

For Immediate Release

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GET THE BALL ROLLING AT CHRISTIE'S SOUTH KENSINGTON

The Nic Costa Collection of Amusement Machines

Auction: Thursday 19th January, 2pm

On View: From Saturday 14th January 2006, 10am

South Kensington – Over 150 lots of amusement machines will be offered at Christie's South Kensington on Thursday 19th January 2006 from the collection of Nic Costa, one of the most imaginative collectors in this field. With machines spanning from the 1880s to the 1950s, the collection offers a glimpse into the world's amusement arcades through the decades and is estimated to fetch in excess of £150,000. From the early mutoscopes and stereo viewers of the 1800s, through to the first fruit machines and pinball machines of the 1930s, and the controversial electric shock machines of the early 1900s, this sale will cater for both serious collectors and those wanting a fun purchase. The sale will be on view during the weekend prior to the sale - creating the perfect opportunity to play on the machines, and see how past generations amused themselves.

Highlights of the sale include:

Mutoscopes and Stereo Viewers

Mutoscopes were coin operated machines that had reels of photographs inside them similar to a giant flipbook. Installed on piers and early amusement arcades from the 1890s to the 1930s, they frequently depicted saucy and erotic scenes. The 3 examples in the Christie's South Kensington sale are no exception, featuring ladies undressing, dancing and massaging each other (estimates start at £1,000). **Stereo Viewers** were similar to mutoscopes and as well as the inevitable peepshows, they would also feature landscapes and everyday life but in 3D – offering a fascinating glimpse into long forgotten times. Christie's is offering 6 examples of these (estimates range from £300 to £2,000).

One Armed Bandits

These were the very first fruit machines and heralded the change from games that involved chance and skill, to games that culminated in winning something by luck. They first were produced in Chicago in the early 1930s at the dawn of the age of casinos in America. They originally had numbers which had to be matched up in order to win, and one of these early machines is included in the sale; The Egyptian Bell, 1933 (estimate: £800-1,200). This section

also includes a wide array of bright, colourful machines, some with their original frontage and others which are branded to a particular casino. It is also possible to pick up a selection of 3 machines from as little as £150 – a stylish and fun addition for any self respecting bachelor pad.

Other interesting finds....

Also included in the sale is a selection of US **pinball machines** from the 1930s (estimates from £120 to £200), great for parties and adult games rooms, as well as several versions of **Bagatelle** (an upright version of the later 'Pinball' – estimates £250 to £800). Elsewhere in the sale are a variety of **electric shock machines**. Popular during the first part of the 20th century, these were used in asylums to cure various ailments when not much was known about the effects of the electric current on the body – indeed it was thought to be beneficial. Consequently, these electric shock machines were installed everywhere from waiting rooms to piers, railway stations and amusement arcades. With estimates ranging from £120-1,500 and many still churning out around 500 volts, these definitely aren't for the faint hearted!

There are **fortune telling machines** from 1890-1950 (estimates: £150-1,800), **dispensing machines** which dispensed everything from cigars and gumballs to soap and perfume (estimates: £200-600), and a rare **Charlie Chaplin wall machine by Jentsch, 1916**, when Charlie was at the height of his fame in which a ball is aimed at his trademark hat (estimate £1,800-2,200). There is proof that there was some fun to be had during the Great War, with the appearance of several wartime machines including a rare **“Allies Flags” wall machine** bearing the slogan; “Unity is Strength” (estimate: £1,800-2,200) and further wartime machines include a rare **French pinball machine** with an Airship theme (estimate: £1,500-2,200) and a rare **“Airship Profit Sharer”** featuring a ball-catch in the form of the R-100 Zeppelin Airship (estimate: £1,800-2,500).

Finally, the sale also features a unique piece of film footage from the Mills Factory in Chicago, USA which shows the building the famous one-armed bandits (estimate £3,000-5,000). This extremely rare 16mm film footage captures a tour of the factory and shows the start of the journey for the new 20th century phenomenon, gambling.

Nic Costa is one of the most prominent collectors in this field, and has written 2 books about his collection and the history of amusement machines. He amassed his collection chiefly in the 1970s and 80s and frequently toured it around the UK.

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Images available on request
Visit Christie's at www.christies.com

Notes to Editors:

Public Viewing:

Saturday 14th – Thursday 19th January

85 Old Brompton Road, SW7 3LD

Specialist Direct line: 020 7752 3278

Public Enquiries: 020 7930 6074 / www.christies.com

Public Auction: Thursday 8 December 2005 at 2pm

Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road

Opening hours:

Monday - 9am to 7.30pm

Tuesday to Friday - 9am to 5pm

Open for Weekend Shopping on Saturday and Sunday - 10am to 4pm

The weekend openings will be throughout the year except for bank holidays.

The UK's busiest auction house, Christie's South Kensington offers more sales more often than any other auction house