

For Immediate Release

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FIT FOR EMPERORS AND KINGS: THE LOVE COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN FURNITURE, ASIAN WORKS OF ART AND ANTIQUITIES

The C. Ruxton and Audrey B. Love Collection: Important European Furniture, Antiquities and Asian Works of Art
October 20, 2004

New York – As part of The C. Ruxton and Audrey B. Love Collection, Christie's New York will offer a superb array of European furniture and decorative arts as well as Chinese and Southeast Asian works of art on October 20, following the sales of jewelry and silver from the same collection. Much of the same splendor, exquisite craftsmanship and fascinating provenance that characterizes the silver collection is also reflected in the group of furniture and Asian art. Their superb taste and style can be seen in the works of art they selected and in their extraordinary ability to combine so many varied objects into a harmonious and decorative setting in their triplex at 655 Park Avenue.

Antiquities

The eclecticism and superior sense of quality of C. Ruxton and Audrey B. Love's collecting approach is once again emphasized by the Hope Pharaoh, a superb Roman alabaster figure of a Roman Emperor in the guise of a pharaoh, circa 1st/2nd century A.D. (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). Thomas Hope (1769-1831), designer, author and architect, amassed an impressive art collection of antiquities during his many travels, especially during his stay in Italy in the late 18th and early 19th century.

In 1799, Hope acquired a mansion on Duchess Street, London, and redesigned its original interior so as to display his many collections in the best possible setting. The house and its contents, which

were published in writings and engravings, were to have a profound and lasting influence on the taste of English Regency, originating the “Hope Style.” The Hope Pharaoh held a prominent position in the Egyptian room on Duchess Street before it was moved to Hope’s country house in Deepdene where it became a centerpiece of the Orangerie and Sculpture Gallery. Although erroneously described as ‘modern’ in a late 19th century publication, the Hope Pharaoh is now recognized as an original Roman work of art, created in accordance with pharaonic Egyptian tenets, and incorporating certain Roman predilections such as the use of exotic Asia Minor alabaster and the integral two-tiered base. It displays a unique physiognomy characterized by a protruding upper lip and may have been intended to depict the Roman Emperor Domitian. It is without a doubt one of the finest such examples to have survived from ancient Rome.

European Furniture and Decorative Arts

A spectacular group of three pairs of Regency ormolu six-light candelabra and stands (estimate: \$200,000-300,000, each pair) represents one of the richest interpretations of the ‘Egyptian’ style popular in the early 19th century, which Thomas Hope had been so instrumental in promoting. This renewed fashion for ancient Egyptian motifs in Regency England was inspired by archaeological discoveries made during Napoleon’s military campaigns of 1798. George, Prince of Wales, ordered four candelabra modelled after the same design, still in the Royal Collection, as part of the celebrated ‘Grand Service,’ which was invoiced in 1811. Four of the six Love candelabra offered for sale were almost certainly supplied by Rundell, Bridge & Rundell to Charles, the 3rd Duke of Richmond, for the Egyptian dining room at Goodwood House created by James Wyatt in circa 1802-6. The remaining pair was supplied to Richard, Marquess Wellesley, the elder brother of the Duke of Wellington, probably for Apsley House, London.

Also clearly inspired by Thomas Hope’s designs is a pair of Regency ebonized, bronzed, simulated porphyry and parcel-gilt torchères, early 19th century (estimate: \$50,000-80,000). Derived from Roman tripod candelabra, these bronzed-black and gilt enriched ‘guéridon’ stands were intended to support vases or candelabra. The columns decorated with lotus leaves resemble a Thomas Hope design and the figures of maidens are similar to the paired vestal figures on the sideboard table in the breakfast room at Thomas Hope’s house in Duchess Street.

A pair of superb Regency gilt-lacquered brass tazze, possibly by Alexis Decaix, circa 1805 (estimate: \$50,000-80,000), was conceived in the French Imperial manner of the 1800s and was also strongly influenced by Thomas Hope. This magnificent pair functions as a centerpiece for fruit placed at a banquet table and is virtually identical to a set of tazze depicted in a painting of a lavish banquet given in 1814 by the City of London for the Prince Regent, the Emperor of Russia, and the King of Prussia.

Another legendary collector of antiquities is linked to the colorful Italian volcanic specimen marble presentation panel in walnut case (estimate: \$25,000-50,000). In 1781, this panel was presented to Sir William Hamilton by the Sicilian Count and Knight of Malta, Joseph Giveni of Catania. While perhaps best known as the husband of Lord Nelson's mistress, Emma, he is most celebrated in the art world for his collection of ancient vases that now form the core of the British Museum collection. He also had a lifelong interest in the study of volcanoes and recruited Giveni to prepare studies of Mount Etna, which were later added to the collection of the Royal Society of Arts.

A pair of English giltwood and ebonized eagle console tables with Italian mosaic tops (estimate: \$200,000-300,000) reflects the revival of the 'Palladian' style in the 19th century. These tables were adapted to accommodate the mosaic tops, which were most likely commissioned in Rome by an aristocratic patron wanting to return to England with a souvenir of his 'Grand Tour.' According to the sale provenance in the 1949 catalogue of the sale in which they last appeared, the pair was once in the collection of the Earls of Kinnoull at Balhousie Castle, Perthshire, England.

A set of nine paintings by José Maria Sert, the celebrated Spanish artist known in the United States for his exhibition at the Wildenstein Galleries and for his commissions at the Waldorf Astoria and Rockefeller Center in New York, will be offered as a single lot (estimate: \$180,000-250,000). The paintings were directly commissioned by Mona Williams, later Mona von Bismarck, a hugely prominent socialite and fashionista, for the dining room of her legendary Fifth Avenue mansion in 1932-1934. The influences of Tiepolo, Goya, and Manet are apparent in these scenes, which evoke a Spanish atmosphere.

Other highlights include a rare Italian specimen marble top on a giltwood stand, an important addition to the small group of known pictorial 'slabs' made in Naples in the mid-18th century (estimate: \$80,000-120,000); an Italian giltwood and ebonized console table of the river god Mincio (estimate: \$50,000-80,000), possibly commissioned from a Roman carver for the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua, early 18th century; and a pair of Italian *pietre dure* panels (estimate: \$40,000-60,000) whose delicate colors and depictions of Arcadian ruin landscapes are reminiscent of two landscape roundels, now in the *Museo dell'Opificio*, Florence.

Asian Works of Art

One of the most exciting pieces to surface from this collection is the highly important and rare Chinese Imperial gold and black lacquered carved nine-panel demi-lune screen, Qianlong period (1736-1795) (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). One of only three screens of this type known to have survived, this demi-lune screen possesses several characteristics of Imperial patronage such as the high quality craftsmanship and use of Japanese style lacquers. Moreover, the appearance of European scenes on the screen - depictions of Amsterdam - again suggests Imperial influence as the

Qianlong Emperor was fascinated by European art and culture. Indeed it is possible that these screens may have been made for display in one of the Imperial Western-style palaces built for the Emperor Qianlong.

Several superb examples of the exuberance of Chinese enamel cloisonné can be found in the Love collection. One of the most impressive lots is the pair of magnificent Chinese Imperial cloisonné enamel and gilt-bronze covered braziers, Qianlong period (1736-1795) (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). Although undeniably decorative, braziers like these were functional objects and would have served as heating devices in the Forbidden City.

The same outstanding cloisonné enamel technique can be seen in the pair of five-clawed leaping dragons, Qianlong period (estimate: \$80,000-120,000). The five-clawed dragon was the symbol of the Chinese emperor and this impressive pair would likely have stood before or to the side of an Imperial throne in one of the major palace halls, such as the Hall of Supreme Harmony. Leaping through multi-colored clouds in pursuit of a flaming pearl, these dragons carry all the symbols of good luck and fortune.

Further outstanding examples of cloisonné enamel, also from the Qianlong period, include a large fish basin decorated with various fish and aquatic plants (estimate: \$50,000-70,000) and a square ice chest used to cool drinks, fruit and sweets and alleviating the oppressive heat of Beijing (estimate: \$40,000-60,000).

Dating to the 16th/17th century of the late Ming dynasty, is a pair of massive glazed tile-work figures of Buddhist lions on stands, (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). Brilliantly colored in yellowish amber, turquoise, dark aubergine and white, these figures were probably made in the Shanxi province, one of the major tile-making regions during the Ming period. In their capacity as defenders of the Buddhist law and protectors of sacred buildings, such figures were placed at the entrances of temples, shrines and private residences.

Other noteworthy items offered for sale include an Imperial zitan-clad nine dragon rectangular throne (estimate: \$80,000-150,000) and two sets of five gilt-bronze bells, *bianzhong*, each cast with Kangxi cyclical dates corresponding to 1714 and 1716 (estimate: \$70,000-90,000). In the field of Southeast Asian art, the sale will offer a group of Gandharan stucco heads of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, with estimates ranging from \$100 to \$40,000.

Auction: The C. Ruxton and Audrey B. Love Collection:
Important European Furniture, Antiquities
and Asian Works of Art

October 20, 2004

10 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

October 16 - 19

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