

For Immediate Release

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THE RARE AND THE BEAUTIFUL LEAD THE ISLAMIC SALE THIS SPRING AT CHRISTIE'S

Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds

Christie's King Street, Tuesday, 17 April 2007

Oriental Rugs and Carpets

Christies King Street, Monday, 16 April 2007

London – An outstanding Qur'an that was specifically made for Shah Sulayman Safavi, the ruler of Iran in the late 17th century, leads the *Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds* sale at Christie's London on Tuesday, 17 April 2007. Further highlights include the most impressive group of late 19th century Moroccan inset gold jewellery ever to come to auction together with a European private collection of Mughal Indian and Safavid Persian miniatures. In the *Oriental Rugs and Carpets* sale on Monday, 16 April 2007, a superb 16th century Isfahan carpet from Central Iran is one of the top lots of over 200 decorative and classical carpets and rugs that will be offered.



Retaining its original leather cover, with sumptuous doublure, this is the first time that this magnificent Royal Safavid Persian Qur'an, dated AH 1094 (1683 AD), has been offered on the European market (estimate: £150,000-200,000). Made specifically for Shah Sulayman Safavi, the ruler of Persia in the late 17th century, it contains a long dedication to him along with his personal seal. Three double-pages of illuminations of magnificent royal quality filled with delicate arabesques and floral designs around panels of text or medallions decorate the opening pages of the manuscript, while every subsequent page is written on sumptuous gold panels, with authoritative commentaries written around the edges. Other manuscripts offered in the sale include a collection of secular

books demonstrating highlights of Persian book production over the last four hundred years such as a manuscript by the calligrapher responsible for the inscriptions on the three most important buildings in Safavid Isfahan, 'Alireza al-'Abbasi, alongside more contemporary examples. The celebrated late 20th century Iranian artist Mahmoud Farshchian has taken a 19th century manuscript that was intended to be illustrated with miniatures but never completed, and transformed it by painting his own illustrations of traditional scenes (estimate: £60,000-80,000).

The most outstanding collection of late 19th century Moroccan diamond inset gold jewellery ever to come to auction will feature in the sale. Consisting of twenty-six pieces, the collection is being sold by direct descendants of the *Mendoub* (Sultan's representative) of Tangier. A highlight is a spectacularly large gemset and enamelled gold eagle pendant inset with emeralds and other precious stones (see right), which according to family records dates back to 1694 AD (estimate: £50,000-70,000). In addition, the collection includes a number of striking gold pendant earrings of varying designs, inset with either diamonds, rubies or emeralds (estimates range from £2,000-60,000) together with an emerald and amethyst inset necklace (*lebba*), probably Fez, 18th century (estimate: £50,000-70,000).



A further highlight is a European private collection of around thirty lots of Mughal Indian and Safavid Persian miniatures, ranging from the 16th to 19th centuries purchased in the late 1970s and 1980s, almost all in excellent condition. A number of Royal Mughal album leaves come from the same album. These the Mughal Court, European influence. album pages with given the name The album pages are Highlights include *A* left) and *A Tavern*



combine drawings by some of the best artists working at such as Basawan and Kesu Das, often with clear The monochrome miniatures are complemented on the calligraphy by the best calligrapher of the time, who was Zarrin Qalam (Golden Pen) by the Emperor Akbar. completed by margins beautifully illuminated in gold. *Temple Scene* by Kesu Das (estimate: £15,000-20,000) (see *Interior* by Basawan (estimate: £12,000-18,000).

An usual repoussé gilt and niello silver panel, probably produced in the 12th century in North East Iran for a piece of furniture, possibly even for a throne (estimate: £80,000-120,000) is also offered. Remarkable for its size and for the boldness of the figural designs on it, this is an extremely rare survival from this period. An unresolved mystery surrounds an outstanding mid 19th century Iranian painted casket (estimate: £25,000-35,000). Three of the decorative sides, which show depictions from the Life of Muhammad Shah, were painted by Muhammad Ismail, the leading painter in this field in the country. Its size would make it the largest of his lacquer works to have survived anywhere. However it is difficult to surmise why the other remaining side and interior were unfinished, and later completed by another renowned artist, Mustafa.



Over 200 decorative and classical carpets and rugs will be offered in the *Oriental Rugs and Carpets* sale on Monday 16 April 2007, with examples from Turkey, Iran, China, the Caucasus and Turkmenistan. In Iran, the ascent of Shah Abbas (1588-1629) to the throne in Isfahan heralded a complete change of approach in the country. Isfahan was fashioned into the jewel of a city that it is today and no expense was spared on the products made there. Typical of carpets from this period is a superb late 16th century Isfahan carpet (estimate: £200,000-300,000) in remarkable condition (see left). Woven on silk, the design is a beautifully drawn version of the most classic combination, in vibrant colours. Also offered is another Isfahan carpet, this

time from the 17th century (estimate: £80,000-120,000) which although smaller in size, is remarkable in its design.

A fascinating 17th century Indian carpet, of a design that derives directly from these two Isfahan carpets, is of a type that seems to have been made specifically for export (estimate: £10,000-15,000). In the West the only trace of the group can be found in paintings; recently however a group of original carpets was discovered in Kyoto in Japan. The carpet offered in the sale has a Japanese provenance, and is sold with its 19th century fitted wooden case inscribed in Japanese optimistically claiming that it was one of ten rugs brought back by Kobayakawa Takakage after the Korean Invasion which took place in the late sixteenth century.

A further highlight is an exceptional 17th century silk and metal-thread 'Polonaise' rug, from Isfahan (estimate: £150,000-250,000) (see right). These opulent silk carpets attracted much attention from travellers in Persia throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, and were often given as gifts. This explains why many are still housed today among royal collections, important museums and private collections across Europe.



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Images available on request

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Notes to Editors

Christie's South Kensington

- **Islamic Textiles, 18 April 2007**

In addition to an interesting collection of Indonesian textiles the sale will include a lovely 1810-15 Indian Kashmir shawl of the type seen in Ingres portraits (estimate: £4,000-6,000), with a fabulously fine ivory wool with red and blue cone borders. Other highlights include a collection of North African embroideries from the 18th century, three Usbek dowry embroideries (susanis) from a Scottish house (estimate: £2,500-3,500) together with a 17th century red Mughal velvet floor spread (estimate: £7,000-10,000).

- **Indian and Islamic Works of Art, 20 April 2007**

Works of art, manuscripts and paintings dating from the 9th century to the early 20th century will be offered in this sale including a fine silver Ottoman ewer and basin together with a Sikh sword with a damascened handle, inscribed and dated 1809AD.