

For Immediate Release

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**THE AVO KRIKORIAN COLLECTION:
INNOVATION AND INSPIRATION OF MEIJI PERIOD DESIGN**



An important presentation pair of Imperial cloisonné vases
Namikawa Yasuyuki (1845-1927)
31.2cm. high
Estimate available on request

Christie's Zurich

19 February 2007 at 11am & 2.30pm

Zurich – The Avo Krikorian Collection, the largest and finest collection of Meiji Art to appear at auction in the last 20 years, will be offered at Christie's Zurich on 19 February 2007. The collection features over 580 pieces of Japanese Meiji period art (1868-1912) including crackle glazed Satsuma ware, cloisonné, metalwork, ivory sculptures and export porcelain. The sale will also include a small group of 17th century Japanese ceramics and Chinese works of art. The collection is estimated to fetch in excess of SFr 5 million.

The Meiji period marked the modernisation of Japan and the restoration of Imperial Rule after centuries of government by the military samurai class. Essentially closed to foreign contact throughout the Edo period (1600-1868), the Emperor Meiji encouraged the adoption of Western ways and the adaptation of Japan's traditional arts and crafts to Western taste. In 1867, the year before the Restoration, the government sent a delegation to the Paris Exposition, whilst independently the great samurai clans of Saga and Satsuma in Kyushu sent deputations carrying ceramics and various antiquities to Paris. From that time the craze

for Satsuma ware swept across Europe and America and the Japanese potters were quick to step up rates of production in response. The collection contains a number of outstanding examples including a Satsuma vase decorated with a spider's web, signed *Yabu Meizan*, Meiji period (estimate: SFr 7.000 – 9.500) and a Satsuma vase decorated with panels of geisha and landscapes, signed *Kinkozan zo Dai Nippon Kyoto* and *Sozan*, Meiji period (estimate: SFr 70.000 – 120.000).

In 1890, a system of honorific appointments, 'Imperial Artists', to the Imperial Household was instituted and the work of several such artists is to be found in the sale. Pieces commissioned by the Imperial Household as gifts for dignitaries and overseas royalty were marked with the chrysanthemum crest of the Imperial Household.

Such presentation pieces are represented by the work of two Imperial Artists, Namikawa Sosuke (1847-1910) and Namikawa Yasuyuki (1845-1927). Sosuke perfected a form of wireless enamelling that made his work appear like painting rather than cloisonné and the collection contains beautiful examples of his craftsmanship, such as a cloisonné vase with red capped Manchurian crane, Meiji period (estimate: SFr 70.000 – 120.000). A remarkable group of over 10 examples of vases by Namikawa Yasuyuki are also represented including the highlight of the sale, a magnificent pair of Imperial Presentation vases bearing the chrysanthemum crest of the Imperial Household (estimate on request). The vases are accompanied by a letter indicating that they were presented to the house of Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922). Okuma was made Finance minister between 1870 and 1881 and Prime Minister briefly in 1908 and then again 1914-1916. The 'Japan Weekly Mail' of 24 May 1890 tells how the vases were presented to Count Okuma by the Emperor and Empress at an audience in the Imperial Palace on 13 May in celebration of his recovery after losing a leg to an assassin's bomb in the previous year. The sale further includes a fine group of works by other artists among them *Kinunen* and *Hayashi Kodenji*, including a cloisonné vase depicting numerous butterflies (estimate SFr 70.000-90.000).

Whilst the collection is highlighted by cloisonné and ceramics, the sale also includes a selection of ivory and metal sculpture. After the prohibition of wearing swords in 1876, the metalworkers who had made decorative sword fittings in the past turned their skills to sculpting and inlaying traditional motifs on vases and other ornaments. The collection is particularly rich in iron ornaments inlaid with gold designs by Komai of Kyoto, such as an iron vase decorated in gold and silver *nunomezogan* with the immortal Tekkai Sennin, Meiji period (estimate: SFr 12.000 – 19.000).

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Pre-Sale Viewing

15 February 2007: 12.00pm-8.00pm

16-18 February 2007: 10.00am-6.00pm

Auction

The Avo Krikorian Collection: Innovation and Inspiration of Meiji Period Design

19 February 2007 at 11am & 2.30pm

Kunsthaus Zurich

Vortragssaal

Heimplatz

8001 Zurich

About Christie's

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