

UNDER EMBARGO

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BURNE-JONES MASTERPIECE RE-DISCOVERED AFTER 97 YEARS

Important painting to be highlight of historic exhibition at Christie's



Exhibition - "Daughters of Delight"
8- 16 March 2005

Important British Art
15 June 2005

London – A rare and important painting by Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833-1898) has been re-discovered by Christie's after 97 years. The large oil painting, *A Sea-Nymph*, which dates from 1880, has not been seen since it was sold in 1908. The picture is to be re-united by Christie's with its pair and exhibited, with a group of related works, at King Street on March 8-16. The painting will be sold at Christie's *Important British Art* sale on 15 June 2005 and is estimated to fetch £1.2-1.8 million, which would surpass the world auction record for the artist.

A Long-Lost Masterpiece

A Sea-Nymph, a large, 48-inch square painting, was sold by Christie's in London in 1908 and its whereabouts have been unknown to experts since then. The picture had hung at 23 Berkeley Square, the London home of William Connal, a wealthy Glaswegian iron broker and shipowner, who was a patron and friend of the classical painter Albert Moore and also owned several works by Burne-Jones. The picture was bought at Christie's on 14 March 1908 by an art dealer named Sulley. Only recently was it discovered that the picture returned to the Connal family at some point, and is now being sold by a descendant. Known only through an old photograph, *A Sea-Nymph* has not been seen in public for nearly a hundred years.

"An important long-lost painting from the height of Burne-Jones' career, A Sea-Nymph is a great rarity on today's market," says Christie's consultant and Burne-Jones expert, John Christian. *"Perhaps what impresses most is its astonishingly bold and sophisticated design, reflecting its origins in his protean work as a decorative artist. The painting is a work of startling originality."*

Burne-Jones drew artistic inspiration from classical mythology and the medieval dream world.

The sea-nymph, or mermaid, was a favourite subject, particularly after he acquired a country retreat in the picturesque village of Rottingdean, on the Sussex coast, in 1880. *A Sea-Nymph* is depicted with extravagant arabesques of red hair, echoing the forms of the rolling waves and holding fishes in either hand. Anticipating Art Nouveau, the design appears strikingly modern, while retaining the ethereal, dream-like qualities that Burne-Jones sought to achieve in his works.

The image was originally conceived in 1875 as part of a design for a woven fabric by Burne-Jones's life-long friend and collaborator William Morris. Tapestries apart, the design represents Burne-Jones's only contribution to a fabric design. The figure was also re-interpreted in 1878 in terms of a gesso relief, which may later have hung at Burne-Jones house at Rottingdean.

Christie's to re-unite masterpiece with its pendant in historic exhibition

Christie's is to re-unite *A Sea-Nymph* with its pendant painting by Burne-Jones, *A Wood-Nymph*, in an exhibition entitled "*Daughters of Delight*" on 8-16 March 2005. The exhibition will take place at King Street, the place where the two works parted company in 1908. *A Wood-Nymph*, was also painted by Burne-Jones in 1880, owned by William Connal and hung in his Berkeley Square house and was sold alongside *A Sea-Nymph* at Christie's. It was bought in 1908 by Alexander Reid, the great Glaswegian art dealer who introduced Scottish collectors to the French Impressionists and was painted by Van Gogh, and eventually made its way into the Humphrey Talbot Collection in the South African National Gallery.

On loan from Cape Town, *A Wood-Nymph* will be re-united with *A Sea-Nymph*, and hung with several other related exhibits from UK public and private collections including The William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. The exhibits will include the original design for fabric by William Morris, related paintings and drawings by Burne-Jones, and material documenting the history of *The Sea-Nymph* in the Connal family collection. Curator of the exhibition, John Christian, says: "To anyone interested in Pre-Raphaelitism and the Arts and Crafts movement, the exhibition should be fascinating." The exhibition comes at a time of ever-increasing appreciation of the significance of the Arts and Crafts movement. An exhibition entitled *International Arts and Crafts* opens at The Victoria and Albert Museum on 17 March 2005.

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Images available on request

Visit Christie's website at www.christies.com

Note to Editors:

Burne-Jones record

The world auction record for the artist stands at £1,158,750, for *The Prince Entering the Briar Wood*, 1869, sold at Christie's London on 13 June 2001.