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## Sotheby's to Offer Important Carpets from The Collection of William A. Clark Sold by the Corcoran Gallery of Art to Benefit Future Acquisitions



*The Clark Sickle-Leaf Carpet, early 17<sup>th</sup> century, est. \$5/7 million*

5 JUNE 2013 – NEW YORK

**NEW YORK, 28 February 2013** – On 5 June 2013, Sotheby's will offer Important Carpets from the Collection of William A. Clark on behalf of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in a dedicated auction in New York. Comprising 25 rugs and carpets from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the group includes one of the most important and revered carpets in the world, **The Clark Sickle-Leaf Carpet**, as well as one of the most majestic, **The Lafões Carpet**. Both epitomize the pinnacle of weaving attained during the Safavid dynasty in Persia (1501–1722) and are extraordinarily beautiful works of art. William A. Clark (1839–1925), an American industrialist and later U.S. Senator from the state of Montana, bequeathed much of his collection to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1926, including these rugs and carpets, which have remained at the museum ever since. The offering is estimated to bring in excess of \$6.7 million, and proceeds will benefit future acquisitions. Highlights will be

on view at Sotheby's during the Asia Week sales in March, and the complete exhibition will open on 1 June 2013 at our York Avenue galleries.

*"It is exceedingly rare for a collection of carpets of this importance to appear on the market," noted **Mary Jo Otsea, Senior Consultant, Rugs & Carpets at Sotheby's.** "The June auction recalls the landmark sales held by our predecessor firm, the American Art Association, in the 1920s from the Collections of Vitall & Leopold Benguiat, sources for many of Senator Clark's carpet purchases. It is a privilege and a highlight of my 30-year career to handle The Clark Sickle-Leaf Carpet in particular, which is without question one of the most iconic and important carpets ever to appear at auction. With masterworks such as The Sickle-Leaf and Lafões Carpets, the offering is certain to appeal to collectors at the highest level across numerous categories."*

***Philip Brookman, Chief Curator and Head of Research at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, commented,** "The deaccession and sale of these carpets will keep alive Senator Clark's generous legacy by enabling us to grow our core collections and make dynamic acquisition choices that will enrich and inform the Corcoran's community for decades to come. We are also pleased that these remarkable carpets, which have been exhibited infrequently at the Corcoran and lie far outside the scope of our current mission, may now enter more appropriate collections through this sale."*

**The Clark Sickle-Leaf Carpet** (est. \$5/7 million) is one of the benchmarks by which Persian weavings of the 17<sup>th</sup> century are measured. This finely woven carpet displays a rare design which is beautifully executed and features plum blossoms, vines and cypress trees, all punctuated by elongated, curving sickle-leaves. The carpet was lauded and published in the seminal *A Survey of Persian Art* by Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman in 1939, as well as illustrated in *Oriental Rugs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* by Maurice Dimand and Jean Mailey, published in 1973. It has been included in several important exhibitions including *Carpets of Central Persia* held in Sheffield and Birmingham, U.K. as part of the World of Islam Festival in 1976 and published in the accompanying catalogue written by renowned scholar May H. Beattie. It was also exhibited at the Hayward Gallery in London during the fourth International Conference on Oriental Carpets in 1983. More recently, this carpet, the Lafões Carpet, and four others included in the auction were exhibited at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the tenth International Conference on Oriental Carpets held there in 2003.

**The Lafões Carpet**, the largest piece in the collection, is an Isphahan carpet measuring 44 feet in length, giving true meaning to the term "palace carpet" (est. \$800,000/1.2 million, below). Its design is comprised of

palmettes and curling leaves that fill the carpet in a balanced and harmonious fashion. This carpet was in the hands of nobility, having previously been in the collection of Duke Don Gaetano de Braganza (1856–1927), before passing through the hands of Vitall Benguiat and being acquired by William A. Clark. It was featured on the floor of a large painting gallery in Senator Clark’s New York mansion.



Other highlights in the collection include a **round Ottoman Cairene carpet** (est. \$80/120,000) once in the collection of the Duke of Sforza, Milan, as well as three luxurious silk **“Polonaise” rugs** and a pristine condition **Isphahan carpet from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century** (est. \$150/200,000) that was in the possession of American financier, philanthropist and collector Henry G. Marquand until 1903, when it was purchased by Clark at auction.

### About the Corcoran

**The Corcoran Gallery of Art**, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869. It was America’s first dedicated art museum and today is Washington’s largest nonfederal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. In addition, a dynamic schedule of special exhibitions is complemented and enhanced by a range of educational programming, which together seek to enrich perspectives, support the local arts community, and encourage interpretation. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded in 1890 and stands as Washington’s only four-year college of art and design, offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Fine Art Photography, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Photojournalism; a BA in Art Studies; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); an AFA in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, and Photography; and MA degrees in Art and the Book, Art Education, Exhibition Design, Interior Design, Master of Arts in Teaching, and New Media Photojournalism. The College’s Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit [www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org).

### Rugs & Carpets at Sotheby’s

Sotheby’s is the undisputed leader in the field of Rugs & Carpets. For decades, Sotheby’s has achieved the top prices for rugs and carpets from Persia, France, India and Turkey and held sales of the most important collections, including *Carpets from the J Paul Getty Museum* (1990) and *Carpets from the Estate of Vojtech Blau* (2006). Sotheby’s established a new benchmark for any carpet at auction in 2009 with the sale in Doha of the *Pearl Carpet of Baroda* which achieved \$5.5 million. Other notable prices include \$4.3 million for a *Safavid silk, Wool and Metal-thread Prayer Rug* (2009), \$3.4 million for a *Safavid voided silk velvet metal thread strip and bouclé figural panel* from Persia (2009), \$2 million for a *Safavid Animal and Tree Carpet* from the *Collection of Lily and Edmond J Safra* (2005), and most recently, a *late 16th century Safavid Carpet* sold for \$1.9 million this past January. Sotheby’s

also holds the record for any Islamic work of art at auction - *an illustrated folio from the Shahnameh, made for Shah Tahmasp of Persia*, sold for \$12.2 million in 2006.

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Sotheby's has been uniting collectors with world-class works of art since [1744](#). Sotheby's became the first international auction house when it expanded from London to New York (1955), the first to conduct sales in Hong Kong (1973) and France (2001), and the first international fine art auction house in China (2012). Today, Sotheby's presents auctions in 8 different salesrooms, including [New York](#), [London](#), [Hong Kong](#) and [Paris](#), and Sotheby's [BidNow](#) program allows visitors to view all auctions live online and place bids in real-time from anywhere in the world. Sotheby's offers collectors the resources of [Sotheby's Financial Services](#), the world's only full-service art financing company, as well as [private sale](#) opportunities in more than 70 categories, including [S12](#), the gallery arm of Sotheby's Contemporary Art department, as well as [Sotheby's Diamonds](#) and [Sotheby's Wine](#). Sotheby's has a [global network](#) of 90 offices in 40 countries and is the oldest company listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium and prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium.*

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