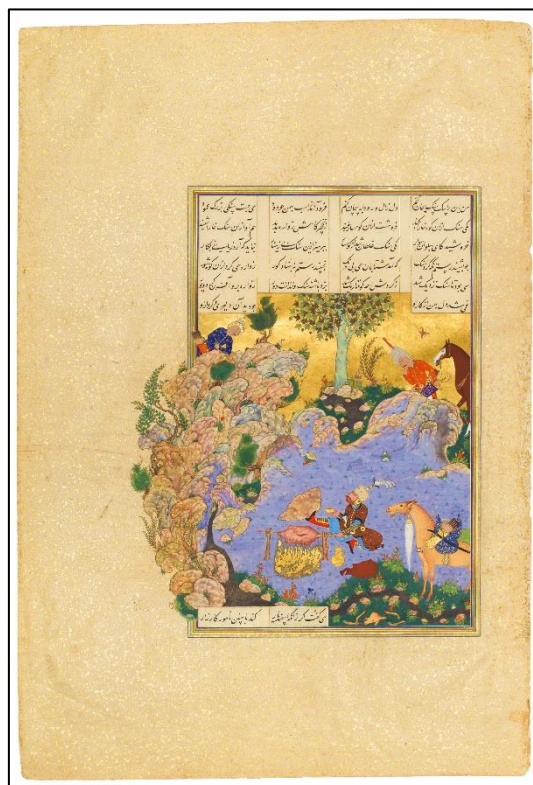


CHRISTIE'S

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RARE COURT PAINTING AND POLONAISE CARPET LEAD ART OF THE ISLAMIC AND INDIAN WORLDS INCLUDING ORIENTAL RUGS AND CARPETS SALE

- A highlight of the sale taking place in London on 31 March is a rare painting from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp, attributed to Aqa Mirak, assisted by Qasim ibn `Ali, Tabriz, circa 1530, (estimate £2,500,000 – 4,000,000).
- The Adolphe von Rothschild silk and metal-thread Polonaise carpet, probably Isfahan, Central Persia (late 16th/early 17th century), is another lead lot, highly prized and an example of magnificent Safavid weavings under Shah `Abbas I, (estimate £1,000,000 – 1,500,000).
- Both lots have a Rothschild family provenance, while the Polonaise carpet has more recently remained in the same collection for more than half a century.



A FOLIO FROM THE *SHAHNAMA* OF SHAH TAHMASP 'RUSTAM KICKING AWAY THE BOULDER PUSHED BY BAHMAN'
Attributed to Aqa Mirak, assisted by Qasim ibn `Ali, Tabriz, circa 1530.
Painting 20.8 x 21.2 cm.; leaf 47.2 x 31.1 cm
(Estimate £2,500,000 – 4,000,000)

LONDON – Christie's announce the Spring **Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds Including Oriental Rugs and Carpets** auction taking place live at King Street, London, on 31 March. Two rare masterpieces lead the sale, exemplifying the height of artistic production in Iran under the Safavid dynasty. The first is a single folio from the most opulent and poetic manuscript produced in the Islamic world; 'Rustam kicking away the boulder pushed by Bahman', from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp, attributed to Aqa Mirak, assisted by Qasim ibn `Ali, circa 1530. Painting 20.8 x 21.2 cm.; leaf 47.2 x 31.1 cm. (Estimate £2,500,000 – 4,000,000).

The Shah Tahmasp *Shahnama* was the result of several decades of collaboration between a small number of leading artists in the royal atelier in Tabriz. The *Shahnamah* of Firdawsi, "The Book of Kings," is the Iranian national epic and our folio comes from the copy which is considered one of the greatest illuminated and illustrated manuscripts in the world.

Sultan Muhammad, Mir Musavvir, and Aqa Mirak, were the three leading artists involved, succeeding each other as directors of the project through the years. Scholars still disagree about the actual dates of execution of the manuscript, however it is thought to have been begun around the early 1520s, probably under Shah Isma'il I (r. 1501–24), the founder of the dynasty, and continued for at least another twenty years under Shah Tahmasp (r.1524-76), the manuscript's dedicatee and principal sponsor.

The manuscript was subsequently presented by Shah Tahmasp to Ottoman Sultan Selim II, remaining in the Topkapi Palace library in Istanbul for many generations before entering the collection of Baron Edmond de Rothschild in 1903. Baron de Rothschild was renowned during his lifetime for devoting himself to art, culture and philanthropic causes and this folio remained in the Rothschild family collection until 1959 when it was sold to Arthur A. Houghton Jr.

Behnaz Atighi Moghaddam, Head of Sale, Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds comments, 'Christie's is proud to bring this folio from the Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp to the market this season. It represents an incredibly rare opportunity to acquire a masterpiece made at the apogee of Safavid manuscript production, and dating from the 16th century, the folio is remarkably well preserved. The painting immerses the viewer into the world of Persian mythology through playful colours and dynamic landscapes. At the centre of this tale, our epic hero elegantly kicks away the oncoming boulder much to the amazement of his onlookers. Across the folio, the eye is drawn to exquisite details, from the poppies dotted across the landscape to the luxurious manner in which the silver has been layered to create the flowing river. The manuscript of which it is part is widely considered to be a wonder of its age'.



The second leading lot is a rare and exquisite Iranian Safavid 'Polonaise' carpet, Isfahan, Central Persia, late 16th/early 17th century, 6ft.5in. x 4ft.6in. (197cm. x 141cm.), (*illustrated p.3 below*), (estimate £1,000,000-1,500,000). Woven with luxurious silk and costly gold and silver metal-thread the carpet is the perfect marriage of beauty, artistry and exoticism. It formerly belonged to Baron Adolphe Carl von Rothschild, art connoisseur and member of the great Rothschild banking dynasty, the first member of the family to be bought out of the business in order to allow him to concentrate on collecting. The carpet remarkably still retains the original label noting its owner and that it was part of the contents of his residence at 45 rue de Monceau in Paris during the 19th century. The carpet was passed down by descent to his cousin Maurice de Rothschild and was sold in Paris in 1968 when it passed to another prominent German noble family where it has remained for over half a century. This Iranian Safavid 'Polonaise' carpet showcases the magnificent Safavid weavings under Shah 'Abbas I. The artistic renaissance that he oversaw encouraged all art forms to flourish from calligraphy, painting and metalwork in addition to carpet and

textile production. Shah 'Abbas had a great appreciation for sumptuous textiles, silks and woven carpets and production in Isfahan rapidly grew under his patronage. This lot is testament to the inspirational designs and techniques produced in the new weaving ateliers. Silk was one of the most costly materials available,

reserved almost exclusively for the court's use, knotted here to form a design set against a background of flat-woven silver and gold covered silk thread.

A significant proportion of *Polonaise* carpets made at the time were gifted by the Shah as ambassadorial gifts to European royalty and nobility. They were hugely appreciated by the Baroque nobility of the 17th century courts; Louis XV apparently owned twenty five such rugs with precious silk and metal thread, while the Polish royalty commissioned a number of such Persian works of art. Further examples remain today in noble European collections such as those of the Swedish and Danish royal families, the Princes of Lichtenstein, the royal house of Savoy in Italy, the Duke of Buccleuch and the Papal collection in the Vatican. The preservation of colour within the shimmering silk pile, enhanced by the opulent use and technical mastery of the silver and gold metal-thread, similarly appealed to the wealthy collectors of the 19th century and encapsulates *Le gout Rothschild*, synonymous with the most refined objects made by the greatest craftsmen.

Louise Broadhurst, Specialist and Head of Carpets, Christie's comments: *"The Adolphe Carl von Rothschild 'Polonaise' is a rare and remarkably well preserved survivor from the Golden Age of Safavid weaving. Woven with the most delicate and costly of materials, the silk pile belies the fact that it is over 400 years old. Where so often the colours have faded and the pile remains worn this extraordinary example contains a palette of 12 vibrant colours all interwoven in a complex arrangement of ornate arabesques and foliate palmettes. The lure of such majestic objects is evident as they have continued through the centuries to beguile the most eminent of collectors"*.

The upcoming auction comprises approximately 211 lots in total, with striking examples of works of art across manuscripts, paintings, ceramics, metalwork and carpets dating from the 9th to 19th century, and with estimates ranging from £2,000 to £2,500,000. Further attesting to the masterpieces produced in Iran is a remarkably preserved, monumental Seljuk stucco panel with provenance traceable to the early 20th century. This is offered alongside a rich selection of Persian and Indian paintings from private collections, and impressive examples of early silver-inlaid metalwork. The sale also features a polychromatic array of nearly seventy rugs and carpets encompassing all aspects of Persian carpet weaving, from the naturalistic and delicate floral depictions woven in Tabriz Iran, to the earthy, warm palettes of the Kurdish nomads. Other countries along the silk route are represented from Safavid-inspired Agra carpets in rich jewel tones, to the bold and playful palettes of the Caucasus.

The view and exhibition opens to the public on Saturday 26 March and is open until Wednesday 30 March. Please see www.christies.com for timings.

For imagery of the two top lots illustrated above please find a drop box link [here](#)

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