

CHRISTIE'S

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“L'AMOUR N'A PAS DE PRIX”

MASTERPIECES FORMERLY IN THE COLLECTION OF MONSIEUR AND MADAME RIAHI

AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON IN DECEMBER



London – It is with great pride that Christie's announces the second part of *Masterpieces Formerly in The Collection of Monsieur and Madame Riahi* will be auctioned in London on the evening of Thursday December 6, 2012; following the record breaking first sale in 2000, which realised \$40 million. The name Riahi is synonymous with French 18th century furniture and works of art; collecting and connoisseurship of the highest level; patronage and dedication to 'l'art français'. Comprising approximately 50 lots, the collection was formed over half a century by M. and Mme. Riahi with love, passion, a discerning eye and the belief that “*l'amour n'a pas de prix.*” M. Riahi believes that 18th century French decorative arts are one of the summits of human achievement; a moment of balance and perfection in design, materials and execution. Presenting the very best mid-18th century marquetry and lacquer furniture, unsurpassed both in quality and rarity, many items have Royal and illustrious provenances. The collection is expected to realise in excess of £20 million/\$32 million.

Charles Cator, Chairman, Furniture & Decorative Arts Department, Christie's International: “*We are thrilled to be entrusted with offering the second part of the Riahi Collection, which holds a legendary position among the great collections of French furniture. Assembled by a dedicated and passionate collector with an extraordinary vision and an instinctive understanding - who has inspired my admiration and respect over nearly 40 years of friendship and shared enthusiasm - I have never failed to be amazed by his unceasing quest for the most perfect examples of 18th century French decorative arts. Presenting the market with unique opportunities to acquire exceptionally rare pieces which are timeless, by master*

makers from Bernard II van Risenburgh and Joseph Baumhauer to Jean François Oeben and Robert-Joseph Auguste, it continues Christie's unrivalled tradition of being the auction house of choice for landmark sales of French decorative arts, including the Givenchy, Lagerfeld, Ojeh, Rothschild, Wildenstein and Champalimaud collections. Monsieur Riahi recognised the power of these perfect works; this power will enable them to speak to an international audience, inspiring both traditional and new collectors who appreciate masterpieces. Both the 2000 and 2012 auctions will be remembered as landmark sales of the early 21st century and in the history of collecting."

FURNITURE



Exceptional Louis XV lacquer furniture by **Bernard II van Risenburgh (BVRB)** is led by a magnificent ormolu-mounted Japanese lacquer secretaire-à-abattant, circa 1755 (estimate: £3,000,000 – 5,000,000, *illustrated left and page 1*). Displaying rich provenance - having almost certainly been formerly in the renowned collection of *Mme de Pompadour*, as recorded in Lazare Duvaux's journal of 19 February 1757 – it entered the collection of Dukes of Richmond at Goodwood House, Sussex in 1765, where it remained until 1993. Though one of a small group of secretaires made by BVRB with the same dimensions, overall form, mounts and marble top, the majority were executed in marquetry, as the use of lacquer panels was extremely expensive and thus extremely rare, and reserved only for the most prestigious clients. The only comparable secretaire is in the Royal Collection. Further examples of Louis XV lacquer furniture by BVRB include an exquisite and delicate bureau en pente and two commodes, one in Japanese, the other in Chinese lacquer.

M. Riahi's appreciation of the perfection found in the best Louis XV furniture is exemplified by a superb bureau plat by **Joseph Baumhauer**, circa 1765, combines panels of Japanese lacquer with tulipwood; its sinuous lines are a triumph of the Rococo (estimate: £2,000,000 - 3,000,000, *illustrated below*). One of the earliest acquisitions of the collection, having been bought in 1963, this bureau is extremely rare and possibly unique. Joseph Baumhauer, known simply as 'Joseph' to his contemporaries, specialised in the use of the richest materials in his creations – including delicate plaques of Sèvres porcelain, rich inlay of hardstones (*pietra dura*) and exotic panels of lacquer from China and Japan. He created a small number of bureaux, almost all of which incorporate porcelain plaques; the only other example known to include lacquer panels, as with the present example, is in the Louvre, though the panels are set against an ebonised ground.



Jean François Oeben was one of the greatest ébénistes in the reign of Louis XV and 'Ébéniste du Roi' from 1754 until his death in 1763. His distinctive individual style is characterised by its unparalleled pictorial marquetry and transitional forms. This late Louis XV ormolu-mounted amaranth and burr-walnut bibliothèque en commode by Oeben, circa 1760, is rare with only two examples known to exist: the current piece stamped by Oeben and its counterpart by Riesener who took over the

Oeben workshop after his death, (estimate: £1,500,000 – 2,500,000, *illustrated on page 2*). Oeben's oeuvre developed from full-blown rococo to a subtle transitional style or early neo-classicism around 1760; his marquetry furniture throughout his life gained him many followers.

SILVER

A lesser known part of the Riahi collection, the magnificent neo-classical silver provides the market with many exciting opportunities led by a pair of soup tureens, covers and stands by King Louis XVI of France's goldsmith **Robert-Joseph Auguste** (1723-1805) (estimate: £600,000 - £1 million, *illustrated right*). Auguste created the crown for the coronation of Louis XVI and also worked for Empress Catherine of Russia and King George III of Great Britain. He also supplied ambassadors such as Count Gustaf Philip Creutz (1731-1785), a Swedish diplomat and statesman who was Swedish Ambassador to Paris in the 1770s and Earl Harcourt, King George III's ambassador to the French Court.



ORMOLU-MOUNTED PORCELAIN



Among the important works of art featured there are some fine Chinese ceramics led by a pair of Louis XVI ormolu-mounted Chinese celadon porcelain Qianlong (1736-1795) vases, with early Neoclassical tortoise and triton mounts, emblematic of the sea-god Neptune. These beautiful vases form part of a small group of eight related vases whose mounts can be attributed to Pierre Gouthière and are possibly the pair that was owned by the painter François Boucher and sold in Paris on 18 February 1771 (estimate: £400,000 – 600,000, *illustrated left*). Separated at some point over the course of two hundred years, they were eventually re-united as a pair by M. and Mme. Riahi, having been bought separately, one in 1971 and the other in the late 1980s.

A further highlight is a Louis XV ormolu-mounted Chinese celadon porcelain pot-pourri vase and cover, Kangxi (1662-1722), with mounts dating to *circa* 1740 (estimate: £250,000 – 400,000, *illustrated right*). This unusual and unique little pot-pourri vase has a history that can be traced back to 1756, when it was sold from the collection of Marie Joseph d'Hostun, duc de Tallard, in a sale of his property that included one of the most important collections of porcelain formed in the 18th century. Many of the pieces in his collection came from the cabinet of the Dauphin, the son of Louis XIV, whose property was sold to different collectors after his death. It was bought at the duc de Tallard's sale by Honoré Camille Leonor Grimaldi, duc de Valentinois and Prince of Monaco (d. 1785), and subsequently sold in 1803. Its whereabouts were then unknown until it was sold from the collection of Mme Henry Farman in 1973 in Paris, when it entered the Riahi Collection.



Notes to Editors:

Christie's New York sale of *Magnificent French furniture, formerly from the Collection of Monsieur and Madame Riahi*, 2 November 2000, comprised 59 lots which attracted buyers from around the globe and realised \$40,324,200 (against a pre-sale estimate in excess of \$25 million), the highest total for a single-owner sale of French furniture at auction at the time; 10 lots fetched over \$1million and three world auction records were established.

THE MOST VALUABLE PRIVATE COLLECTION SOLD AT AUCTION

The Collection of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, 23 – 25 February 2009, Christie's Paris, realised £332.8 million / \$483.8 million, the world record for the most valuable private collection sold at auction.

THE TOP 3 MOST VALUABLE COLLECTIONS OF FRENCH FURNITURE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S

- 1 *The Collection of The Barons Nathaniel and Albert von Rothschild*, 8 July 1999, Christie's London, realised: £57,716,497/\$89,980,019.
- 2 *The Champalimaud Collection*, 6-7 July 2005, Christie's London, realised £38,968,460/\$68,452,825.
- 3 *Magnificent French Furniture, Formerly from the Collection of Monsieur and Madame Riahi*, 2 November 2000, Christie's New York, realised £27,809,793/ \$40,324,200.

THE TOP 3 PRICES FOR PIECES OF FRENCH FURNITURE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S

- 1 The Commode from the Bibliothèque of King Louis XVI at Versailles, A Royal Louis XVI ormolu-mounted amaranth, sycamore, mahogany, parquetry and marquetry commode by Jean-Henri Riesener, The Rothschild Collection, Christie's London, 8 July 1999, sold for £7,041,500/ \$10,984,740 against a pre-sale estimate of £1.5 – 2.5 million.
- 2 A Magnificent Louis XIV gilt-bronze and *pietra dura*-mounted brown tortoiseshell, ash, ebonised and parcel-gilt cabinet-on-stand, attributed to Domenico Cucci and the Gobelins Workshop, *circa* 1665-1675, Christie's London, 10 December 2009, sold for £4,521,250/ \$7,350,150 against a pre-sale estimate in excess of £4 million.
- 3 A Louis XVI ormolu-mounted ebony, Boule marquetry and *pietra dura* commode à encoignures stamped Martin Carlin and Adam Weisweiler, The Akram Ojeh Collection, Christies Monaco, 11-12 December 1999, sold for £4,414,851 / \$7,164,171/ Fr46,212,500 against a pre-sale estimate of Fr15,000,000-25,000,000.

WORLD AUCTION RECORD FOR ORMOLU-MOUNTED PORCELAIN

A set of four Empire ormolu-mounted Chinese porcelain baluster vases, the porcelain Jiaqing period (1796-1821), the mounts *circa* 1815, Christie's London, 7 July 2011, sold for £7,993,250/ \$12,757,227 against a pre-sale estimate of £600,000 - 1,000,000.

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