

## **For Immediate Release**

April 29, 2005

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### **FROM MEDICI TO GUCCI: CHRISTIE'S OFFERS FRENCH FURNITURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS WITH A TOUCH OF SUPERB PROVENANCE**

#### **Magnificent Sèvres Porcelain and Important Early Works of Art with Exceptional Renaissance Provenance**

#### **Important European Furniture, Works of Art, Ceramics, Tapestries and Carpets May 17 & 18, 2005**

**New York, NY** – The sale of *Important European Furniture, Works of Art, Ceramics, Tapestries and Carpets* on May 17 and 18 at Christie's Rockefeller Center will dazzle not only with exquisite quality but also with breathtaking provenance. Its impressive role call of important collectors in history includes Mme de Pompadour, le Duc de Pontievre, le Comte de Provence, Francesco I de Medici, Renata di Francia and Borso d'Este, to name just a few.

#### **Ceramics**

A superb group of ceramics is highlighted by a remarkably important piece with exceptional provenance: an ormolu and silver-gilt mounted Vincennes fountain, with cover and basin, made for Madame de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV, in 1754 (estimate: \$ 150,000-300,000). Only a few examples were made, all for royal commissions or associated with Versailles. This richly painted fountain, modeled as a dolphin with coral, shells and crustaceans, was originally conceived for Louis XV's daughter-in-law Marie-Josèphe de Saxe, daughter of Augustus the Strong. However, the fountain went to Jeanne Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour and favorite of the king, as it was customary for her to acquire the first production of a new model. This fountain is the only example to come to the market in over eight years and is likely to be the last one available to collectors.

Previously from the collection of J. Pierpont Morgan, and presently from a private collection, is a pair of Sèvres genre paintings, known as tableaux, porcelain plaques conceived as paintings (estimate: \$50,000-70,000). This pair, which depicts a scene of peasants after a painting by David Teniers the Younger, was painted by Nicolas Charles Dodin, one of the finest painters *en miniature* working at Vincennes and Sèvres in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Porcelain painted after works by the Flemish painter David Teniers the Younger were particularly popular at Sèvres between 1758 and 1764.

Thus the present pair is dated 1776, late in date for this body of work, possibly an indication that they were a special commission. Also previously from the collection of J. Pierpont Morgan, and presently from a Washington D.C. Collection, is a pair of Sèvres flower paintings (estimate: \$15,000-20,000), made in 1774 by Jacques-François Micaud, a Sèvres flower painter from 1757-1810.

Another exquisite highlight is a pair of Sèvres two handled vases made by Etienne-Henry Le Guay, one of the factory's most prolific gilders, in 1774-1775 (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). This elegant form was first produced at Sèvres in 1774 and it is noted in the factory records that only eleven were produced, all between 1774 and 1778. This present pair, richly gilt with a basket of flowers, was sold at the annual sale held by the factory at Versailles on December 1774, and was later in the collection of the late Baron Louis de Rothschild.

### **European Furniture, Works of Art and Tapestries**

An Italian mythological tapestry designed by Alessandro Allori, one of the most active painters in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and supplied to Francesco I de Medici in 1583, later in the collection of Gucci (estimate: \$100,000-150,000), will highlight the sale. Woven in silks and depicting *The Judgment of Paris*, this tapestry was probably made for Poggia à Caiano, the de Medici's summer villa where Alessandro, Cosimo I and Francesco I celebrated their marriages. Curiously, the tapestry's coat-of-arms shows a Medici-Austrian marriage though they were woven while Francesco I de Medici was married to Bianca Cappello, his former mistress and daughter of the Venetian nobleman Bartolommeo Cappello. When both Francesco I and Bianca died from malaria in 1587 within a day of each other, the coat-of-arms were covered up by Francesco's brother and successor, Ferdinand I, to reflect his original marriage, hence the Austrian reference. The only other surviving panel from this set depicting *The Triumph of Venus* is in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.

Other pieces of Renaissance art include a North Italian red goatskin *cuir bouilli* and *cuir ciselé* missal or prayer book box, from the estate of Dr. Bernard Breslauer (estimate: \$30,000-40,000). The book displays the coat-of-arms of Borso d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara, Reggio and Modena. Borso, the son of Niccolò III d'Este, made Ferrara a center of the arts and literature and greatly increased the power of the d'Este family. He was a shrewd ruler as well as a patron of the arts and his library was highly celebrated. From the same collection is a North Italian gold-tooled and red Morocco leather book-form missal box, probably Milan, from the second quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$15,000-20,000). This missal box belonged to Renata di Francia (or Renée de France), the Duchess of Ferrara and the daughter of King Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne. Her marriage to Ercole II d'Este provided the House of Ferrara a powerful French ally against the Papal armies. Unfortunately Renata's important book collection was burned in 1554 by the inquisition for suspicion of heresy upon learning that she had permitted the Huguenots and Calvinists to take

refuge at her court in Ferrara. An Italian polychrome-decorated wax relief portrait of Pope Pius V by Giovanni Battista Capocaccia, Rome, 1566-1567 (estimate: \$20,000-30,000), also from this collection, is a jewel-like portrait that depicts the Pope's secretary Teodosio Fiorenzi kneeling at his feet. Examples of Capocaccia's work are extremely rare to find and this work is not only perfectly preserved but it is also the only one that is signed. Astonishingly, this portrait can be identified as being mentioned by none other than Giorgio Vasari in his *Vite* of 1567, where he is highly praised. Besides this relief, there is another relief attributed to Capocaccia, 1566-1677 that was recently bequeathed to the Museo Civico in Turin.

Exceptional French Royal provenances are represented by a pair of Louis XVI green-painted 'chaises de jardin,' supplied by Georges Jacob in 1786 (estimate: \$50,000-80,000) for the 'Pavilion de Monsieur à Versailles,' will be offered. The label on the chaises indicates that they were made for the Comte de Provence, who, after his elder brother succeeded to the throne as Louis XVI, was known at court as 'Monsieur.' The pavilion refers to the 'folie' created by him for his mistress, the Comtesse de Balbi, at Versailles.

A masterpiece of the German-born cabinet-maker Jean-Pierre Latz is a magnificent Louis XV ormolu-mounted amaranth, bois satine, tulipwood and *bois de bout* marquetry table à la Bourgogne (estimate: \$250,000-350,000). This exceptional table was commissioned by Louis-Jean-Marie de Bourbon, the Duc de Penthièvre and son of Louis XV's illegitimate son, Louis-Alexandre-Marie, Comte de Toulouse. The Latz table was placed in the *appartement* of the Duc, the Duchesse d'Orleans or his daughter-in-law the Princesse de Lamballe at the Château de Sceaux.

Also highlighting the sale is a set of eight Italian empire grey-painted and parcel-gilt armchairs, probably Naples, early 19<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: \$70,000-100,000), from the collection of Princesse Murat, Napoleon's youngest sister. These examples resemble other known examples of seat furniture made for Caroline Murat in the Palazzo Reale in Naples.

The golden age of English 19<sup>th</sup> century collecting is reflected in a Louis XV ormolu-mounted kingwood and amaranth bureau plat, mid-18<sup>th</sup> century from a Noble Collection (estimate: \$60,000-90,000), which reflects the taste for furniture of the *ancien régime* among sophisticated 19<sup>th</sup> century collectors. This piece, along with other fine examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century *ébénisterie*, was reputedly presented as a gift to Arthur Hill-Trevor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Dungannon of Brynkinalt, North Wales by his first cousin, the Duke of Wellington.

Property from the Springfield Museums, seven Aubusson tapestries from a suite of chinoiserie tapestries originally designed by François Boucher for the Beauvais tapestry workshop (estimates ranging from \$8,000-50,000), will be offered. François Boucher supplied the designs of this series

to Jean-Baptiste Oudry, the directory of the Royal Beauvais tapestry workshop, who exhibited the set of eight paintings at the Salon at the Louvre between August and September 1742. These designs immediately resulted in a successful series of tapestries consisting of six subjects woven at least ten times between July 1743 and August 1775 at Beauvais and additionally copied at Aubusson. A Soho Arabesque tapestry (estimate: \$70,000-100,000) boasts an interesting provenance. Originally supplied to Thomas Heath, a leading East India merchant who was a director of the East India Company and a member of Parliament, the tapestries passed through the hands of George Clive, the Under Secretary of State of the Home department from 1859 until 1862, and finally to Maisie Hayward. Mrs. Hayward first married railroad tycoon, Henry Bradley Plant, who gave her a \$5 million pearl necklace by Cartier, which was traded in for a Fifth avenue mansion on 52<sup>nd</sup> street, now the flag-store for Cartier.

Sophisticated late 20<sup>th</sup> century collecting is represented by the California collection formed with the legendary decorators Michael Taylor, Valerian Rybar and Bruce Gregga with an eclectic group of furniture including a pair of magnificent 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish gilt-bronze mounted ivory, tortoiseshell, ebony and rosewood cabinets on stands bearing the arms of the Vilchez family of Andalusia (estimate: \$300,000-500,000).

Other highlights in the sale include a late Louis XV ormolu and cut cobalt blue glass garniture, circa 1765-1770 (estimate: \$120,000-180,000), from a Noble Collection and a pair of Charles X ormolu and opaline glass vases, circa 1820-1825, from a Virginia collector (estimate: \$20,000-30,000).

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| <b>Auction:</b> | Important European Furniture, Works of Art, Ceramics,<br>Tapestries and Carpets | May 17 & 18 |
| <b>Viewing:</b> | Christie's Galleries at 20 Rockefeller Plaza                                    | May 14-16   |

More information about Christie's sale *Important European Furniture, Works of Art, Ceramics, Tapestries and Carpets* can be found on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com) provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.

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