

London | +44 20 7293 6000 | Matthew Weigman | matthew.weigman@sothebys.com
Mitzi Mina | mitzi.mina@sothebys.com | Leyla Daybelge | leyla.daybelge@sothebys.com |
Jamie Penaloza | jamie.penaloza@sothebys.com

Global Buyers Battle for Treasures at Sotheby's London *Estimates Defied as Collectors Pursue Exceptional Works in "Treasures, Princely Taste" Sale*

- *Sèvres Vases soar above expectations to more than £1.7 million*
- *Shah of Persia's Elephant Automaton Clock sells to Asian Buyer for £1.6 million*



WEDNESDAY, 4th July 2012 – This evening's sale of **Treasures, Princely Taste** at Sotheby's London saw collectors from across the globe compete vigorously for exceptional works of art and furniture. Many of the works in the sale were pursued to prices well in excess of pre-sale estimates, chief among which was a pair of **gilt-bronze-mounted Sèvres porcelain vases** (c. 1788-1790); realising **£1,777,250**, they tripled their pre-sale estimate of £600,000.* Close behind the vases was the **Shah of Persia's musical elephant automaton clock** (c. 1780), which sold to an Asian collector for an impressive **£1.6 million**, at the high end of its £1-2 million pre-sale estimate. Together, the 39 lots offered this evening realised £9,507,800 / \$14,909,181 / €11,837,193, with 72% sold by lot and 84%

sold by value. 44% of the works sold in this evening's sale realised prices in excess of their pre-sale high estimates.

Mario Tavella, Sotheby's Deputy Chairman, Europe, commented: *"The superb results this evening confirm the continuing demand for the rarest and highest-quality furniture and decorative arts. Buyers from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East competed for beautiful works with noble heritage. In particular, a pair of Sèvres porcelain vases saw spirited bidding, realising a phenomenal £1.7 million. Having concluded our third year of Treasures sales, I am delighted with the results which are testament to the enduring strength of this market."*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SALE:

- **The Sèvres vases**, referenced above: the vases' rare sky-blue colour was developed by Sèvres specifically for Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette for the decoration of the royal Rambouillet estate. The gilt-bronze mounts can be almost certainly attributed to Pierre-Philippe Thomire, who made pieces for Louis XVI's bedchamber at Compiègne and for Marie-Antoinette's apartments at Versailles.
- **The "Elephant" Clock**, referenced above: the magnificent automaton clock of a rare and impressive scale was most probably acquired by Naser al-Din Shah of Persia (1831–96) in London in the 1890s, and typifies the intriguing and inventive objects produced in London in the late 18th century for the Chinese market.
- **Five exceptionally rare masterpieces of 16th and 17th century silver from a European princely family, which originally formed part of the collection of Fernando II, King of Portugal**, realised a combined total of **£1,053,850**. The top lot of the group was a magnificent silver gilt flagon from the first half of the 16th century, which realised **£565,250** – seven times its pre-sale estimate of £80,000.
- **A pair of Chinese celadon Vases aux Tritons circa 1770** sold for a remarkable **£577,250**, nearly quadrupling its pre-sale low estimate of £150,000. The elegant pair of celadon vases with exquisite gilt-bronze mounts is extremely rare and highly desirable amongst collectors, and was acquired by the Rothschild family in the second half of the 19th century.

- **A Swiss parcel-gilt silver drinking cup in the form of a lark, Nicholas Matthey, Neuchâtel, late 17th century**, achieved **£433,250**, soaring above its estimates of £200,000-250,000. This ancestral drinking cup of the von Lerber family is in the form of a skylark, a charge of the family coat-of-arms and intended to be drunk from at guild festivities.
- **A gilt-bronze and patinated-bronze ink stand by Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, Louis XV, circa 1735**, realised **£361,250** against estimates of £200,000-300,000. This superb *encrier* is a perfect early example of the 18th century Rococo vogue, of which Meissonnier was a pioneering and influential figure.
- **A chessboard with pagoda figurines and chess pieces in mother-of-pearl and aventurine glass circa 1720-30**, realised **£445,250**, well in excess of its estimates of £200,000-300,000. The chessboard comes by repute from Frederick Augustus III (1750-1827), Elector of Saxony, who according to family tradition presented it as a gift to Comte Louis Gabriel du Buat-Nançay in 1772. The king and queen figures, in the form of seated Chinese men and made of white Meissen porcelain, reflect the enthusiasm for *Chinoiseries* and the exoticism of the East.

Images available via e-mail.

* Estimates do not include the buyer's premium.

#