

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON

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## THE OPULENT EYE

IMPORTANT 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DECORATIVE ARTS  
AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON - 6 MARCH 2014

*An exceptional gilt-bronze mirror by Ferdinand Barbedienne - a rediscovered 'art-case' piano by François Linke -*

*A Private Monaco Collection - The Property of a Lady from a Noble Italian Palazzo -*

*Joséphine Baker's piano & bed from the Château des Milandes*



**London** – On 6 March 2014 Christie's sale of *The Opuient Eye* will offer furniture, sculpture and works of art from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sale reflects the eclectic and opulent styles of the period from the regal grandeur of Napoleon's Empire to the Art Nouveau of Belle époque Paris. The sale is led by an exceptional French gilt-bronze mirror designed by the sculptor Albert-Ernest Carrier Belleuse and made by the *bronzier* Ferdinand Barbedienne (estimate: £100,000-150,000, *illustrated above*). An important discovery from a Private Monaco Collection, the mirror stands 2 meters high and is sculpted with foliate scrolls and figures emblematic of fortune. Only two other examples of the mirror are known: one in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, the other in the Bowes Museum, Co. Durham.

Further highlights include a monumental Napoleon III commode, attributed to the Grohé Frères (estimate: £150,000-250,000, *illustrated right*). The commode is veneered in pictorial marquetry and applied with finely cast mounts is a celebration of Minerva, goddess of Wisdom.



The sale also features an important rediscovery of a Bechstein grand piano with art-case by François Linke, the most important *ébéniste* of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which was thought lost until recently being rediscovered at Pineheath

House, Harrogate, in a collection created by Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji in the 1920s. Part of one of Linke's most important commissions, the piano was originally supplied to Elias Meyer at 16 Grosvenor Square London in 1909. With only two owners since new, the piano is offered here for the first time at auction and is a major addition to the inventory of important known pieces by Linke (estimate: £100,000-200,000, *illustrated previous page*).



The selection of fine 19<sup>th</sup> century bronze and marble sculpture offered within the sale is led by this Florentine marble of *Leda and the Swan* expertly carved in *contrapposto* from a single block of Carrera marble by Vittorio Caradossi, (estimate: £80,000-120,000, *illustrated right*).



The auction also features a 22 lot collection, The Property of a Lady from a Noble Italian Palazzo, of ornate Italian neo-rococo furniture, (*interior illustrated left*). The collection was formed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the unification of Italy inspired a new nationalist aesthetic in celebration of the glory of the Kingdom of Italy. This was a more florid, uniquely Italian, interpretation of the international beaux-arts style, which was fashionable from Belle époque Paris to Gilded Age America and was based on a revival of art from France's *ancien*

*régime*.

*The Opulent Eye* will offer furniture once owned by spectacular performer and jazz age diva Joséphine Baker. Born in the slums of St. Louis in 1906, Joséphine Baker rose to fame during that city's *Roaring Twenties* becoming the highest-paid chorus girl in vaudeville. She travelled to Paris in 1925 where her sensual *La Danse de Sauvage* sensationalized society. Baker was the first African-American actress to star in a major motion picture and was the most successful entertainer working in France at the time. The



piano (estimate: £30,000 – 40,000, illustrated right) and the Louis XVI style giltwood bed (estimate: £4,000 – 6,000, illustrated left) were

in Joséphine Baker's French home, the Château des Milandes in the Dordogne where she lived with her fourth husband, the French composer Jo Bouillon whom she married in June 1947, and where she raised her twelve adopted children.

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**PUBLIC EXHIBITION:**

Sunday, 2 March 2014: 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm  
Monday, 3 March 2014: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm  
Tuesday, 4 March 2014: 9:00 am – 8:00 pm  
Wednesday, 5 March 2014: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

**AUCTION:**

*The Opulent Eye*  
Thursday, 6 March 2014  
11:00 am

## About Christie's

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*\*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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