

For Immediate Release
17 September 2010

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

OXFAM DISCOVERY TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S THIS SEPTEMBER

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London – Christie's announce that they will offer a pair of rare 19th century photo albums by Esteban Gonnet entitled *Recuerdos de Buenos-Ayres*, which was discovered in an Oxfam shop in Newcastle upon Tyne. A very rare and early account of Argentine landscapes in the 19th century, the albums are being offered by Oxfam with an estimate of £3,000-5,000.

Caroline Ingram, Volunteer at Oxfam, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne - *"I have been volunteering at Oxfam for six years now and have never had a find to compare to this! As I am a keen photographer, I selected these albums to research from a selection of other books and began investigating. After a quick online search I discovered that the National Library of Argentina houses albums entitled Recuerdos de Buenos-Ayres and the list of photographs they contain is almost identical to those in the albums I had in my hands. I realised that the albums dated back to the 19th century and were probably valuable. After speaking with my store manager I contacted an old friend from university, Julian Wilson at Christie's, who confirmed my beliefs."*

When a box is dropped off at Oxfam the volunteers put to one side any items that might be valuable so that further research can be carried out - they are then studied, priced and put onto the shop floor or sometimes sold online or at auction if they are particularly valuable. Who donated the *Recuerdos de Buenos-Ayres* remains a mystery and it is possible they were part of a hoard brought to Oxfam after someone had passed away.

Early 19th century Argentine photography was principally concerned with portraiture and early outdoor shots are thus very rare, yet these albums capture the landscapes and cityscapes of Argentina as well as the gauchos and indigenous peoples. Gonnet, a French photographer, took the photographs in situ using the latest technology, and combined with the fact that there are only a couple of these albums recorded in institutions, these are exceptionally rare documents. Once taken to sell to tourists, the *Recuerdos de Buenos-Ayres* are now an important record of 19th century Argentine life. An advert placed in *La Tribuna* in October 1864 for Gonnet's albums reveals both their date and significance: 'A photographer from Buenos Aires has had the welcome idea of shooting the main vistas of this capital city. These make up a precious album worthy of any library'.

A highlight of the auction of *Exploration and Travel* on 22 September 2010, the albums have been consigned by Oxfam and all proceeds will go to the charity. If the albums reach their low estimate of £3,000 they could fund the purchase of safe water for 3,300 people, 1,500 bags of seeds or 120 goats.

Full Lot information:

http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?from=salesummary&intObjectID=5349656&sid=212af663-4323-485f-8354-d27deda5c5dd

E-catalogue:

<http://www.christies.com/eCatalogues/index.aspx?id=0CA6C61ACDD92D9F85257650002C53B4>

Sale: Exploration and Travel with the Polar Sale

Date: 22 September 2010

Location: Christie's King Street, 8 King Street, St. James's, London, SW1Y 6QT

Visit Oxfam's online shop:

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop>

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Images and interviews available on request
Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com