

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S LONDON RUSSIAN ART SALE LED BY TWO EXCEPTIONAL PAINTINGS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE FRANCES LEHMAN LOEB ART CENTER, VASSAR COLLEGE BY RUSSIAN MASTER VASILY VERESHCHAGIN



Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904)
The Pearl Mosque at Agra
oil on canvas 150 x 200.7 cm
Painted in the late 1870s/early 1880s
Estimate: £1,000,000-£1,500,000



Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904)
The Portico of a 17th Century Church in Yaroslavl
oil on canvas, 43.1 x 58.4 cm
Painted circa 1894
Estimate: £300,000-500,000

London – Christie's Russian Art sale in London on 2 June will present two masterpieces by Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904), *The Pearl Mosque at Agra* (estimate: £1,000,000-£1,500,000) and *The Portico of a 17th Century Church in Yaroslavl* (estimate: £300,000-500,000), which will be sold to benefit the acquisitions fund of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College in New York. These iconic subjects by the great Russian master have not appeared at auction in more than 95 years and will present an exciting opportunity for collectors. The paintings will be on public exhibition at Christie's New York for a limited engagement during the Russian Works of Art preview exhibition April 5-8, before the London sale.

James Mundy, Director of Vassar College's Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, comments:

"From a founding collection of slightly over 3,000 objects, mostly American Painting and European works on paper, Vassar College's collection has now grown to over 19,000 works of art representing the history of art in the West from Egyptian antiquity to Twenty-first century photography. As part of a program of responsible collections management, the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, like many art museums, periodically reviews its holdings to identify works that, because of their relevance to the program, condition, or redundancy, can be converted into acquisitions of greater potential to the academic mission of the college. The conversion into funds of

these two significant works by Vereshchagin for the acquisition of future works will continue the legacy of the institution, which has served as one of the most prestigious art history curricula in the United States for a century and a half, and will continue to carry the credit line of the original donors and, therefore, fulfil to a greater degree the donors' original philanthropy."

Alexis de Tiesenhausen, International Head of Christie's Russian Art Department comments:

*"We eagerly look forward to presenting *The Pearl Mosque at Agra* and *The Portico of a 17th Century Church in Yaroslavl* to an international audience in one of Christie's most important sales of the season. Last exhibited in New York in 1916 and 1891 respectively, Christie's is honoured to be able to exhibit these important Russian paintings in both New York and London alongside other major Russian works of art."*

In 1874 Vasily Vereshchagin forsook his native land for India, where he was to remain for almost two years gathering ethnographic materials to colour an intended series of paintings devoted to the region. The resulting works inspired by his time abroad are extraordinarily beautiful and accomplished. The magnificent *The Pearl Mosque in Agra* was painted in his customised Parisian studio in the late 1870s or early 1880s. Visually stunning, a soft light illuminating the architectural details of the structure, Vereshchagin was understandably drawn to this magnificent building, writing in 1891: 'I like the Moslem mosques: the prayer is simple and not less solemn than that of the Christians; but the deity is not represented there isn't any painted or sculptured form. You may feel that God is present at your prayer, but where is He? – it is left to your soul to discover it.'

From 1887-1894, Vasily Vereshchagin travelled extensively in Russia, visiting Yaroslavl, Rostov, Kostroma and Makarev. *The Portico of a 17th Century Church in Yaroslavl* is a particularly fine example of the works Vereshchagin painted at this time, the evocative shadowy interior so familiar it is almost accompanied by the associated scents and sounds. Born in Cherepovets, the son of a relatively prosperous landowner, Vereshchagin never showed any inclination to curry the favour of the rich and the famous; in 1895 he published an illustrated biography of ordinary Russian people which reproduced images of real people accompanied by stories of their experiences and difficulties. As the *New York Times* suggested on 10 December 1888, "Vereshchagin 'preaches with his brush the doctrines Tolstoy propagated with his pen.'"

Both *The Pearl Mosque at Agra* and *The Portico of a 17th Century Church in Yaroslavl* were exhibited at the American Art galleries in New York in November 1888. On view in New York for two months, Vereshchagin's American art show was a phenomenal success. Five thousand invitations were sent out for the opening. The galleries were decorated in exotic fabrics, Oriental rugs, and artefacts collected by the artist during his travels. From New York the exhibition travelled to Chicago, St Louis, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston, attended by thousands of visitors while garnering extensive press coverage. When the tour ended in 1891, the works returned to New York City, where on the evening of 17 November the entire collection of 110 paintings were sold.

The Portico of a 17th Century Church in Yaroslavl was acquired at that sale by E. M. Colie, and the painting remained in the family until it was gifted to Vassar College in 1981. *The Pearl Mosque at Agra* was sold in 1891 and acquired a year later by Catholina Lambert, whose renowned collection would later be offered for sale during a three-day period at the Plaza Hotel in 1916. The work was then acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Thompson, who in turn gifted it to Vassar that same year.

Notes to Editors:

PUBLIC VIEWING IN NEW YORK:

Saturday 5 April 12.00am-4.30pm
Sunday 6 April 12.00am-4.30pm
Monday 7 April 9.00-5.00pm
Tuesday 8 April 9.00am-5.00pm

PUBLIC EXHIBITION IN LONDON:

Friday 30 May 9.00 am-4.30 pm
Saturday 31 May 12.00 pm-5.00 pm
Sunday 1 June 12.00 pm-5.00 pm

AUCTION IN LONDON:

Russian Art
2 June 2014
10:30

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2013 that totaled £4.5 billion/ \$7.1 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 around 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 & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £760.5 million (\$1.19 billion) in 2013, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

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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