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Contact: Catherine Fenston (London) 44.207.389.2664 cfenston@christies.com

THE FORBES COLLECTION OF VICTORIAN PICTURES AND WORKS OF ART First Session of Two Day Auction Totals £11 Million with Fourteen Record Prices Achieved

The Forbes Collection of Victorian Pictures and Works of Art Evening Sale - 19 February 2003

London – The landmark sale of *The Forbes Collection of Victorian Pictures and Works of Art*, the finest collection of Victorian art to come up for sale in recent auction history, began this evening with 28 lots totalling £11,069,275 (\$17,644,424). 14 record prices were established tonight and 65% of lots sold within or above the pre-sale estimate. The sale continues tomorrow with a broad range of Victorian paintings and sculpture with estimates starting at £1,000.

“Christie’s was packed this evening with both established collectors as well as new faces who came to see and participate in the auction. We have welcomed literally thousands of visitors to Christie’s in the last fortnight, some having never visited before, all of whom came to see this extraordinary overview of Victorian art,” said Dermot Chichester, Chairman of Christie’s UK and tonight’s auctioneer. *“The bidding this evening was consistent and strong which bodes well for tomorrow and included strong American and Continental European buying. This reinforces the anticipated reaction that this collection gives a fresh opportunity to appreciate and buy Victorian art, bringing many new collectors to this category. In the selective environment of today, tonight’s sale underlies the ongoing health and stability of the London art market.”*

John Martin’s (1789-1854) dramatic *Pandemonium*, a haunting vision of London besieged by a river of fire inspired by John Milton’s text for *Paradise Lost* led the sale, selling for a record price of £1,656,650. A celebration of the elegant Victorian aristocrat depicted in *Scene in Chillingham Park: Portrait of Lord Ossulston* also called *The Death of the Wild Bull* by Sir Edwin Henry Landseer, R.A. (1802-1873) was the second highest price realising £1,271,650 and establishing a new world record

for the artist at auction. This monumental picture is set on the Northumberland estate where there was a famous herd of wild cattle, one of the three surviving breeds from pre-Roman times.

The first ambitious painting of a life-sized figure painted by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) was offered tonight. *Il Dolce Far Niente*, oil on canvas, sold for £666,650. Showing a woman languishing, wistful, in an Egyptian chair, the initial sitter was Hunt's fiancée, Annie Miller. Midway through painting the work, they separated and he finished the work using the features of Fanny Waugh, whom he married in December 1865.

The 19th century emigration to the 'New World' is memorably recorded by James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902) in *Goodbye on the Mersey* that sold for £831,650. The stunning work is filled with a degree of anxiety and anticipation for those who remain on the docks waving goodbye to loved ones on the steamer heading away from British shores.

The monumental sculpture, *An athlete wrestling with a python*, by perhaps the most prominent figure in Victorian Art, Frederic, Lord Leighton, P.R.A. was a further highlight, selling for £446,650 establishing a record price for a sculpture by the artist at auction. It is the quintessential expression of Victorian academicism by the man who not only wielded more influence as P.R.A. than any incumbent since Reynolds, but dominated the whole Victorian art establishment.

Record prices were achieved also achieved this evening for the following artists Walter Howell Deverell, John Faed, William Powell Frith, Robert Huskisson, John Linnell, John Martin, Albert Joseph Moore, John Morgan, John Philip, Briton Riviere, Thomas Seddon and Henry Scott Tuke.

Over thirty years ago, the late Malcolm S. Forbes purchased William Powell Frith's *For Better, For Worse*, the first major painting in this collection. From there, under the guidance of his son, Christopher Forbes, one of the most quixotic ventures of modern collecting began. "I was able to persuade my father that the Magazine could assemble the "best" collection of Victorian pictures ... for the price of a lovely, but relatively unimportant, Monet *Waterlilies* which hung in his office". The ethos of the collection was reflected in the initial premise that every painting must have been exhibited at the Royal Academy during Queen Victoria's reign, or be a study or a replica of a painting that was.

The sale continues tomorrow when over three hundred works of art will be offered over two sale sessions at Christie's, 8 King Street, St. James's, SW1Y 6QT.

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Images available on request