

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 22 MAY 2013

THE ULTIMATE LUXURY FOR COFFEE-LOVERS AROUND THE GLOBE

- The most important silver coffee-pot ever to come to auction
- Rococo masterpiece by the greatest silversmith working in Britain in the 18th century: Paul de Lamerie

London – With an estimated 1.6 billion cups of coffee being consumed worldwide each day, Christie's London is pleased to present the most important coffee-pot ever to come to the market in *The Exceptional Sale* on 4 July 2013 (estimate: £3.5 million – 4.5 million). This Rococo masterpiece by Paul de Lamerie (1688–1751) - the greatest silversmith working in Britain in the 18th century - is expected to become the most valuable piece of English silver ever to be sold at auction. The George II silver coffee-pot was created in 1738, for a successful merchant. This exceptional piece of craftsmanship has recently been the centerpiece of the British Silver exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Lamerie's works have been prized above all others for the last two hundred and fifty years. He was apprenticed to his fellow Huguenot Pierre Platel in 1703, becoming free of his master in 1711. Within six years he was described as the *King's Silversmith*. This coffee-pot is the masterpiece of de Lamerie's highly developed Rococo period and is a tour-de-force of design and execution.

The coffee pot was commissioned by London based trader and fellow Huguenot Sir John Lequesne. As a child, Lequesne came to Britain as a refugee with his younger brother, fleeing Rouen like so many of his fellow Protestants. It was arranged by their father that they would lodge with a Spanish merchant in London; the brothers would never see their father again, he died tragically from an illness after having been imprisoned for his beliefs. The Lequesne





brothers prospered; John became free of the Grocers' Company and David the Salters' Company. They later set up business together trading with the West Indies. John not only became an Alderman of the City but was also a director of the Bank of England, and was knighted by King George II in 1737. A successful marriage, bringing a dowry of £20,000, and an equally successful career enabled him to commission this most magnificent of coffee-pots from the greatest silversmith of the day. The coffee-pot, inspired by French forms and conceived in the new French Rococo style, speaks of his ancestry. Its presence in the ownership of a successful merchant epitomises the vibrancy of 18th century trade in London.

The first London coffee house was opened in 1652 by a member the English Levant company which traded with Turkey. Pasqua Roseé had served in Smyrna (now Izmir) and had acquired a taste for the dark stimulant drink. Coffee's many virtues, both real and imagined, were extolled by printed handbills; they also warned of a sleepless night if consumed too late. Each coffee house had its own particular clientele, some were literary, some political, others concerned with shipping and others finance. From the coffee house came the Gentleman's Clubs and City institutions such as the insurance market Lloyds of London. These unofficial meeting places were disapproved of by the establishment; King Charles II tried to censure them in 1675 to no avail.

By the 18th century the practice had acquired polite acceptance and coffee was being consumed at home from silver and porcelain pots. It was usually served black and from long spouted vessels. There was also a fashion for taking it in the Turkish manner, with large quantities of sugar syrup used in the preparation. Contemporary accounts survive for 'Turkey Coffee Pots' with short spouts, as used by Lamerie for the present coffee pot; the short spout meant viscous liquid flowed freely.



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PUBLIC EXHIBITION:

HONG KONG:

Thursday, 23 May 2013: 10:30 am – 6:00 pm
Friday, 24 May 2013: 10:30 am – 6:00 pm
Saturday, 25 May 2013: 10:30 am – 6:00 pm
Sunday, 26 May 2013: 10:30 am – 6:30 pm
Monday, 27 May 2013: 10:30 am – 6:30 pm
Tuesday, 28 May 2013: 10:30 am – 6:30 pm

LONDON:

Friday, 28 June 2013: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday, 29 June 2013: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Sunday, 30 June 2013: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Monday, 1 July 2013: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm
Tuesday, 2 July 2013: 9:00 am – 3:30 pm
Wednesday, 3 July 2013: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm
Thursday, 4 July: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

AUCTION:

The Exceptional Sale
Christie's London
Thursday, 4 July 2013
19:00

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2012 that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 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 £631.3 million/\$1 billion in 2012, an increase of 26% on the same period last 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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