

For Immediate Release

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IMPORTANT ANTIQUITIES AT CHRISTIE'S

Antiquities including an English Private Collection of Gems at 10.30am & 2.30pm

The Heidi Vollmoeller Collection at approximately 3pm

Wednesday 29 October 2003



A late Minoan terracotta Larnax
Estimate: £80,000-120,000



An Achaemenid limestone Relief
Estimate: £100,000-200,000

South Kensington - The autumn Antiquities sales at Christie's promise to offer a wide ranging selection of fine Greek, Roman and Egyptian pieces alongside the second part of an English Private Collection of Ancient Gems and the superb single-owner collection of the charismatic collector Heidi Vollmoeller.

Born in Germany, Heidi Vollmoeller became an antiquities dealer in Switzerland during the 1950s at a time when there were hardly any women in the business. Having started her career as a champion ice-skater, she moved to Paris in the mid 1940s to study ballet and it was there that her passion for antiquities was first ignited by her uncle

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and mentor, the painter Hans Purrmann. Returning to Zurich in the early 1950s, she opened her first gallery which she later moved to the Vollmoeller family home on Kurhausstrasse. Over the next five decades Miss Vollmoeller's gallery became a one-stop shop for many museums with more than seventy international institutions acquiring works of art there. This marvellous collection to be offered at Christie's comprises 200 lots and bears witness to her excellent taste, knowledge and innate creativity.

The collection has a particular emphasis on early Greek antiquities as well as the most wonderful array of decorative jewellery including Greek, Roman and early Islamic earrings spanning from the 4th century B.C. to 12th Century A.D. and in estimate from £500 to £5,000. The undoubted highlights of the Vollmoeller collection though are two rare Minoan painted terracotta coffins, or larnakes, both dating from 1400-1200 B.C. Popular in Crete during this period, they were decorated with similar motifs to those found on painted pottery at the time. The first example on offer in the Christie's sale is decorated with palm trees and argonauts with spiralling tentacles (estimate: £80,000-120,000) while the other depicts octopuses on the exterior and a shoal of fish swimming around the interior (estimate: £50,000-80,000).

The general Antiquities sale is led by the Ouseley Achaemenid Relief acquired by Sir Gore Ouseley in the early 19th century while Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Court of Persia (1810-1815). This extraordinary piece depicts the bearded head of a Persian guardsman wearing a feathered headdress and is expected to fetch up to £200,000.

This auction will also feature the second part of an English collection of ancient gems [50 lots] formed by the late Gavin Todhunter during the late 1940s-1970s – this follows the hugely successful sale of Part I of his collection at Christie's last May. One of the many notable intaglios is a fine Roman amethyst intaglio engraved with a male portrait bust estimated at £3,000-5,000.

Elsewhere the sale includes a well provenanced private collection of Egyptian antiquities originally acquired by G.A. Michaelides in the 1930s-1940s. Also on offer are 20 lots of Daunian vases, 6th-3rd Century B.C. from the Desmond Morris collection.

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