

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S

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REDISCOVERY

CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER THE MOST IMPORTANT BREGUET WATCHES

TO COME TO THE MARKET IN A GENERATION

To be offered in the Christie's auction of 'Important Watches'
Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues, Geneva Monday 14 May, at 2pm



Geneva - On 14 May 2012 Christie's will offer for sale the most important antique watches by Breguet seen at auction in a generation. Recently-discovered and previously unrecorded publicly, they have surfaced from the private collection of a European noble family and were created by the hands of Abraham-Louis Breguet (1747-1823). The revolutionary master and founder of Breguet only produced some 4,500 pieces during his lifetime, the majority of which are kept in the most prestigious private collections or in museums. The most spectacular example is a gold precision watch with two movements, signed Breguet et Fils, no. 2667, which was sold in August 1814 to a Mr. Garcias of London for the sum of 5,000 francs; the watch is now offered with an estimate of SFr.800,000-1,400,000 (US\$890,000-1,600,000 / €670,000-1,200,000); illustrated left and below right.

Aurel Bacs, Head of Christie's Watch Department:

"It is an extraordinary and rare occasion when a watch created by the legendary Abraham-Louis Breguet comes to the market. Having two Breguet masterpieces considered to be key milestones in the history of horology in the same sale is simply unique. In fact on 14 May Christie's Geneva will offer for sale the finest examples from the legendary watchmaker's production in absolutely perfect condition. Breguet watches were at the time the most prestigious and most costly in the world and were only created for royal and imperial families and aristocracy, or high-ranking generals and politicians, and the remainder for extremely wealthy business people and bankers. This is a lifetime opportunity for any serious watch collector to purchase a true museum quality timepiece".





The first piece of this exceptional collection is a great “Montre à deux mouvements” (no. 2667); *illustrated on the previous page*. This is the first experimental watch created by Breguet with two complete movements (barrels, gear trains, escapements and balance), with the purpose of obtaining the ultimate rating of his timepieces through the physical phenomenon of resonance. Recorded as sold for the first time in August 1814 to a Mr. Garcias of London for the amount of 5,000 francs, then resold on 30 April 1856 to Eugène Emmanuel de Savoie-Villafranca-Soissons (1816-1888), Prince of Carignan, Count of Villafranca, for the amount of 4,500 francs, scholars believe that Breguet only made three examples of this type of watch (the very first one being the present watch, the second created for George IV, King of England, the third was executed for the French crown; the latter two are now kept in the Jerusalem museum;). This is the first time ever that such an important watch by Breguet has come to the market (estimate: SFr.800,000-1,400,000 / US\$890,000-1,600,000 / €670,000-1,200,000).

Equally extraordinary is a large “Half-quarter repeating watch, with equation of time” (No. 4111); *illustrated below right*. Among the fifteen equation of time watches (indicating the difference between the mean time and the real or solar time) manufactured by Breguet and his son Antoine-Louis Breguet (1776-1858) between 1790 and 1830, this is one of only two watches with two independent dials offering an easier reading of the mean time and the real time as well as a quarter and half-quarter repeating mechanism. Originally created for the banker Peyronnet, before being bought back by Breguet and then re-sold in 1834 to Count Charles de l’Espine, this watch will be offered with an estimate of SFr.800,000-1,400,000 (US\$890,000-1,600,000 / €670,000-1,200,000).

Besides these masterpieces other great examples from the same collection are also featured in the Christie's Geneva sale, including an antique Breguet minute repeating watch (No. 2903) with jump centre seconds, considered to be an ancestor of the chronograph mechanism, and other rare period examples by Breguet, as well as by Louis Moinet (1768-1853), Mugnier Le Jeune, Louis Berthoud (1754-1813) and the ‘Frères Berthoud’, sons of the latter.

Abraham-Louis Breguet

Known as “the watchmakers of the kings, the king of the watchmakers”, Abraham-Louis Breguet (1747-1823) is widely acknowledged for having set the standard by which all fine watchmaking has been judged ever since. He was born in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, but it was in Paris that he spent most of his productive life. No aspect of watchmaking escaped his study, and his inventions were as fundamental to horology as they were varied. His career started with a series of breakthroughs: the development of the successful self-winding or “perpetuelle” watches, the introduction of the gongs for repeating watches and the first shock-protection for balance pivots. Louis XVI and his Queen, Marie-Antoinette, were early enthusiasts of Breguet’s watchmaking. Each watch from his workshops demonstrated the latest horological improvements in an original movement, mostly fitted with lever or ruby-cylinder escapements that he perfected. Breguet took refuge in Switzerland from the excesses of the French Revolution. He returned to Paris overflowing with the ideas that produced the Breguet balance-spring, his first carriage clock (sold to Bonaparte), the “sympathique” clock and its dependent watch, the tact watch, and finally the tourbillon, patented in 1801. Breguet became the indispensable watchmaker to the scientific, military, financial and diplomatic elites of the age. His timepieces ruled the courts of Europe, and for his most celebrated clients, Breguet designed the most exceptional timepieces. For Caroline Murat, queen of Naples, he conceived in 1810 the world’s very first wristwatch. Honours saluted his enormous contribution to horology: appointed to the Board of Longitude and as chronometer-maker to the navy, he entered the Academy of Sciences and received the Legion of Honour from the hands of Louis XVIII. When he died in 1823, all mourned the architect of the greatest revolution in the science and art of time-keeping.

CHRISTIE'S Important Watches

Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues - 33 quai des Bergues, Geneva

Auction:

Monday 14 May 2012, at 9am & 2pm

Viewings in Geneva:

Friday 11 May, 10am-6pm

Saturday 12 May, 10am-7pm

Sunday 13 May, 10am-6pm

International Tour:

Christie's New York

20 Rockefeller Plaza

14-15 April, 10am-6pm

16 April 10am-2pm

Beijing

Great Hall, 2nd floor of Hotel, The St. Regis Building, 21 Jianguomenwai Dajie

21-22 April, 10am-6pm

Shanghai

The Peninsula, No. 32, The Bund, 32 Zhongshan Dong Yi Road

24-25 April, 10am-6pm

Christie's Hong Kong

22nd Floor, Alexandra House, 18 Chater Road, Central

27 April, 10am-6pm

28 April, 10am-5.30pm

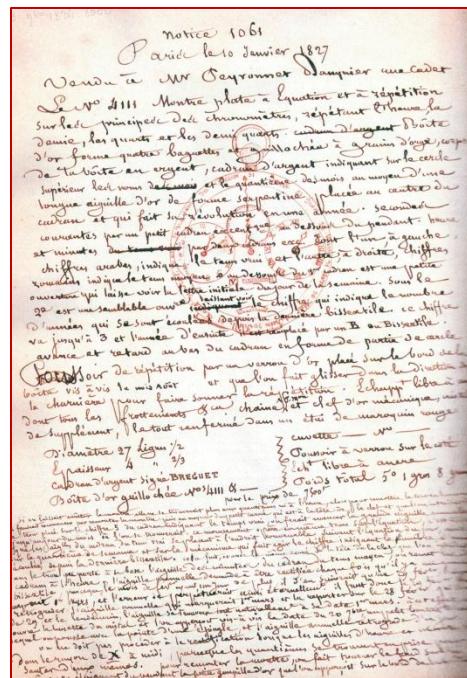
About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2011 that totaled £3.6 billion/\$5.7 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £502 million / \$808.6m in 2011, an increase of 44% on the previous year. Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.

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Images available on request
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