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Sotheby's London to sell a rare masterpiece by Constantinos Volanakis in November



Constantinos Volanakis, *The Arrival of Karaiskakis at Faliro*, oil on canvas
estimate: £1.5-2 million*

London, September 24, 2008 – SOTHEBY'S is delighted to announce that the second of its bi-annual sales of Greek Art on Tuesday, November 11, 2008, will be led by a rare masterpiece by Constantinos Volanakis (1837-1907), entitled *The Arrival of Karaiskakis at Faliro*. With an estimate of £1.5-2 million, this is the most significant painting by Volanakis to ever appear at auction and it is one of only a small number of works of this scale and importance by the artist that has remained in private hands. The vast majority of comparable works by him are today housed by museums, institutions and corporate collections. The painting will be on public exhibition in Athens on Wednesday, October 22, ahead of its sale the following month.

The Arrival of Karaiskakis at Faliro portrays a historic scene from the Greek War of Independence and it is one of a number of scenes by Volanakis that celebrates Greece's most important naval exploits. It marks the arrival of the fledgling Greek navy and one of its most charismatic commanders, Georgios Karaiskakis, on the shores of Faliro near Piraeus, in preparation for the campaign to liberate Athens from Ottoman forces. In total, some 10,000 Greek soldiers convened at Piraeus for this operation and the fleet consisted of vessels assembled by various islands and forces under the command of Karaiskakis and the English philhellene, Lord Cochrane. Karaiskakis was mortally wounded during the ensuing attack and eventually died on April 23, 1827. His leadership, however, gained him international standing as one of the great heroes of the Greek War of Independence.

The impressive size of the painting – it measures 146 by 219cm – adds to the painting's sense of monumentality and drama and accentuates its patriotic content: of Greece's struggle for independence and autonomy, from which it would eventually emerge victorious. It captures the tense atmosphere of the eerie calm before the attack on Athens.

Volanakis was an artist of great renown in both 19th century Greek painting and marine art. He had a particular passion for the sea, ships and fishermen and his marine studies are his finest works. This interest in marine subjects first emerged during his time working as an accountant for his brother-in-law's sugar firm and his idle sketches of the harbour and the ships on the firm's ledgers drew the enthusiastic attention of his employer.

Commenting on the sale of ***The Arrival of Karaiskakis at Faliro*** in November, Constantine Frangos, Senior Director and Head of Greek Art at Sotheby's, comments: *"This is - without doubt - the most important 19th century Greek painting to appear on the international market and its exhibition in Athens on October 22nd will represent an extremely rare opportunity to see this masterpiece, given that it has remained in private collections since the turn of the century and has never appeared at auction. Sotheby's is thrilled to be bringing this monumental work to auction at a time when the Greek Art market is flourishing and receiving an ever greater spotlight on the international stage."*

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Sotheby's was the first auction house to hold regular sales dedicated to Greek Art in London. Since its inaugural sale in 2001, Sotheby's has held regular sales and between 2001 and 2007 the annual turnover for Greek sales has increased from £2.4 million to £15.6 million, an increase of some 550%.
- Sotheby's last Greek Sale in April 2008 realised £9,566,050 and established 18 new auction records.

* Pre-sale estimates do not include buyer's premium

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