

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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TITANIC LIFE PRESERVER PROVIDES A POIGNANT REMINDER OF THE INFAMOUS MARITIME DISASTER



**Ocean Liner
June 25, 2008**

New York – Christie's New York annual *Ocean Liner* sale is scheduled to take place on June 25 at the Rockefeller Galleries and is led by a life preserver from *R.M.S. Titanic*. Never before seen in public, and one of only six known to be in existence, the life preserver has been in the safe keeping of a Nova Scotia family since being retrieved immediately after the 1912 disaster. It is the first life preserver from the doomed ship ever to be offered for sale in North America, and is estimated at \$60,000-80,000. Last year, Christie's London sold a similar Titanic life preserver for \$119,000.

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The cork-filled canvas life preserver was recovered in Nova Scotia by John James Dunbar, and has passed down within the family by descent since 1912. He traveled to Halifax to help with the cleanup after the disaster, and the preserver was most likely found on the shoreline after the sinking during an official beach-sweep recovery operation, although it is possible the preserver was recovered in Halifax from one of the rescue ships, *S.S. MacKay-Bennett* or *S.S. Minia*. They docked there after returning from assisting the rescue operation at the scene of sinking.

The preserver is in excellent condition, considering its age and time spent in the cold Atlantic waters, and has oil stains, along with a missing makers mark. The lack of cut shoulder rests or side straps indicate that this preserver was most likely retrieved from the shoreline or water alone – if the preserver had been recovered from a disaster victim, these would have been cut when the body was found.

The life-preserver is one of over 250 lots that feature in the *Ocean Liner* sale. This popular annual Christie's auction celebrates the golden age of ocean-going, featuring fittings, fixtures and related ephemera from some of the grandest ocean liners, along with memorabilia from their respective operating companies. Other lead Titanic lots include a rare second class passenger list carried off the ship by 12 year-old survivor Miss Bertha Watt, along with her high school essay describing the night of the sinking (estimate: \$15,000–20,000); a Marconi Gram sent to her family by survivor Helen stating, 'Safe on Carpathia' (estimate: \$7,000–10,000); and a large display model of the ship, built circa 1990 (estimate: \$3,000–5,000).

Elsewhere in the sale are two important fittings from the *S.S. France* and the *S.S. Norway*, two of the most celebrated liners of the age – a large glass and bronze Art Deco screen used on board both ships depicting two female figures and a tree (estimate: \$40,000–60,000); and a mid-century French modernist chandelier designed by André Arbus used in the 1st class smoking room onboard the *S.S. France* (estimate: \$50,000–70,000).

About Christie's

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium