

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Erin McAndrew

emcandrew@christies.com

212.636.2680

**A CABINET OF CURIOSITIES: SELECTIONS FROM
THE PETER TILLOU COLLECTIONS**

**EUROPEAN FURNITURE, FINE ART, AND DECORATIVE OBJECTS
FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ONE OF
AMERICA'S MOST PROMINENT ANTIQUES DEALERS**



New York - Over the course of his 50-year career, antiques dealer Peter Tillou has helped to build some of the finest private collections of art and antiques in the U.S. Admired for his deep passion and relentless pursuit of knowledge about the items he sells, Mr. Tillou is a sought-after expert on an array of collecting categories, from coins and antique guns, to fine art, furniture, and decorative objects. On January 28, Christie's is honored to offer *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Selections from the Peter Tillou Collections*, a sale of over 225 exceptional items from his vast personal collection. This eclectic mix of Old Master paintings, European furniture, Tribal art, cameo glass, fossils and minerals reflects Mr. Tillou's long career and ever-expanding universe of collecting interests. With estimates ranging from \$250 to \$250,000, and all lots under \$2,000 offered without reserve, the total sale is expected to achieve in excess of \$1.6 million.

Catherine Elkies, Head of Private Collections at Christie's, comments: *"Christie's is honored to present this wonderfully eclectic selection of items from a truly devoted American collector. Each item in this sale began as a piece that Peter collected for himself, because he saw something wonderful and wanted to study it further, whether it was a magnificent aboriginal painting, a rare George II cabinet, or an intriguing specimen of petrified wood. This is an exciting opportunity for interior designers and collectors to take advantage of Peter's incredible knack for putting together seemingly disparate items to create a compelling and cohesive collection."*

European Furniture Highlights

Leading the sale is a magnificent offering of European furniture, featuring an important mid-Victorian Burr-Amboyna, Amaranth, Palmwood, Ebonised and Marquetry Center Table (pictured right; estimate: \$70,000-100,000), which was featured in the 1867 International Exhibition in Paris. At the time, *The Art Journal* proclaimed "there was no work of its class that demanded and deserved greater admiration". Embellished with an interlaced "AM" monogram on the top, this exquisite table was designed by Owen Jones and



finished by the eminent London cabinet-making firm of Jackson and Graham as part of a substantial commission for the wealthy collector Alfred Morrison (1821-1897). Other magnificent examples of inlaid furniture that are believed to be from the same commission are now in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Carnegie Museum of Art.

Another highlight is a George II Mahogany, Padouk, and Parcel-Gilt Secrétaire-Cabinet (estimate: \$150,000-250,000). With its curving bombé base and intricate carved details, the cabinet is a superb example dating from 1740-1750 that shares details with works produced by Royal cabinet-makers William Hallett and his disciple William Vile.

Additional furniture highlights include a 17th century Spanish polychrome-painted walnut and pine commode (estimate: \$30,000-50,000) and a group of fine antique collectors cabinets that open to reveal multiple rows of drawers, perfect for storing and displaying antique medals, coins, flowers, or shells. The lead item of the group is a late 17th century South German Inlaid-Walnut and Parcel-Ebonized Table Cabinet (pictured page one, center; estimate: \$7,000-10,000).

Fine Art Highlights

With an appreciation for fine art that is rooted in the classics, Mr. Tillou's collection includes numerous examples of 17th and 18th century European art, including the delightful *Trompe l'oeil with a flame stitched bag* by the 18th century French artist Jean Valette-Falgores, called Penot (pictured at right; estimate: \$60,000-80,000), and an appealing group of Old Master portraits, led by *Portrait of a*

girl in a red dress holding her dog, attributed to the 17th century Italian artist Carlo Ceresa (estimate: \$70,000-90,000), and a 17th century Anglo-Flemish School painting, *Portrait of a gentleman and a lady, full-length, with a monkey and a dog, in an interior*. Renewed scholarship has determined that the sitters are Florence Poulett, daughter of John, 1st Lord Poulett and her husband, Thomas Smyth of Long Ashton, Somerset.

Among the many sculptural treasures in Mr. Tillou's collection are the intricate figures, clubs, masks, and shields that comprise the sale's selection of tribal art. Leading the group is a Kota Reliquary Guardian Figure from Gabon (pictured at left; estimate: \$30,000-50,000), a matched pair of brass figures, one male and one female, from the Yoruba, Ogboni Society in Nigeria (estimate: \$25,000-35,000), and a fine Marquesas Island club, 'u'u', with eyes and mouth in the form of a 'tiki' head on both sides (estimate: \$25,000-35,000).

A small selection of 20th century aboriginal paintings reflects Mr. Tillou's continuing interest in indigenous cultures and non-Western art forms. Characterized by vivid colors, geometric patterns, and recurring circular motifs, the group includes Wenton Rubuntja's *Grandfathers Dreaming* (estimate: \$4,000-6,000), which Mr. Tillou purchased direct from the artist, Mary Dixon Nungurrayi's *Kunyatjarri Dreaming* (pictured at right; estimate: \$3,000-5,000), and Big Dave Oldfield Tjupurrula's *Yala, Snake and Dingo Dreaming* (estimate: \$4,000-6,000). All were included in a 1993 exhibition of Mr. Tillou's collection at the William Benton Museum of Art in Storrs, Connecticut.



Decorative Objects Highlights

The largest section of the sale is a veritable treasure trove of over 100 decorative objects, including pottery, glass, stoneware, candelabras, and rugs. A stunning selection of late 19th century cameo glass in shades of blue, citron, and red features 14 exceptional examples by Thomas Webb & Sons, including several marked "Cameo * Gem", a signifier of the highest quality (pictured page one, right; estimates range: \$1,800-6,000). Elsewhere, a small group of Chinese pottery figures includes a Pair of Painted Pottery Figures of Horses from the Northern Qi Dynasty (pictured page one, left; estimate: \$20,000-30,000), and a large Painted Pottery Figure of a Court Lady from the Tang Dynasty (estimate: \$20,000-35,000).

Among the most unusual items in the collection is a rare 16th century etched and inlaid German wheel-lock sporting gun with finely detailed scenes of hunters and peasants (estimate: \$20,000-25,000), a beautifully-preserved 19th century Himalayan saddle with iron fittings and bronze stirrups (estimate \$2,000-3,000), and a charming painted cast-resin figure of a mastiff that stands more than 3 and a half feet tall (estimate: \$3,000-5,000).

Natural History



Rounding out the selection of decorative objects is a stunning array of fossils, geodes, ammonites and seashells in a variety of shapes, textures, colors, and sizes. Long a favorite of interior designers, these items add interest to any style of décor. Highlights include a large green fish fossil (estimate: \$10,000-15,000), a giant ammonite measuring over a foot high (estimate: \$1,500-2,000), a large Mellon shell and a Horned Yellow Giant Helmet shell (\$1,000-1,500), and a beautifully-hued specimen of

petrified wood (estimate: \$700-900).

Auction: *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Selections from the Peter Tillou Collections*

January 28, 2010

Viewings: *Christie's Rockefeller Center Galleries*

January 23-28, 2010

A special extended evening preview of the sale is scheduled for Monday, January 25 from 5 – 8 pm

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2008 that totalled £2.8 billion/\$5.1 billion. For the first half of 2009, art sales totalled £1.2 billion/\$1.8 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales 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 \$80 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the Middle East, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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Images available on request

Complete e-catalogue for this sale is online at:

<http://www.christies.com/eCatalogues/index.aspx?saleid=22818>