

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S PRE-COLUMBIAN ART SALE FEATURES OLMEC, MAYAN, AND PERUVIAN TREASURES

Pre-Columbian Art 23 May 2007

New York – Christie's second New York-based *Pre-Columbian Art* sale will be held on May 23. The auction will feature iconic examples of Olmec art, a vast range of Peruvian ancient art, and Mayan ceramics.

The highlight of the sale is an important Olmec figure from Los Bocas, early Preclassic, circa 1150 - 550 B.C. which is considered one of the masterpieces of Pre-Columbian art (estimate: \$200,000-250,000). The figure is rare for its large size and exceptional sculptural quality, which has survived intact. While most figures from this period are known for their prototypical faces, this Olmec figure is unique for its emotive and portrait-like face which conveys a focused repose.

Other treasures from the Olmec culture include two masks — an Olmec serpentine mask, Rio Pesquero Type, middle Preclassic, circa 900 – 600 B.C. (estimate: \$150,000-250,000) and an Olmec jade were-jaguar maskette, middle Preclassic, circa 900 – 600 B.C. (estimate: \$20,000-40,000). This Olmec serpentine mask has remarkably survived from its original funerary function in which masks were burned and buried during an elite burial ceremony. This life size mask shows signs of ritual burning and is striking for its serenity and beauty.

The Olmec were-jaguar maskette is rectangular and carved with the physiognomy of a mythical were-jaguar and displays typical Olmec features: a V-shaped cleft on the top of the head, almond-shaped, short flat nose and trapezoidal mouth with a flared upper lip (estimate: \$20,000-40,000).

Another important mask is an imposing Teotihuacan stone mask, classic, circa A.D. 450-650 (estimate: \$125,000-150,000). The importance of the Teotihuacan masks is signified by the fact the Aztecs excavated such funerary masks to include in their own burials, in order to legitimize their position and counterbalance their nomadic heritage.

Two marvelous Mayan painted ceramics are offered and are examples of the Mayan's craftsmanship. A Mayan blackware effigy vessel, early classic, circa A.D. 250 – 450 depicts an anthropomorphic figure wearing an animal identity, possibly a possum (estimate: \$40,000-50,000). This animal was significant to the Quiche Maya for its cleverness and brief reproductive cycle of only 13 days — a sacred number for the Maya. A Mayan alabaster lidded vessel, late classic, circa A.D. 550 – 950 is a rare type with the ferocious head of a god carved into one side, and the head of a duck on the domed lid represents the creature's supernatural ability to inhabit both sky and water (estimate: \$30,000-35,000).

The sale offers a comprehensive and diverse Peruvian selection of ancient art from different styles, periods and mediums. The history of ancient Peru is told through these various textiles, ancient gold, ceramics and stone sculptures. Examples include a late Chavin blackware figural vessel, Tembladera, circa 700-400 B.C. (estimate: \$7,000-9,000); three Chavin gold plumes, circa 800-500 B.C. (estimate: \$8,000-10,000); a Loma Negra silver and gold nose ornament, circa 300-B.C. – A.D. 300 (estimate: \$25,000-35,000); and a Nazca tie-dye textile panel (estimate: \$25,000-35,000).

Auction: *Pre-Columbian Art*

23 May 2007

Viewing: Christie's Rockefeller Galleries

18-22 May 2007

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More information about Christie's sale of *Pre-Columbian Art* can be found on 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 provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.