

Press Release

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**A WELL-FOCUSED COLLECTION OF SUPERB OLD MASTER
PAINTINGS TO BE OFFERED IN NEW YORK THIS APRIL**



**Important Old Master Paintings
April 15, 2008**

New York – Christie's New York annual *Important Old Master Paintings* sale is set to take place on April 15 and features a broad selection of French, German, English, Dutch and Italian masterworks. Expected to realize in excess of \$35 million, this is the third year in which the *Important Old Master Paintings* sale is to be held in April, a change that has brought more balance to the international sales calendar for Old Masters and appreciation from collectors.

The auction is led by an very important late pair of Jacques-Louis David portraits offered for sale with a unique parcel-lot option; a magnificent Cornelis Van Haarlem, recently restituted to its

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rightful owner after being confiscated by the Stasi, the former East German Secret Police; a appealing Lucas Cranach the Elder portrait of Henry VIII's sister-in-law, Princess Sybille of Cleves; a potential record-breaking Thomas Gainsborough landscape; a wonderful pair of Venetian views by Giovanni Michele Marieschi which have never before been seen in public and a recently rediscovered Nicolas Poussin.

Jacques-Louis David Portraits

Jacques-Louis David's *Portrait of Ramel de Nogaret*, 1820 (estimate: \$4,000,000-6,000,000) and *Madame Ramel de Nogaret*, 1820 (estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000) are magnificent examples from a legendary French master who is considered by many the greatest portraitist of his era. This late pair depict Ramel de Nogaret, the Revolutionary French Finance Minister from 1796 to 1799, and his wife and are the only pair of David portraits left in private hands – the only other two examples are in the Louvre. Although the pair is being offered as single lots, the successful buyer of the Ramel de Nogaret portrait will be given the option of securing the portrait of the wife, without competitive bidding, at the reserve price. Working like a 'parcel-lot' in a wine sale, this is the first time this mechanism has been offered in an art auction and encourages the continued union of the portraits.

Ramel de Nogaret was the father of the French Franc, and was a central figure in the Revolution. He swore the Oath of the Tennis Court, was elected to the National Convention in 1792 and voted for the death of Louis XVI – and notably, Ramel and David were very close, with Ramel delivering the funeral oration at the painter's death. The portraits have only been together for the last 13 years, having previously been separated in the mid-20th century. They were reunited by James Fairfax, the chairman of the Fairfax media empire in 1995 – his collection of European art is one of most celebrated in Australia.



Cornelis Van Haarlem

Hercules and Achelous by Cornelis Van Haarlem (1562-1638), the Dutch Mannerist master and co-founder of the Haarlem academy, was recently restituted to the current owner from the German government in November 2007 (estimate: \$1,500,000-2,000,000). The work is an exemplary example of Northern Mannerist painting. All struggle and movement, with Hercules' muscles bulging and the lion's mane flying, the action is pushed to the very

front of the picture plane and the painter chooses the moment of greatest drama, at the very height of the struggle just before Hercules pulls the horn from the massive bull's head.

The picture was owned by the current owner's parents, who were art dealers in the former German Democratic Republic. When the last parent died in 1976, the property passed to the consignor, who lived with his parents in the same Berlin apartment. The picture was part of the interior of the apartment, and as a result no heritage tax was paid at that point.

In 1984, the consignor befriended a gentleman who, unknowingly to the owner, was a Stasi informant. A year later, the informant told the Stasi about the picture in the apartment, and the consignor was accused of tax evasion, was taken in police custody and the picture was confiscated. Although criminal proceedings were dropped in 1986, the picture and other objects were kept to cover the tax debts and sent to the storage facilities of the Berlin State Museums (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). Still unaware that his friend was an informant, the consignor donated the works to him, having been reassured that with his good connections with to the regime, he could help return them to the owner. However, the informant, under pressure from the Stasi to secure the paintings for the country, organized a donation to the Berlin State Museums, and the picture was declared property of the German Democratic Republic.

In 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginnings of German reunification, the consignor began legal proceedings to have the picture returned to him. In 1997, the Berlin Regional Court ruled that the confiscation of the picture was unlawful, as was the donation to the informant, as the consignor was unaware of the informant's real identity. In 2003, the same court began to process the restitution claim, and in November 2007, the painting was finally restituted to the proper owner



Lucas Cranach The Elder's Portrait of Sybil of Cleves

This portrait of *Princess Sybille of Cleves* (1512-1554) was painted when she was fourteen years old and newly betrothed to Johann Friedrich I, the future Elector of Saxony. Sybille grew up at court in Düsseldorf with her sister Anne, the fourth wife of Henry VIII, who famously was painted by Hans Holbein the Younger for Henry VIII to view his future wife for the first time. The union between Sybille of Cleves and Johann Friedrich of Saxony was a far more successful union than the one between Anne and Henry, and seems to have been genuinely affectionate. This portrait of Sybille was painted sometime after her betrothal in September 1526 and before her marriage on June 1527. The jeweled and feathered wreath, the object most associated with

the bride in sixteenth-century Germany, is the most obvious indication the portrait was painted after the betrothal at Burg on the Wupper. At the wedding ceremony at Torgau, Lucas Cranach provided the lavish decorations.

Cranach's linear, highly decorative and almost abstract style both served the function of court portraiture in sixteenth-century Germany and appeals to the modern viewer. This astounding ability to speak to two vastly different worlds is nothing short of a testament to Cranach's genius.

Gainsborough Landscape

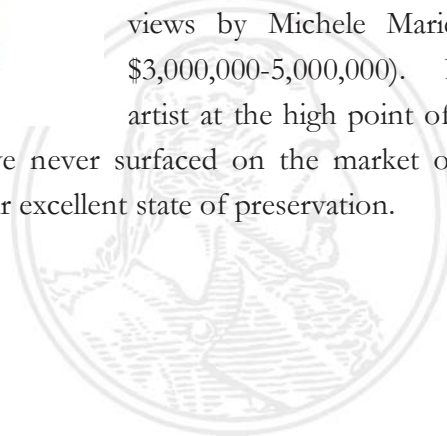
A wooded landscape with a herdsman, cows and sheep near a pool, circa 1786 by Thomas Gainsborough, is one of the most beautiful Gainsborough landscapes to come on the market in recent years (estimate: \$3,000,000-5,000,000). Last sold at Christie's New York in January 1999 for \$2,092,500, the painting set a new world auction record at that time. With the current record for Gainsborough standing at \$3,892,132, this magnificent landscape demonstrating all the finest qualities of Gainsborough's late romantic style has the potential to set a new market record for one of the greatest English landscape artists.



A Pair of Venetian Views by Michele Marieschi

Following on from the successful \$11 million sale of *The Grand Canal at the Church of San Stae, Venice* by Bernardo Bellotto in last year's April *Important Old Master Paintings* sale in New York, Christie's is delighted to offer an excellent pair of 18th century Venetian views by Michele Marieschi (estimate: \$3,000,000-5,000,000). Painted by the artist at the high point of his production

of such views, these exceptional paintings have never surfaced on the market or been publicly exhibited. This has no doubt contributed to their excellent state of preservation.



A Recently-Rediscovered Nicolas Poussin

A notable addition in the sale is a newly rediscovered painting by Nicolas Poussin, *Jupiter and Antiope* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). Virtually unknown, it has been all but unseen for more than a century, recently sheltering under an attribution to the 'Heytesbury Master' with which Sir Anthony Blunt christened it in 1983. It is soon to be published by Timothy Standring, a Poussin scholar and it is a happy coincidence that its discovery coincides with the current exhibition *Poussin and*



Nature at the Metropolitan Museum. Although a generation of scholars led by Sir Anthony Blunt did not believe such pictures to be by Poussin, current leading academics believe that shortly after his arrival in Rome, destitute and looking for immediate sales, Poussin painted a series of erotic pictures loosely based on Titian prototypes to sell on the open market, of which this work is one. It represents Poussin at his most seductive and openly carnal.

Auction: Important Old Master Paintings, Christie's New York

April 15, 2008

Viewing: Christie's, 20 Rockefeller Plaza

April 10-14

About Christie's

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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