

For Immediate Release

21 May 2008

Contact:	Alex Kindermann	020 7389 2289	akindermann@christies.com
	Matthew Paton	020 7389 2965	mpaton@christies.com

RUSSIAN ART AT CHRISTIE'S IN JUNE

- **DEDICATED RUSSIAN ART SALE TO OFFER WORKS BY GONCHOROVA, LARIONOV AND KONCHALOVSKI**
- **ELSEWHERE AT CHRISTIE'S IN JUNE, A GONCHAROVA MASTERPIECE EXPECTED TO REALISE UP TO £4.5 MILLION, AND THE ONASSIS FABERGÉ BUDDHA LEADS THE AUCTION OF JEWELRY**

London – In June 2008, Christie's will offer a wide array of exceptional Russian works of art, offered at the auctions of *Russian Art, Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World*, *The London Jewels Sale*, and the *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, all taking place at King Street. Highlights include:

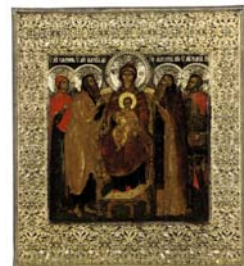
Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World

Monday 9 June 2008

Building on the strength of 2007, when auctions of Icons at Christie's realized over £7 million, an increase of 724% on 2006 (total: £971,000), the auction on 9 June will offer 230 lots spanning the 15th to the 20th century. The most valuable auction of Icons ever organised in the international marketplace, the sale is expected to fetch in the region of £5 million. The auction will include significant Russian and Greek icons as well as valuable Orthodox artefacts such as a Book of Gospels, once belonging to the Grand Duke Aleksander Mikhailovich Romanov, son-in-law of Tsar Alexander III (estimate: £35,000-45,000) *illustrated left*.



The Adoration of the Mother of God by Patron Saints of the Stroganov Family is a superb example of 17th century icon painting (lot 28, estimate: £40,000-60,000) *illustrated right*. The Stroganov family played a crucial role in the development of Russian art and culture over many centuries. In the 16th century members of the family invited artists from Moscow and Novgorod to the town of Solvychevodsk, in the Deep Russian North where they lived, and established the celebrated school of painting and the decorative arts which was named



after the family's surname - the Stroganov School. The panel offered in the June sale was commissioned by Maksim Stroganov and passed by family descent until the 1940's when Maria Vladimirovna, Princess Shcherbatov, was blessed on her wedding day by her grandmother, Countess Maria Stroganov, with this very icon.

The sale includes a large selection of icons with silver, gilt and enamelled oklads. The oklads, which reached the height of their popularity between the second half of the 19th century until the Revolution in 1917, signified a feature which became fundamental to the tradition of icon production in Imperial Russia and differentiated it from icons produced elsewhere in the Orthodox World. Icons portraying



holy figures, usually patrons of specific families, were used for private devotion or were presented as gifts. Splendid examples of enamelled decoration by major makers with the Imperial Warrant, like Sazikov, Khlebnikov and Postnikov adorn the icons of this sale. The work of Pavel Ovchinnikov, the main competitor of Carl Fabergé, is featured in the sale by a number of lots, including a rare and highly elaborate

pair of wedding icons, depicting The Mother of God of Kazan and Christ Pantokrator (lot 93, estimate: £40,000-60,000) *illustrated left*.

The London Jewels sale

11 June at 11.00am

The final lot of the Jewellery sale is *The Onassis Fabergé Buddha* (estimate: £250,000-350,000) *illustrated right*, a gem-set bowenite magot made in 1900 in St Petersburg. This work of art was apparently given to Lady de Grey (1859-1917) by Mr. Poklewski-Koziell, councillor to the Russian Embassy in London. Lady de Grey was a great patron of the arts and she was involved in bringing Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes to London in 1911 for the coronation of George V. By 1966 the magot was recorded to have moved to a private collection. The exact date on which Aristotle Onassis acquired the piece is unknown. It was kept in the pilot deck of Onassis' yacht *Christina*, christened in 1954.



Chinese figures of budai, meaning *promise this*, are always represented with a smile. An attribute of budai is the sack which is always full, and, traditionally, brings enduring wealth and happiness. In the present representation, as in many of the late 19th and early 20th century porcelain figures, the sack has been simplified to a tuck of cloth at the girdle. The term magot was used from as early as the mid 17th century to describe the European heavy set or bizarre representations in clay, plaster, copper or porcelain of Chinese or Indian figures.

Russian Art and Works of Art

11 June at 2.00pm

Following the success of the June 2007 sale, which realized over £18 million, this summer's Russian Art Sale will again highlight works by celebrated Russian artists.



The Russian period of Natalia Goncharova's (1881-1962) paintings, before her trip to Paris in 1914 is less than fifteen years. During these years she became the most famous, influential and even scandalous painter in Russia. *Crucifixion*, 1906 (estimate: £1,500,000-2,500,000) *illustrated left*, shows the tragic figure of Jesus Christ with the expressive features of her life-long partner and collaborator Mikhail Larionov, echoing the catastrophic events of the beginning of the century; the defeat of the Imperial army and navy during the Russo-Japanese war and Bloody Sunday of 1905. The grief of thousands of Russian families is symbolized by a mourner to the right of the cross and Larionov's features, easily-recognisable on Christ's face, convey the universality of this loss.

Mikhail Larionov's (1881-1964) *Les Cerises rouges*, painted in 1902 (estimate: £450,000-650,000), demonstrates his experimentation with the possibilities of colour and light. *Une journée de mai*, executed two years later includes his research findings (estimate: £500,000-700,000) *illustrated right*. In 1904 Larionov moved from the Impressionist picturesque techniques to the more innovative styles of the Post-Impressionism and Cézanism. At first glance, the room in *Une journée de mai* seems to be a simple sketch full of spring light. Actually the painter created and successfully solved several pictorial problems. A casual observer glimpses a multi-layered and multi-dimensional composition. The view of the spring garden from the open window infiltrates the room. On the left we see a mirror with a heavy frame, rather than a door to the next room. It reflects the objects standing on the table and the view of the room, filled with light from the window.



Petr Konchalovsky (1876-1956) is represented in the sale with a masterpiece entitled *Portrait of Todzuro Kavarasaki, a Japanese actor*, painted in 1928 (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000). Petr Konchalovsky was the founder and chairman of the Jack of Diamonds group, which was founded at the beginning of the Russian avant-garde. During the Soviet era he was a national painter, laureate of the USSR State Prize and the most popular painter in the country. What is striking is that this painting has a direct link to a unique cultural event in the history of both Russia and Japan. During the 1920s, the country of the rising sun was a closed and isolated military country, as was Soviet Russia. Traditional Japanese culture was practically unknown in Europe and the Kabuki Theatre left Japan for the first time in 1928 to perform in the Soviet Union.

Konchalovsky went to see the performances and was inspired by what he saw. He worked for a long time on the portrait, searching for the perfect pose and colours. There are many sketches and drafts, which testify to this search. In the end, the artist chose a dynamic composition, showing the richness of the artistic motions of the Kabuki theatre. The painting was kept in storage at the Tretyakov Gallery for many years but has always been in the ownership of the family of the artist.



The Track by **Isaak Levitan** (1860-1900) *illustrated left* depicts the Vladimir Highway known colloquially as the *Vladimirka*. Approximately 190 kilometers in length, the road leads East from Moscow to Nizhny Novgorod and has been used since the Middle Ages when it connected the political capital of Muscovy with the ancestral seat of the Grand Dukes of Vladimir-Suzdal.

As Siberia became a place of exile, the Vladimirka became associated with the arduous passage of prisoners making their way to *Katorga*. In the summer of 1892, while Levitan resided in a small village located near the Nizhny Novgorod railway, the artist was inspired by the vast open highway. As a result, Levitan produced a cycle of paintings depicting this desolate yet consuming landscape, including the well-known *Vladimirka* held at the State Tretyakov Gallery. The present work appears to be from this series and is estimated between £500,000-700,000.

One of the greatest musicians of the 20th century, Sviatoslav Richter (1915-1997) was a renowned art collector and his collection is now a centrepiece in the Moscow Museum of Private Collections. *A church on a street near Tours* by **Vasilii Shukhaev** (1887-1973) painted in 1929 was part of Richter's collection (estimate: £150,000-200,000) *illustrated right*. In 1920 Shukhaev left the Soviet Union for France. The modest cities of Southern France, Corsica and the paved streets of the small cities of the Loire valley attracted Shukhaev with their quiet provincial beauty.



Spring by **Natan Altman**, (1889-1970) painted in Odessa in 1908 was painted more with light than with colour. The grainy structure of the canvas adds to the effect of instability and creates an atmosphere of romantic mystery, so particular to the Russian Symbolists. Altman kept this work with him throughout his life; it was included in all of his catalogues and shown at most of his exhibitions (estimate: £300,000-500,000) *illustrated left*.

The sale will also offer a fine selection of **Russian historical militaria** belonging to the grandson of Tsar Nicholas I, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich the Younger (1856-1929). One of the most powerful and outspoken members of the Romanov dynasty, he was made Supreme Commander of the Russian Armed Forces at the beginning of the First World War.

The Order of Saint George was founded by Empress Catherine II on 26 November 1769 as a military award to officers for outstanding bravery on the battle field. Consisting of four classes, the first class

was not awarded during the First World War or even during the reign of Nicholas II (only 25 people were awarded the highest class during the entire Romanov dynasty). The second class was only awarded six times during World War I and Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich the Younger was the only member of the Romanov to receive it. He was awarded the Cross for the taking of the fortified town of Peremyshl. It can be considered as a unique opportunity to see an order of the Saint George Cross with Imperial provenance offered at auction (estimate: £200,000-250,000).

From the same Imperial provenance is a very rare St. George Infantry sword with diamond pattern (estimate: £150,000-200,000). During the First World War, only eight St. George swords with diamond pattern were awarded. Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich the Younger received his on 4 April 1915 as Supreme Commander of the Russian Armed Forces. It is the first sword with Imperial provenance to appear at auction.

Impressionist and Modern Art

24 June at 7.00pm

Highlights of the *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale* taking place on 24 June include **Natalia Goncharova's (1881-1962) *Les Fleurs*, 1912** (estimate: £3,500,000-4,500,000) *illustrated right*, which marks a major breakthrough in Russian Avant-garde art and a significant shift in the artist's work. *Les Fleurs* blends the contemporary trends in European art with Rayonism, the radical method of representation Goncharova developed together with her life-long partner and collaborator Mikhail Larionov. By 1912, Goncharova had begun to move towards an art notable for its structural compositions. Although *Les Fleurs* is based on an observation of nature, Goncharova manipulates this simple still life subject into a superb exploration of composition and form. It was produced at the height of Goncharova's greatest period of creative activity, during which she gained recognition in the West as a participant in the groundbreaking 1912 shows of *Der Blaue Reiter* in Munich.



In *The Rhythm (Adam and Eve)*, 1910 Vladimir Baranov-Rossiné (1888-1944) gives mythological and cosmological connotations to his use of colour and his schematic organization of the canvas (estimate: £1,400,000-1,800,000) *illustrated left*. The vibrant painting unites developments in Western art with an interest in the latest scientific advancements and the spiritual harmony of Russian icons. *The Rhythm (Adam and Eve)* was exhibited for the first time in 1913, at the landmark Salon des Indépendants in Paris. Baranov-Rossiné was a graduate of the Odessa School of Art, known for his Bohemian air and liberal views and for his early work of the 1900s, which depicts his surroundings, seen through the prism of Post-

Impressionism. In the 1910s he worked on the problem of combining colours and forms, assimilating Cézanne's work.

#

Images available on request

Visit Christie's on the web at www.christies.com

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2007 that totaled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.