

For Immediate Release
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Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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LORD HARRIS OF PECKHAM'S MAGNIFICENT SILVER COLLECTION LEADS CHRISTIE'S NOVEMBER SALE



**Highly Important Silver from the Collection of Lord Harris of Peckham
and
Important Silver including a Collection of Mounted Hardstone Works of Art
Christie's London
Tuesday, 25 November at 1.00 pm**

London – An afternoon of exceptional, rare silver at Christie's London is led by the *Highly Important Silver from the Collection of Lord Harris of Peckham*, followed by *Important Silver including a Collection of Mounted Hardstone Works of Art* on Tuesday, 25 November 2008. Acquired over the last thirty years, the Lord Harris collection provides an historical tour of works by the greatest European goldsmiths over 300 years, from the 16th Century to the 19th Century. Featuring the rarest Tudor and Stuart pieces offered on the market for over 50 years, all the lots are united by the prevailing themes of rarity, quality and beauty, assembled by the selective eye of a connoisseur. Exemplifying the group's significance is the star lot, the important Elizabethan silver-gilt mounted ostrich-egg cup and cover, *illustrated above*, with the mark of Royal Goldsmith John Spilman, London, 1590 (estimate: £500,000-800,000); this was bought from the collection of Scottish ship-owner and philanthropist Sir James Caird Bt. (1864-1954) of Glenfarquhar, co. Kincardie, in 1993. Consisting of 57 lots in total the collection is expected to realise in the region of £3 million. The day's sales, comprising over 270 lots, with estimates ranging from £3,000 up to £800,000 are expected to realize a total in the region of £4 million.

"A private collection of silver created by an informed individual differs enormously from family collections assembled over generations. Bearing the stamp of a single person's vision such a collection is freed from the vagaries of generational changes of taste and can epitomise that which the collector holds in highest esteem. The collection of Lord Harris of Peckham is such a collection. Over the last thirty years Lord Harris, a collector whose interests cover many facets of the decorative arts, Impressionist, modern British and contemporary art, has pursued the rare, the beautiful and the exceptional. We are thrilled to have the privilege of offering such important silver to the market," **said Harry Williams-Bulkeley, Head of Department, Christie's London.**

Lord Harris of Peckham is an inspirational figure. Awarded Businessman of the Year in 1983, Knighted in 1985 and elevated to the Peerage in 1996, he is an individual not only with an exceptional eye for superb silver but a richly varied and benevolent background. In 1957 at the age of 15, having been educated at Streatham Grammar School, Lord Harris took over running the family business: three carpet shops, which by 1977 he had increased to 93 premises. Having expanded and developed the business over the past 50 years, Lord Harris is Chairman and Chief Executive of *Carpetright plc*, a company with over 600 stores. Chairman of charities, a sponsor, founder and benefactor of colleges, city academies and a community centre, Lord Harris is also non-executive director of Arsenal Football Club.

The Rarest Tudor and Stuart pieces offered at auction in over 50 years



In the 17th century the turmoil of the Commonwealth period saw the destruction of the vast majority of the nation's silver. The Tudor and Stuart silver, silver-gilt and mounted works offered from the Harris Collection are the rarest survivals and the largest number offered at auction for over 50 years. Five pieces from the reign of Queen Elizabeth I include the earliest known silver basket of 1579 (estimate in the region of £300,000) *illustrated left*, which pre-dates the previous known example by nearly 40 years, and the magnificent John Spilman Ostrich-egg cup, made in 1590 by the Royal Goldsmith who was later knighted by James I in 1605 (estimate £500,000-

700,000) *illustrated in full on page 1 and as a detail below right*. Exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum between 1955 and 1993, this cup epitomises the height of stylistic technique achieved by certain London goldsmiths in the late 16th century; incorporating the best silverwork with exotic



materials ranging from shells, coral, pearls, hardstones, rock crystal and ostrich eggs. Known as 'Gryphon eggs' in the medieval period, few mounted ostrich-egg cups were made in England and even fewer survive. Always viewed as a treasure, the cup is the focus of a 17th century Dutch still life painting which offered as part of the same lot, *illustrated left*.



A second Elizabeth I cup and cover of 1582 is included in the sale, with an estimate of £150,000-200,000; there is a comparable example to this in the collection of the Kremlin Museum Moscow. A considerable amount of significant silver, with European origin, is held in museum collections in Russia, as superlative examples of silver were frequently given as diplomatic and political gifts.



The collection does not concentrate on the work of London goldsmiths alone. From Germany come George Kobenhaupt's five calendar beakers, which are exquisitely engraved with scenes depicting the months of the year, made in Strasburg circa 1580 (estimate £150,000-200,000), *example illustrated right*.

Celebrating the Stuart period is the Cowcadden mazer, made in Edinburgh, circa 1615 (estimate £80,000-120,000) *illustrated above left*, Nicholas Crestian's basket marked in Paris in 1638 (estimate £100,000-150,000) and the Tazza by Cornelius Jansz van der Burch of Delft dated 1604 (estimate £60,000-80,000).



The political stability and resulting economic wealth which followed the Restoration in 1660 enabled the crown to equip its ambassadors with the finest plate with which to impress the courts of Europe. In 1703 Queen Anne granted Lord Methuen, her ambassador to Portugal, 7,000 ounces of silver-plate. It is not surprising that the Harris collection extends to the cups, covers and stands (estimate £400,000-600,000) and a set of three casters from this historic service (estimate £150,000-200,000).

Many of the French Huguenot goldsmiths fled persecution on the Continent to Britain, drawn by the Protestant religion and society's insatiable appetite for the finest silver. Goldsmith Pierre Platel arrived in



the reign of William and Mary in 1688; Platel was master to Paul de Lamerie who is recognised as the greatest Rococo silversmith to have worked in London. Platel's wonderfully robust candlesticks from 1714 (estimate £100,000-150,000) provide a strong contrast to Lamerie's high Rococo coffee pot of 1744 (estimate £70,000-100,000), *illustrated left*. Also offered from this period are two charming, decorative French silver mounted Japanese Imari bowls and covers assembled in Paris circa 1720, each with an estimate of £20,000-30,000.

Links to Garrard's - the Oldest Jewellery House in the World

English silversmith George Wickes, who entered his first mark in 1722, is admirably represented in the sale and illustrates that the London market was not dominated by the expertise of Huguenot goldsmiths alone. Garrard's, the oldest jewellery house in the world, is the company founded by George Wickes; having seen many changing partnerships, it bears the name of the partner who took sole control in 1802, Robert Garrard. A direct line can be drawn between Lord Miltown's soup tureen of 1742 by Wickes (estimate: £70,000-100,000) *illustrated right* and Lord Cadogan's extraordinary ewer shaped wine coolers with their dragon handles (estimate £60,000-80,000), as well as other works in the sale made by Garrard.



Important Silver including a Collection of Mounted Hardstone Works of Art



Treasures in this part of the afternoon's silver sales are led by a private collection of 30 mounted hardstone works in rock crystal and lapis lazuli, which have never been seen in public before and are collectively expected to make in the region of £700,000. Key works include two Austrian silver-gilt mounted lapis lazuli dishes Vienna, *circa* 1890 attributed to Hermann Ratzersdorfer (1815-1881) (estimate: £50,000-80,000) *illustrated left* and an Austrian silver-gilt mounted rock crystal cup and cover in the shape of an ostrich, Vienna, *circa* 1890, by Hermann Ratzersdorfer (estimate: £80,000-120,000).

The collection exemplifies the very best of Viennese Renaissance-style enamelled silver and gilt-metal mounted objects, from the second part of the 19th century; the pieces are amongst the select few from the period which, in both rich decoration and superior craftsmanship, come close to the 16th-century masterpieces that their makers tried to emulate. Purchased over a century ago by the American wife of an English aristocrat, almost all of the collection is either marked by, or can be attributed to, one of the leading Viennese makers of the period, Hermann Ratzersdorfer (1815-1881) and his workshop. They may have been a single purchase or spread over regular visits at the end of the 19th century. Ratzersdorfer's work was shown in many of the major exhibitions of the mid-19th century and at the Vienna World Exhibition, 1873, he was awarded the diploma of honour and his Renaissance-style works of art, 'were said to light up the gloomy exhibition Rotunda with their colour and sparkle.'

Elsewhere in the sale, a magnificent late 17th century German tankard from Hamburg (estimate: £30,000-50,000), a highly desirable Paul Storr wine coolers of Warwick Vase form 1819 (estimate: £50,000-70,000) and an important Charles II canteen (estimate: £70,000-100,000) are among the many other highlights.

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Images available on request

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Notes to Editors:

Sale date:

Christie's London: Tuesday, 25 November at 1:00pm

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and

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Public Viewing dates

Christie's London, 8 King Street, St. James's, London, SW1Y 6QT: Between 21 November and 24 November 2008

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global art sales in 2007 that totalled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. For the first half of 2008, art sales totalled £1.8 billion / \$3.5 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai, Hong Kong and Zurich. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai. *Estimates do not include buyer's premium