

Press Release

For Immediate Release
07 September 2009

CHRISTIE'S

Contact: Alexa Kindermann 020.7389.2289 akindermann@christies.com
Elena Kurbatskaya +7 916 798 99 87 kurbatskaya@ima-consulting.ru

**GALERIE POPOFF
AN ENDURING PASSION FOR RUSSIAN ART**

TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN OCTOBER 2009



Galerie Popoff

An Enduring Passion for Russian Art

Auction: 12 and 13 October 2009

London – Christie's announce the auction of **Galerie Popoff - An Enduring Passion for Russian Art** which will take place on 12 and 13 October 2009 in London, and which will present exceptional Russian works of art from one of the most renowned Russian galleries in Paris. The auction will offer around 550 lots including rare Russian and European 18th century and 19th century porcelain, watercolours, paintings, works of art and textiles. Established in 1920, Galerie Popoff, located just opposite the Elysée Palace in Paris, has long been recognised as one of the most esteemed sources of Russian art. The exceptionally fine collection of 18th century porcelain, assembled by three generations of collectors and art dealers, is the subject of a book, entitled *Masterpieces of 18th century Russian porcelain from the Collection of the Popoff and Cie gallery* published earlier this year, with contributions from several distinguished porcelain experts from prestigious Russian museums.

Alexis de Tiesenhausen, International Head of Russian Art: *“We are delighted that Christie’s has been chosen to offer this collection for sale and to be able to add an additional Russian Art sale to this year’s autumn sale calendar. Galerie Popoff, one of the longest-serving Russian art dealers in the world, has attracted many important collectors over the past 90 years as a result of Alexandre Alexandrovich Popoff’s commitment to offer only the best of the best. This high standard has been maintained by subsequent directors of Galerie Popoff to the present day. This sale provides a unique opportunity to acquire not only a piece of Russia’s artistic heritage but also to acquire part of a highly respected and important collection, which will be remembered and revered by the Russian art world for many years to come.”*

Although Alexandre Alexandrovich Popoff (1880-1964) died nearly fifty years ago, his legacy as a connoisseur and collector remains undiminished. His interest in Russian art was all encompassing, but his primary passion was porcelain. The breadth of his knowledge and his intuitive feel for the subject was legendary. One old time Russian collector recalls a visit he made to Popoff as a young man. He watched in amazement as Popoff, by then elderly and blind, identified each piece of porcelain placed in front of him simply by touch. It was this passion and dedication that enabled Alexandre Popoff to assemble a collection which, to this day, remains the most important collection of Russian porcelain in private hands.

The first session of the sale, on Monday 12 October, will focus on 18th century Russian and European porcelain. Most of the important services produced by the Imperial Porcelain Factory and the Gardner Factory are represented. Many lots have important Imperial provenance, such as pieces ordered by Catherine the Great, Grand Duke Paul Petrovich, the future Paul I, Empress Maria Feodorovna, Emperor Nicholas II and his wife Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The extraordinary breadth of the collection and the wide range of estimates, starting at £2,000, make this sale a unique opportunity for collectors of Russian art.



One of the leading highlight of the auction is part of a porcelain service made by the Royal Berlin Porcelain Factory in 1778 for Grand Duke Paul Petrovich (estimated £200,000-300,000). This magnificent service was commissioned by Emperor Frederick II of Prussia and all the pieces offered in the sale feature the coat of arms of the Imperial Russian Empire and the arms for the Duchy of Hollstein-Gottorp, Paul’s patriarchal arms.



Another important porcelain masterpiece is the Orlov Service, commissioned by Catherine the Great from the Imperial Porcelain Factory in the 1760s for Count Grigorii Grigorievich Orlov who, along with his four brothers, was instrumental in Catherine's ascent to the throne in 1762. The sale will offer three plates from this service, designed after drawings by G.I. Kozlov. Each piece is decorated with the interlaced Cyrillic monogram GGO, trophies and scenes referring to Orlov's military career (estimate: each £60,000-80,000).

To celebrate the coronation of Catherine the Great in 1762, following the deposition of her husband Peter III, the Imperial Porcelain Factory in St Petersburg created a special presentation covered cup and saucer. The cover is crowned with the two-headed Imperial eagle, making this lot



unique. No comparable example exists, even amongst the most prestigious museum collections in Russia (estimate: £150,000-170,000).

WATERCOLOURS OF THE POPOFF COLLECTION – 13 October 2009

Alexandre Popoff not only had the eye of a connoisseur for exquisite porcelain, he also had an unparalleled knowledge of Russian watercolours. The Popoff Collection features works by the most prominent artists working in Russia in the early 19th century, including Alexander and Karl Briullov, Piotr Sokolov, Orest Kiprensky, Alexei Venetsianov and Vladimir and Edward Hau. The watercolour portraits of the collection

are exceptional in terms of their quality and variety of artists and members of the Russian nobility depicted. They provide a picturesque window on a bygone era and a valuable record of a fascinating society.

An excellent example is Vladimir Hau's *Portrait of Natalia Nikolaevna Pushkina* (1812-1863), the only one known in private hands (estimate £120,000-160,000). Natalia Pushkina, wife of the great poet Alexander Pushkin was renowned for her beauty and she attracted the attention of the young Baron d'Anthès. Maddened by jealousy, Pushkin challenged him to a duel and died two days later as a result of his wounds.



The early 19th century aristocracy, including members of the Imperial family, features strongly in this collection. One of the highlights is the *Portrait of Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna* by Piotr Sokolov (1787-1848). This charming work depicts both members of the Imperial Family by the

seaside in 1829 (estimate: £100,000-150,000) and is widely considered to be the *pièce maitresse* by Sokolov.

Giovanina Pacini (1799-1852) was Karl Briullov's model on several occasions. Giovanina's mother, Countess Julia Samoilova, was the richest woman in the Russian Empire. She was romantically involved with the artist and commissioned several portraits of her daughter. The present work is an excellent example of the artist's use of chiaroscuro and his capability for exquisite rendering of detail. The subject emerges out

of the several layers of her delicate shawl, complemented by the atmospheric background (estimate £100,000-120,000).

RUSSIAN WORKS OF ART AND TEXTILES

The Popoff Collection also incorporates a large selection of Russian works of art and textiles. Embroidery has been at the heart of Russian court, domestic and ecclesiastic tradition for centuries. The kokoshnik, sarafan and the festive scarf for formal occasions show the wealth of the wearer as well as her regional roots as each area had its own characteristic patterns and traditions. To the contemporary viewer the national dress spoke volumes. The cresen-shaped kokoshnik told the viewer that the wearer came from Central Russia (lot 262; estimate: £3,000-5,000) and the velvet conical pill box headdress told of Moscow Province (lot 255; estimate: £4,000-6,000). This collection of scarves, sarafan and kokoshniki can therefore take the modern connoisseur straight back to history.

A commemorative gold medal of the All-Russia Industrial and Art Exhibition held in 1896 in Nizhnii Novgorod will be offered for £5,000-7,000. On one side the medal shows the profile of Tsar Nicholas II, founder of the exhibition which celebrated the greatest artistic and technical achievements of the Russian Empire. The reverse of the medal depicts the city-shape of Nizhnii Novgorod and Mother Russia.

Auguste Montferrand's delicately drawn study for the monument of Nicholas I in St Isaac's Square, St Petersburg is a discovery of great importance in the Popoff Collection. It is sold together with a portfolio comprising Montferrand's original drawings of the structure and sculpture of the monument (estimate: £60,000-90,000) Montferrand was architect of the northern capital's two most distinguished squares – Palace Square and St Isaac's Square. The drawing has particular resonance this year as the monument was erected 150 years ago.

Notes to Editors:

Galerie Popoff was founded by Alexandre Alexandrovich Popoff in 1920. The gallery is still located at its original site, opposite the Elysée Palace in Paris. Popoff launched a wave of interest and passion for Russian Art which captivated a generation of collectors and art lovers including the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Giovanni Agnelli, Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya, Michel Brodski, Marjorie Merryweather Post, Greta Garbo and Leonard Bernstein. Alexandre Popoff was very close to emigrated Russian artists and the notable figures of the time, including Konstantin Somov,

Konstantin Korovine, Boris Grigoriev, Yuri Annenkov, Sergei Lifar, Sergei Chekhonin and many others. In 1935 the gallery received the “Premier Grand Prix d’Honneur de la ville de Paris” for offering only objects of the highest quality in the best condition.

#

Images available on request
Visit Christie’s on the web at www.christies.com

About Christie’s

Christie’s, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2008 that totaled £2.8 billion/\$5.1 billion. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie’s offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie’s has 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie’s has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium