

For Immediate Release
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Important Daguerreotypes by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey from the Archive of the Artist, Part II

Tuesday 18 May 2004 at 6.30pm



Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey
41. Tivoli. 1842. Villa Adriana
Panoramic daguerreotype
Estimate: £30,000-50,000

London – In May 2003, Christie’s London held an historic sale of Important Daguerreotypes during which a new world record was realized for a single photograph at auction. When Athènes Temple de Jupiter Olympien, by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, sold for an incredible £565,250, the previously little known French artist established his place in the history of photography. The sale comprised 86 unique daguerreotypes, totalled £3,798,126 and was almost 100% sold.

Christie's is delighted to announce the sale, on 18 May, of an equally desirable selection of daguerreotypes from the archive. Part II will feature 89 images with individual estimates ranging from £1,800 to £150,000. Once again, many of these unique photographs are the earliest surviving images of the subjects depicted including architectural views of Damascus, Cairo, Jerusalem, Athens and Rome as well as some breathtaking portraits.

As more of the artist's work is being disclosed, the ambition and magnitude of his unparalleled photographic oeuvre become more evident. Images in Part II complement and enhance the selection offered in Part I. It is now becoming clear that Girault de Prangey was one of the earliest artists in photography. Confirming his historical importance, several of his works will be shown in the 'Photographers of Genius' exhibition opening at the Getty Museum in California this month [16 March – 25 July].

This remarkable early master made his first photographs in 1841 when he experimented with Daguerre's invention in the grounds of his villa. By 1842 de Prangey began travelling extensively, touring the historical sights and cities of the Mediterranean and the Near East. He returned with a treasure of images that today remains unrivalled.

Highlights:

One of the leading lots is Thèbes, 1844, 202 Rhamséion, a powerful image of the Osirid pillars of the Ramesseum at Gurna, Thebes, (estimate: £80,000-120,000). This lot is a wonderful example of how the natural hues created by the daguerreotype process perfectly complement the image with its light blue sky and warm pinkish-brown stonework.

Athènes, Tour des Vents, n.d. [1842] is another notable lot and depicts a fine, clear detail of two of the Eight Winds around the top of the Tower; the two winds are the east wind, Apeliotes, with a harvest of fruit, grain and honey on the left, and the south east wind, Euros, whose heavily folded garments are said to indicate heavy clouds. Girault de Prangey succeeds in creating an image, which reveals the magnificence of this important monument. It is thrown into our faces from the surrounding ruins and dwarfs everything around it (estimate: £30,000-50,000).

The tree is a subject that is notoriously difficult to photograph but one that fascinated de Prangey. In Tivoli, 1842, Villa Adriana, an elegant panorama, the dark solid mass of the cypress trees, which appear silhouetted, puncture the even light blue of the sky with a single pine emerging from the deep shadows in the foreground (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

One of the highlights among the portraits being offered for sale is a beautiful portrait of a young woman described as a member of one of the nomadic Bedouin tribes - Kaire. Bédouine de Ghiséh, n.d. [1843], (estimate: £9,000-12,000). How did Girault de Prangey convince this pretty young girl to pose for him, alone and in such a casual attitude? She appears confident and very much at ease, with none of the fears one might expect given the social climate of the time and her background. This results in a unique portrait which bears little comparison with the studio portraits that were just beginning to become popular in London, Paris and New York. Even today, such a portrait could still prove difficult.

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*Images available on request
Visit Christie's at www.christies.com*

Note to Editors:

This sale will take place at Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1

Viewing:

New York

Christie's, Rockefeller Centre, New York: 23 - 27 April

London

Christie's, 8 King Street, SW1:

Friday 14 May: 9am - 4.30pm

Sunday 16 May: 2pm - 5pm

Monday 17 May: 9am - 8pm

Tuesday 18 May: 9am - 4.30pm