

**For Immediate Release**

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## CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER THE CONTENTS OF DUMFRIES HOUSE IN JULY 2007

- Including the most important collection of Thomas Chippendale furniture ever offered at auction



### *Dumfries House*

To be held at Christie's, 8 King Street, St. James's, London SW1Y 6QT

Thursday, 12 July 2007

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**London** - Christie's announce that they will offer at auction the contents of Dumfries House on 12 and 13 July 2007 at King Street, London. Designed and built by John, Robert and James Adam between 1754 and 1759, the house contains the most important collection of Rococo furniture by Thomas Chippendale to remain in private hands, and the only fully documented furniture commission dating to his seminal *Director* period. A landmark auction in the history of collecting, the sale is expected to attract the interest of private collectors and institutions from around the world. Dumfries House and 1,940 acre estate will be brought to the market in the summer of 2007 by *Savills*.

Charles Cator, Deputy Chairman of Christie's International and Chairman of the International Furniture Department: "*Christie's is honoured to have been instructed to oversee the sale of the contents of Dumfries House in Ayrshire. One of the finest and most original collections of British furniture to remain in private hands, Dumfries House contains the only fully documented works of art dating from Chippendale's illustrious Director Period, as well as the finest private collection of Scottish 18<sup>th</sup> century furniture. Christie's have a proud tradition of offering works of art from distinguished houses and collections, and the importance of this auction ranks alongside the historic landmark sales of the past, such as Longleat, Houghton and Wentworth; we look forward to presenting this exceptional sale to the international market place in July 2007.*"



Leading the selection of Chippendale furniture is a magnificent late George II parcel-gilt rosewood, padouk and sabicu breakfront bookcase, 1759, which is expected to realise £2,000,000-4,000,000 *illustrated left*. Delivered by Chippendale and his Scottish partner James Rannie in May 1759 as 'a rosewood Bookecase wt. rich carr'd and gilt ornam'ts on the top & doors a Writing drawer in the underpart & a Cloaths press & drawers at each end', it cost the enormous sum of £47 5s and is expected to establish a new record price for a piece of British furniture when it is offered at Christie's in July 2007. The current record for British furniture\* is jointly held by *The Dundas Armchairs*, designed by Robert Adam and made by Thomas Chippendale, which were delivered to Lord Dundas in 1765 at a cost of £40 for the pair and sold at Christie's in July 1997 for £1.7 million (\$2.85 million), and *The Anglesey Desk*, sold at Christie's in 1993 for £1.76 million (\$2.62 million).

William, 5th Earl of Dumfries (1699-1768), commissioned the design, building and furnishing of the house during the 1750s and its contents remain recognisable from the 1803 Inventory - right down to the Axminster carpets, George II steel fireplace furniture by John Richardson and as many as eight George II fourposter beds. The latter includes the most expensive piece of Chippendale's commission - the George II palm-wrapped mahogany bed supplied for the Blue Bedroom in 1759 at a cost of £90-16-1 1/2 d. It will be offered at the sale with an estimate of £300,000-500,000.



A highly important pair of late George II giltwood pier glasses, 1759, by Thomas Chippendale will be offered with an estimate of £600,000-1,000,000 *one illustrated left*. These ornate oval mirrors, with their pagoda crestings and moustachioed Chinaman inspired by the Rococo taste for the Exotic of the Orient, were supplied at a cost of £36 15s. In spite of Chippendale's precautions, with no expense being spared to protect the goods during transit, one of the plates suffered; in 1759, William Mathie of Edinburgh was paid £7 'To furnishing one Oval Plate of looking Glass for a London frame.'

Lord Dumfries did not only turn to Chippendale - he also extensively patronised two Scottish 'wrights' or cabinet-makers; Alexander Peter (active 1713-1772) and William Mathie (active 1740-1761), who at times used Chippendale's furniture as inspiration for their own work. Arguably the most important historic and documented ensemble of Scottish furniture from this period, the collection at Dumfries embraces more than seven George II mirrors, tables, chairs and bureaux. Highlights include two pairs of Scottish late George II giltwood pier glasses by William Mathie of Edinburgh, 1759; one in the Chinoiserie taste supplied at a cost of £40 plus £37 16s Od for each plate, the other celebrating Lord Dumfries' elevation to the Order of the Thistle and supplied at a cost of £29.0.0, which are expected to realise £400,000-600,000 and £300,000-500,000 respectively. The Dining Room *illustrated above right* was also furnished by Alexander Peter, the set of twenty-two Scottish late George II mahogany dining chairs with 'Ossenburgh' tapestry covers being supplied in 1759 at a cost of £36.0s.0d. (estimate: £400,000-600,000). The Chinese 'fret-carved' sideboard en suite was supplied by Peter in 1759 at a cost of £7 (estimate: £80,000-120,000). Francis Brodie was another Edinburgh



wright to whom Lord Dumfries turned, his masterpiece being the Scottish George II brass-inlaid parcel-gilt padouk cabinet-on-chest delivered in 1753, which is estimated at £50,000-80,000.



Further highlights by Thomas Chippendale include an important suite of late George II mahogany seat-furniture which was supplied for the White Drawing Room in 1759 at a cost of £71 8s for the armchairs, the sofas at £26 10s (estimate: £250,000-400,000 per pair of open armchairs) *illustrated left* (estimate: £300,000-500,000 for the pair of sofas). An important pair of late George II giltwood girandoles, a tour de force of the carver's art, encapsulate the spirit of Chippendale's rococo *Director* style and do in fact combine two elements from plates in the *Director* which were supplied in the same year at a cost of £36 15s (estimate: £400,000-600,000). In terms of line and movement, the important pair of late George II mahogany concertina-action card-tables, also supplied in 1759 at a cost of £11, are without parallel in Chippendale's oeuvre (estimate: £300,000-500,000). A late George II ormolu hexagonal lantern which repeats a design published in the *Director* and was also delivered in 1759 at a cost of £13 13s is expected to realise £40,000-60,000.

Rarest of all, perhaps, and certainly unique in Chippendale's production, is the sensational late George II giltwood overmantel mirror with a Savonnerie tapestry panel probably woven by Thomas Moore *illustrated right*. This was delivered to the Blue Bedroom in 1759 as 'A large Chimney frame richly carv'd & gilt in burnish'd gold for a Tapestry picture & a Glass under it £17' (estimate: £500,000-800,000). This was the same price as Lady Dumfries' Japanned clothes press by Chippendale, enriched with Chinese lacquer panels cut from lacquer screens (estimate: £150,000-250,000), and only slightly less than the cost of Lord Dumfries' Library Table, which was supplied by Chippendale for £22 (estimate: £300,000-500,000).



Dumfries House is an extraordinary time capsule of the late 1750s and early 1760s, and almost all of its contents remain recognisable today from the 1803 inventory of the house. Lord Dumfries not only commissioned new furniture and works of art, but he was also a collector / connoisseur, buying the sensuous early 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian bronze bust of Bacchus from the collection of John de Pestiers at auction in London in 1756 for £4 4s; this now carries an estimate of £60,000-100,000. The same auction in London in 1756 also yielded the pair of ormolu-mounted, tole-decorated Meissen porcelain two-light candelabra, *circa* 1750, which were bought by Lord Dumfries for £3 3s 30 (estimate: £20,000-30,000).



Lord Dumfries, like so many figures of the Enlightenment, was a keen scientist and astrologist, and his George II mahogany and engraved-brass grand orrery by Thomas Wright and Benjamin Cole from *circa* 1750 is expected to realise £80,000-120,000 *illustrated left*. A connoisseur in many collecting fields, the Italian Old Masters in the sale are led by Jacobo da Ponte and workshop's *Laban and his flock*, which was bought for the Dining Room and framed by William Matthie at a cost of £12 in 1759 (estimate: £60,000-80,000), whilst the ceramics will be led by a garniture of five Chinese famille rose vases dating from the Qianlong Period (1736-1795) which is expected to realise £10,000-20,000.

## DUMFRIES HOUSE

Dumfries House in Ayrshire, Scotland, was designed and built on the instruction of William, 5th Earl of Dumfries (1699-1768), an officer of note in the British army who served as aide-de-camp to the commander of the Allied forces at the Battle of Dettingen in 1743. William first opened discussions with William Adam in 1747, the year before the architect's death, and the project was adopted by William's three sons, John, Robert and James, who designed the house and oversaw its construction which took place between 1754 and 1759.



In 1759 and 1760, the Adam brothers set about the task of furnishing the Palladian mansion. Having approached the design of the house with a classical style, they turned to their friend Thomas Chippendale (*circa* 1718-1779) in order to furnish the house in a manner which complemented their design. A number of rooms were furnished entirely by Chippendale, including the Blue bedroom *illustrated left*, where almost all the pieces from the four poster bed to the overmantel mirror, were produced by the greatest of all English cabinet-makers. Lord Dumfries also employed several Scottish cabinet-makers in order to provide furniture for the house; Francis Brodie, Alexander Peter and William Mathie, who at times used Chippendale's furniture as inspiration for their own work. Lord Dumfries and his family are thought to have taken residence at the house from August 1760.

William, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries, died without issue and the title passed to his nephew Patrick, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries. He had a daughter, Lady Elizabeth Penelope Crichton, who was born at Dumfries House in 1772. In 1792, she married John, Viscount Mountstuart, eldest son of the Marquess of Bute. Their elder son inherited the Earldom of Dumfries from his mother and the Marquessate of Bute from his father, becoming John, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess of Bute. For succeeding generations, the principle residence of the family became Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute.

After the death of the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries in 1803, his grandson, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl, instructed the undertaking of an inventory of Dumfries House. No longer the principle residence of the family, Dumfries House was uninhabited until 1890, and lay redundant again between 1910 and 1950. What is so exceptional is that the contents of the house are fully documented, with original receipts for much of the Collection, from the bookcase by Thomas Chippendale which was acquired in 1759 at a then considerable cost of £47 5s (estimate: £2,000,000-4,000,000) right the way down to the fire-grates and fenders in each and every room.

In 1754, Chippendale published the *Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*. This comprehensive book of furniture designs became popular with European nobility, gentry and cabinet-makers; Catherine the Great and Louis XVI, two of Europe's most prolific collectors, owned editions in French. The success of the book prompted Chippendale to publish an enlarged edition in 1762, and the period surrounding its publication is

recognised as *The Director Period*, considered to be the cabinet-maker's most important and influential style. Dumfries House contains the only fully documented Chippendale furniture dating from this period, which *'unquestionably forms the outstanding monument to his early Rococo phase'* (Christopher Gilbert, *The Burlington Magazine*, 1969).

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\* The current record for British furniture in \$ is held by the Dundas Armchairs which sold at Christie's, London in July 1997 for \$2.85 million (£1.7 million). The current record for British furniture in £ is held by The Anglesey Desk which sold at Christie's, London in July 1993 for £1.76 million (\$2.62 million).

- *Dumfries House* will be on public view at Christie's, 8 King Street, St. James's, London SW1Y 6QT from 9 to 12 July 2007. For general enquiries, contact Christie's on +44 (0)207 839 9060 or visit [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)
- For press enquiries regarding Christie's auction of Dumfries House, please contact Rhiannon Broomfield +44 (0) 207 389 2117 [rbroomfield@christies.com](mailto:rbroomfield@christies.com) / Matthew Paton +44 (0) 207 389 2965 [mpaton@christies.com](mailto:mpaton@christies.com)
- For press enquiries regarding Savills sale of Dumfries House and 1,904 acre estate, please contact John Vaughan, Savills Press Office: +44 (0) 20 7034 4725

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