

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Catherine Manson 44.207.389.2982 cmanson@christies.com
Clare Roberts 44.207.389.2664 croberts@christies.com

THE BADMINTON CABINET SELLS FOR £19 MILLION / \$36 MILLION AT CHRISTIE'S The Most Expensive Piece of Furniture Ever Sold at Auction ... Again!

The Badminton Cabinet
Important European Furniture and Sculpture
9 December 2004

London – The Badminton Cabinet sold today at Christie's for £19,045,250/\$36,662,106/€27,463,250 breaking its own record price of £8.5 million established at Christie's on 5 July 1990, and becoming the most expensive decorative work of art ever sold at auction. It was purchased in the room by Dr. Johan Kraeftner, Director of the Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna on behalf of Prinz Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein for the museum.

“We are delighted to have been the successful buyer today”, said Dr. Kraeftner, Director of the Liechtenstein Museum. “The Badminton Cabinet will form the centrepiece of our strong collection of over fifteen important pietra dure works. We plan to arrange a Kunstkammer around the Cabinet in a new gallery which will also display our 17th century collection of still-life and flower paintings. I tried to bid as fast as I could to secure this magnificent object for our Collection. We look forward to welcoming the international public to view the Badminton Cabinet in Vienna where it will be on permanent display from Spring 2005.”

“Yet again the Badminton Cabinet has pushed the boundaries of the art market. The Cabinet transcends the boundaries of furniture, combining architecture, sculpture and painting in pietre dure, resulting in a unique masterpiece,” said Charles Cator, Chairman of Christie's UK and International Head of the Furniture Department. “It was an honour to be entrusted again with its sale and the price achieved today reflects the magnificence of this famous, much loved and admired work of art”

There were three other bidders competing for the Badminton Cabinet in the auction today. Dermot Chichester, Co-Chairman of Christie's UK, brought the hammer down and the price realised marks the most expensive lot he has ever sold.

Executed in ebony, gilt-bronze and *pietra dura*, The Badminton Cabinet was made for Henry Somerset, 3rd Duke of Beaufort, by the Grand Ducal workshops (Opificio delle pietre dure) in Florence, from 1720-1732, under the supervision of the Foggini family. Unsurpassed in its richness and splendour, the Badminton Cabinet is bold testimony to the young Duke of Beaufort's genius. The Duke was only nineteen at the time of the commission, so he made one of the grandest acts of patronage of the 18th century before he had even come of age.

Standing 386 cm high and 232.5 cm wide (151 ½ inches by 91 ¼ inches), this monumental Cabinet is undoubtedly the greatest Florentine work of art of its time. It is also perhaps the most important work of the decorative arts to have been commissioned by a British patron in three hundred years. It is a triumph of the very best craftsmanship, a unique object that utilizes a broad combination of materials and forms. The Cabinet also incorporates an amazing wealth of materials, from lapis lazuli, agate and Sicilian red and green jasper, to chalcedony (*calcedonio di Volterra*), amethyst quartz as well as other superb hardstones.

The Cabinet remained at Badminton until 1990 when it was sold at Christie's, on 5 July that year, by the Trustees of the Beaufort family to the Barbara Piasecka Johnson Collection for £8,580,000 (\$15,178,020). A further work from the Collection of Barbara Piasecka Johnson, *Still-life with Cardoon and Francolin* by Juan Sánchez Cotán (Orgaz 1560- 1627 Granada) was also offered at Christie's in yesterday's the sale of *Old Master Pictures* (8 December). It realized £4,037,250, establishing a world record price at auction for the artist and a world record price for any still-life Spanish Old Master painting.

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Notes to Editors:

Christie's International Furniture Department are market leaders in this category and hold all the major world record prices for furniture including for any English, Italian, German and French piece.

The Badminton Cabinet is the 17th most expensive work of art ever sold at auction and most expensive decorative work of art (non-pictorial) ever sold.

For further information on the Liechtenstein Museum please contact Alexandra Hanzl Alexandra.hanzl@at or visit their website <http://www.liechtensteinmuseum.at>