

For Immediate Release

Wednesday 4 April 2007

Contact

Zoë Schoon 020 7752 3121

zschoon@christies.com

***TITANIC*: SURVIVOR'S LIFE PRESERVER & PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE DISASTER TO BE TOLD FOR THE FIRST TIME AT CHRISTIE'S SOUTH KENSINGTON**

Maritime Models & Maritime Pictures

Christie's South Kensington

Wednesday 16 May, 10.30 & 2.00pm



Titanic Leaving Southampton, 10 April 1912
Charles Edward Dixon, R.I. (1872-1934)
Estimate: £8,000-12,000



A *Titanic* life-preserver, worn by Miss Mabel Francatelli
Estimate: £50,000-80,000

Maritime Models & Maritime Pictures

Christie's South Kensington

Wednesday 16 May, 10.30 & 2pm

London – Christie's South Kensington's *Maritime* sale on Wednesday 16 May 2007 will offer three rare and important objects relating to the *Titanic* disaster of 15 April 1912 which have been hidden away in two private collections and appear at auction and in public for the first time.

The *Titanic* life-preserver, the Affidavit and the Duff-Gordon Scandal

Leading the sale is the life-preserver of Laura Mabel Francatelli, a survivor of the *Titanic* disaster, along with a copy of a letter she wrote just days after she was rescued by the *Carpathia*. The life-preserver, which was signed by some of the ten men and two women on-board her lifeboat is expected to realise £50,000-80,000. It is being offered from the collection of her elderly nephew who inherited it from her estate in 1967, and has never been seen by the public before. Also included in the sale a copy of Miss Francatelli's Affidavit which she provided to Lord Mersey's enquiry following the disaster (estimate: £500-800). Miss Francatelli's boat sparked one of the greatest controversies of the *Titanic* disaster when it failed to return to the wreck site, despite being under half full. Miss Francatelli was a prime witness in the enquiry.

Laura Mabel Francatelli, was staying in cabin E-36, and was secretary to Lady Duff-Gordon, who was accompanied on the *Titanic* by her husband Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon. Lady Duff-Gordon was a highly successful dress designer and owner of one of London's leading salons, *Madame Lucille* in Hanover square. Miss Francatelli's letter, written to "*My own only darlings*", describes how she and Lady Duff-Gordon refused to get into the lifeboats as they didn't want to leave Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon. They were eventually allowed to go with him on a small emergency row –boat.

"....we were dropped into this boat then they let it down to the water. That sensation I cannot describe, and what was worse, it got caught up at one side and nearly hurled us all into the water. We rowed away from the ship, which was sinking fast so to get away from swell or suction [sic]. Then all the rest is too terrible for me to write."

They were rescued by the *Carpathia* the following day at 6am:

"....our little cockle-shell boat coming up to the darling Carpathia, the water was rushing in and we had to sit on a rope swing and they hauled me up. They treated us with the greatest kindness and gentleness, and gave me a whole tumbler of hot brandy."

Further scandal surrounded Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon when it was claimed that he had "paid off" crew members of his life-boat not to return to the wreck site to rescue more survivors. In fact it seemed it was an act of genuine charity. When Sir Cosmo realised that the crewmembers of his boat would not be paid from the exact moment the ship sank, he ordered Miss Francatelli to draw up seven draft "orders" for £5 from his London bank *Coutts*, in order that the crew members not miss out on their wages. However, his apparent act of kindness inadvertently created one of the greatest *Titanic* controversies and Miss Francatelli's Affidavit was crucial in clearing his name. In it she states that going back for survivors was never discussed, and in fact Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon had actually instructed her to draw up the orders on 16 April, the day after they were rescued on-board the *Carpathia*. Sadly the stigma stayed with Sir Cosmo and ruined his reputation – he eventually had to take legal action to clear his name.

Titanic leaving Southampton by Charles Edward Dixon, R.I. (1872-1934), was discovered in a trunk of assorted paintings bought in a house sale in Kent in 1962, for which the current owner paid just £5. This previously unknown work is a major discovery, and may well be the only conventional portrait painted from life of this extraordinary ship (estimate: £8,000-12,000). It is thought the work was commissioned by *The Graphic* magazine to go alongside the story announcing the maiden voyage of the White Star Line's newest luxury liner in the spring of 1912.

Other Titanic Memorabilia includes:

- Two un-transmitted Marconigrams from the RMS *Carpathia*, April 1912 which would have been intent on letting relatives of survivors know that they had been saved. The first one reads; “Laurel House, Mrs Compton and Daughter on *Carpathia*” and the second one; “Laval University, Montreal, Judge Mathieu saved” (estimate: £400-600).
- A Marconigram received aboard *Carpathia*, transmitted from the *Olympic* on at 8pm 15th April 1912. The *Olympic* was the Titanic’s sister ship, and the marconigram was sent from Mrs E C Swift aboard the *Olympic* enquiring after first class passengers Clarence Moore and Major Butt. Both these passengers were lost with neither body being recovered (estimate: £500-700).
- An extremely rare silver souvenir tea-spoon from the *Titanic*, bought by a second class French passenger from the Barber’s shop on board. The spoon was kept in his family until it was sold in Paris in 1998 (estimate: £3,000-4,000).

Visit Christie’s Web site at www.christies.com

CHRISTIE’S SOUTH KENSINGTON

85 Old Brompton Road
London SW7 3LD

Nearest Underground: South Kensington

Public Enquiries: 020 7930 6074 / www.christies.com

Opening Hours: Monday: 9am – 7.30pm, Tuesday – Friday: 9am – 5pm
Weekends: 10am – 4pm

Notes to Editors:**Mabel Francatelli:**

- Copies of the full version Miss Francatelli’s letter and full cataloguing are available on request.
- Miss Francatelli was born in London in 1882, and having survived the Titanic disaster, she married Swiss Hotelier Max Haering. They lived in Streatham, South London and she died in London on 2nd June 1967.

Christie’s Maritime Department:

Christie’s is the world market-leader in the fields of *Maritime Pictures* and *Maritime Collectibles*. Sales are held in Spring and Autumn in both London and New York featuring oil paintings, watercolours and prints, as well as ship’s fittings, carvings and figureheads, instruments, models and ephemera. World auction records established by Christie’s include Montague Dawson for his *The action between H.M.S. Shannon and the U.S.S. Chesapeake*, which realised, \$486,400 (£273,258/¥398,689) at Christie’s New York on 1 February 2006 and £172,000 for John Wilson Carmichael’s *A sleek-bulled British Opium Schooner amongst other shipping, including fine-lined Chinese deep water junks and a large British man-o-war under sail, off what is presumed to be Hong Kong* from 1843 (November 1997).