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Sotheby's to Offer Selected Works from one of Britain's Greatest Stately Homes **CASTLE HOWARD**

"Nobody had informed me that at one view I should see a palace, a town, a fortified city, temples on high places, woods worthy of being each a metropolis of Druids, the noblest lawn in the world fenced by half the horizon, and a mausoleum that would tempt one to be buried alive: in short I have seen gigantic palaces before, but never a sublime one." -- **Horace Walpole, 1772**



Castle Howard © Mike Kipling

London, 29th March 2014 – This summer, Sotheby's London will offer for sale a group of works from the collections of **Castle Howard**, one of Britain's greatest and most beautiful country houses. Set in the rolling Howardian Hills of North Yorkshire, and designed by the architect and dramatist John Vanbrugh in 1699, the exuberant facades and interiors of Castle Howard are familiar the world over as the backdrop to TV drama *Brideshead Revisited* and Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*. The grandeur of the house - perfectly captured in Horace Walpole's words above - is echoed by the magnificent collections of antiquities, paintings, furniture and works of art that have graced its interiors for nearly three centuries.

Reflecting both the history of the house and the tastes of the extraordinary men who built and shaped its collections, the works to be offered at Sotheby's span a range of periods and media, from Roman antiquities to Old Master paintings and 17th-century Italian furniture. They will be offered, on behalf of the Trustees of Castle Howard, in Sotheby's London **Old Masters and Treasures sales in London on 8th July**, with a combined estimate in excess of £10 million.

Speaking of the sale, **The Hon. Nicholas Howard** said: “I am privileged to be able to say that Castle Howard is my family’s heritage and has been since it was built over 300 years ago. With that privilege comes the responsibility of ownership, and the Trustees’ unanimous decision to hold this sale is the exercise of that responsibility. If the sale helps to secure that heritage as the house moves into its fourth century then it will have achieved its goal. To this end, we have selected for sale at Sotheby’s a small number of works which, while of great intrinsic interest, have been carefully chosen so as not to detract from the overall integrity of the collection.”

The Hon. Simon Howard added: “Running Castle Howard for the last 30 years has been an immense privilege. Now, as a new chapter in its history opens, the sales that we are planning at Sotheby’s will make an important contribution to the long term future of the Castle Howard estate and collections.”

Henry Wyndham, Chairman, Sotheby’s Europe commented: “The collections at Castle Howard chart two millennia of history and 300 years of collecting, and rank among the finest private art collections in the world. The carefully selected group of works to be auctioned this summer is testament to the taste of a series of enlightened art patrons, starting with the visionary 3rd Earl of Carlisle, and continuing through his Romanophile son, Henry, collector of antiquities and Venetian vedute, to his diplomat grandson Frederick, 5th Earl of Carlisle, who is thought by many to have been the most refined English collector of the period around 1800.”

The Howard family is one of the most important collecting dynasties in Britain. For generations, members of the family have been among the leading patrons and collectors of their time, beginning with the 3rd Earl of Carlisle, whose vision and daring resulted in the building of the family’s magnificent Yorkshire home, Castle Howard. Later, the 9th Earl, himself an artist, formed a famous collection of 15th and 16th-century paintings, many of which were gifted on his death to the National Gallery in London. Each generation has contributed in its own particular way to the magnificence and breadth of the overall collection.



Many of the works to be offered are particularly reminiscent of one of the most critical eras in European cultural history – that of the ‘Grand Tour’. While the Grand Tour was undertaken almost *de rigueur* by 18th-century young men of social standing, for the 3rd and 4th Earls of Carlisle it was an experience that was ultimately to place them among the most important art patrons of their times.

Charles Howard, 3rd Earl of Carlisle (1669-1738), whose architectural vision led to the building of Castle Howard, travelled to Italy in the late 1680s. Inspired by what he saw, some thirty years later he proved an enthusiastic patron of Venetian painters Antonio Pellegrini and Marco Ricci, who were commissioned to decorate his splendid new house. Henry Howard, the 4th Earl (1694-1758), shared his father’s passion for Italy, and for Venetian art in particular. Over the course of two extensive sojourns in Italy, he acquired significant quantities of important Roman furniture, antiquities, gems and – perhaps most importantly of all – Venetian pictures. This summer’s sales will be led by Italian masterpieces that entered Castle Howard’s collections after his second Grand Tour in 1738-39.

During this trip, the Earl bought or commissioned over 40 views of Venice by Canaletto, Bellotto and Marieschi. Together, they form one of the most extensive groups of *Vedute* acquired by a British patron in the 18th century.

Sotheby's **Old Masters sale** will include one of the great Venetian views acquired by the 4th Earl on his famous second Grand Tour. One of no fewer than 15 works commissioned or bought by the Earl from Bernardo Bellotto (1722-1780), *Venice, A View of The Grand Canal Looking South From The Palazzo Foscari* ranks, together with its companion paintings, among the earliest and most important examples of works by Bellotto purchased by a British patron. Painted when Bellotto was just 16 years old, at a time when he was working in the studio of his uncle Canaletto, this exceptional work bears witness to his remarkable precocity. It also constitutes a major contribution in our knowledge of the painter's early career, showing that even while still in his teens Canaletto's nephew had begun to develop his own distinctive approach to the *vedutista's* art (est. £2,500,000–3,500,000, pictured p.2).



The Treasures sale will be spearheaded by two other masterpieces testifying to the 4th Earl's taste for antique objects and gems: a pair of extremely rare Italian *pietre dure* inlaid cabinets produced in Rome in the 17th century. These highly prized cabinets were purchased in Rome in 1739, together with another pair which remains in the Castle Howard collection. Estimated at £700,000-1,000,000, the pair to be offered in July may have been commissioned by a member of the Borghese family – a provenance which may have influenced Lord Carlisle's desire to acquire them. No other pair of Roman or Florentine hardstone cabinets is known to exist, making this pair (illustrated above) truly unique.



Unlike his father, who was best known as a collector of Italian antiquities and paintings, Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle (1748-1825) collected more broadly, embracing contemporary British pictures, as well as Dutch and Italian Old Masters. His acquisitions transformed the collection at Castle Howard into one of the most significant in Britain. A fine example of 17th century Dutch painting is to be found in **Ferdinand Bol's Portrait of a Boy**. Bought from the Fagel family in 1801, this impressive work is surely the finest portrait by the artist, one of Rembrandt's favourite and most talented pupils. It is without any doubt Bol's most original work, in which he finally steps out of the shadow cast by his teacher to establish his own independent style (est. £2-3 million, pictured right). Also acquired by the 5th Earl are two exceptional **white marble busts**. Produced in France in the 17th century, they carry a combined estimate of £150,000 - £220,000.

The selection of Old Masters paintings will also include two striking portraits of important English sitters. The first is a powerful depiction of **King Henry VIII, from the studio of Hans Holbein (1497-1543)**. Estimated at £800,000-£1,200,000, the work is dated 1542, the year when the King's fifth wife, Catherine Howard, niece of the Duke of Northumberland, the ancestor of the Earls of Carlisle, was beheaded on the grounds of alleged adultery.

The second portrait is a masterful rendering of the **6th Duke of Devonshire, or "The Batchelor Duke" by Sir Thomas Lawrence** – a gift from the artist to the Duke's sister, wife of the 6th Earl of Carlisle (est. £400,000-600,000).

Among the works of art presented in the Treasures sale are a **monumental quartz diorite vase with graceful leaf-shaped handle terminals, from Roman Egypt, circa 1st Century B.C.**, from the Baths of Augustus in Rome and acquired by the 5th Earl in 1801 at the sale of the Bessborough Collection (est. £400,000-600,000); an **important carta pesta relief of the Virgin and Child, early 16th century, Florentine, from the workshop of Jacopo Sansovino** (est. £400,000-600,000).



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