

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S ANNOUNCES CENTERPIECE OF THE *RENAISSANCE* SALE DURING OLD MASTERS WEEK IN NEW YORK:

'*THE ROTHSCHILD PRAYERBOOK*'

MAGNIFICENT MASTERPIECE OF RENAISSANCE ART AND
HOLDER OF THE WORLD AUCTION RECORD FOR AN ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT



New York - Christie's is pleased to announce the centerpiece of its *Renaissance* sale during Old Masters Week in January 2014 will be "The Rothschild Prayerbook," a magnificent masterpiece of Renaissance art with an illustrious provenance. Returning to the global stage after setting the world auction record for illuminated manuscripts nearly 15 years ago at Christie's London, the prayerbook contains lavish and extensive illustrations by the most renowned illuminators of their day, including miniatures of unsurpassed beauty and refined execution. Perhaps the finest illuminated manuscript in private hands, it is expected to inspire fierce competition, with an estimate of \$12,000,000-\$18,000,000. It is scheduled for a world exhibition tour to Moscow, Hong Kong and London before it is offered for sale at Christie's Rockefeller Center saleroom on January 29, 2014.

Made for a member of the imperial court in the Netherlands c. 1505, this hand-painted manuscript, a Book of Hours, joined the fabled collections of the Rothschild family in the 19th century. In 1999, when the Collection of the Barons Nathaniel and Albert von Rothschild was entrusted to Christie's in London, the Rothschild Prayerbook sold for \$13,378,558, both a world record for its category and the highest price of all the works in the renowned collection. This prayerbook is one of the highest achievements of Flemish Renaissance painting with 150 pages and miniatures and

borders of superlative quality by Gerard Horenbout, Simon Bening and the Master of the Older Prayerbook of Maximilian I probably Alexander Bening, the father of Simon. One exquisite miniature, the Virgin and Child on a Crescent Moon (illustrated below, right), is accepted as one of a select group of illuminations by the painter Gerard David.

Nicholas Hall, International Co-Chairman of Old Masters & 19th-Century Art, comments: “Every aspect of this Book of Hours – from the quality of the parchment to the wealth and refinement of the decoration – marks the Rothschild Prayerbook as one of the most prestigious and exquisite examples of Flemish manuscript illumination. Christie’s is honored to be entrusted with its sale for the second time in a generation. We are excited to include it as the centerpiece of a global tour of highlights from our Old Masters Week, giving collectors around the world an opportunity to see this beautifully rendered and remarkably well-preserved work.”

This Book of Hours is one of a group of spectacular *manuscripts-de-luxe* that was produced around 1490 to 1520 for an international clientele and members of the Habsburg court in the Netherlands. These vast undertakings were achieved by the efficient coordination of labor and collaboration of several artists and their workshops. It is closely related to a Book of Hours in the British Library, the Spinola Hours (now at the J. Paul Getty Museum) and the Grimani Breviary (now in Venice, at the Bibl. Marciana). With the Rothschild Prayerbook, these are the most impressive productions of the illuminator Gerard Horenbout, who became court painter to Margaret of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands, in 1515, before relocating to England to work for King Henry VIII. As well as painting and illuminating, he designed tapestries and stained glass.



The illuminated openings, where a miniature faces a complementary full-page border, are some of Horenbout’s most exceptional creations. These scenes are thoughtfully devised and precisely observed, and they provide a fascinating record of liturgical practices of the day and they are some of the finest and most remarkable of all Flemish miniatures. The description of the fabrics of the vestments, the integration of figures in architectural space, and the extensive and atmospheric recession are evoked with a detailed delicacy and a bravura naturalism.



One of the beguiling features of the Prayerbook is the wide variety in the decorative borders. Many of them, as well as further miniatures, recognizably belong to the repertoire of the illuminator long-known as the Master of the Older Prayerbook of Maximilian, who is now generally accepted as being Alexander Bening, friend of Hugo van der Goes and Joos van Ghent. Alexander’s son also contributed miniatures to the Prayerbook, including the Vision of St Bernard (illustrated top of page). The delicacy and elegance of this scene and the subtlety of handling in the modeling of the flesh and the description of fabric and form demonstrate why Simon went on to become the most celebrated illuminator of his day.

Several miniatures were painted by the anonymous artist known as the Master of the Prayerbooks of c.1500. This illuminator is particularly valued for his delightful secular work, above all in the *Roman de la Rose* in the British Library. In the Rothschild Prayerbook he was responsible for some miniatures in the Office of the Virgin, including the Nativity on one of the most colorful and engaging openings where the borders around miniature and text are used to show other episodes from the Christmas story with the lively addition of the scene of joyful, dancing shepherds (illustrated above).

Christie's *Renaissance* sale debuted last year during Old Masters Week as a curated sale devoted to the artistic traditions that flourished in Europe from 1300 to 1600. *Renaissance* celebrates the golden age that produced some of the most extraordinary innovations in poetry, music and literature, painting, sculpture, and architecture. The sale will feature a select group of paintings, works on paper and other media from some of the greatest masters of the era who were active throughout Europe.

The Rothschild Prayerbook and additional select highlights from *Renaissance* will be included in a global tour to:

Christie's Moscow | November 6-10
Christie's Hong Kong | November 20-25
Christie's London | November 29-December 2
Christie's New York | January 25-28

More details on Christie's Old Masters Week, including *Renaissance*, will be available at a later date.



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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, reached a total of £2.4 billion/\$3.68 billion in global auction and private sales in the first six months of 2013. In 2012, global auction and private sales totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion, marking the highest annual revenue ever reached by Christie's. 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, jewelry, photography, 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 an emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewelry. Global private sales totaled £465 million/\$711 million in the first half year of 2013, an increase of 13% from the same period last year, breaking the sales record of half year private sales for Christie's and the art market for three consecutive years.

Christie's has a global presence of 53 offices in 32 countries and 11 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Christie's has recently led in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and The United Arab Emirates, with successful sales, exhibitions and initiatives held in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

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