

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | NEW YORK | SEPTEMBER 17, 2018

CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER A 3,000-YEAR-OLD ASSYRIAN RELIEF OF A WINGED GENIUS FROM THE PALACE OF ASHURNASIRPAL II

- FINEST EXAMPLE OF ASSYRIAN ART TO COME TO MARKET IN DECADES
- ONE OF THE EARLIEST WORKS OF ANCIENT ART SENT TO AMERICA IN 1859
- SOLD BY THE VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY TO UNDERWRITE A SCHOLARSHIP FUND



An Assyrian gypsum relief of a Winged Genius.
Reign of Ashurnasirpal II, circa 883-859 BC.
7 ft 4 in x 6 ft 5 in (223.5 x 195.5 cm). Estimate on request.

New York – Christie's announces an important Assyrian relief will highlight the Antiquities sale on 31 October at Christie's in New York as part of Classic Week (estimate on request). The finest example of Assyrian art to come to the market in decades, the work will be sold on behalf of the Virginia Theological Seminary to underwrite a scholarship fund.

According to **G. Max Bernheimer, International Department Head of Antiquities**, *"This Assyrian relief is without question the most exquisite to come to the market in more than a generation, in terms of the style, condition and subject. The last example, sold by Christie's London, was the Canford School relief which depicted two figures that were only preserved from the waist up, while here we have a complete figure, perfectly-preserved from head to toe. The Canford School relief set a world-record in 1994 when it sold for nearly \$12 million. The Virginia Theological Seminary acquired this relief through the American missionary Dr. Henri Byron Haskell (1781-1864) in 1859, who*

bought it directly from Sir Austen Henry Layard, the excavator of the royal palace at Nimrud. The relief arrived in Alexandria in 1860, making it one of the earliest-known examples of ancient art to reach American soil."

The imposing large-scale Assyrian gypsum stone relief is over 7 feet tall and once adorned the walls of the massive Northwest Palace commissioned by King Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) at Nimrud in modern-day Iraq. The royal palace was one of the largest in antiquity, reflecting Ashurnasirpal's status as the most powerful ruler of the largest empire ever seen, spanning much of the "cradle of civilization."

The relief depicts a Winged Genius, a deity also known as an *Apkallu*, holding a bucket and a cone-shaped object, signifying fertility and protection for the king. The *Apkallu* has feathered wings and wears elaborately detailed robes, a horned headdress, an earring, a necklace and armlets, and has two daggers and a whetstone tucked into fabric folds at his waist. The work is in excellent condition and skillfully carved with superb details, nearly all preserved, offering a glimpse into past – showing the human form, costume and jewelry from nearly 3,000 years ago.

One of the earliest-known works of ancient art sent to the United States, the frieze was acquired in Mosul in 1859 by an American missionary named Dr. Henri Byron Haskell from the English archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard, who had unearthed the royal palace at Nimrud. In addition to this relief, which has been housed at the Virginia Theological Seminary since 1860, Haskell also sent five other examples to Bowdoin College in Maine and another which is now housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Other institutions and approximately 60 museums around the world contain reliefs from Ashurnasirpal's palace, including the British Museum, the Brooklyn Museum and the Yale University Art Gallery.

Note to Editors:

- The current world record for an Assyrian relief sold at Christie's London in 1994, the Canford School reliefs set the record for the category, realizing 7,701,500 GBP.

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction sales in 2017 that totalled £4.5 billion / \$5.7 billion, confirming art market leadership with a 34% increase over 2016. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie's offers around 350 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. Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

*Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.

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Images available on request

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