

For Immediate Release

24 October 2005

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RUBENS LEADS EIGHT PICTURE COLLECTION TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN DECEMBER



Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), *The Hunt of Meleager and Atalanta* (estimate: £2,000,000-3,000,000)

**Important Old Master Pictures
Thursday, 8 December 2005**

London – Christie's announce that the evening sale of *Important Old Master Pictures* on 8 December 2005 will include a group of eight paintings, all of which once formed a part of the renowned Cook Collection at Doughty House, Richmond. The group includes works by Italian, Flemish, Spanish and French artists, and is led by the powerful oil sketch by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, *The Hunt of Meleager and Atalanta*. Further highlights include a moving *Christ the Man of Sorrows* by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo and a *Portrait of Captain Hood* by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The collection of eight paintings is estimated to realise in the region of £5 million.

Richard Knight, International Director of the Old Master Department, Christie's: "Of those great 19th century collections formed in the so-called 'golden age', that assembled by Sir Francis Cook and installed at Doughty House, Richmond, ranks alongside the achievements of the Marquis of Hertford and Sir Edward Guinness (later 1st Earl of Iveagh), and in the United States, Henry Clay Frick and Isabella Stewart Gardner. Christie's is proud to be offering for sale on December 8, at the direction of Brenda, Lady Cook, eight remarkable Old Master paintings. Their range and quality reflects the extraordinary breadth of the Cook Collection and includes, for example, a Rubens, a Murillo and an outstanding Reynolds."

The oil sketch by Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), *The Hunt of Meleager and Atalanta*, carries an estimate of £2,000,000-3,000,000. This work depicts Ovid's tale of how the Goddess Diana, feeling neglected by the subjects of King Oeneus of Calydon, sent a huge boar to ravage the land. Many of the most famous names in antiquity gathered together and, while most failed in their attempts to slaughter the beast, Atalanta wounded it with an arrow before

Meleager finally killed it. Dated to the early 1630s, this sketch focuses on Atlanta in a short, pink gown having just shot the wounding arrow, and Meleager, apparent in orange, thrusting a spear towards the creature. The background is dominated by blues and greys while areas of the foreground are defined by warmer shades of brown, ochre and amber. This sketch was used in reverse for a very large canvas, most likely a cartoon for a tapestry, which was in the collection of Horace Walpole at Houghton Hall in the 18th century. *The Hunt of Meleager and Atalanta* was included at a Christie's auction in 1845 as the Property of E.W. Lake, where it sold for 18 guineas, and then again in 1857 as the Property of D. Robertson Blaine, where it realized 10 guineas. In 1868, the sketch was purchased by Sir Francis Cook and added to his impressive and growing collection.

Also included in this group of eight pictures is the emotional and moving *Christ the Man of Sorrows* by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (*circa* 1617-1682) which carries an estimate of £500,000-700,000. Murillo lived and worked most of his life in Seville and the majority of his works are centred on religious subjects, reflecting his own dedication to the doctrines of the Counter-Reformation church. This noble portrayal of Christ in reflection, before his execution, shows his hands bound and the crown of thorns in place. Soft modelling and delicate colouring convey a potent sense of piety.



Other works include *Madonna and Child* by Naddo Ceccarelli, a rare Sienese master from the generation immediately following the founder of that school, Duccio. In late 2004, Christie's were privileged to negotiate the private sale of Duccio's *Stroganoff Madonna* to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. For Christie's to have consigned for sale yet another masterpiece from the Sienese *Trecento* in less than a year is a truly remarkable event for the art market. This *Madonna and Child* (estimate: £600,000-800,000) is distinguished for being signed and is dated 1347, only one year before the Black Death devastated much of Europe.

From the following century, a Florentine cassone panel depicting *The Triumph of David* from the Circle of Apollonio di Giovanni carries an estimate of £400,000-600,000, and later still, Giovanni Battista Salvi's (called Sassoferrato, *circa* 1605-1685), *Madonna and Child* (estimate: £40,000-60,000), is an exquisite, highly-finished work in a Raphaelesque idiom.

Nicolas Maes (1634-1693) was a favoured pupil of Rembrandt who developed a progressive style of portrait painting in the latter part of his prolific career. *Group Portrait of a Family by a Fountain* (estimate: £400,000-600,000) is one of his most ambitious works, dating from his Amsterdam period. The *Portrait of a Boy with blonde hair* by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805) sensitively captures an endearing image of childhood and carries an estimate of £70,000-100,000.

The swagger *Portrait of Captain Hood, later Lord Bridport, three-quarter length, in naval uniform* by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A. (1723-1792) depicts one of the most significant figures of the British Navy during the Seven Years and French Revolutionary Wars. Alexander Hood (1726-1814), later Viscount Bridport, joined the Navy in 1741 and dedicated almost sixty years to military service. By 1795 he was appointed Vice Admiral and commander of the Channel Fleet, before retiring from active duty in 1800. This portrait was painted between 1758 and 1761 (estimate: £250,000-350,000).

All eight pictures once formed a part of the magnificent collection formed by Sir Francis Cook (1817-1901) and later, his grandson Sir Herbert Cook (1868-1939) at Doughty House, Richmond. Sir Francis was a collector of antiquities until middle-age when, with the help of his advisor Sir John Charles Robinson (1824-1913), he began to collect paintings with the aim of assembling an encyclopaedic collection to rival the breadth and depth of the public galleries of Britain and Europe. At his death in 1901, the collection included approximately 500 pictures with works by Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, del Sarto, Titian, Tintoretto and Raphael, among others. Sir Herbert continued adding to the collection, focusing on paintings from the Venetian High Renaissance, as well as playing a major role in the founding of *The Burlington Magazine*. As the Second World War approached, it became difficult to house and maintain such a substantial private collection, and so began significant sales. Sir Francis Cook (1907-1978) ensured that dispersals from the collection were largely to the benefit of institutions around the world and in 1942, he donated one of the most impressive masterpieces, Titian's *La Schiavona*, to the National Gallery in memory of his father.

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Images available on request

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

- Highlights from December's sale of Important Old Master Pictures will be on view:

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

Notes to Editors:

- A remarkable and little-known masterpiece by Titian will also be offered in Christie's evening sale of *Important 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.

- Christie's has an unrivalled expertise in the field of Old Master Pictures, and hold major auctions 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.