

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | SOUTH KENSINGTON  
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## ONE OF THE EARLIEST SURVIVING 'POCKET' CALCULATING MACHINES

A Precursor to the Modern Computer

To be Offered at Christie's in October



**South Kensington** - Christie's is honoured to present collectors with the opportunity to bid for an exceptionally rare *Arithmetical machine*. This 'pocket-sized' calculator, measuring 14.5 centimeters in width and 32.5 centimeters in length, is one of the earliest mechanical calculating devices known to exist and is the first portable device; only three other known examples of this design have survived. The French instrument by Parisian mechanic and watchmaker to *His Royal Highness King Louis XIV* – **René Grillet de Roven** dates from *circa* 1678 and will be offered in Christie's bi-annual sale of *Travel, Science and Natural History* auction on Thursday, 10 October 2013. The exceptional piece is expected to realise between £70,000 and £100,000.

**James Hyslop, Head of Travel, Science and Natural History, Christie's South Kensington** commented, "This pocket-sized calculator is one of the earliest surviving pieces in the history of the computer. Mechanical calculators date from the 1640s, but were big clunky brass machines. This small lightweight machine, based on Napier's logarithms was one of the earliest portable designs. I am proud to be presenting collectors with the opportunity to bid on such an exciting piece."

The calculating device, contained in a complete walnut wooden box, comprises twenty-four rotating dials arranged in three rows of eight located on the interior lid. Each wheel consists of several concentric circles, while the bottom of the box contains a set of rolling cylinders carrying logarithmic tables. The *Arithmetical machine* performs all the arithmetic operations including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division through the use of these rolling rotating Napier's bones.

Grillet exhibited his pocket sized machine during the 1670's and 1680's at markets and fairs throughout Paris and the Netherlands. The device is very rare to the market; with only three other known examples; two of these are in the Musée des Arts et Métiers, Paris and the other in the collections of IBM based in New York.

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The complete eCatalogue will be available to view online from September 2013 at [www.christies.com/calendar](http://www.christies.com/calendar)

### Public Exhibition:

Saturday 5 October: 11am-5pm

Sunday 6 October: 11am-5pm

Monday 7 October: 9am-7.30 pm

Tuesday 8 October: 9am-5pm

Wednesday 9 October: 9am-5pm

### Auction:

*Travel, Science and Natural History*

Thursday, 10 October 2013

10:30am & 2pm

### Christie's South Kensington

Open seven days a week, Christie's South Kensington is one of the busiest salerooms in the UK attracting over 200,000 visitors each year. With over 100 sales and offering more than 20,000 lots annually, estimates start from under £1,000. Interiors sales dedicated to home furnishings are held three times a month alongside regular Sunday sales of single-owner collections. Specialised sales for the avid collector are scheduled throughout the year according to category, and include Popular Culture Memorabilia, Vintage Couture, Islamic Art, Jewellery, 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Art and Chinese Works of Art, amongst others. In 2012 Christie's South Kensington realised the highest ever total for the third consecutive year with sales of £139.4 million / \$223.1 million having welcomed a 10% growth in registered bidders and a 20% increase (£ / \$) in total sales.

### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2013 that totaled £2.4 billion/ \$3.68 billion. In 2012, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. 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 £465.2 million (\$711.8 million) in the first half of 2013, an increase of 13% on the previous year, and for the third successive year represents the highest total for the period in both company and art market history.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. 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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