

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S RUSSIAN ART PRESENTS IMPORTANT PAINTING AND WORKS OF ART FROM THE 18TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY

**Russian Art
18 April 2008**

New York — Following the success of the November 2007 London sales which totaled £42.9 million, Christie's is pleased to announce its *Russian Art* sale on April 18 in New York. Among the paintings offered, a highlight from the group of 15 works by Aleksandr Iakovlev is *Loge de Théâtre à Pékin*. Of the works of art offered is an unusually large Fabergé nephrite elephant, a rare and large important Soviet propaganda vase by the State Porcelain Factory, a silver-gilt and cloisonné enamel punch set by Ovchinnikov, and a pair of silver candelabra by Nicholls & Plincke from the estate of Leona Helmsley.



Leading the paintings in the sale is Aleksandr Iakovlev's *Loge de Théâtre à Pékin* a rare work from the Chinese Theatre series that is an exceptional example of the artist's work for its unusual subject matter, original composition, and intensely saturated color palette (estimate: \$1,800,000-2,500,000). Iakovlev was a painter, theatre designer and graphic artist, whose art interprets his vast travels. *Loge de Théâtre à Pékin* reflects the artist's influential journey to China in 1918, the first of many expeditions to the Far East, which resulted in an endless source of inspiration. Iakovlev was mesmerized by the dramatic expression, simplicity of

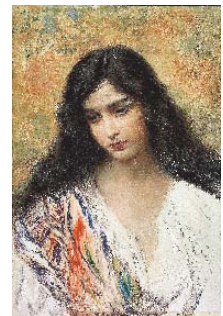
form, colorful and harmonious presentation of the Chinese Theatre. The painting shows a group of men watching the performance on stage in front of them and depicts a spectacular array of characters following the drama with intensity. Iakovlev records the emotions and reactions exhibited by audience members, as they lean forward in their seats; some have a mask-like expression, mimicking the actors on stage. *Loge de Théâtre à Pékin* is one of the most important works by Iakovlev to be offered at auction.

A work by one of the greatest 19th century landscape painters, Ivan Ivanovich Shishkin, is offered in the sale, *The Forest Clearing* (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,400,000). Painted in 1896, it is one of the most important late works by the artist. This sylvan scene depicts an oak forest with the sun filtering through the canopy of branches to a clearing. The naturalistic rendering of the trees and light, with a deep receding background evokes the feeling of being alone in the forest. According to Shishkin, “the forest is the basic element of the universe, along with the sea and the sky.”



Included in the property of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, a group of ten works by Nikolai Roerich to be sold, benefiting the acquisitions fund. Roerich’s paintings are also reflective of his travels through the Far East, as exemplified in *Ruins of a Chinese Fort*, a somber earth-toned work of snow-covered ruins, which was inspired by the artist’s travels between Guma and Karaghalik, Chinese Turkestan (estimate: \$120,000-180,000). Other paintings in the collection include jewel-toned and expressively painted landscapes of lakes and mountains (estimates start at \$3,000).

A portrait titled *Russian Beauty* by Konstantin Egorovich Makovskii is a perfect example of his ‘head studies’ (estimate: \$350,000-450,000). Maskovskii was a successful artist who excelled in history painting, genre scenes and portraiture. The unknown sitter is portrayed with a lowered gaze and her dark hair frames her shoulders. The bright fabrics of her blouse and the floral backdrop of this elegant yet simple portrait demonstrate Makoskii’s mastery of color and brushwork.



An unusually large jeweled nephrite model of an elephant by Fabergé, circa 1890, in the original red velvet presentation case (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) leads the works of art section. Carved from a single block of nephrite, the elephant is an example of Fabergé’s technically accomplished stone carving on a large scale. Such large hardstone models of animals are very rare compared with the miniature models more common in the production of the firm.

Also featured is a rare and large important Soviet propaganda vase by the State Porcelain Factory, executed by Ivan Riznich in 1927, a turning point in the history of the factory. The design of the vase depicts the role of the Red Army in the Russian countryside, protecting grain convoys during the Civil War. One side depicts a horse and a ploughman furrowing a field with peasants and horse-drawn wagons in the background, the other side depicts a line of Red Army soldiers and an officer on a rampant horse beneath a Soviet flag. The vase is inscribed in Russian on the foot “The Red Army, defender of the Soviet working class” and dated beneath the rim on one side 1917-1927 and inscribed in Russian on the other “10th Anniversary of Soviet Rule” (estimate: \$250,000-350,000).



Property from the Estate of Leona Helmsley includes a pair of silver five-light candelabra by Nicholls & Plincke (estimate: \$80,000-100,000). Other highlights in the works of art section of the sale include a silver-gilt and cloisonné enamel punch set by the firm of Ovchinnikov, on the market for the first time since it was purchased at auction in Shanghai in 1930 by a prominent White Russian émigré family (estimate: \$200,000-300,000); a large silver and guilloché enamel photograph frame by Fabergé (estimate: \$150,000-250,000); and a silver and cloisonné enamel kovsh by Feodor Rückert for Fabergé (estimate: \$70,000-100,000), one of many exceptional works by Rückert in the sale.



Auction: *Russian Art*

18 April at 10am

Viewing: Christie’s Rockefeller Galleries

12 - 17 April

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*Estimates do not include buyer’s premium

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