

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK TO OFFER THE MAGNIFICENT BRESLAUER COLLECTION OF BOOKS AND BOOK BINDINGS**

#### **Bibliotheca Bibliographica Breslaueriana**

**March 21, 22 & 23 and June**

**New York** – On March 21, an evening sale followed by four day-sale sessions on March 22 and 23, will present the magnificent library of Bernard Breslauer, the legendary New York-based book dealer and collector. The sale will offer a spectacular collection of the fine books and historic and artistic book bindings. A second part of the collection will be offered in June.

Bernard Breslauer's father, Martin, set up shop in Berlin in 1898 and soon acquired a European-wide reputation as one of the most erudite bibliographers in the trade. His catalogues and many literary discoveries – including the Stolberg Library from Wernigerode and the rediscovery in Vienna of the books belonging to Napoleon and Marie-Louise – astound today's collector of rare books and manuscripts beyond belief and shed a formidable light on the riches and exquisite material still available in those days.

In order to make his family's escape from Nazi Germany financially possible, Breslauer was forced to sell two thirds of his matchless reference library to Martin Bodmer in Zurich, keeping only the basic bibliographies and catalogues needed for re-establishing himself in London. Martin's son, Bernard, was marked profoundly by this loss, and after having served for more than four years as a volunteer in the Alien Pioneer Corps of the British Army, he slowly but brilliantly revived the fortunes of his father's company when Martin died in 1940 as a result of a direct hit of the Bloomsbury mansion block where he lived. In 1977, the firm moved to premises on Fifth Avenue, where Bernard's unmistakably European demeanor added Old World elegance to the New York book milieu. Bernard Breslauer became the greater expert, notably on historical and artistic book

bindings and his collection concentrated on vellum printing, large-paper and blue-paper issues, presentation and association copies, manuscript catalogues, distinguished provenances, and copies in decorated bindings. In addition and most unusually, he commissioned fine bindings for his own authoritative publications from the foremost Parisian artists, such as Paul Bonet, Pierre-Lucien Martin, Thérèse Moncey, Germaine de Coster, and Jean de Gonet.

In March and June of this year Christie's will sell in three portions the Bibliotheca Bibliographica Breslaueriana. More than 2200 lots will be offered in total and many of the Breslauer treasures – as could be seen during exhibitions at the Wittrockiana in Brussels in 1986 and at Harvard's Houghton Library in 1991 – will be available again for a next generation of collectors.

Highlights are many and multiple but among the most spectacular items definitely features the splendid Art Nouveau binding designed by Henry van de Velde c. 1898 (estimate: \$50,000-70,000). Van de Velde's designs no doubt influenced England's greatest woman binder, Sybil Pye, whose best Art Deco work is represented by several examples in the Breslauer Collection, including a mosaic binding of rare beauty executed in 1941 for Major J.R. Abbey, her major patron (estimate: \$10,000-15,000) and, incidentally, one of Breslauer's best customers in the 1950s and 60s. Goethe's catalogue of his own autograph collection is of the greatest rarity (estimate: \$10,000-15,000); the immortal German poet and scientist was one of the earliest collectors of literary, artistic, musical and historical autograph manuscripts and letters, and he used the occasion of distributing this broadside catalogue among his friends and famous acquaintances to solicit more examples. The fine Parisian binding for Thomas Wotton on the first published bibliography of British authors, compiled by John Bale (estimate: \$30,000-40,000), reveals a unique association of the two greatest English Protestant bibliophiles of the Renaissance. Another English text published on the Continent, Richard de Bury's *Philibiblion* (1473), represents the first monograph on bibliophily (estimate: \$120,000-160,000), while Johann Trithem's treatise on ecclesiastical writers (1494) (estimate: \$20,000-30,000) is the first printed bibliography. Dr. Breslauer's copy of the latter work is in characteristically fine condition, in an unrestored gothic blind-stamped binding.

**Auction:** Bibliotheca Bibliographica Breslaueriana

March 21 at 6 p.m. and

March 22 & 23 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

**Viewing:** Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

March 16 - 21

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*Images available on request*

*Visit Christie's Web site at [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)*

More information about Christie's sale of *Bibliotheca Bibliographica Breslaueriana* can be found on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com) provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.