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COLLECTION OF MRS NELIA BARLETTA DE CATES
French Furniture, Old Master Drawings, Silver, Porcelain and Works of Art

View of the drawing room

Christie's Paris
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Paris – Christie's is delighted to present the private collection of Mrs Nelia Barletta de Cates on March 18 in Paris. This magnificent collection includes important pieces of 18th century furniture and silver as well as old master drawings. Assembled over a period of more than thirty

years, it bears an eloquent testimony to the refined taste and discerning eye of Mrs. Cates whose collection was made with zest and flair. The collection is expected to fetch in excess of € 4 million (£2 million).

Bertrand du Vignaud recalls Mrs Cates's flawless understanding of architectural balance: "Nelia Barletta de Cates was "une grande dame" whose elegance, culture, charm and intelligence left a strong impression on everyone who knew her. Born in Santo Domingo and living in America and Europe, she epitomized the best of these worlds. During the many years she spent in London, she not only became one of the most prominent figures on the social scene, but she was also a devoted Cultural Attaché on behalf of her native country, the Dominican Republic. She was an ideal ambassador for its culture, art and music."

"In Paris she quickly attracted a group of devoted, passionate and interesting friends. Her receptions at 18 avenue Matignon were splendid. To many, her apartment will remain a place to be remembered for its wonderful works of art, refined hospitality and – most of all – for the unique personality of its hostess that lingered in every detail. Having had the privilege of knowing her well, I remember long conversations with her about art, architecture and travels. I was constantly impressed by her positivism, her knowledge, and her readiness to discover new places and people.

Nelia Barletta had an eye for architecture and dimensions. She understood the proportions of works of art and could easily envisage their visual impact. She was also an eclectic collector and displayed the best French furniture and objects of the 18th and 19th centuries alongside exotic objects. They fused effortlessly, creating an exquisite atmosphere."

Many of the pieces were acquired in the 1970s and early 1980s for Mrs. Cates's elegant London house in Mayfair. When she moved to Paris in the late 1980s, she acquired one of the most remarkable of all Parisian apartments – 18 avenue Matignon – legendary for its style and elegance. Decorated by Georges Geffroy for Loel and Gloria Guinness in the mid-1950s, it had been furnished with his favored Louis XVI and Empire pieces, always from the best sources. With the apartment, Mrs. Cates also acquired some of the highlights of Loel and Gloria Guinness's collection, so these superb pieces have not been on the open market for at least fifty years.

Harmony of form and line is a leitmotif of the collection and it is no coincidence that the Louis XVI and Empire pieces the Cates's acquired from Loel and Gloria Guinness combined flawlessly with the pieces from their London house – again almost entirely Louis XVI and Empire. The emphasis was on architectural forms, with a preference for plain veneers of mahogany or ebony, and a particular emphasis on sumptuous gilt-bronze. Examples include an Empire ormolu center table, executed by Martin-Guillaume Biennais (estimate: € 100,000–

200,000) and a late Louis XVI ormolu gueridon, probably supplied by Dominique Daguerre, with circular porphyry top (estimate: €80,000-120,000).

The apartment showcases pieces from the Louis XIV period to Empire, signed by major furniture makers and craftsmen such as Brizard, Canabas, Heurtaut, Jacob, Leleu, Macret, Molitor and Tilliard.

The drawing room was decorated by important pieces of furniture, mainly Louis XVI and Empire, such as a suite of Louis XVI gilt-wood seat furniture stamped Tilliard (estimate: € 600,000-900,000). This important suite can be closely linked to designs by Louis Prieur for the Royal Palace in Warsaw, circa 1766 and to chairs made by the celebrated furniture maker Louis Delanois. Two sets of four Louis XVI ormolu wall-lights are very similar to a model in the Paul Getty Museum (estimate: €150,000-250,000).

Interestingly, Patrick Leperlier, Head of the European Furniture department at Christie's Paris, made an important discovery while working on the collection: a pair of Louis XVI ormolu andirons - identical to a pair in Pavlovsk in the boudoir of the Empress Maria Feodorovna and based on a drawing by Jean-Demosthene Dugourc - had been commissioned originally by the Comte de Provence for his pavilion in Versailles (estimate: € 100,000-150,000).

A pair of late Louis XVI ormolu oviform ewers can be compared to a very similar vase signed by the silversmith Nicolas Delaunay and dated 1697, today in the Cathedral Museum at Poitiers in France (estimate: €80,000-120,000). The sale will also feature marble and porphyry vases, a pair of Louis XIV massive pink granite urns (estimate: €250,000-400,000) and a Louis XVI navette-shaped pot-pourri vase and cover from the Vogüé collection (estimate: €100,000-150,000). A pair of early Louis XVI column pedestals - possibly from the William Beckford collections - each with a ribbon-tied portrait bust medallion of Maréchal de Turenne et Sully probably executed by Jacques or René Dubois, could fetch €200,000 to 300,000. Also included is a Louis XVI ormolu mantel clock, the dial inscribed Baffert à Paris. This mantel clock came from Monsieur de Tourolle, a distinguished 18th century art patron established rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré (estimate: €70,000-100.000).

The Empire period is well represented with furniture made of pietra dura and marble, ormolu chandeliers and wall-lights: an Empire ormolu-mounted mahogany commode stamped B. Molitor (estimate: €20,000-30,000) and a set of four Restoration ormolu and griotte marble torchères from the Loel Guinness collection (estimate: €200,000-300,000) will be also be offered.

The strong architectural theme running through the collection makes it particularly attractive to today's market which is inspired by many of the great designers of the 1940s and 1950s such as Emilio Terry and Georges Geffroy, who worked with bold and architectonic neoclassical pieces of the late 18th and early 19th century.

The coherent group of furniture is enhanced by a small but particularly well-chosen group of 18th-century French drawings, especially featuring the oeuvre of Hubert Robert. A Fountain at Versailles with figures promenading - probably from the Chevalier de Clesne collection - is a 1773 oil on panel estimated at €20,000-30,000. Other landscapes by the same artist will be offered with estimates ranging from € 1,500 to € 50,000. A group of silver and silver-gilt objects will also be part of the sale. A pair of George III silver-gilt candlesticks made for the legendary patron William Beckford are an appropriate example - combining perfection of design with an illustrious and romantic history (estimate: € 50,000-80,000). Among the porcelain and glass section, a Nicolas II Imperial Russian part dinner-service of twenty plates from the Kremlin Service designed by Solntev could fetch €20,000 to 30,000 and a Paris Botanical part dessert-service is estimated at € 20,000 to 30,000.

Mrs. Cates was a generous woman, who decided to discreetly establish a foundation to help those who, like herself, had to face and suffer a terrible disease. The Amadeo and Nelia Barletta Foundation will support medical research in the field of oncology, and provides another reason to remember its generous benefactor.

Auction: March 18

Viewing: March 14-17

Christies.com: This sale will be featured on www.christies.com. All lots in the sale can be viewed online, along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®.

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