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MARÍA FÉLIX: LA DOÑA

Paintings, Furniture, Decorative Art, Jewelry, And Couture Clothing From The Estate Of María Félix, Mexico's Screen Legend, To Be Auctioned At Christie's New York

17 – 18 July 2007



New York – Christie's is honored to announce the auction of the Estate of María Félix in New York on July 17 and 18, 2007. María Félix's legacy is not just that of an international movie star, but also of an avid art aficionado and humanitarian. Comprising over 600 lots, with estimates ranging from under \$200 to over \$500,000, the auction will feature a superb selection of paintings, European and 19th century furniture, an extensive porcelain collection, decorative works of art, couture clothing, jewelry and film memorabilia. A portion of the sale proceeds will benefit the Mexican Red Cross.

María Félix, nicknamed La Doña for her role in the 1943 film *Doña Bárbara*, had a larger than life personality which is reflected in her portraits and the contents of her home that capture her unique style and vibrant glamour. Her homes in Mexico City and Cuernavaca reveal her superb sense of color with many rooms decorated with elaborate themes fit for a movie star. She was an accomplished collector who developed a refined and highly personal sensibility as well as an inspirational artist who knew most of her contemporaries in the entertainment and art worlds.

Paintings

The auction will offer approximately 60 paintings, many of which are portraits of La Doña, by artists such as Leonora Carrington, Antoine Tzapoff, Diego Rivera, Stanislas Lepri and Leonor Fini. The first of her portraits was Diego Rivera's *Estudio de María Félix (Madre)*, 1948, a charcoal portrait of María holding a baby in her arms (estimate: \$150,000-200,000). The portrait was commissioned by

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the film producer of *Río Escondido*, and intended to be used for the film's advertisement, and therefore the portrait is also referred to by the film's title.



Paintings by Leonora Carrington, never before publicly exhibited, include *Maja del Tarot*, 1965 (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) and, *Sueño de Sirenas*, 1963 (estimate: \$350,000-450,000). *Maja del Tarot* is the large scale surrealist painting specially commissioned for her home in Mexico City and represents a double portrait of María in the guise of a tarot card. Carrington's *Sueño de Sirenas* is a folding triptych depicting María as three mermaids and employs the artist's fantastic imagery of mythical creatures that are half human and half animal.

Antoine Tzapoff painted numerous portraits of La Doña which often incorporated jewelry and objects from her collection as props in the paintings, and this further obscured the line between her life and art. An example of this integration is Tzapoff's *Amazona* (María Félix riding a rhino in Chinese costume), 1985-86, (estimate: \$30,000-40,000) in which María is adorned in a silk and satin skirt and jacket (estimate: \$500-700) and carries a jade and enameled walking stick (estimate: \$800-1,200), both the painting as well as the props will also be offered for sale.

In the Tzapoff portrait, *Tebuana*, 1991-92 (estimate: \$20,000-25,000), examples of María's jewelry that will be auctioned are depicted — a set of three gold and diamond rectangular bangle bracelets variously inset with the words *Donita*, *Pumita*, *Bonita*, (estimate: \$6,000-8,000) and a double sided gold-plated pendant necklace, also made by Tzapoff, with portraits of María and himself (estimate: \$800-1,200).

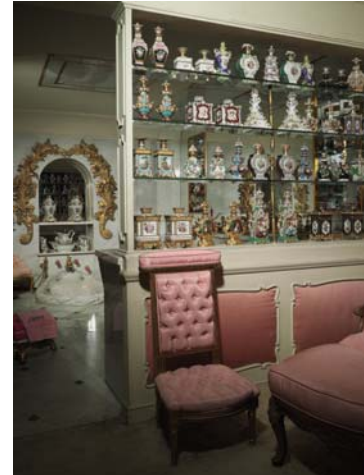
Tzapoff's *Doña con porcelana*, 1988-1989 (estimate: \$20,000-25,000) contains a pair of massive Jacob Petit vases and covers applied with bold clusters of fruit and flowers which are highlights amongst her vast Jacob Petit porcelain collection (estimate: \$30,000-50,000).



Porcelain, Furniture and Decorative Objects

The exuberant style of porcelain associated with the French firm of Jacob Petit, made circa 1830-1860, served as a perfect reflection of María's personality. Her extensive collection of over 1,000

pieces of French and German porcelain being offered includes the largest selection of Jacob Petit to appear on the auction market. These brightly colored wares, often flower-encrusted, range in style from the Renaissance to the Baroque and Rococo with a nod to the Orientalist taste contemporary with their manufacture. The collection is rich in examples of the myriad styles on which the reputation of this chameleon firm is based - vases encrusted with fruit and flowers, scent bottles modeled as sultans and sultanas, tea services molded as shells, inkstands in the form of ancient Roman daybeds, teapots and warmers modeled as courtesans, perfume burners modeled as ancient braziers – their gemlike colors and rich gilding enhancing the decorative scheme of her homes in Cuernavaca and Mexico City.



Her first piece of Jacob Petit porcelain was a gift from her brother, a green and apricot encrusted with a brown whippet (estimate: \$2,000-4,000). Her collection of Jacob Petit began by happenstance — the gift was chosen because she owned a dog named JP, and the encrusted was stamped with the same initials after the maker. After receiving this gift, she became an avid collector of Jacob Petit and amassed nearly 200 objects from the maker.

Highlights of the collection include examples related to the few designs by Jacob Petit for which the original drawings are extant. These include a garniture of four Jacob Petit gold-ground Neo-Rococo topographical vases and stands, finely painted with Mexican views of ‘Veracruz Veracruz’, ‘Interior de Mexico’, ‘Interior de Zacatecas’ and ‘Plaza Mayor de México’ (estimate: \$60,000-80,000), two pair of apple-green ground four light candelabra on fixed stands (\$15,000 – 20,000 per pair) and a pair of green-ground footed pot-pourri vases and covers (\$15,000 – 20,000).



María’s furniture and decorative art was often fit for a film backdrop and it embodied her intensely exuberant taste. Amongst the important works offered is a gilt-metal and Meissen porcelain-mounted gilt-painted secretaire cabinet, circa 1880, which is almost identical to a cabinet that was exhibited at the 1878 Paris *Exposition Universelle* by Mr. William Oppenheim, an agent for the Meissen Porcelain Factory (estimate: \$100,000-200,000). An unusual Louis XV style ormolu, cut brass and mother-of-pearl mounted four sided regulator is another stunning object of grand size decorated overall with mother-of-pearl parquetry, the upper section with

dials for a clock, barometer, thermometer and hydrometer (estimate: \$50,000-80,000).

María Félix had a discerning eye for iconic examples of 18th century furniture that echoed her love of the fantastic and dramatic and the collection is particularly rich in finely carved giltwood from the Regence period. Highlights include a pair of early Louis XV giltwood tabourets, circa 1730, possibly German with their distinctive serpent dragons entwining the legs (estimate: \$40,000-60,000) and a banquette most likely from the same suite (estimate: \$20,000-30,000), based on designs by Nicholas Pineau and Jean-Honore Tureau called Toro. Pineau's designs are also the basis for a pair of Regence giltwood consoles, circa 1725 (estimate: \$80,000-120,000). Italian and Colonial furniture are also represented in a pair of Italian silvered figural torcheres (estimate: \$20,000-30,000) and the impressively scaled and carved Colonial hardwood center table, 19th century (estimate: \$30,000-50,000). Her love of design permeates her collection even with more affordable items such as a pair of Indian carved hardwood deck chairs, second half 19th century, (estimate: \$5,000-8,000) with their densely carved frames rife with religious and architectural symbols.

Clothing, Jewelry and Memorabilia



María Félix was a style icon and owing to her tribute, she was nominated in France and Italy as one of the world's best-dressed women in 1984. The sale offers couture clothing, jewelry and memorabilia from her film career.

With nearly 30 lots of Christian Dior, the top pieces from the designer include a suede coat with patch work sable lining (estimate: \$3,000-5,000), a sleeveless mink fur coat with multi-colored abstract design (estimate: \$2,000-4,000), an ivory chiffon dress with net underskirts, 1959 (estimate: \$1,000-1,500), and a pink chiffon mini dress with allover pleating and paillettes at the hem (estimate: \$800-1,200).

Jewelry highlights include a French enamel chain link necklace with a pendant painted by Antoine Tzapoff (estimate: \$6,000-8,000), a pair of gold and turquoise enamel oversize snake earrings by Cartier (estimate: \$5,000-7,000) and a Van Cleef & Arpels gold and diamond miniaudiere with the clasp labeled 'Puma' – a nickname given to her by her late husband Alex Berger (estimate: \$3,000-5,000).

Félix made eighteen films during the 1940s, and continued to work in México until 1970, by which time she had completed forty-seven movies. She worked in Spain, Italy and France, with directors who included Jean Renoir (*French Cancan*, 1954) and Luis Buñuel (*Los Ambiciosos*, 1959). Ariel awards

from her acclaimed films *Río Escondido*, 1948, *Enamorada*, 1946, and *Doña Diabla*, 1950 are available each with estimates of \$2,000 to \$3,000.

María Félix: La Doña (1914-2002)



Born in 1914 in Alamos, Mexico, Félix made her first film, *El Peñón de las Animas*, in 1942. However, Félix was not catapulted into stardom until the release of her third film, *Doña Barbara*, in 1943. Playing the title role, Félix eventually became so closely identified with the character that she was known widely for the rest of her life by the nickname Doña.

In the film, Félix played a strong and powerful woman who adopted some of the traits of patriarchy for her own means. This was a role that Félix would repeat throughout her career, however in each instance these women were ultimately put under the control of patriarchy by the end of the film. Her characterization demonstrated just how powerful women could be, however, and captured the imagination of an international audience.

Félix married four times throughout her life and these marriages, in addition to her powerful screen presence, continually placed her in the attention of the media. Her son Enrique, whom she remained extremely close to throughout his lifetime, was born during her first marriage to Enrique Alvarez. Alvarez later kidnapped his son after their divorce, and Enrique was later rescued by Félix and her second husband, composer Agustin Lara. Félix later married a third time, to actor Jorge Negrete, who died of hepatitis barely a year into their marriage. Her fourth and final husband was the Swiss businessman, Alex Berger. Félix remained married to Berger for nearly two decades, until his death in 1974.

Known also as a collector, Félix enjoyed filling her homes with elaborate and expensive porcelain, carpets, jewelry, books and antique furniture. She was the subject of many portraits, including those by the great Mexican master, Diego Rivera, and her close friend and companion, Antoine Tzapoff, and enjoyed displaying these portraits prominently in her homes as well. Félix was also intensely interested in horse racing and owned stables in Paris and Mexico City towards the end of her life. The legacy of María Félix encompasses the fields of acting, collecting as well as horse racing. This dynamic woman died on April 8, 2002 on her 88th birthday.

Auction: *María Félix: La Doña*

17 – 18 July

Viewing: Christie's Rockefeller Galleries

13 – 17 July

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More information about Christie's sale of *María Félix* 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.