

# CHRISTIE'S

MEDIA ALERT | LONDON  
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## TWO 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BRONZE MASTERPIECES FROM 'THE COURT OF THE SUN KING' LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE



**London** – From the Court of King Louis XIV of France, the ‘Sun King’, Christie’s announces two of the most significant sculptures to come to the market in recent years. A unique rediscovered masterpiece by Louis XIV’s Royal sculptor François Girardon, *Louis XIV on Horseback*, Paris, circa 1690-1699, is believed to be the lost sculpture from the artist’s own collection, depicted in the famous engraving of the *Galerie de Girardon* (estimate: £7-10 million, *illustrated right*).



*Hercules Overcoming Acheloüs*, circa 1640-50 by Florentine sculptor Ferdinando Tacca (1619-1686), was a gift from Louis XIV to his son, the Grand Dauphin, in 1681, remaining in the Royal collection until the Revolution (estimate on request: in the region of £5 million, *illustrated left*). Both works attest to the significance of Louis XIV as a connoisseur collector, celebrating the very best art from France and beyond. The works will go on view at Christie’s New York in April (the Girardon now until 20 April and both works together from 28 April to 9 May); Hong Kong (24 to 28 May) and London (30 June to 4 July), ahead of being sold in the London *Exceptional Sale* on 5 July during *Classic Week*, in July 2018.

**Donald Johnston, International Head of European Sculpture at Christie’s**, notes: “Not since the record breaking sale of the bronze figure by Adriaen de Vries have works of this extraordinary calibre and rarity come to the market. Directly associated with the Court of the Sun King, offering these two works marks a unique opportunity for international collectors and institutions and an historic moment for Christie’s.”

**A grand and magisterial masterpiece of design and finish, by the finest sculptor of the age, *Louis XIV on Horseback* reflects the power of the Sun King at the height of his reign.** The present work is a unique reduction of the original monument, with the King’s hand raised, holding a baton. It is the only example in private hands, with the three other surviving reductions having entered the British Royal Collection



(Windsor Castle, London), Russian Royal Collection (now Hermitage, St Petersburg), and French Royal Collection (now Louvre, Paris). Commissioned for the newly created Place Louis-le-Grand (now Place Vendôme), the monument was a symbol of royal power and absolute authority until it was destroyed in the Revolution.



**Dynamic and timeless, *Hercules Overcoming Acheloüs* by Ferdinando Tacca represents a high point of Florentine seventeenth century bronze casting.** The only example in private hands, Hercules is depicted in a ferocious battle against the god Acheloüs, who is transformed into a bull. A superb feat of compositional bravado, technical brilliance and overpowering force, it was given by Louis XIV of France to his son in 1681. The present bronze remained in the French Royal Collection until the Revolution.

The only other known cast of *Hercules Overcoming Acheloüs* is in the Wallace Collection, London. Scholar Jeremy Warren has noted that the present cast is a technical advancement on the Wallace cast; the finishing is of a higher quality and the composition is more harmonious.

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*Images available on request*

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