

For Immediate Release

6 April 2004

Contact: Alexandra Kindermann +44.20.7389.2664 akindermann@christies.com
Ann-Sophie Steenhault +32.2.289 13 38 asteenhault@christies.com

AXEL VERVOORDT AND CHRISTIE'S

A Unique Selection of Works of Art

Christie's Country House Sales

Kasteel van 's-Gravenwezel

10 – 12 May 2004

Antwerp – Christie's will celebrate bold design, beautiful objects, exotic fashions, the lure of history and the passion of an eclectic vision in a one-of-a-kind auction in Belgium in May.

A unique selection of works of art from the collection of Axel Vervoordt will be offered for sale over three days in situ at his Castle van 's-Gravenwezel outside Antwerp from 10 – 12 May 2004.

Comprising a broad range of objects including furniture, paintings and works of art selected by Axel Vervoordt himself, the sale offers 1,000 lots spanning over 4,000 years of artistic endeavour.

The sale is expected to fetch in the region of 4 million Euros and will be organised by Christie's Private Collection and Country House Sales Department. The auction reflects the impressive vision of Axel Vervoordt, a charismatic collector who has had great influence over interior design. Estimates will appeal to all levels of buying and range from €200 to €100,000.

In the Castle, each of the twenty rooms has its own identity and demonstrates Axel Vervoordt's signature vision combining art and antiques from all over the globe, representing a wealth of different styles and artistic periods from Pre-Colombian antiquities, Oriental works of art and 18th century English furniture to modern paintings and contemporary objects. Axel Vervoordt chooses each object because of its own inherent nature and history.

As a believer in the historical and not the merely decorative, highlights reflect Axel Vervoordt's broad approach to collecting. 'I have always found it extremely stimulating to the eye to mix very abstract contemporary art with beautiful things from the distant past' he says. Historical highlights in this sale include a Roman Egyptian porphyry urn with 18th century cover and socle (estimate: €80,000–100,000), and a large Chinese figure of Boddhisattva, dating from 549–577 A.D. (estimate: €30,000–50,000). The imposing standing figure wears simple robes subtly revealing the contours of the body which is typical for the refined and ephemeral art of the Northern Qi Dynasty.

Further highlights include a Bactrian 'Konisch' marble idol from the 2nd Millenium B.C. (estimate: €3,500–4,500), a bronze bell from the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100–771 BC) (estimate: €3,000–5,000), two pottery models of horses' torsos from the Han dynasty (202BC–220AD) (estimate: €2,000–3,000 for the pair) and a Khmer sculpture, circa 1,200 AD, representing Prajnaparamita, the mother of all buddha's (estimate: €30,000–50,000).

A collection depicting the first 15 Roman Emperors from Augustus to Antonius Pius, painted by Otto van Veen (1556–1629) in oil on panel, are of great art historical interest (estimate: €150,000–250,000). Otto van Veen was one of the most influential artists in Antwerp at the end of the 16th century and was also master to Peter-Paul Rubens. The collection offered here is thought to be the inspration behind Rubens' own series of Roman Emperors painted in the mid-1620s. An important series of five portrait tile pictures commemorating the battle of Fontenoy, executed by Jan Aalmis (estimate: €100,000–150,000) includes large equestrian portraits of Louis XV, King of France, his wife Maria Leszczyńska, Franz I, Emperor of Austria, his wife Maria Theresia and finally a smaller one depicting William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, third son of George II, King of England.

This auction also offers exceptional decorative objects covering a range of periods and designs. A series of four bronze profile medallions depicting the Dukes of Guise with Queen Catherine de Medici (estimate: €15,000–25,000) dating from the second half of the 16th century are attributed to Barbieri Riconucci (1506–1565) and Jean Picard (1536–1550). A rare Marseille manganese-purple floral dinner service from the Joseph Fauchier factory, circa 1750, (estimate: €35,000–45,000) is thought to be one of the few 'complete' earthenware dinner services from this period.

Joseph Fauchier (1687–1751) set up his own factory around 1731 and quickly became considered to be the greatest producer of earthenware in Marseille during the first half of the 18th century.

Another important dinner service is a Moustiers faience blue and white "grotesque" décor service manufactured by Olerys and Laugier around 1745–1755 (estimate: €30,000–40,000). "Grotesque" décor was Olerys' most original creation.

A group of four sculptures representing the Four Seasons (estimate: €20,000–30,000), dating from the beginning of the 18th Century, each is given a specific attribute for the season represented. A basket of flowers for the spring, a bundle of corn for the summer, a bowl of grapes for the autumn and a warm scarf alongside a stew pot for the cold winter season. A carved stone figure of Diana, representing the goddess of the hunt, by Jan Pieter van Bourscheit I (1669–1728) is another superb object in the sale (estimate: €80,000–120,000). Bourscheit's Diana is a fine exemple of the Baroque sense of monumentality and stands at a height of 2.8 metres.

The sale also offers a substantial selection of furniture, an area of collecting which Axel Vervoordt adores. 'The love of wood is evident in every room of the castle. I prefer plain, unadorned, architectural furniture from England, Ireland or Northern Europe to the elaborate lines and details of French furniture', he commented. Among the most impressive examples of furniture on offer is an Irish William IV mahogany breakfront bookcase from circa 1835 (estimate: €80,000–100,000). Irish furniture is further represented in the form of a George II mahogany side table from the mid 18th century (estimate: €30,000–50,000). Impressive examples of furniture from North Italy include a set of six North Italian walnut open armchairs from the early 18th century (estimate: €25,000–40,000) and a North Italian kingwood, tulipwood and marquetry commode, Lombardy from the late 18th to early 19th century (estimate: €12,000–18,000).

A superb Brussels mythological tapestry of the late 17th century by Gerard Peemans, after Charles LeBrun, is from one of the largest workshops in Brussels at the time. Peemans employed 33 workers by the 1680s and was active until 1707. The tapestry depicts the Coronation of Atalanta from the story of Meleager with the huntsmen presenting the Caledonian boar to the seated Atalanta in a wooded landscape with her attendants waiting (estimate: €150,000–250,000).

More unusual and eclectic items in the sale such as a pair of monumental Flemish marble fireplace jambs from the 17th century (estimate: €8,000–12,000), an English yew-wood and oak turner's chair, also 17th century (estimate: €3,000–4,000) feature alongside a French walnut architectural model of a spire, 19th century (estimate: €8,000–12,000). A wall map of Vienna from 1776 by Joseph Daniel Huber (estimate: €6,000–12,000) and a large Dutch parcel-gilt beaker dating 1636–1637 from Enkhuizen (estimate: €10,000–15,000) will also appeal to collectors.

The Castle van 's-Gravenwezel was first built in 1108 and the oldest part of the present Castle dates from the early 14th century, it's rococo façade was added in 1729. The Castle is surrounded by an 18th century park that features an orangerie and conservatory.

*Four years ago Axel Vervoordt opened an art center at the industrial complex of the Albert Maltings in Wijnegem. Built around 1860, the complex is an amalgam of silos, warehouses and storage rooms. Painstakingly restored and now known as the Kanaal, this edgy, industrial complex provides a stunning setting which juxtaposes the ancient with the modern. It is a superb space for objects and works of art that could not be exhibited in the Castle and therefore were previously hidden from public view. In addition, it also functions as a multidisciplinary art centre and a platform for contemporary artists, including an installation by Anish Kapoor, titled *At the edge of the world*.*

During the official viewing dates before the Christie's auction, the Castle and the Kanaal will both exhibit objects, and will provide a great opportunity to inspect works of art specially selected for the auction by Axel Vervoordt.

Viewing dates: 6- 9 May 2004 from 10.00am to 17.00pm

*Sale dates: 10 May 2004 at 18.00pm
 11 May 2004 at 13.00pm and 18.00pm
 12 May 2004 at 11.00am*

#

Notes to Editors:

Axel Vervoordt

Born in 1947, Axel Vervoordt grew up in the suburbs of Antwerp. His father ran a successful horse dealing business and his mother bought and restored 16th century houses in the centre of Antwerp. Axel inherited from his parents a love for restoring houses as well as an appreciation for objects of art.

During the 1960s, Axel underwent an aesthetic education and discovered his métier. In those years he started attending auctions and buying works of art missed by the important dealers. For the famous Woburn Abbey sale, property of the Duke of Bedford, Axel borrowed money from his father to be able to act as an important buyer.

At 18 years of age, Axel started to read economics at university but left quickly to join the army to complete his National Service. At 19 years old he obtained his first real client, a friend of his parents who had just bought a very grand family home. She gave Axel Vervoordt a monthly allowance of BF200.000 (\$26,500) to find her beautiful objects for him to arrange at her home. It was the first time he not only discovered but also arranged works of art for a client.

Commenting on the forthcoming sale, Axel Vervoordt says, "I hope that this auction will inspire and attract many new collectors and that this exciting collaboration will allows us to show many interesting pieces that we were previously unable to display properly. I'm sure that

during the viewing and the auction, people will meet here to enjoy the collection, but also to discover Antwerp with its beautiful museums and its artistic events.”

Nowadays he personally supervises between 12 and 20 major decorative and furnishing commissions a year. About 30 smaller projects are undertaken by the business, which employs about 100 people, including six architects. His clients range from royalty to pop stars and from palaces to contemporary apartments.

#

Images available on request

Visit Christie's at www.christies.com

Visit Axel Vervoordt at www.axel-vervoordt.com