

For Immediate Release

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SINGLE OWNER COLLECTION OF PRE COLUMBIAN JADES TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK

**A European Private Collection of Pre Columbian Art
November 12, 2004**

New York – For the first time in its history, Christie's New York at Rockefeller Center will offer a single owner collection of Pre Columbian works of art, a European collection formed over the past three and a half decades. Presenting a dazzling array of jade and greenstone artifacts, the collection also includes a group of Mezcala votive sculptures from the world-renowned Carlo Gay collection and choice Mayan ceramics.

Revered by Chinese, Mughal, Maori and Aztec cultures alike, jade was considered one of the earth's most precious substances and from as early as 1000 B.C., craftsmen from the ancient Olmec of Mexico sought the translucent blue-green jades from what is now Costa Rica and shaped them into sacred and symbolic objects. Over the course of a thousand years (circa 200 B.C. – 800 A.D.) the artisans of the Costa Rica area created objects that were useful and meaningful, many of which were decorated with carvings representing birds or semi-human faces and were buried with the honored dead. Mayan artifacts (circa 100 B.C. – 1000 A.D.) not only symbolized wealth and status but their jewelry also copied the finery of one of their principal deities, the Maize god. All three great traditions of jade carving in the New World are distinguished for their exquisite quality, a characteristic that is apparent in the works of art offered for sale.

The highlight of the collection is a Mayan jade belt plaque (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000), Early Classic, circa A.D. 400-450. This splendid plaque is one of only three examples still extant, the two other ones in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, Holland and in a private collection, currently exhibited in the Miho Museum near Kyoto. Subtly decorated, the plaque shows on one side the profile portrait of a young lord richly attired in the regalia

associated with enthronement. The verso shows a graphically drawn text in two columns, primarily stating the date, action and protagonist of the scene

A Mayan ritual container, possibly Mayapan, late Postclassic, circa A.D. 1100-1300 (estimate: \$100,000-150,000), is decorated with a brightly painted figure of a Diving Maize God in Maya blue, deep red, black, white and rich saffron. The Diving God, Yum Kaax, is closely associated with agriculture and fertility but he also appears as a sacrificial offering, linking the birth and rebirth concepts.

Also part of the Mayan culture are a figural scepter of the Maize God, Jaina, Late Classic, circa A.D. 550-950 (estimate: \$30,000-50,000), with the Maya aesthetic bodily ideal reflected in the rendering of the God; a rare jade deity head pendant, Early Classic, circa A.D. 250-450 (estimate: \$40,000-60,000), made for an image of a deity rather than for a historical individual; and a jade head of the Maize God, Classic, circa A.D. 450-650 (estimate: \$15,000-20,000), depicting the young Maize God as a handsome, high-browed head.

Further highlights of the sale include a Guerrero stone palanquin group, Late Preclassic, circa 300-100 B.C (estimate: \$50,000-70,000) and three artifacts from the Olmec tradition, all Middle Preclassic, circa 1150-550 B.C.: an effigy pendant stylized in the form of the head of a wild duck (estimate: \$20,000-40,000); an Olmec/Tlatilco dancing figure (estimate: \$30,000-50,000); and a Las Bocas seated figure in the form of a 'baby,' with an ornamented headdress that might indicate the status of an elite wearer.

Auction: Pre Columbian Art

November 12 at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center
Christie's Paris

November 5 - 11
October 13 - 15

More information about Christie's sale of *A European Private Collection of Pre Columbian Art* can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.

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Images available upon request

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