

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | THURSDAY, 1 AUGUST 2013

UNSEEN & UNTOUCHED FOR ALMOST HALF A CENTURY
CHRISTIE'S CELEBRATES
THE DISCERNING TASTE OF
PROFESSOR SIR ALBERT RICHARDSON, P.R.A.
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2013



London – Having remained unseen and untouched for almost half a century, Christie's is pleased to announce that *The Collection of Professor Sir Albert Richardson, P.R.A.* (1880-1964) - the celebrated collector, architect and President of the Royal Academy (1954-1956) - will be auctioned over two days in London on 18 and 19 September 2013. All great collections are exercises in creativity and self-expression, but rarely do they give such a vivid impression of the collector's discerning tastes, interests and idiosyncrasies as that formed by Professor Sir Albert Richardson. Providing a window into an older, more generous and civilised world, this collection is complete to its last detail, providing astonishing variety and a stark contrast to the frenetic pace of the modern world. The collection comprises around 650 lots and includes Old Master and British paintings, British watercolours and architectural drawings, English and European furniture, sculpture and objects, garden statuary, books, clocks, musical instruments and Georgian costume. In essence, the sale directly mirrors and celebrates the life and passions of Professor Sir Albert Richardson. The collection is expected to realise in excess of £4 million.

Simon Houfe, FSA: *“I have lived in my grandfather’s house for most of my life and for the last forty years have been the guardian of its history, traditions and collections, built up over a period of ninety-five years and more. I had intended that the house, grounds and art treasures should go to the nation, but seven long years of negotiations proved fruitless. So it was only with considerable reluctance and sadness that I decided to put the remarkable collection on the market in 2013, almost fifty years since Sir Albert Richardson’s death.”*

Orlando Rock, Deputy Chairman, Christie’s Europe and Head of Private Collections and Country House Sales: *“Christie’s is privileged to have been entrusted with the sale of Professor Sir Albert Richardson’s remarkable collection. The Professor surrounded himself with inspirational material – not only architectural drawings and folios, engravings and models, but also antiquities and casts, furniture and musical instruments – all of which embodied in some way his guiding principle of creative eclectic classicism. The taste is unified by recurrent themes – and these reflect the key strands of the Professor’s evolving tastes and career. Here lies the narrative of the sale and the story that needs to be told: The architect, ‘The Complete Georgian’, The father of the Regency revival, The Jockey Club and Sporting Pictures, Britain’s Naval Tradition, The Inspiration of the Past, The Bedfordshire Sketchbook, Betjeman and the Victorian Revival, Charles Wade and The Countryman Articles, The Musician, Country House discoveries and so on. These themes lie at the heart of the appeal of the collection and embody all that the Professor believed. Both amateur and aesthete, the Professor’s collection should be equally well recognised for its widespread educational influence as a crucible of new ideas. To a generation of scholars, its collections represented a glossary of taste, its library and architectural drawings a source of inspiration from the past, its embodiment of craftsmanship the touchstones for so many of the pioneering careers of historians of architecture and the decorative arts.*

This auction follows Christie’s rich history of offering the collections of Presidents of the Royal Academy, over almost 200 years, from Benjamin West (1820); Sir Thomas Lawrence (1830) and Sir Martin Archer Shee (1855); to Sir Francis Grant (1878); Lord Leighton (1896); Sir John Everett Millais (1897) and Sir Gerald Kelly (1980).”

THE ARCHITECT & ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Professor Sir Albert Richardson was one of Britain’s finest architects during the first half of the 20th century. His early commissions included the façade of the Regent Street Polytechnic and the New Theatre, Manchester. Prestigious post-war commissions included the Financial Times building in Cannon Street, which was the first post-war building in Britain to be listed; the AEI building in Grosvenor Place; various reconstruction projects as well as alterations at Woburn Abbey; and the restoration of the Assembly Rooms at Bath. Richardson was a dedicated student of Georgian architecture and a fluent and skillful draughtsman, obsessively recording the buildings he saw on his extensive travels. He also created *capriccios*



which he called his ‘Fantasies’ and were often based around a lost great building. Often produced during one intense sitting, works such as *A Fantasy of Kubla Khan’s Palace*, 1915, could take up to 15 hours to produce (estimate: £1,500-2,000, *illustrated left*). He was also a distinguished architectural historian, writing pioneering works such as *London Houses from 1660 to 1820*, a study of the capital’s elegant Georgian streets and squares, and the acclaimed *Monumental Classic Architecture in Great Britain and Ireland*.

By 1919 the combination of Richardson’s practical experience and architectural scholarship won him the chair of architecture at University College London; a post which he held for twenty-seven years, retiring as professor emeritus in 1946, an appointment which led to him being universally known as ‘The Professor.’ His influence and professional connections extended internationally, most notably to America. He was closely involved in the Colonial Williamsburg restoration project in 1929; he worked together with Edith Wharton’s architectural partner Ogden Codman on the preservation of the Beacon Hill houses in Boston; and was great friends with Fiske

Kimball, the great restorer at Montecello, the primary plantation of Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States.



Appropriately, the sale is led by a pair of magnificent lifesize lead busts of Andrea Palladio – the most recognised of all classical architects - and Inigo Jones – the first classical architect in Britain – after Michael Rysbrack, probably cast by John Cheere, *circa* 1740 (estimate: £400,000-600,000, *illustrated left and right*). They are associated with the marble busts by Rysbrack commissioned by Lord Burlington and today at Chatsworth. Rysbrack did not cast his own works but he is understood to have worked closely with those who did; in the case of the present lot the exceptional quality points to Cheere who dominated this market at the time.



Like the great architects who went before him, Richardson collected works by his peers and predecessors to aid his own work. He was one of the last who had the chance to equip himself with such valuable first-hand records of his artistic inheritance. The drawings which will be offered include *Design for a National Monument*, by Sir John Soane (1753-1837) (estimate: £6,000-10,000, *illustrated left*).

The Professor's books to be offered range from *The Works in Architecture*, London: 1778–1779 by Robert and James Adam, which was the finest architectural work of its time, and one of the most magnificent 18th century plate books; this first edition has an engraved allegorical frontispiece by Francesco Bartolozzi after Antonio Zucchi (estimate: £20,000–30,000). Other notable books include one of the most influential pattern books in the history of British architecture: *A Book of Architecture*, London, 1728, by James Gibbs (estimate: £1,500-2,000); and the Holland House copy of Fernando Ruggieri's magisterial epitome of Florentine architecture, *Scelta di architetture antiche e modern della citta di Firenze*, Florence, 1755 (estimate: £4,000-6,000).

Further lots directly linking to Richardson's primary passion include architectural models such as a remarkable Anglo-Indian carved ivory model of the Hazarduari Palace in Murshidabad, *circa* 1837, which the Professor bought for £50 in 1949 (estimate: £30,000-50,000, *illustrated above*). Hazarduari means 'the one with a thousand doors', although 900 of the 1,000 doors of the palace are actually false. It was built by Colonel Duncan Macleod of the Bengal Corps of Engineers during the reign of Mubarak Ali Khan, who is better known as Hamayun Jah (Nawab, ruler of Bengal). He ascended the throne of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa after the death of his father, Wala Jah, in 1824 and received the imperial title of Shuja-ul-Mulk, Ihtisham-ud-Daulla, Humayun Jah, Feroze Jang (Hero of the Country, Dignifier of the Country, of auspicious rank, Victor in War). An ivory miniature model of the palace was prepared by Colonel Duncan's assistant Sagore



Mistri as a gift to be sent from Hamayun Jah to King William IV, together with portraits of the Nawab and his son. The King acknowledges the receipt of the paintings and other gifts (probably including the palace) by letter and in appreciation honored the Nawab, with the badge and insignia of the Royal Guelphic and Hanoverian order and with the gift of a state portrait of himself. The King's gifts are still preserved in the Palace, which is now a museum, housing the Nawab

collections and under the control of the Archeological Survey of India. Another important architectural model is *the theatre of Herculaneum*, executed in plaster of Paris by Jean-Pierre and Francis Fouquet (estimate: £15,000-25,000, *illustrated page 3 left*).

THE COLLECTOR

Having been a keen collector from an early age, it was around 1919 that Richardson's collecting really gained momentum. He was active at an ideal moment: the opportunities, both in terms of cost and availability, which were open to a well-informed and by no means indigent collector, were such as someone with similar ambitions today can only dream of. Possessing the competitive nature of a true collector he often liked to hunt for treasures alone; foraging far and wide, from the local antique shops, to the grandest emporiums of London. Many treasures from the great country house sales of the time found their way into the Professor's collection via the network of dealers he frequented. Examples of such magnificent treasures include a set of four George III torchers, *circa* 1775, which come from the collection of Viscount Ullswater at The High House, Campse Ashe, Suffolk and may



have originally been commissioned by the 1st Earl of Lonsdale for Whitehaven Castle to designs by Robert Adam (estimate: £120,000-180,000, *illustrated left*) and four marble busts of emperors which were previously at Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire. One of the busts appears in a photograph of Wimpole's Entrance Hall in *Country Life* magazine in February 1908. It is likely they were part of a series of six busts listed in the inventory of the property of the late 3rd Earl of Hardwicke at Wimpole in 1835.

An eclectic, not a purist, Richardson approached collecting as an artist and scholar; how cleverly something was made and what it said about taste and social conditions of the era in question. Like Sir John Soane, the Professor surrounded himself with inspirational material. Each object epitomised both a love of craftsmanship and design, as well as curios, which could shed light on social history and long forgotten traditions. Professor Richardson's enthusiasm for the Georgian period extended well beyond the walls of his home and in the 1930s he was, on occasion, to be seen travelling the country roads near his home in a horse drawn carriage, or being carried through the streets in his sedan chair, always fully bedecked in Georgian attire.



The Professor's 18th century sedan chair reputed to have once belonged to the Dukes of Grafton, is included in the sale complete with poles, harness and clock (estimate: £2,000-3,000, *illustrated left*). A Victorian wrought iron-mounted scale model of a horse-trap boasts an adjustable seat, hinged tailboard and articulated brakes (estimate: £2,000-3,000, *illustrated above right*). The precise nature of the construction of this model would suggest that it was probably constructed as either an apprentice piece or as a salesman's sample.

He was keenly aware of associations and provenance, which provided a direct link to the past, such as that of a pair of Regency giltwood corner-brackets, *circa* 1800, which the Professor refers to in a 1954 diary entry as having originated from Carlton House, a provenance which is supported not only by their exemplary quality but also the apparent incorporation of the Prince of Wales's feathers in their design (estimate: £6,000-9,000). Other quirky examples include a white silk corsage coronation favor woven with metal thread for the coronation of George III framed with its original bill of purchase dated 17 September 1761 (estimate: £300-500, *illustrated right*).



Richardson had enormous fun with his collecting, which was a self-education, an endless source of pride and pleasure, also providing valuable material for the books and articles that he wrote. He once explained 'My house is my yardstick, it is the measuring-scale by which I contemplate the past and assess the future!'

Further highlights include:

PICTURES



The pictures in the collection express the taste and range of interests that made the Professor such an exceptional figure of his generation. Portraits were the mainstay of painting in Georgian England and one of the highlights of the collection is a half-length *Portrait of Countess Lucietta Memmo Mocenigo* by Angelica Kauffmann, R.A (1741-1807) (estimate: £150,000-250,000, *illustrated left*). This is a particularly fine example of Kauffmann's mature work, painted after her return to Italy and before her handling became looser. The Memmo and the Mocengio were among the major families of Venice. The pendant, of the younger sister, was acquired by the late Lord Faringdon (Faringdon Collection Trust, Buscot Park).

ANTIQUITIES



A Roman *carved marble group of Silenus riding on the back of a goat*, dating to 1st-2nd century A.D. is expected to realise between £80,000-120,000. Satyrs and silenoi – drunken men with goat-like features – were a vital part of the mythological procession of Dionysus, god of wine. Silenus, the wise companion and tutor of Dionysus, is often represented in art as an older satyr with a pot belly, carried by a goat or donkey to support him in his excessive drunkenness – much like the present statue. Such playful representations of satyrs proved a highly popular subject from Hellenistic age to the Roman Empire, as the experience of drinking wine and its effects continued to fascinate ancient society. The present statue was acquired in December 1764 by Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham from James ‘Athenian’ Stewart, and was subsequently installed in the long gallery at Wentworth Woodhouse. The statue remained in the famed collections at Wentworth until the contents of the house were sold in 1949 following the premature death of Peter Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, 8th Earl Fitzwilliam and was subsequently purchased by the Professor in York, 1951.

FURNITURE & WORKS OF ART



A pair of George III ormolu and white marble perfume-burners, circa 1771, by the celebrated 18th century English craftsman Matthew Boulton (estimate: £60,000-100,000). An almost identical pair was acquired by Catherine the Great of Russia in 1772. In 1771, she directed her Russian envoy to visit Boulton and Fothergill's manufactory and this was followed by a delivery of vases to the English envoy in Russia, destined for the Empress. Catherine the Great was reported, in 1772, to have commented that Boulton's ormolu vases were ‘superior to those of the French in all respects’. The Imperial perfume burners were subsequently sold by the Soviet government in 1929, as part of wider dispersal sales of imperial works of art to raise capital.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



A George III satinwood and mahogany pianoforte, circa 1786, is by John Joseph Merlin (1735-1803), a brilliant figure who would have appealed directly to the sensibilities of the Professor, ‘the complete Georgian’ (estimate: £30,000-50,000). ‘The ingenious mechanic’ arrived in England in 1760 and invented novelties ranging from inline skates, automata and the ‘Una Corda Pedal’ for pianos, as well as the celebrated James Cox ‘perpetual motion machine’. Joseph Merlin displayed his automata and instruments in Merlin's Museum at No.11, Princes Street, Hanover Square, one of the wonders of late 18th century London.

CHRISTIE'S
EDUCATION

Christie's Education will provide a companion course which will run alongside the sale of *The Collection of Professor Sir Albert Richardson, P.R.A.* Please click [here](#) for further information.

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