

For Immediate Release

16 September 2005

Contact: Matthew Paton

020.7389.2664

mpaton@christies.com

REDISCOVERED TITIAN TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN DECEMBER
Intricate Restoration Reveals Portrait by the Italian Master

Old Master Pictures

Thursday, 8 December 2005



London – A remarkable and little-known masterpiece by Titian will be offered in Christie's sale of *Old Master Pictures* on 8 December 2005. The *Portrait of a Lady and her Daughter* had not been seen for over 400 years having been painted over in the late 16th or early 17th century, and was only recently revealed after nearly twenty years of careful restoration. It is the most important work by the master to come to public auction for many years and is expected to realise in excess of £5 million.

Francis Russell, Deputy Chairman of Christie's and Old Master scholar says, "*This remarkable and moving portrait is one of the most notable discoveries of recent years. Titian was one of the greatest and most influential of all portrait painters, and his portraits stand at the head of a tradition, championed by such artists as van Dyck, Reynolds and Sargent.*"

Women rarely feature in Titian's considerable output of portraits, and the *Portrait of a Lady and her Daughter* is the only known work by Titian to show a mother and daughter. It is thought that the subjects are Titian's daughter Emilia with one of his granddaughters. The painting probably dates from the 1550s, but was never completed. Both heads are very fully realised and imply a probing direct observation. Emilia is shown as a mature woman, no longer a girl, captured at a moment when her beauty is splendid and maternal. Her appearance is fashionable; her thick blonde hair is curled back in a *torciglione* across her forehead and her dress is elaborate and ample. The daughter, whose brown hair is dressed with seed pearls, has an earring of amethyst.

The canvas was reworked soon after Titian's death in 1576 by one of his pupils, as a *Tobias and the Angel*, presumably for commercial reasons. The Lady was given wings and became the Archangel Raphael, while her daughter was given a male hairstyle to become Tobias. The *Tobias and the Angel* was first recorded in the mid-18th century when it was in the famous Barbarigo Collection in Venice. This collection had been enriched with works by Titian in 1581 when Cristoforo Barbarigo purchased the artist's house and studio with all their remaining contents.

The Barbarigo collection, which included other unfinished works by Titian, was sold in 1850 to Tsar Nicholas I of Russia, and the pictures, including this work, entered the Hermitage. However, a few years later, the Tsar was advised to dispose of nearly 3,000 pictures and this work was acquired by Russian aristocrat, Count Tyszkiewicz of St. Petersburg in whose family's collection it remained until 1913.

By the 1920s, the painting, *Tobias and the Angel*, belonged to the renowned picture dealer, René Gimpel. At the outbreak of World War II, by then in his late middle-age, René Gimpel joined the French Resistance having sent all his pictures to hiding places in London to avoid confiscation. He revealed their location to no-one. He was captured and sent to the slave-labour camp at Neuengamme and perished in 1944. It was some considerable time before his sons, who had also fought in the French Resistance, were able to locate the pictures. The Titian, along with many other paintings, was discovered in a garage in Bayswater in 1946.

Gimpel's son, Jean, who was a champion of science as applied to the arts, had the *Tobias and the Angel* X-rayed by Stephen Rees-Jones at the Courtauld Institute Technology Department in 1948 when the underlying composition became apparent for the first time. It was Jean's enthusiasm which later led to the complex restoration that uncovered the original composition.

The restoration process took nearly twenty years and it was only in 2001 that the original portraits were revealed. The picture was then the major rediscovery of the Titian exhibition of 2003 in Madrid. *Portrait of a Lady and her Daughter* has caused much excitement among scholars, offering the chance to further examine the later style of Titian's painting. Its unfinished state provides a fascinating glimpse of the artist's working methods and technique. Like many portrait painters, he began by concentrating on the heads, bringing the features of mother and child to a high degree of finish. It is likely that Titian usually began his portraits this way, quickly capturing his sitter's likeness before they tired of the session.

Tiziano Vecellio, called Titian (*circa* 1485-1576) was born at Pieve di Cadore, Italy, and moved to Venice when he was ten. He succeeded Giovanni Bellini as painter to the Republic of Venice in 1516 and soon became famous across Europe, in particular for his skill as a portraitist. In the 1530s and 1540s he traveled to Bologna and painted The Emperor Charles V and Pope Paul III. He joined the Court of Charles V at Augsburg, Germany in both 1548 and in 1550, and obtained a large number of portrait commissions before returning to Venice. Having obtained the patronage of King Philip II of Spain, the son of Charles V, he remained in Venice, further developing a style of painting that pioneered a loose, impressionistic character. Titian's influence cannot be understated, providing direct inspiration for a range of artists including Velàzquez, Rubens, Rembrandt and van Dyck, as well as modern and impressionist artists including Monet and Renoir. During his own time, Titian was already acknowledged as a master of the arts. Lomazzo described him as 'The sun amidst small stars not only among the Italians but all the painters of the world.'

#

Images available on request

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

- Highlights from December's sale of Old Master Pictures will be on view in various locations around Europe during September and October. The tour dates are as follows:

Florence: 30th September to 2nd October at the Hotel Excelsior, Sala Cestello
during the Florence Biennale

Hamburg: 13th and 14th October at Deutsche Bank

New York: 28 October to 1 November 2005, Christie's Rockefeller Centre

Notes to Editors:

- *Portrait of a Lady and her Daughter* by Tiziano Vecellio, called Titian, measures 89 x 80 cm. Oil on canvas. Inscriptions on the reverse, on the stretcher: inscribed with the Barbarigo Collection number in Russian.

- The current world record price for a work by Titian at auction is £7,480,000, which was paid for *Venus and Adonis* at Christie's, London on 13 December 1991. In 2003, the negotiated sale to the nation of the *Venus Anadyomene* by Titian was completed by Christie's. It was offered in lieu of tax liabilities arising on the death of the late Duke of Sutherland. The picture was from the historic Ellesmere Collection, the most celebrated pictures from which have been on loan to the National Galleries of Scotland since 1946. A major picture from Titian's early maturity, the *Venus Anadyomene* is datable to the 1520s and shows the goddess rising from the sea.

- Christie's has an unrivalled expertise in the field of Old Master Pictures, and hold major auctions of Old Masters twice a year in both London and New York. The July week of Old Master sales in London sold over £50 million of works, including Canaletto's *The Bucintoro at the Molo, Venice, on Ascension Day* which realized £11,432,000 and a rediscovered drawing by Andrea del Sarto, *Head of St. Joseph looking down, which sold for £6,504,000*, a world record price for the artist at auction.