

*For Immediate Release
1 March 2004*

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CHECK MATE



*An amber animalier chess set,
Baltic region, late 19th century
Estimate: £10,000-15,000*



*An Indian carved ivory figural chess set
Rajasthan, 19th century
Estimate: £15,000-20,000*

*The Kaspar Stock Collection of Chess Sets
Thursday 27 May 2004 at 2pm*

South Kensington, London - An impressive single-owner collection of chess sets will be offered at Christie's South Kensington on 27 May. Amassed over a period of thirty years by the German collector, Dr. Kaspar J. Stock, the collection comprises more than 100 chess sets and approximately 30 chessboards. Expected to fetch up to £150,000, individual estimates range from £100 to £20,000.

Chess – Chess is a game of great antiquity and while its origins are obscure, it seems probable that it was originally an Indian invention. During the 6th Century it was brought to Persia from where it spread to the Arabic Empire, and eventually to Europe. Since its beginnings, chess was played on a board drawn into squares – however, by the end of the 15th century the board had become chequered, making it easier to play on.

Dr. Kaspar J. Stock – Born in 1933 in southern Germany, Dr Stock's passion for the game of chess started as a young child when he learnt to play on a carved wooden set. Painstakingly assembled over many years, Dr Stock's chess sets have been sourced from antiques shops and flea markets all over Europe including Berlin, St Petersburg, Amsterdam, Paris and London and as far afield as auctions in Hong Kong, China and New York. His particular fascination with wooden, metallic and especially ivory handcrafted sets grew over time and there are many fine examples on offer in the Christie's sale.

Highlights of the collection include a stunning amber animalier chess set from the Baltic region. Dating from the late 19th century, it is estimated to fetch £10,000–15,000. A 19th century Indian carved ivory figural set carries an estimate of £15,000–20,000. Beautifully modelled, the Kings and Queens are typically in the form of elephants, the bishops riding dromedaries, the knights on horseback while the pawns are employed in a variety of roles, some bearing muskets, clubs and swords with others playing musical instruments such as drums and flutes.

Further noteworthy lots include: a Dieppe bone bust set, first half 19th century (estimate: £2,500–3,000); a 19th century immaculate German turned softwood 'Selenus' type chess set and box (estimate: £3,000–4,000); a Russian walrus ivory figural chess set, Kholmogory, 19th century – representing the Russians versus the Turks (estimate: £3,500–5,000). On a more affordable note, a 20th century painted wooden Russian doll set may appeal at £150–200. The collection also features sets from Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Cameroon, Indonesia and Chinese Export sets.

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