

For Immediate Release

21 June 2006

Contact: Christina Freyberg 020 7389 2117 cfreyberg@christies.com

UNIQUE ROYAL COLLECTION OF NETSUKE TO BE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S THIS JULY

Japanese Art and Design

Christie's King Street

12 and 13 July 2006

London – A unique Royal Collection of netsuke and a private collection of classic Japanese prints are among the highlights of Christie's *Japanese Art and Design* sale at King Street on 12 and 13 July 2006. The netsuke collection, which comprises over 300 pieces, was formed by the late HRH The Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester and includes examples dating from the Edo to the Meiji Period. The Japanese prints offered date from 18th century examples to works from the 1950s.

This will be the first time that the late HRH The Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester's collection of netsuke will be seen by the public. It is a unique collection of 300 pieces, with estimates ranging from £300-500 to £10,000-15,000, that provides an enormous insight into the legends and daily life of Japan from the 18th to the 19th century. The collection boasts a number of early pieces, some signed by the leading carvers of the day alongside many signed examples of late 19th century netsuke, which have become very desirable in the current market. As well as numerous animals and birds including rabbits, hares and quails, there are mythical animals from Japanese legends including *baku*, *kirin* and *Tengu* alongside depictions of foreigners who arrived to trade in 18th century Japan.

In addition to this Royal collection, the sale features a superb 18th century ivory netsuke figure of a Dutchman from a Private European Collection (estimate: £40,000-50,000). This outstanding figure is a whimsical interpretation of a Westerner and combines features from several different cultures, with his Chinese-style hat, Buddhist hair, a boar borne on his back. A further highlight among the netsuke in the sale is a group deaccessioned from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, including many pieces from the well-known 19th collector William Sturgis Bigelow.

Christie's sale will also include the second part of a fine European Private Collection of around eighty classical Japanese prints mainly from the 18th and 19th century. Examples by celebrated artists such as

Hiroshige and Hokusai are well represented in the collection. One of the highlights is an exquisite rare 18th century print by Kitagawa Utamaro entitled *Kaya (Mosquito Net)*, circa 1797 (estimate: £20,000-30,000). This is from a group of *oban* three-quarter length portraits published by Moriya Jihei, of lovers either side of a mosquito net. In addition there is the well-known print of the poet *Ri Haku* by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) from the collection of Eliot Hodgkin and sold by The Georgian Group and The Victorian Society.

A further highlight of the sale is an important late 16th or early 17th century lacquer *Kodaiji-maki-e Kodansu* (table cabinet), Momoyama-Edo Period (estimate: £40,000-60,000), it is rectangular in form with three drawers revealed behind the hinged door. Against a black lacquer background, the decoration in gold is of elegant flowering cherry and maple trees, with stylized clouds. *Kodaiji* lacquer has become a generic term for lacquer made in Kyoto during the late-Momoyama Period. The word *Kodaiji* refers to the temple which was built in 1606 by Kitano Mandokoro Kodai-in, who was the widow of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598).

A 14th century *Sosbu Tanto*, attributed to *Daishinbo*, Nanbokuchō Period (estimate: £50,000-70,000) is an important lot among the sword and sword-fittings. Many legends surround *Daishinbo*, who is probably the most mysterious name among all Japanese sword-smiths. Early documents refer to his excellence although no signed blades are known to exist. The subject on this outstanding sword is of Fudo-Myo-O shown with his two *doji* acolytes Kongara and Seitaka, with a mounting in high Momoyama style. The sale also features a fine European private collection of over 300 sword-fittings with a wide group of historical styles, with classic designs from most of the major schools, in various metal plates including iron *sukashi* through to mixed metals of the Meiji period.

An impressive group of pipe cases and other accoutrements for smoking from the collection of Paul Blöchlinger is another private collection in the sale. The intricate carving of these pipe cases in such materials as stag antler, ivory and bamboo give a sense of the enormous range of designs and materials used from the 18th to late 19th century.

The sale also includes a rare and striking group of 20th century works of art including a lacquer two-panel screen by Kosen Shinshiki, Showa Period (estimate: £5,000-8,000) which clearly shows the influence of mid-20th century Western design. In addition there are ceramics by Kitaoji Rosanjin (1853-1959). These include a set of five dishes each decorated in a blue underglaze with a shrimp and seaweed (estimate: £5,000-7,000). Born in Kyoto, Rosanjin began his career as a calligrapher. Later he began to design and produce ceramics through his passion for fine Japanese food, believing that the ceramics of the day were inadequate for serving it. He imitated many of the earlier Japanese designs creating his own individual contemporary versions.

###

Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

Notes to Editors

Christie's Asian Art Week

Sales Dates:

11 July 2006 – Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art including Export Art, King Street

12 and 13 July 2006 – Japanese Art and Design, King Street

13 July 2006 – Exploration and Travel: Asia, including China Trade Paintings

13 July 2006 – Chinese Textiles, South Kensington

14 July 2006 – Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, South Kensington