

For Immediate Release

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KINGS, KNIGHTS AND NOBLES TO GATHER AT CHRISTIE'S

Antique Arms and Armour
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King Street – Christie's is pleased to announce their first sale of Antique Arms and Armour



under the stewardship of Nicholas McCullough, who joined Christie's earlier this year as Senior Specialist to the department. The sale is set to offer approximately 200 lots of arms and armour from the 14th to the 19th centuries, including an exceptional pair of cannon, gifted by George III to Major-General John Graves Simcoe, a sword owned by Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain and Naples and brother of Napoleon, and an exceptional and complete suit of black and white armour dating to the Thirty Years' War. Also included in the sale is a selection of US Military firearms dating back to the American Civil War.

Leading the sale are an exceptional pair of Spanish bronze cannon made by Mathias Solano, Director of the Royal Gun Foundry in Seville from 1703-1755, which have never previously been offered on the open market (estimate: £30,000-40,000). Dated 1747, these cannon were sent to the Spanish garrison at Port au Prince in Haiti, occupied by the British from 1793-1798, and used against the British in order to support Spanish trading routes to Europe. Having fallen into



British hands, the cannon were gifted by George III to Major-General John Graves Simcoe (1752-1806), an Englishman who had campaigned for over 6 years in the American War of Independence and then held the role of Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1791 to 1798. Having been gifted the cannon, Simcoe kept them at his country seat of Wolford Lodge, near Exeter, where they remained until the 1920s. At this time, Wolford Lodge and a selection of the contents were acquired by a new owner, and the cannon were gifted to Leatherhead County Council, who displayed them outside the entrance to the Town Hall. These remarkable firearms have escaped centuries of cleaning and remain in remarkable, crisp, untouched and original condition. Also included in the antique firearm section of the sale are a number of US Military firearms from the American Civil War, including 9 Colt pistols. Highlighting this section is a Colt Dragoon 2nd model pistol *circa* 1847 (estimate: £4,000-6,000).

The sale will also include a variety of edged weapons from the 14th to the 19th centuries. The most spectacular of these is an historic French 1st Empire Staff-Officer's sword with silver gilt-mounted hilt and scabbard by Antoine-Modeste Fournera, which comes complete with embroidered fabric belt and carrier (estimate: £20,000-30,000). This sword is of particular interest as it belonged to Joseph Bonaparte (1768-1844), the eldest of the Bonaparte brothers, deputy to Napoleon in his campaigns of 1805 and later King of Naples and of Spain. At the collapse of the French Empire, Joseph Bonaparte visited England and America under the title of Comte de Survilliers before settling in Florence in 1839. In 1817, soon after the fall of the French Empire, Joseph instructed his personal secretary, Louis Mailard, to return to his former Chateau and retrieve a hidden cache of gold and jewels, including approximately 5 million francs worth of uncut diamonds. When Joseph died, he left his trusted secretary a prosperous farm in Pennsylvania, as well as a number of shares in the Pennsylvania Union Canal and \$10,000 '*for discreet disbursement to the King's ex-mistresses and illegitimate offspring....*' The descendents of Louis Mailard became prominent in San Francisco, and it was the Mailard family who donated this sword to a museum in San Francisco in the early 20th century. The sword was subsequently deaccessioned in recent years.

Leading the armour section is a North German black and white cuirassier's ¾ length armour, dated from the first quarter of the 17th century (estimate: £30,000-35,000). This suit of armour stands as one of the finest of very few homogenous examples of this type in existence; the helmet still retains its quilted canvas and tow lining while the gauntlets retain their doeskin gloves. This suit dates from the period of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a bloody period of history that saw conflicts throughout central Europe, firstly between the Protestant and Catholic factions, and then due to continued efforts of self-preservation by the Hapsburg dynasty. Since then, this fine example of cavalry armour has graced a number of prestigious collections including those of Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, Sir Edward Barry, Seymour Lucas, R.A. and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Other highlights in the armour section include a German fluted breastplate, formed into two parts and fitted with a skirt of 3 articulations, which bears an unrecorded maker's mark and is dated to *circa* 1470-1490 (estimate: £10,000-15,000), and an etched circular shield *circa* 1550, the etching attributable to the armour-making centre of Landshut in Bavaria (estimate: £10,000-14,000).

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