

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, 30 April 2015

## SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE OF RUSSBOROUGH, IRELAND

The Alfred Beit Foundation will offer  
A Small Group of Carefully Selected Old Master Paintings by  
Rubens, Adriaen van Ostade, David Teniers the Younger & Francesco Guardi  
AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON IN JULY



**London** – Christie's is proud to have been entrusted with the sale of a small group of carefully selected Old Master paintings from *The Alfred Beit Foundation* which will be sold at auction in the London **Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale** on 9 July. The works are being sold by the foundation in order to set up an endowment fund which is necessary to safeguard the long term future of Russborough, one of the greatest Georgian houses in Ireland, which was gifted by the Beit family to *The Alfred Beit Foundation* in 1976. Built almost 300 years ago, Russborough is in continuing need of restoration and improvements to the main house, wings & colonnades; outbuildings; estate grounds; walkways; water features; historical features; and visitors facilities. The Beit name is synonymous with the remarkable connoisseurship of successive generations of the Beit family, from Alfred Beit (1853-1906) and his brother Sir Otto (1865-1930), to Sir Alfred Lane Beit (1903-1994) who acquired Russborough in 1952 as a splendid home for him and his wife Clementine and their extraordinary collection. In 1986 they made one of the most generous philanthropic gifts in the arts to Ireland, in giving many of the most celebrated pictures from the Beit Collection to the **National Gallery of Ireland**. These included masterpieces by Vermeer, Gabriel Metsu, Jacob van Ruisdael, Goya and Gainsborough amongst others. This donation transformed the Gallery's collection of Old Master Paintings and a wing of the Gallery was fittingly named 'The Beit Wing' in recognition of this remarkable gift.

The group of paintings that will be auctioned is led by two magnificent works on panel by **Sir Peter Paul Rubens**, *Head of a bearded man* (estimate: £2-3 million) and *Venus and Jupiter* (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million). The group also includes one of the most celebrated *Kermesse* scenes by **David Teniers the Younger** (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million), a rare religious work by **Adriaen van Ostade**, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (estimate: £600,000-800,000), and a pair of Venetian views by **Francesco Guardi** (estimate: £300,000-500,000). A selection of highlights from the group will go on view in pre-sale exhibitions at Christie's in New York from 2 May to 12 May, followed by London (28 May to 1 June), Hong Kong (28 May to 1 June) and London in June and July.

**Judith Woodworth, Chair of The Alfred Beit Foundation:** *“The Alfred Beit Foundation is committed to safeguarding the long term future of Russborough, as was the wish of the Beits when they entrusted the Foundation with their magnificent home in 1976. Built almost 300 years ago, Russborough is now in urgent need of ongoing major restoration, maintenance and improvements. In order to fulfil our responsibility to the Beit legacy, the endowment fund which will be established with the proceeds raised by selling this small and very carefully selected group of paintings is an absolute necessity. The roofs, stonework and electrical and heating systems need attention; the interiors require refurbishment and conservation to preserve the delicate stucco and wood work of outstanding Irish craftsmen, as well as a conservation programme for the magnificent artworks and furniture. Throughout the 200 acre parkland, restoration is planned for the walled garden and terraces dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as well as ongoing development and replanting of the woodland areas throughout the demesne. Additionally the facilities for visitors need upgrading to reflect Russborough's claim to be one of the finest 18<sup>th</sup> century houses in Ireland open to the public.*

*Following four separate notorious thefts over a period of four decades, in the 1970s, 80s and early 2000s, six of the eight lots being auctioned have not been on view or even in storage at the house for many years due to security concerns. Against the backdrop of Sir Alfred Lane Beit's extensive philanthropic gifts of many of the most celebrated pictures in the collection to the National Gallery of Ireland, the sale of these works will ensure the next chapter of this great house for the continued enjoyment, education and appreciation of current and future generations.”*

**Henry Pettifer, Head of Old Masters and British Paintings, Christie's London:** *“We are delighted to have been entrusted with the sale of such a rich group of Old Master Paintings from the celebrated collection formed by Alfred Beit and his brother Sir Otto Beit. This historic collection is especially noted for its outstanding Dutch and Flemish pictures, and this auction will include two spirited oil studies by the most important artist of the northern baroque – Rubens; a masterpiece by David Teniers the Younger; and a rare Adoration of the Shepherds by Adriaen van Ostade. The sale of these paintings will provide today's buyers with the chance to acquire works from one of Europe's most famous private collections”.*

## RUBENS



The works being offered are led by two superb studies by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, one of the greatest geniuses of the Baroque. Executed with exceptional verve and sensitivity, the *Head of a bearded man, in three-quarter-profile*, is an outstanding example of Rubens's *ad vivum* portraits (estimate: £2-3 million, *illustrated left*). Painted *circa* 1620 on a composite panel, which was typical for studies of this type, it shows the artist's remarkable skill in modelling features and expressing character with a singular spontaneity and bravura.

The second of the studies, painted on a similar scale but completed at a slightly earlier date, is a beautiful *modello* for *Venus and Jupiter*, demonstrating Rubens's masterful delicacy of touch and fluency in execution (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million, *illustrated right*). Illustrating a story from the first book of the Aeneid, it forms part of a series on the story of Aeneas that Rubens began at some point after 1602. The picture has a particularly distinguished provenance prior to entering the Beit Collection: it formed part of the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds, before being sold in the Reynolds sale at Christie's in March 1795, and later passing to the Earls of Darnley at Cobham Hall, who owned masterpieces by Titian and Veronese.



### DAVID TENIERS THE YOUNGER

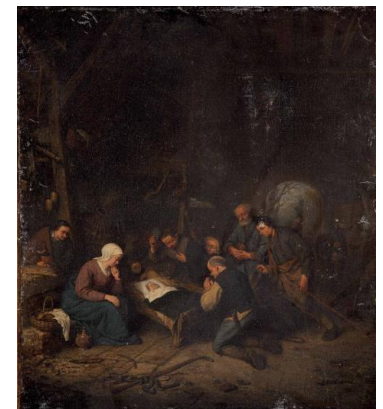


The Beit *Kermesse* by David Teniers the Younger has long been heralded as one of the jewels in his *oeuvre* (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million, *illustrated left*). Dating to the 1640s, when he was at the peak of his fame, it is one of the most successful treatments of the artist's most popular subject, and the only one to be painted on copper. Populated with a great array of characters, it excels in its depiction of anecdotal detail and incident. Its enormous appeal is evident in its stellar provenance, passing successively through some of the greatest French Old Master collections of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the

Marquis de Brunoy, to Antoine Dutarte, Lucien Bonaparte and the Comte de Pourtales, prior to being acquired by Alfred Beit (1853-1906) in 1895.

### ADRIAEN VAN OSTADE

Adriaen van Ostade's small scale and wonderfully intimate *Adoration of the Shepherds* was executed at the very height of his career in 1667 (estimate: £600,000-800,000, *illustrated right*). It is exceptional in the *oeuvre* of the artist, being a rare staging of a religious subject, where genre scenes otherwise dominate. It was exhibited in the renowned *Art Treasures* exhibition in Manchester in 1857, and it too has fine provenance, having once been part of the collection of the Hesse-Kassels, one of Germany's most prominent families, before being owned by Empress Josephine. This work, like that by Teniers the Younger, was purchased by Alfred Beit (1853-1906) in 1895.



### FRANCESCO GUARDI



Dating to Francesco Guardi's full maturity, the pair of Venetian views are a spirited and characteristically atmospheric treatment of one of Guardi's most popular and enduring pairings, showing two of the most celebrated sights of Venice: the Piazza San Marco looking towards the Basilica, and the Piazzetta, flanked by two of the great secular buildings of the city, the medieval Doges' Palace on the left and Sansovino's Libreria on the right (estimate: £300,000-500,000, *illustrated page 3*). Painted in afternoon light, on a small format, they are fine examples of Guardi's late work.

### **Notes to Editors:**

In addition to the Old Master Paintings being sold there are three further lots also being sold from the Alfred Beit Foundation in order to set up an endowment fund to safeguard the future of Russborough:

>Francois Boucher: *Aurore et Amour tenant une torche* (estimate: £30,000-50,000) in *Old Master Drawings*, 7 July 2015

>John Atkinson Grimshaw: *Two views of Yew Court, Scalby, Scarborough* (a pair) (estimate: £50,000-70,000 each) in *Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite and British Impressionist Art*, 16 June 2015.

### **About the Alfred Beit Foundation**

The Alfred Beit Foundation is a charitable trust that owns and operates Russborough and demesne in County Wicklow, Ireland. The Alfred Beit Foundation was established by Sir Alfred and Lady Beit in 1976 with the object of promoting education in the fine arts in Ireland. With a view to securing the future of Russborough, the house and demesne were gifted to the Foundation by the Beits, along with many of its contents. In 1978 the Foundation opened Russborough to the public for guided tours which have attracted over 1 million visitors to date. The Foundation is run by a committee of management which includes nominees from various national organisations including the Royal Dublin Society; University College Dublin; Trinity College Dublin, The Irish Georgian Society; The National Gallery of Ireland and An Taisce. The Alfred Beit Foundation is a company limited by guarantee, which was incorporated in March 1976, with charitable status granted under reference number CHY 5940.

**Contact:** Eric Blatchford, CEO, Alfred Beit Foundation/ email: [eric@russborough.ie](mailto:eric@russborough.ie) / tel. no (+353) 045-865239

### **About Russborough**

Located near Blessington in County Wicklow, Russborough was built in the 1740s by Joseph Leeson, a wealthy Dublin brewer, to designs by Richard Castle. As Castle's masterpiece it represents one of the most architecturally significant neo Palladian buildings in Ireland. Leeson, later 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Milltown, embarked on two extensive Grand Tours to Italy, commissioning and acquiring Florentine paintings, classical statuary, and splendid rococo gilt furniture, all to adorn the house and complement its decoration by the great Swiss-Italian stuccadores the Lafranchini brothers. The Milltowns remained at Russborough until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the last Countess donated its contents to the National Gallery of Ireland. The house passed to a nephew of the 4th Earl of Milltown, Edmund Turton, whose widow later sold it to the Daly family. It was purchased in 1952 by [Sir Alfred and Lady Beit](#), who installed the family's internationally acclaimed art collection, comprising works by artists such as Murillo, Vermeer and Velázquez. Several well publicized [robberies](#) did not deter the Beits from two extraordinary acts of generosity to the benefit of the Irish people. Major works of art were donated to the National Gallery of Ireland, while the house and its important collection were passed to the Alfred Beit Foundation. Russborough is now open to the public.

**Russborough: A Great Irish House, its Families and Collections** tells the remarkable story of Russborough: one of Ireland's truly great houses. It is the most detailed study of an Irish country house attempted to-date and draws on extensive new research and discoveries. By William Laffan and Kevin V. Mulligan

[Russboroughhouse.ie](http://Russboroughhouse.ie)

### **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 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 totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion) in 2014, an increase of 20% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 54 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong and the latest additions 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.*