

**SALE OF THE COLLECTION OF CHARLES DE BEISTEGUI TOTALS FF167,748,765
£16,442,382 - \$26,409,225**

Largest house sale in France this century exceeds all expectations

Montfort l'Amaury, near Paris

THE FIVE-DAY sale of the contents of Château de Groussay, the largest house sale to be held in France this century, concluded today (Sunday, June 6, 1999) having raised a total of FF167,748,765 (£16,442,382, \$26,409,225). The figure far exceeds the pre-sale high estimate of FF100 million.

Mr. Juan de Beistegui, the owner of Château de Groussay, thanked and congratulated Maîtres Poulain-Le Fur and Sotheby's for the sensational result. "The sale has been a true homage to my uncle Charles de Beistegui who would have approved wholeheartedly. He would also have been highly satisfied with how buyers responded to objects he collected in creating what came to be known as le goût Beistegui (the Beistegui style)."

Auctioneers Maîtres Poulain et Le Fur and Princesse de Beauvau Craon, the President of Sotheby's France and Vice-Chairman of Sotheby's Europe, described the sale as an absolute triumph. "The collaboration between Sotheby's and Poulain Le Fur has made this success possible and created a synergy in which the real beneficiary is the vendor. Celebrating le goût Beistegui, every object which bore this stamp sold way above estimate," Laure de Beauvau Craon added.

It took approximately 50 hours of auctioneering shared by Maîtres Poulain et Le Fur to sell the more than 2,000 lots. The nine sessions of the five-day sale took place in a huge marquee which comfortably accommodated up to 1,000 bidders. The sale was nearly 98% sold by value and by lot, and more than 82% of the lots sold above their pre-sale high estimate.

Interest in the sale was truly international with bids being received from 26 countries among them the US, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Greece, the UK, Russia, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey and Hong Kong. French participation was also active with 35% of the buyers coming from all over the country.

The top lot in the entire auction was a pair of mid-18th century gilt-bronze mounted Meissen porcelain pot-pourris vases and covers which were bought by a private collector for the staggering FF4,360,000, (£430,980) more than three times their pre-sale high estimate (lot 330).

Close behind was a large Restoration bronze guéridon with an Italian micromosaic table top which overturned its pre-sale low estimate of FF500,000 to sell for the outstanding FF3,052,000 (£303,900). Decorated with the head of Medusa at its centre, the table had enjoyed a prominent position in the chateau's library (lot 155).

Further top lots included: a monumental pair of celestial and terrestrial globes, decorated with 19th century designs based on the 17th century originals by the Venetian cosmographer Coronelli, which sold for FF2,616,000 (£258,590, lot 543); a large English Axminster carpet of cream ground and decorated with foliage and shells, which sold for FF2,616,000 (£260,460, lot 291); a painting of an imaginary collector's cabinet by Willem van Haecht, which sold for FF2,616,000 (£258,590, lot 533) and a pair of late 18th century, ebony and gilt-bronze mounted cabinets attributed to Étienne Levasseur which sold for FF2,180,000 (£215,490, lot 383).

The sale of a number of lots was pre-empted by the French Government and saved for the nation. Among them were several drawings and models relating to both the interior and exterior of Groussay, which were bought for the Archive National and the Musée du Monuments Français (lots 1670, 1671, 1705, 1708, 1719, 1726 and 1728). A group of four drawings attributed to Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809) were acquired by the Musée du Petit Palais in Paris for FF70,850 (£7,056, lots 200-201B) and a beautiful Sèvres biscuit statue of the Duc de Bordeaux by Pierre Sébastien Guersant (1789-1853) was bought by the Direction des Musées Nationaux for the Museum of Decorative Arts in Bordeaux for FF1,090,000 (£107,740, lot 226).

The many mementoes of Groussay included a charming model of the theatre, made under the direction of architect Emilio Terry in 1952, which sold for FF130,800 (£12,938, lot 499). Further models relating to the park's follies also

sold well.

Among the many curiosities was Charles de Beistegui's 1960s Fiat motorcar, specially equipped with wicker chairs in which he could be driven around the park to view the construction of the follies. The car overtook its pre-sale low estimate of FF2,000 to sell for FF63,220 (£6,250), despite being in need of much restoration work (lot 1707).

The colourful costumes designed by Charles de Beistegui for the theatre's inaugural play L'Impromptu de Groussay in 1957 were modelled by Sotheby's staff. As they mounted the rostrum, they were greeted with applause from the delighted audience. The costumes sold extremely well, notably one for a Marquis, originally worn by Monsieur Jacques Sereys from the Comedie Française, which sold for FF13,080 (£1,290, lot 1667).

The follies in the grounds of Château de Groussay attracted enormous interest from collectors around the world. An 18th century gazebo which Charles de Beistegui had bought in England, sold for the staggering FF675,800 (£66,800, lot 1710) against a pre-sale estimate of FF30/40,000, while 17 large tôle vases painted to imitate Chinese blue and white porcelain which had decorated the area around the Tartar Tent, sold to the same buyer for FF457,800 (£45,250, lot 1680).

The most remarkable price in the sale, however was paid for a pair of English steel paper scissors. Expected to fetch FF4/6,000, the scissors astounded the people in the saleroom when they sold for FF147,150 (£14,550), more than 36 times their low estimate (lot 117). The least expensive lot in the sale turned out to be a glass jar and a green shell shaped dish which sold for FF163 (£20, lot 809).

The pre-sale exhibition was viewed by more than 30,000 visitors before the first sale day. Those who were unable to attend the sale left around 10,000 commission bids or took advantage of the 40 telephones in the saleroom available for telephone bidding. In the region of 3,000 people bid over the telephone from as far afield as Brazil and the Far East.

For further Press information please contact:

Sotheby's in Paris: Marie-Odile Deutsch or Sophie Dufresne: Tel. 33 (1) 53 05 53 66

Sotheby's in London: Christopher Proudlove or Alfonso Icaza: Tel. 44 171 293 5170

Etude Poulain Le Fur: Vanessa de Las Asturias: Tel. 33 (1) 42 46 81 81