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**WILDENSTEIN
MAGNIFICENT FRENCH FURNITURE, OBJETS D'ART &
TAPESTRIES**

**Unseen for Decades and In Pure, Untouched and Unrestored Condition,
The Superb Wildenstein Collection Will Be Revealed at Christie's**

**The Wildenstein Collection of Magnificent French Furniture and Objets d'Art
Christie's King Street
14 & 15 December 2005**

London – Christie's announces the sale of the Wildenstein Collection of **Magnificent French Furniture, Objets d'Art and Tapestries** will take place in London on 14 and 15 December 2005. The sale of this vast collection, started at the turn of the century by Nathan and Laure Wildenstein and comprising more than 250 works of art, including an unprecedented dispersal of magnificent Boulle furniture, is estimated to realise over £14 million (\$25 million).

The depth and range of the collection is as extraordinary as its impeccable, untouched condition. The majority of the works have remained undisturbed since their acquisition up to one hundred years ago at the turn of the 20th century and the collection has not been available, even to the cognoscenti, for either viewing or acquisition. Its appearance on the market is a true landmark event in the annals of French furniture collecting.

"After careful thought, Wildenstein has decided to sell the contents of the Hôtel de Wailly at 57, rue de la Boétie in Paris to create new facilities for housing the archives and research workrooms of the Wildenstein Institute, the world's leading publisher of catalogues raisonnés. While the works of art have great meaning for us, the property has not been used as a residence since the death of our grandfather, Georges Wildenstein, in 1963," said Alec and Guy Wildenstein. (Full family statement available.)

"This auction will be an important event in Christie's history and it is an honour for us to be entrusted with this highly significant sale", said François Curiel, Deputy Chairman of Christie's. *"It will provide a fascinating*

insight into a past era of collecting in France; the sale will be the crowning glory of the auction season in Fall 2005."

Charles Cator, International Director of Furniture at Christie's said: *"For anyone passionate about French 18th century decorative arts, this collection is a treasure-trove beyond comparison – a jewel chest of delights. The objects transport one back to the world of the late 19th and early 20th century, when Paris provided the stage for Nathan Wildenstein, Sir Richard Wallace, Calouste Gulbenkian and Comte Moïse de Camondo, a time when the market was dominated by such great art collectors."*

The remarkable ensemble is largely the creation of one man – Nathan Wildenstein (1851-1934). Hugely influential in the history of taste in the early 20th century, Nathan Wildenstein was the founder of the Wildenstein dynasty, which to this day represents more than a century of tradition, expertise and connoisseurship. This collection of French decorative arts was assembled with the same eye and understanding that launched the family as arguably the most influential art dealers of the 20th century.

From humble beginnings, Nathan's brilliant and incisive mind seized the opportunities unfolding at the turn of the 20th century. Based in Paris, and from 1905 at Hôtel de Wailly, 57, rue de la Boétie, Nathan swiftly expanded his operation to embrace both New York in 1902 and subsequently, London. The Wildenstein Collection essentially contributed to the creation of the sumptuous settings in which Nathan could best display and offer the Wildenstein paintings and sculpture. His wealthy clientele could feel at ease and envision how their interiors could benefit from the acquisition of the works they had come to view. The residence became the epicentre of the art trade. Nathan's wife, Laure Lévy, was closely involved in all aspects of the business as the private and the professional merged for the Wildensteins. Family history relates that she served the most wonderful tea every afternoon in the galleries to whoever was visiting, whether for business or pleasure.

While the majority of the Wildenstein Collection of furniture remained in Paris, some was transported to their other premises. Some major pieces went to New York to decorate the legendary gallery on East 64th Street – designed by Horace Trumbauer in 1931 - where the headquarters of the business remain to this day.

André-Charles Boulle – The Great Genius of Innovation in Furniture

An incomparable array of furniture by the great genius of furniture making, André-Charles Boulle, includes three superb ormolu-mounted brass-inlaid ebony and tortoiseshell marquetry bureaux plats. The largest and earliest, a late Louis XIV example, was acquired from the Collection Kraemer on 17 October 1928 (estimate: £1,500,000-3,000,000). The second, dating to the Louis XV period, was from the Collection of Alfred Morrison at Fonthill and acquired at Christie's in 1927 (estimate: £250,000-400,000). The third, also a Louis XV and attributable to Boulle fils, is remarkably rare in that it retains its original cartonniér or filing cabinet surmounted by a

sumptuous sculptural group displaying a clock by Enderlin which has one of the earliest rotating dials (estimate: £300,000-500,000) (*Illustrated right*). This latter example was acquired from the Collection of Eugene Foulc – whose Renaissance and Medieval Collection had also been sold by Nathan Wildenstein for over \$1 million in 1931 to form the nucleus of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Further highlights from the *grande galerie* on the first floor of 57, rue de la Boétie include a matched pair of Louis XIV ormolu-mounted brass-inlaid tortoiseshell marquetry console tables by André-Charles Boulle acquired at the Jacques Helft sale in 1923 (estimate: £1,000,000-1,500,000) and a Louis XIV ormolu-mounted and boulle marquetry armoire attributed to André-Charles Boulle, acquired at the Seligmann sale in 1930 (estimate; £400,000-600,000) (*Illustrated Right*).

The celebrated ébéniste André-Charles Boulle's (1642-1732) unparalleled fame rests upon his extraordinary technical virtuosity, his innovation in both technique and design, his brilliance as a sculptor and his love and inventive use of rare and exotic materials. Christened by his contemporaries as "the most skilful artisan in Paris," André-Charles Boulle's name is synonymous with the practice of veneering furniture with marquetry of tortoiseshell, pewter, and brass. Although he did not invent the technique, Boulle was its greatest practitioner and also lent his name to its common name: boulle work. Boulle also specialized in floral marquetry in both stained and naturally coloured wood. Many of his designs are illustrated in the famous book of engravings published in Paris around 1720. Boulle became a master before 1666, and in 1672 the King granted him the royal privilege of lodgings in the Palais du Louvre. In the same year, he achieved the title of cabinetmaker and sculptor to Louis XIV, King of France. This new title allowed him to produce furniture as well as works in gilt bronze such as chandeliers, wall-lights, and mounts. Although strict guild rules usually prevented craftsmen from practicing two professions simultaneously, Boulle's favoured position allowed him protected status and exempted him from these statutes.

The lasting legacy of André-Charles Boulle enjoyed a fashionable renaissance during the late Louis XV period, principally as a result of the brilliant career of the marchand Julliot. Amongst the earliest examples of Julliot's oeuvre is a superb Louis XV ormolu-mounted table de milieu, signed and dated Julliot 1761, which reuses marquetry panels and legs executed by André-Charles Boulle himself (estimate: £250,000-400,000). This table was acquired from the legendary American heiress Lady Baillie of Leeds Castle, Kent. Also probably a Julliot commission are a pair of late Louis XV ormolu-mounted brass-inlaid ebony and tortoiseshell marquetry side cabinets originally acquired from the Léon Helft Collection in November 1912 (estimate: £600,000-1,000,000).

Additional Highlights

While the Boulle ensemble forms the summit of the Wildenstein Collection, there are also outstanding examples of both Louis XV and Louis XVI pieces – not just *ébénisterie* but also *menuiserie* - as well as a sumptuous range of the most luxurious products of the *bronzier* and *ciseleur*-

doreur. A magnificent series of six pairs of Louis XVI candelabra illustrate the technical skill and creative brilliance of the period – each pair combining different materials and demonstrating mastery over a variety of techniques (estimate: £50,000-150,000). The superb pair of Louis XV ormolu-mounted celadon carp vases supplied by the marchand-mercier Lazare Duvaux is a particularly distinguished example of this famous and coveted model (estimate: £150,000-250,000). Noble exponents of the Rococo style, this model features in the superb portrait of the Baron de Besenval by Danloux recently acquired by the National Gallery in London.

An extraordinary Louis XV ormolu-mounted Nautilus shell expresses the creative genius of the 18th century marchand-merciers. It was probably designed by Juste-Aurèle Meissonier, and came from the fabled collections of the Viennese Rothschilds through Rosenberg and Steibel (estimate: £100,000-200,000).

An unrivalled *tour-de-force* of French cabinet-making is a Louis XV ormolu-mounted tulipwood, amaranth and bois de bout marquetry secrétaire by Bernard II van Risenburgh, *dit* BVRB (estimate: £300,000-500,000), one of the most talented ébénistes of the Louis XV period. His work was particularly admired by the mistress of Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour, who purchased several works by him through Duvaux. Interestingly, the King purchased a secrétaire of precisely this model for Château de St Hubert in 1758. Three small marquetry tables by the ebeniste also form part of the collection.

One of the greatest treasures of the collection is a Louis XVI mahogany and yew-wood secrétaire stamped by Nicolas-Philippe Dussault, lavishly embellished with elaborate ormolu mounts and numerous Wedgwood plaques. It was undoubtedly the brainchild of that creative genius Dominique Daguerre, who enjoyed a monopoly over the import of Wedgwood plaques into France. Housed in the Salon Bleu, the secrétaire is superbly decorated and mounted with outstanding plaques (estimate: £800,000-£1,200,000). Amongst only five pieces ever published from this collection, this secrétaire was featured on the front cover of Charles Packer's celebrated 1956 publication, *Paris Furniture*.

Another masterpiece of Louis XVI cabinet-making is Jean-François Leleu's monumental secrétaire à abattant which relates directly to the monumental and architectural furniture created by Leleu for the Prince de Condé's Palais Bourbon, one of the great show places of the early neo-classical style (estimate: £250,000-400,000). The commode from the Palais Bourbon is now in the Louvre.

Further Royal masterpieces include the superb pair of Louis XVI giltwood console tables with beautiful granite tops, which are branded with various Royal inventory marks and numbers including the stamp of the Palais des Tuileries, where they were listed in the early 19th century (estimate: £250,000-400,000) (*Illustrated Left*).

The *marque au feu* of another Royal château, Fontainebleau, can be seen on a wonderful late Louis XV ormolu-mounted marquetry commode attributed to Roger van der Cruse, *dit* Lacroix, which was supplied by the marchand Léonard Boudin for Fontainebleau in the 1770s (estimate: £70,000-100,000).

Notes to Editors:

Public Viewing:

New York	Highlights will be on view from 15 - 20 October 2005 at 20 Rockefeller Plaza
London	The complete collection will be on view from 11 – 14 December 2005

Further Information

Nathan Wildenstein and an Artistic Dynasty

Nathan's credo was expressed in the advice he repeatedly gave his children and grandchildren: "Love France. And go to the Louvre."

Nathan Wildenstein (1851-1934) was born on 8 November 1851 and grew up in Fegersheim, a village in Alsace south of Strasbourg. The Wildenstein clan had resided in Fegersheim since the beginning of the 18th century, and for generations many of them made their living in the buying and selling of horses. Nathan left school at an early age and worked for a time selling men's ties in a shop in Strasbourg run by Wildenstein cousins. He considered himself a Frenchman and against his father's wishes nineteen-year old Nathan had elected to leave his native Alsace after the Franco-Prussian War. However, his departure created a serious rift between him and his family, with whom he had little further contact.

From Strasbourg, Nathan travelled to Paris, which was still under siege so he was turned away and may have worked for a while in Liège. Once he returned to France, he settled in the province of Champagne, where he apparently worked in the shop of a tailor or cloth merchant. He is said to have visited the Château of Vitry-la-Ville belonging to Comte de Riancourt, where he saw among the other paintings a portrait of a woman by Nattier, a work with which he became infatuated and which his gallery would later acquire and sell to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In Vitry, Nathan met Laure Lévy (1856-1937), the daughter of Samson Levy and Leah Milhaud. Nathan courted her for a number of years and they finally married on March 31, 1886.

Nathan ultimately settled in Paris, where he and a partner named Lachatroulle ran a manufactory of neckwear and cuffs at 111, rue Montmartre, a business that was still operating in 1876. One day, a Countess Potocka with whom he was acquainted asked him to sell an Old Master painting for her, a portrait of a Flemish dignitary by, or at least attributed to, Anthony van Dyck. Although he knew nothing about art at that point, he spent days haunting the corridors and galleries of the Louvre in an experience that was overwhelming revelation to him and that he later termed "heavenly disorder". He left the museum convinced he had found his calling. He successfully negotiated the sale of the lady's painting, and with the profit bought other pictures.

Nathan took a gamble, totally abandoning his early career and putting all of his meagre income into acquiring works of art. He trained his eye by constant visits to museums, private collections, dealer's shops on both sides of the Seine, flea markets and the auction rooms of the Hôtel Drouot and the Galerie Georges Petit. Sheer will power led him to become a connoisseur in the fullest sense of the word. He was sought out for his expertise, which some collectors came to regard as nearly infallible.

In the late 1870s Nathan Wildenstein opened in Paris where he began buying and selling French paintings. Enamoured with the creative brilliance of the French ancien regime and the Enlightenment, Nathan was quick to see that the vagaries of fashion and taste had dispersed these underappreciated masterpieces into unjustified obscurity. He was endowed with an instinct for quality and an ability to recognise the masterpiece lost among a multitude of other objects. In 1890, he was able to move to the more prestigious location at 46, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. He and his wife were an ideal couple. Well-educated, an omnivorous reader, a talented hostess, Laure added a certain distinction to the marriage and was the soul of the family. A modern woman, she oversaw the firm's bookkeeping, the preparation of invoices and the correspondence exchanged between her husband and a growing number of clients.

A smart dresser, Nathan Wildenstein is said to have had a wry, jovial, entertaining and infectious sense of humour that endeared him to many with whom he came into contact. Moreover his enthusiasm about the works he was selling was absolutely contagious. By the turn of the 20th century, he was considered as one of the pre-eminent art dealers in Europe and with a flair for seizing opportunity the instant it appeared. Nathan Wildenstein's intrepid spirit meant that he had amassed a superb collection of Old Masters and established himself as one of the leading art dealers in Europe.

Ahead of his time and sensing opportunities across the Atlantic, Nathan opened a gallery in New York in 1903, followed by another in London in 1925. Seizing on the importance of educating the new generation of Industrialists and railroad magnates, Nathan's careful and informed cultural tutelage of the likes of Jules S. Bache, Henry Ford, Edward G. Robinson, the Havermeyers, Henry and Arabella Huntington and Mortimer Schiff ultimately provided the backbones of the great bequests to American Museums. The business he created in the 1870s, grew into a vast enterprise that today includes galleries in New York and Tokyo and a research institute in Paris.

From before the turn of the century to the end of his life, Nathan Wildenstein began a collection which was housed in his principal home in Paris at 57, rue de la Boétie which he had acquired in 1905 following the continued success of the business. The building had been designed in 1776 by Charles de Wailly, one of the two architects of the Théâtre de l'Odéon, for his own use. Nathan gave the building its present configuration with the succession of sitting rooms and galleries designed to showcase works of art and house a library. Many of the pieces he acquired were from some of the most prestigious collections including the French Rothschilds, Doucet, David-Weil, Kann, Lion, Burat, Bensimon, Helft, Seligmann, Lévy, Kraemer and Veil-Picard. While a few of the pieces were illustrated in Charles Packer's Paris Furniture published in 1956, the majority are little known, even in illustrations.

Nathan's son, Georges Wildenstein (1892-1963) inherited his father's eye and instincts and also cultivated a broader interest in the academic pursuit of art history itself. He assembled an extraordinary library and photographic archive, concentrating particularly on the late 19th century, and purchased works by Cézanne, Degas, Manet and Monet. Georges' passion for French art and culture knew no bounds, and his profound understanding of them was conditioned not only by his reading and the elaborate research projects he initiated, but also by his visits to art museums, exhibitions, commercial galleries, auction houses and homes of private collectors.

Daniel Wildenstein (1917-2001) was born to Georges and Jane Wildenstein in Verrières-le-Buisson, near Paris. Educated at the Sorbonne, he joined the family business in New York in 1940. He continued to expand his family's collections and published catalogues on the works of Monet, Renoir and others. At the Wildenstein Institute, Daniel Wildenstein revised and expanded the catalogues raisonnés on Chardin, Gauguin, Houdon, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Redon, Renoir, Hubert Robert, Van Dongen, Vigée Le Brun and Vlamincq.

Like his father, Daniel was elected *Membre Libre de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts* of the *Institut de France*.

The Wildenstein Institute

The Wildenstein Institute is a unique organisation which was founded to benefit historians, researchers and art-lovers. Its original documentation was assembled in the late 19th century by Nathan Wildenstein (1851-1934), one of the pioneering figures in the rediscovery of masters of 18th century French painting such as François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. With tireless enthusiasm, Nathan's son Georges continued to amass historical documentation and photographic archives concerning the life and works of thousands of artists. He built up a vast library that

provides an overview of European art through the ages. He was also active in publishing and produced some of the first major, fully illustrated catalogues raisonnés that were accessible and affordable to a wide audience. He also edited such art periodicals as *Beaux-Arts* and the venerable *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.

The Institute was founded in 1970 by Georges' son Daniel, who was eager to continue this form of cultural sponsorship. Under his guidance, the Institute was organized along more modern, scientific lines by focusing on the accumulation of documents and research materials.

The Institute's Library holds more than 400,000 volumes, 20,000 catalogues raisonnés and over 50,000 exhibition, public and private collections and sale catalogues. The oldest sale catalogues, veritable museum pieces, date from the 17th century. These are complemented by extensive archives documenting the activities of the international art market dating from the late 19th century; these include notarized inventories and sale records, an area of particular interest.

A treasure-trove of visual data has been constantly enriched by the acquisition of the photograph libraries of Galerie Druet, Gachet, Vollard, [more forthcoming] and the historian Georges Isarlo.

The number of catalogues raisonnés prepared with the aid of the Wildenstein Institute is considerable. Work is facilitated by donations of historical records bequeathed by descendants of specific artists, among them Michel Monet and Denis Rouart, heirs of the Monet and Manet families, and by the archives of such patrons of the Impressionists as Ambroise Vollard, Etienne Bignou and Dr. Paul Gachet. A catalogue raisonné attempts to record the entire output of an artist, thus constituting the fundamental reference work on that artist and is sometimes decades in the making. For example, Daniel Wildenstein spent more than thirty-six years completing the five-volume Monet, which he started with his first wife Martine Kapferer.

Among its other activities, the Wildenstein Institute fosters and encourages cultural ties within the international art community and has organised symposia, conferences and exhibitions.

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