

For Immediate Release

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FROM THE YETI TO TAHITI – CHRISTIE’S LONDON AUCTION OF *TRAVEL AND EXPLORATION* GOES AROUND THE WORLD IN SEPTEMBER

- “What it is, I don't know, but I am quite clear that it is no animal known to live in the Himalaya, & that it is big.”

Exploration and Travel

Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 September 2007



King Street – Christie’s is pleased to announce a two-day auction dedicated to exploration and travel which will take place on 26 and 27 September 2007, and which will offer books, maps, paintings and relics from history’s bravest explorers and greatest adventures.

The auction of *Exploration and Travel* will offer approximately 250 lots with

highlights including a photograph of a mysterious footprint from the Himalayas, taken in 1951 and believed to have been that of a yeti; the case for Captain Oates’s sleeping bag case from the ill-fated expedition to the South Pole in 1912; photographs from the first ever flight over Mount Everest; a rediscovered and unrecorded watercolour of Tahiti by William Hodges, official artist on Captain Cook’s second great Pacific voyage of discovery; and a selection of relics from Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904).

The auction will be divided into three sections:

26 September at 10am – *Americas, Africa, Middle East, Pacific and Australasia*



A recently discovered masterpiece by William Hodges, R.A. (1744-1797), the artist on Captain Cook’s second great Pacific voyage of discovery, will highlight this section of the sale. A completely unrecorded large-sheet watercolour, *Matavai Bay in Otaheite*, (illustrated left) is an extraordinarily exciting new discovery, a precious addition to the few surviving drawings produced by

Hodges while in Tahiti, and the only example of the artist's Tahitian watercolours to remain in private hands (estimate: £100,000-150,000). The watercolour has been consigned by a descendant of John Leach Bennett, Elizabeth Cook's residuary beneficiary, and so shares the distinguished provenance of the group of sheets from the voyage now in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, all of which also came from the collection of the great navigator's widow.

A further highlight of this section is a portrait of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) by Henry William Pickersgill, R.A. (1782-1875), which was commissioned by Sir Robert Peel and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1831. Described by Charles Darwin as *'the greatest scientific traveler who ever lived'*, the portrait of von Humboldt is expected to realise £100,000-150,000. A selection of relics related to Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) will also be offered at the sale, including his pedometer (estimate: £2,000-3,000), his watch (estimate: £6,000-8,000) and his Belgian Geographical Society medal (estimate: £3,000-5,000).

26 September at 2pm – *The Alps to Everest and The Polar Sale*



This section of the sale includes a photograph of a mysterious footprint from the Menlung Basin in the Himalayas, taken in 1951 and believed to have been that of a yeti (estimate: £1,800-2,500). In 1951, a team of renowned mountaineers travelled to the Himalayas on a reconnaissance mission before attempting to conquer the world's highest peak for the first time, a landmark feat which was

achieved two years later. Among those present were Eric Shipton (1907-1977) who took the photograph, and Tom Bourdillon (1924-1956) who gave the photograph to be offered at Christie's to his friend Michael Davies with an inscription on the reverse. *'Dear Mick, Here are the footprint photos: sorry for the delay. We came across them on a high pass on the Nepal-Tibet watershed during the 1951 Everest expedition. They seemed to have come over a secondary pass at about 19,500 ft, down to 19,000 ft where we first saw them, and then went on down the glacier. We followed them for the better part of a mile. What it is, I don't know, but I am quite clear that it is no animal known to live in the Himalaya, & that it is big. Compare the depths t'o which it & Mike Ward (no featherweight) have broken into the snow. Yours, Tom Bourdillon.'*

The European debate surrounding the existence of the yeti had first begun in earnest in 1925 when N.A. Tombazi, a member of The Royal Geographical Society, claimed to have sighted a yeti at 15,000 feet while on a British Geological Expedition in the Himalayas. Eric Shipton's photographic evidence of 1951 reignited the debate and prompted a series of subsequent expeditions in an attempt to find the yeti, including The Daily Mail's *Snowman Expedition* of 1954, American oil magnate Tom Slick's expedition of 1957 and Sir Edmund Hillary's attempt of 1960. No conclusive evidence has yet been found.



A further Himalayan highlight of the sale is a series of photographs by Colonel Blacker from the first flight over Mount Everest *one illustrated left* (estimate: £4,000-6,000) – the first photographs taken of the summit of Everest. In 1933, Lord Clydesdale, later the 14th Duke of Hamilton and 11th Duke of Brandon (1903-1973)

was the chief pilot of an open cockpit bi-plane which achieved the miraculous feat of flying over the world's tallest peak. In 1935, he was awarded an Air Force Cross in recognition of his achievement.

Leading the section devoted to Polar Exploration is the case for Captain Oates's sleeping bag, recovered from the Ross Barrier by the Search Party in 1912 on Captain Scott's ill-fated Terra Nova expedition of 1910-1914 (estimate: £30,000-40,000). Having reached the South Pole for what they thought was the first time, Scott's team realised that they had been beaten there by the Norwegian Roald



Amundsen. On the way back from the Pole in early 1912, the dejected team faced terrible conditions and Oates became severely frostbitten. Realising that he was delaying the rest of the team, he left his tent and sacrificed himself to the freezing outdoors, uttering the infamous words '*I am just going outside and may be some time*'. Oates's body was never recovered and his sacrifice was in vain; the frozen bodies of Scott, Wilson and Evans were discovered in their tent approximately 15 miles North on 12 November 1912.

A further highlight is a pair of watercolours from Scott's Discovery expedition of the first sledging journey on the Antarctic continent by Edward Adrian Wilson (1872-1912). *The sledge party to White Island, February 1902: Shackleton, Wilson and Ferrar preparing to set out* is expected to realise £8,000-12,000.

27 September at 10am – *Travel and Exploration: Asia*



A rediscovered masterpiece by William Hodges, R.A. (1744-1797) highlights this section of the sale. Following his service on Captain Cook's second voyage, Hodges embarked for India, arriving in Madras in January 1780 and becoming the first significant western artist to work in India. He spent three years travelling in the north east of the country under the protection of the Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings. A recently

rediscovered and 'highly accomplished' picture by Hodges, probably painted in 1781 for Augustus Cleveland, the young magistrate and Collector stationed at Bhagalpore, depicts the Mohammedan tomb of Makhdum Shah Daulat at Maner, some 25 kilometres to the west of Patna, and will be offered with an estimate of £200,000-300,000.

A further highlight is an unsigned planisphere attributed to the Inacio Moreira, the leading Portuguese cartographer of the late 16th century who was working at the time in Jesuit circles in Japan. An early example of a thematic world chart used for religious geography, the map was intended as an instrument of Christian propaganda made to impress the Japanese. It presents an image of the world with attention drawn to the cities and kingdoms in each region where Christianity reigned and offers a vision of the global scale of contemporary Christianity, intended to give added impetus to the conversion for the Japanese (estimate: £200,000-300,000).

Treasures from the Alpine Club

From Friday 21 to Wednesday 26 September, paintings, photographs, manuscripts and relics from *The Alpine Club* will be on public exhibition at Christie's alongside the auction preview in celebration of the Club's 150th Anniversary. Highlights include an ice axe belonging to Sandy Irvine found during the 1933 Everest expedition by Percy Wyn Harris and Lawrence Wager, leaning against an outcrop of rock about 18m below the crest of the NE ridge and 230 m from the First Step at an altitude of 8380m, and Edward Whymper's tent, given to the Club about 1965 by Guido Monzino, the leading Italian mountaineer and explorer, having apparently lain in a barn in Valtournanche since the 1860s.

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Images available on request

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

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- From Friday 21 to Wednesday 26 September, paintings, photographs, manuscripts and relics from the Alpine Club – “*Treasures from the Alpine Club*” - celebrating the 150th anniversary of the world's first Alpine Club will be on free public exhibition at Christie's alongside the auction preview.