne, the Madonna and the Child, was a very popular subject for devotional works, but Saraceni renders them with a strong sense of realism. The figures are wearing contemporary clothes and most attributes, such as the brown jute pillow and the cloth on which the Child rests, are depicted in a realistic way.*

Also from the Phoebe Cowles collection is a stunning portrait executed in pastel on paper of Charles-Louis-Auguste Fouquet, Maréchal de France and Duc de Belle-Isle by Maurice-Quentin de la Tour (1704-1788) (estimate: \$350,000-450,000). De la Tour was France's foremost portraitist under Louis XV and this portrait is considered a supreme example of his work. He rendered Charles-Louis-Auguste Fouquet, one of Louis XV's most important generals, with knowing eyes and an imperceptible smile, confident and aware of his many achievements.

*Meindert Hobbema's *A woodland glade with anglers by a pool in the foreground, cottages beyond* (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000) is a peaceful scene done in the best Dutch landscape painting tradition. The wooded landscape as shown here harks back to the influence of Hobbema's teacher, Jacob van Ruisdael, whereas the presence of water in the painting reflects the influence of Cornelis Vroom and Salomon van Ruysdael. The work was executed in the 1660s, when Hobbema was at the height of his career and a mark of his genius is the fact that he manages to imbue this small landscape on panel with same sense of monumentality that characterizes his large ambitious works on canvas.*

*An excellent group of French paintings will also be presented, featuring two portraits of girls by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (estimate: \$150,000-200,000 each); a *Fête galante* by Nicolas Lancret (estimate: \$200,000-300,000); and two works by Francois Boucher, *The encounter on the road* (estimate: \$250,000-350,000) and *L'attente* (estimate: \$500,000-700,000), the latter a splendid example of Boucher's mastery of the pastoral genre.*

The sale further offers the traditional Italian vedutti including a pair of capricios by Francesco Guardi (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) and a Michele Marieschi (estimate: \$200,000-300,000); a portable tabernacle by the Giotto follower Giovanni Bonsi (estimate: \$200,000-300,000); various portraits and stunning still lifes by Melchior d'Hondecoeter (estimate: \$500,000-700,000); Jan Philips van Thielen (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) and Isaak Soreau (estimate: \$600,000-800,000).

Both morning and afternoon sessions will offer paintings without reserve, about 50 works in total.

Auction: Important Old Master Paintings

January 23 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

January 17 - 22

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Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com