

For Immediate Release

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TRAVEL IN TEXT THROUGH RUSSIA'S HISTORY

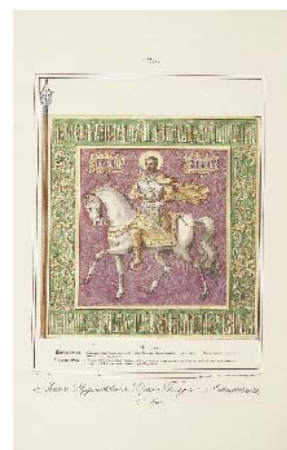
Valuable Russian Books and Manuscripts

Thursday, 30 November 2006

London - Christie's King Street will hold its first dedicated sale of Russian Books and Manuscripts as part of a week-long calendar of Russian art auctions at London, King Street on 30 November. With Christie's recent successes in the Russian art market, the series of sales come at a wonderful time, and are sure to attract enthusiastic bidding. The Russian Books and Manuscripts sale is expected to realise in excess of £1.2 million.

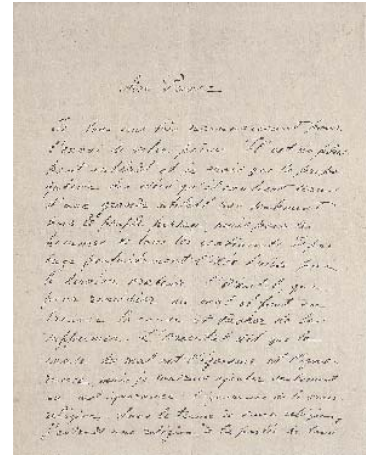


The sale's star lot is a painted, first edition two volume album titled *Drawings of the Uniforms and Arms of the Russian Army*, by Aleksandr Vasil'evich Viskovatov. It is the only known handcoloured copy outside of Russia., while in Russia only two such examples are known. With an impressive provenance, a gift from Tsar Alexander II to his brother-in-law Duke Friederich von Mecklenburg-Schwerin of Germany, the album presents a chronological journey through the uniforms, insignia, and standards of every regiment in the Russian army. One of very few known examples, it is estimated to realise between £300,000 – 500,000. An exceptionally rare work of much importance to Russian history, it is beautifully hand-coloured throughout, and often finished with touches of gilt and silver. Considered the most important illustrated reference work of its genre, it presents a vivid progression of the Russian Army regiments. The book begins in 862, the same year that the Slavs and Finns of northwestern Russia decided to call the Scandinavians to their aid, a move which would protect them from the invasions of the Mongols and Turks. Rurik of the tribe of the Russ, was the first of many leaders to govern Russia until the accession of the Imperial Romanov's in the 17th century. *Drawings of the Uniforms and Arms of the Russian Army* travels through this entire period, right up until its date of publication in 1841.



Christie's also has the pleasure of offering an important letter from Leo Tolstoy discussing his personal philosophy. The letter is addressed to Prince Mirzha Reza Khan Arfa, the former Persian

Minister in St. Petersburg. It is expected to fetch between £12,000 – 18,000. Tolstoy, one of the greatest Russian novelists of the 19th century, wrote *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*, which is widely acclaimed as among the best novels ever written. In the letter, Tolstoy discusses the futility of war, and reveals his religious nature, extolling the *true religion*, one in which God is obeyed above man. Essentially, the correspondence describes his philosophy of life and calls upon beliefs such as ‘*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*’, a popular credence from the Gospel. In fact, by the time Tolstoy wrote this letter, he had developed a kind of untraditional Christian philosophy that shared similarities with Buddhism. His non-violent belief system directly influenced Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, seminal pacifists of the 20th century. To purchase a letter from Tolstoy is to purchase a philosophical and literary achievement in itself.



Finally, Christie’s will also auction Emperor Alexander I’s copy of *Les Peuples de la Russie* (The People of Russia), by Charles de Rechberg and George Bernhard Depping. This work is estimated to realise in the region of £15,000 – 20,000. The volume contains ninety-four finely hand-coloured aquatints, after designs by the Russian painter, E Karneev and was intended to show Alexander his subjects in various scenes throughout his vast empire. This example includes a rare image censored in most other known copies: what is known as the ‘*bath*’ plate – an image of nude Russian women at the steam bath.

Notes to Editors:

- Christie’s were the first auction house to devote sales to Russian art although the connection between Russia and the world’s leading auction house extends back to the 18th Century when James Christie, the company founder, helped negotiate Robert Walpole’s Collection of Pictures to Catherine the Great of Russia, now the core of the Hermitage Collection.

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For further information on any aspect of the international art market, images or interviews please contact Christie’s Press Office on 020 7389 2664. Christie’s dedicated email address for Russian clients is po-russki@christies.com