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Christie's To Hold First-Ever Combined Sale of Russian Paintings & Works of Art in New York

Christie's International Russian Dept. to Hold Spring Sales in New York, Fall Sales in London

Christie's Unveils Impressive Collection of Ambassador Charles R. Crane

Plus: New Senior Specialist in New York Reinforces Christie's Strong Market Position

*Russian Paintings and Works of Art
April 24, 2006*

*The Collection of Ambassador Charles R. Crane
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New York – Alexis de Tiesenhausen, Christie's International Head for Russian Works of Art, is pleased to announce that commencing with the April 24 sale of Russian Paintings and Works of Art, all Christie's New York sales of Russian works of art and paintings will be combined into one dedicated sale, a sale that will more closely mirror the current sale structure in London where a single day of sales dedicated to Russian paintings and works of art has been in place since 2004. The inaugural April sale in New York features an outstanding selection of magnificent Russian pictures and exceptional Russian works of art, the rich scope of which speaks to the strength of Christie's International team and its ability to bring together a highly selective collection from all corners of the globe.

In response to the strengthening market for Russian pictures and works of art and the refocused sale structure in New York, de Tiesenhausen announces the appointment of Yelena Harbick as Senior Specialist of Russian Paintings. Prior to joining Christie's, Harbick spent eleven years as a Research Assistant and later as Assistant Curator of Russian Art at the Hillwood Museum and Gardens in Washington, D.C. The Hillwood Collection is the largest collection of Russian Imperial art outside of Russia. Natalie Newcom will continue her role as specialist for Russian decorative arts.

Alexis de Tiesenhausen says, “The market for Russian paintings and works of art is witnessing unbelievable excitement and activity from new and seasoned collectors all over the world. Refocusing our international sale calendar to a single dedicated sale in New York in the spring and dedicated sales in London in the fall was the logical next step as we continue to provide our clients at Christie’s with simply the most complete and seamless access to the best of the Russian art market.”

Russian Paintings

*Among the fine art highlights in the April sale of Russian Paintings and Works of Art is a masterpiece by Zinaida Serebriakova, *Sleeping Nude* (illustrated left, estimate: \$300,000–400,000). One of the leading female artists of Russia’s Silver Age, Serebriakova produced an unique body of work easily identified by its idiosyncratic blend of Russian realism and personal expression. A dynamic work combining the technical with the emotional, *Sleeping Nude* positions the woman’s body diagonally across the canvas in a way that accentuates and elongates her smooth contours. The suppleness and vitality of the woman’s body is complemented by Serebriakova’s delicate brushstrokes that conceal imperfections, idealizing the female form, while more spontaneous lines of undiluted color, a trademark of Serebriakova’s portraits, create the disheveled bed–linen which further emphasizes the curvature of the model. The eroticism of the figure’s pose, coupled with her state of slumber, work together to make *Sleeping Nude* one of the most provocative and glorious examples from this most celebrated female Russian painter.*

*Two glorious works by Ivan Aivazovskii also lead this sale. Raised in Theodosia, a thriving port on the Black Sea, Aivazovskii’s fascination with the sea dominated his work throughout his career. *An Italian Brig in the Harbor at Sunset* (illustrated right, estimate: \$400,000–600,000) is a spectacular example illustrating the artist’s renowned talent for the faithful depiction of sky, air and water. With transparent color washes that barely stain the prepared ground of the canvas and almost invisible brushstrokes, Aivazovskii creates an atmosphere unparalleled in his time or later. His calm waters are lit from within with the same minute brushstrokes and painstaking layering of very thin paint to achieve the particular clear green and blue that is a hallmark of this artist’s work. By contrast, the cresting waves in the sea below and the actual orb of the sun in the sky above are built up with thick impasto, through which the artist has left visible reminders of his brush.*

*In *Moonlight* (estimate: \$1,000,000–1,500,000), Aivazovskii takes one main theme of his oeuvre – the uncontrollable power of natural forces – to a new dimension by raising the human figure out of turmoil and allowing him to witness the beauty and grandeur of natural forces without immediate peril. Depicting two small figures on a cliff high above the agitated waters of an approaching storm, seemingly frozen in awe before the majesty and might of nature unleashed, *Moonlight* is wonderfully indicative of the romantic seascapes for which this artist has become famous.*

Other important works of note include The Last of Atlantis by Nicholas Roerich (estimate: \$350,000–400,000); Konstantin Somov's After the Rain (estimate: \$180,000–220,000); and Konstantin Korovin's Still Life with Flowers (estimate: \$150,000–200,000), a work remarkable in its virtuoso brushwork and carefully controlled palette which together give a simple still life subject an almost erotic texture.

Russian Works of Art

Leading the Works of Art category is a magnificent pair of elaborately designed silver candelabra, by Nicholls and Plincke and marked with the Imperial Warrant, circa 1863 (illustrated right, estimate: \$200,000–300,000).

Featured prominently is a large silver and enamel kovsh, marked with the initials of Yegor Cheriakov, Moscow, 1908–1917 and retailed by V. Morozov, St. Petersburg (illustrated left, estimate: \$50,000–70,000). The en plein enamel plaque on this kovsh depicts Three Bogatyrs which was painted by Viktor Vasnetsov in 1898 and is now located in the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Bogatyrs were medieval Russian epic heroes and warriors and the three depicted in Vasnetsov's painting are perhaps the most famous Russian Bogatyrs, Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich and Ilya Muromets who were each known for a specific heroic trait. Alyosha Popovich was known for his bravery, Dobrynya Nikitich for his courage, and Ilya Muromets, who was believed to be the greatest of all Bogatyrs, was known for his integrity, his spiritual and physical power and for fierce dedication to his homeland.

Also of note is an important silver-mounted cut glass presentation bowl presented as a gift to Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna, the sister of Emperor Nicholas II, for her work as a nurse during the World War I (estimate: \$120,000–160,000).

Among the many Fabergé highlights is an unusual covered silver bowl naturalistically designed as a cabbage and marked Fabergé with the Imperial Warrant, Moscow, 1893 (estimate: \$35,000–55,000), as well as a jeweled, enamel and two-color gold cigarette case marked with the Workmaster's mark of Henrik Wigström, St. Petersburg, 1908–1917 (estimate: \$25,000–30,000).

The Collection of Ambassador Charles R. Crane

Christie's is honored to offer The Collection of Ambassador Charles R. Crane on April 24. This extraordinary collection of 42 works was collected over several decades and is the result of Ambassador Crane's discerning eye and the incredible ethnic consciousness concerning Russia, China, the Middle-East and the Slavic states that he developed during his years as a diplomat throughout those regions. This sale offers collectors, connoisseurs and scholars alike a glimpse into

The Russian department is led by Alexis de Tiesenhausen, Senior Vice President and the International Head of Christie's Russian Department.

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