CHATSWORTH
THE ATTIC SALE

--SOTHEBY’S TO HOLD A THREE-DAY AUCTION OF PROPERTY FROM ENGLAND’S MOST MAGNIFICENT STATELY HOME--

--RARE REDISCOVERED INTERIOR FURNISHINGS BY ONE OF BRITAIN’S GREATEST ARCHITECTS SAVED FROM AN ILLUSTRIOUS LOST PALACE OF LONDON--

LONDON 14 JULY 2010 --- This autumn Sotheby’s will hold a once-in-a-lifetime sale at the most magnificent of all England’s stately homes – Chatsworth, in Derbyshire. Chatsworth: The Attic Sale - a three-day auction – will have in it all the ingredients of the quintessential attic sale: an Aladdin’s cave of items at all price levels (estimates range from £20 to £200,000), each one with its own story to tell. More than that, though, the sale will have at its core a
wealth of fine, rare architectural fixtures and fittings, the existence of which had been obscured by time. Discovered beneath layers of dust, these magnificent pieces – handsomely carved fireplaces, architraves, doors and shutters - were once part of the fabric of the many great houses that have featured in the Devonshire family’s extraordinary history, including Chatsworth itself, Chiswick House, Hardwick Hall, Lismore Castle, Compton Place, Bolton Abbey and, most of all, their palatial London residence, Devonshire House, on Piccadilly - for centuries the centre of London’s social, political and cultural elite.

Estimated to realise a sum in the region of £2.5 million, the sale will comprise some 20,000 objects in around 1,400 lots. Together they allow for a journey from the 16th century to the present day, bringing to life both the places and the people that have defined this extraordinary family through the generations. The sale will be on view in situ at “the most pleasant garden and most beautiful palace in the world” (Daniel Defoe), 1st-4th October, prior to the auction on 5th-7th October.

Speaking of the sale, the Duke of Devonshire said: “When we moved into Chatsworth several years ago we found the attics filled with the contents of other family homes from generations past. With Sotheby’s, we embarked on the lengthy process of selecting a group of items for sale that would allow us to create much-needed space in several rooms throughout the house. Like those who will attend the exhibition in October, I have had the pleasure of stepping back in time - revisiting the history of my family through these artefacts and seeing treasures from Devonshire House that have been hidden for nearly a century. The proceeds will be used to further some projects both at Chatsworth and on our other Estates which we are delighted that this sale of items from the Attics will accelerate.”
Harry Dalmeny, Deputy Chairman, Sotheby’s UK, said: “Exploring the attics at Chatsworth took us on a remarkable journey. In examining thousands of items to consider for sale, we had the privilege of reuniting long-forgotten objects with their illustrious pasts. Like a jigsaw puzzle, the histories of many of the Devonshire family’s homes have been assembled once again. The revelation of the hidden trove of architectural fixtures designed by William Kent - one of Britain’s greatest architects and designers - for Devonshire House in London is an architectural historian’s dream. The sale of this material will provide a unique opportunity to acquire examples of the work of one of England’s greatest architects - one that is unlikely ever to be repeated as Kent’s work is otherwise confined to major listed buildings. With the extraordinary range of material that will feature in the sale, it will be possible to obtain a single treasure that belonged to this celebrated family, or recreate in near entirety many of the rooms in which the fascinating life of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was played out.”

Georgiana, 5th Duchess of Devonshire:

“A woman more exalted in every accomplishment of rapturous beauty, of elevated genius, and of angelic temper, has not adorned the present age…”

Morning Chronicle, 31st March, 1806

Some of the most beloved and influential characters in British history lived and entertained at Chatsworth and the houses of the Devonshire family, none of whom were more adored than Georgiana, 5th Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806). The legendary Duchess was the leading light of London life, the undisputed queen of fashion and centre of the so-called ‘ton’ (a high society clan of the most illustrious people in the country), Georgiana was painted by Gainsborough, Reynolds and Cosway. A compulsive gambler, the beautiful Duchess used her considerable charm to placate her creditors, whilst borrowing from the Prince of Wales to fund her habit and purchase the latest fashions in clothes and furniture.
In keeping with her own Spencer family and the Devonshire family tradition, Georgiana was a staunch Whig supporter and an influential political activist, although today she is perhaps more famous for her troubled marriage to the 5th Duke and their ménage-à-trois with Lady Elizabeth Forster (Bess) - even today, over 200 years after her death, Georgiana commands fascination. A close confidante of Marie Antoinette, Georgiana feared for the safety of her friend as the revolutionary movement swept across France and sent desperate letters to Lafayette begging him to protect the French Queen, although this did not prevent the daring Duchess from shopping in Paris just weeks before the storming of the Bastille. Having gambled herself deep into debt, Georgiana fell foul of her husband’s agent, John Heaton, for commissioning a considerable amount of François Hervé furniture, including a pair of simulated rosewood and caned settees, circa 1780, (est. £8,000-12,000, pictured on page 10). Items that Georgiana chose herself for her personal rooms feature in the sale, such as a set of eleven George III painted and caned chairs, almost identical to those used by another style icon – Keira Knightley – in the film of Georgiana’s extraordinary life ‘The Duchess’ (est. £2,000-3,000, pictured above).

The Brilliant Mr Kent and the Lost Palace of London

Devonshire House, Piccadilly, was the centre of London society in the 18th century – it was there that Georgiana ran an alternative court - a hedonistic palace where fortunes and reputations were lost and won. The house contained the finest of all the family’s possessions, more than Chatsworth or any other properties of the estate; Devonshire House was a showroom through which the most influential figures of the day passed. Designed and built by William Kent in the 1730s, Devonshire House was demolished almost 200 years later in the 1920s, whereupon much of its interior, from doors and original furnishings to elegant, gilt chairs, was carefully removed to the attics of Chatsworth. A unique opportunity to re-create this “lost palace of London”, the surviving objects featured in the sale include all manner of architectural fixtures, furniture and objects of everyday life. Further adding to its rarity, Kent’s elegant architectural fittings and furnishings – fireplaces, door frames, skirting boards and more - are only found today in listed, and therefore “untouchable” buildings, and never come to the market. From the Saloon in Devonshire House - a room so grand it prompted Lady Eastlake to
describe it in 1850 as a ‘perfect fairyland, marble, gilding, mirrors, pictures and flowers…’ – comes one of the sale highlights: a magnificent and extremely rare George II carved white marble chimneypiece, designed by William Kent, circa 1735 (est. £200,000-300,000, pictured on page 8). After Georgiana’s death in 1806 her body was laid in state in the Saloon in front of this exquisite piece of 18th-century craftsmanship whereupon queues of mourners filed past to pay their last respects.

Almost all the architectural fixtures and fittings of the Devonshire House Library have survived, as have many of those from the Ballroom and the Saloon, as decorated by Georgiana’s son the 6th Duke - known as the ‘Bachelor Duke’ as he never married (Ballroom illustrated on page 2). The Duke commissioned extensive works on nearly all his properties – in fact, since inheriting his title he must have been building almost every day of his life. However, fiercely loyal to his mother Georgiana, he left her personal rooms at Devonshire House untouched, and on his father’s second marriage to Bess he wrote to his sister: ‘The worst has happened – our father has married that woman’. Items of great historical interest include what at first appears to be a George III gilt-bronze mounted library bookcase (attributed to Marsh and Tatham, circa 1800, est. £60,000-80,000 pictured on page 8), but on closer inspection reveals a ‘hidden door’. The Dowager Duchess reveals who used to pass unseen through this secret passageway: “The Regency cupboard in the Day Nursery (at Chatsworth) was a fixture from Devonshire House, highly unsuitable for a Nursery, as George IV, a great friend of Georgiana and constant visitor at Devonshire House, used to go through its doors to Mrs Fitzherbert (his Catholic mistress whom he later married in secret) in the next room there.”
A Passion for the Exotic - The ‘Bachelor’ Duke

The extravagant Bachelor Duke (1790-1858) transformed the Devonshire Estate - a patron of the arts and charming host he had a passion for the exotic and built a new wing at Chatsworth to house his extensive collections. Of the Bachelor Duke, Deborah, Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, has said: “He was funny and sad, the irresistible combination that is one of the secrets of charm…How I would love to come face to face with the undisputed spirit of this place”. The Duke was a close friend of Tsar Nicholas I, attending the latter’s coronation in his capacity as Ambassador Extraordinary for the Court of St James to the Russian Empire. During his time in St Petersburg the Duke purchased a wrought iron, wood and leather upholstered Russian sleigh in which he liked to drive through the snowy streets of the capital (est. £2,000-3,000, pictured on page 10). The Duke employed the Royal decorators J. G. Crace to refurbish, among others, Chatsworth and Devonshire House, creating two of the most sumptuously decorated homes in the country – every empty space was gilt and embellished with elaborate mouldings, bare walls were hung with vast mirrors and the rooms adorned with rich silks and textiles. A set of six Louis XV carved giltwood fauteuils, from the mid-18th century, covered in original blue and gold silk lampas are part of the luxurious Crace refurbishment (est. £18,000-25,000, pictured on page 8 and in the 19th-century photograph of the Ballroom on page 2). Famed for his splendid entertainments, the Duke said of an evening at Chatsworth: “Of a night it (the Medici Vase) holds powerful lamps, that send up such a magical light on the branches of the Altingia, that people cry out Fairy land”. A large number of these “fairy lights” feature in the sale, (pictured on page 11).
‘Debo’ – The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire

The story of this great collecting family continues into the 20th century with the current Dowager Duchess, Deborah Devonshire, known not only for being the youngest of the extraordinary Mitford girls, but as the Duchess who ensured the survival of the estate into modern times, in an era when many of the eminent family houses of Britain faced closure. Following in the footsteps of the family’s forebears, Deborah Devonshire has been a patron of artists at the forefront of the Contemporary art scene, such as Lucian Freud, as well as being close friends with the likes of Alan Bennett and Cecil Beaton. Her personal mementos in the sale range from a walnut-veneered combined record ‘changer’ and wireless by Garrard & Co. to personal jewels, tapestry and ceramics. Pictured on page 11 is one of her brooches.

Above: The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, reproduction after an original drawing by William Acton, to be sold together with three others depicting Diana, Pamela and Unity Mitford, est: £150-250 for the four

Images available via email

Further notes
For more information on Chatsworth, please visit www.chatsworth.org

Directions to Chatsworth:
By Car: From London it is approximately a 3-hour drive. Turn off the M1 at Junction 29 and follow the brown signs for Chatsworth via Chesterfield.
By Train: London St Pancras to Chesterfield: 1 hour 51 minutes. Trains depart every hour. Chesterfield to Chatsworth is a 30-minute taxi ride.

Press Preview: There will be a Press Preview at Chatsworth on September 29, 2010. Accreditation will be necessary. Please contact Sotheby’s Press Office for further information on 020 7293 6000.

Entry to the pre-sale exhibition will be by catalogue which will be available from early September by logging on to www.sothebys.com or by calling 020 7293 5000. Catalogues can also be purchased at Sotheby’s New Bond Street and Sotheby’s New York, and at Chatsworth from September onwards.

Pre-sale exhibition viewing times:
Friday, 1st October: 9am - 4:30pm
Saturday, 2nd October: 9am - 5:30pm
Sunday, 3rd October: 9am - 5:30pm
Monday, 4th October: 9am - 2pm

For Chatsworth press enquiries, please contact Redbrick Communications:
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Left: a magnificent George II carved white marble chimneypiece by William Kent, circa 1735, from the Saloon, est. £200,000-300,000

Right: one of six carved giltwood fauteuils, Louis XV, mid-18th century – covered in original blue and gold silk lampas from the Bachelor Duke’s Crace refurbishment, est. £18,000-25,000

Left: A door from the Dining Room of Devonshire House, est. £8,000-12,000

Above: George III gilt-bronze mounted library bookcase, circa 1800, through which the Prince Regent passed to visit Mrs Fitzherbert, (further details on page 5) est. £60,000-80,000

Right: a regency carved giltwood and gesso overmantel frame, circa 1810, bearing the Devonshire coat of arms and Ducal coronet, est. £20,000-30,000

Left: an eclectic group of architectural fragments dating from the 18th century onwards
-- Items from the Magnificent Chatsworth House --

Left: the Devonshire Borghese table, an Italian carved giltwood console table with a serpentine alabaster veneered top, mid-18th century, est. £40,000-70,000.

Right: A carved, painted, faux-marble and gilt chimney piece with carving to a design by William Kent, est. £10,000-15,000.

Left: a vast Regency mahogany extending dining table, from the State Dining Room of Chatsworth at which Britain’s most illustrious figures would have dined, est. £150,000-250,000. Also, an enormous carpet measuring 1000cm/62ft in length, est. £5,000-10,000.

Far right: an impressive Regency gilt-bronze free standing nine light candelabrum, circa 1820, 220cm high, used to illuminate the painted ceiling by Louis Laguerre in the famed Painted Hall of Chatsworth, est. £30,000-50,000.

Right: a 19th-century photograph which shows the candelabrum in situ.
Left: a late 19th-century miniature of Georgiana and her beloved daughter ‘Little G’, mounted in a gilt-metal Empire style casket, est. £400-600

Right: a simulated rosewood and caned settees, circa 1780, by François Hervé, est. £800-1,200 – deep into debt Georgiana got into trouble with the estate manager for buying these.

Right: detail of four Chinese floral brocaded yellow satin curtains together with two matching shaped pelmets from the Great Dining Room at Chatsworth, identical to those purchased by the Bachelor Duke for the Yellow Drawing Room at Chatsworth in the 1830s, measuring approximately 464cm high and 141cm wide, est. £3,000-4,000

Above: the Bachelor Duke’s Russian Sleigh from his days as the Ambassador Extraordinary for the court of St James’ to the Russian Empire, est. £2,000-3,000

Left: a giltwood centre table from the Ballroom at Devonshire House, est. £4,000-6,000

-- Items associated with the legendary Georgiana, 5th Duchess of Devonshire --
-- Further items in the sale --
Captions for page 11, clockwise from the top:

- Textiles – some of many examples to be offered in the sale
- A Chinese Coromandel lacquer six-panel screen, Kangxi (1662-1721), £20,000-30,000
- A Humber open touring four-seater car, 1914, delivered by Humber to the Cavendish Motor Company in the summer of 1915 and purchased for £350. The car is known as ‘The Yellow Peril’ and is depicted in a painting by D.F.E. Molas which hangs in the Dining Room at the Cavendish hotel, Baslow, £2,000-3,000
- A pair of George II simulated-stone, carved-wood brackets, *circa* 1735, based on a design by William Kent, £20,000-30,000
- Forty Meat and Poultry Covers, Sheffield Plate and Electroplate, English 19th Century, together with an iron-bound oak plate chest, with a brass label engraved *His Grace The Duke of Devonshire No. 1*, £3,000-5,000
- Teacups and saucers – some of many to be offered in the sale
- A selection of carved sandstone troughs, 18th century, £1,000-1,500 each
- Interior of a cupboard overflowing with ceramics and glass, prices start at £20
- Ruby and diamond brooch, *circa* 1900, belonging to The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, est. £80-100
- A selection of early Victorian gilt-brass mounted glass, porcelain and wood bell pulls, *circa* 1840 and later, £300-500
- 19th Century garden lamps, used by the 6th Duke to light the gardens both at Chatsworth and at Chiswick. In the *Handbook* when discussing the Orangery, p. 8, he noted ‘of a night it (the Medici vase) hold powerful lamps, that send up such a magical light on the branches of Altingia, that people cry out Fairy land.’, estimate: £400-600
- Luggage – some of many examples to be offered in the sale