

FIVE CENTURIES OF IMPORTANT BRITISH PICTURES

Special evening sale at Sotheby's in London features British art from the 16th century through to the 20th century

Includes works by Reynolds, Turner, Zoffany, Hogarth, Millais and others

SOTHEBY'S LONDON - Almost exactly a year to the day since Sotheby's first highly successful evening sale of Important British Pictures, which established a new world auction record of £1,376,500 for a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sotheby's British picture departments will be collaborating on a second similar select sale.

It will take place in the prestigious main gallery of Sotheby's in London on the evening of Tuesday June 8, 1999 and offers collectors a sumptuous feast of the finest of British Art ranging in date from 1500 to the 1920s.

Outstanding examples include a magnificent portrait by John Zoffany, which dates from 1770, the year in which the artist first exhibited at the Royal Academy. By this date, Zoffany had become the King and Queen's most favoured painter and had established himself as the leading exponent of the conversation piece. The portrait was commissioned by Henry Knight, of Thyegston, in Glamorganshire, and shows him with his three children. It has passed by family descent and is estimated to fetch £1,000,000/1,500,000.

Another notable work is a stunning portrait of a young girl with a parrot by Allan Ramsay. The girl, said to be the artist's niece, is shown in a landscape, seated and wearing a white satin dress and holding her hand out to a parrot. Signed by the artist and dated 1744, this magnificent work is estimated to fetch £200/300,000.

Other portraits in the sale include Joseph Wright of Derby's Portrait of Colonel Charles Heathcote, a commanding work and a rare example of Wright's mastery of the small scale conversation piece (est: £400/600,000) and an impressive portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds which depicts Edward Morant and his son, both shown in a landscape setting which is estimated to fetch £200/300,000.

A screen made up of 12 panels, each panel depicting horses at dressage, is one of only five known sporting screens of the mid-18th century. Attributed to Thomas Butler, the illustrated panels of the screen are based on drawings by John Vanderbank which were published in 1729 by Josephus Sympson in his book *Twenty Five Actions of the Manege Horse* and show the influence of the artist James Seymour. Dressage was a hugely popular sport in England in the 18th century and many of the important country houses had their own indoor maneges. This very rare sporting screen is estimated to fetch £400/600,000.

Ashburnham Place, Sussex, one of the less well known of the great English houses, is the subject of an impressive panorama in oils by Peter Tillemans which is estimated to fetch £100,000/150,000.

Works in watercolour include an outstanding view of the town of Bedford by J M W Turner. This magnificent work, which has not been seen at auction since 1960, shows a calm river scene looking westwards in the late afternoon light along the River Ouse. In the distance is the Swan Inn, Bedford Bridge and the spire of St Paul's Church, while in the foreground is a fisherman accompanied by a boy. Adding a touch of humour to the work is a small scene of three boats that seem to have collided in an attempt to avoid being carried over the shallow weir. The importance of this watercolour and its excellent condition are reflected in an estimate of £300,000/500,000.

Two extremely fine vignettes also by Turner are another feature of this sale. The first, entitled *The Wreck*, is probably the most important and elaborate of Turner's vignettes to come on to the market (est: £120,000/150,000). The second is a sombre and highly atmospheric study of Calais under moonlight (est: £60,000/80,000).

Drawings by Hogarth are extremely rare which makes the appearance of his pen and ink study of *Hudibras Vanquished by Tulla* doubly exciting. Based on a mock-heroic poem by Samuel Butler published between 1663 and 1676, the drawing marks a turning point in the artist's early career before he increasingly turned to painting in oil (est: £60,000/80,000).

A stunning painting by the pre-Raphaelite artist, Sir John Everett Millais, depicts James Wyatt, a prominent figure in mid-19th century Oxford, and his granddaughter, Mary. Millais' portrait shows the pair in the comfortable first floor

sitting-room, overlooking the garden of the Wyatt family home in Oxford and was painted by the young Millais during a visit in September 1849. The portrait is an extraordinary demonstration of how Pre-Raphaelite principles of careful observation and intense colour might be adapted from the type of religious and literary subjects that Millais, Holman Hunt and D G Rossetti had previously painted, to scenes of modern life. In technical terms, the work is dazzling with an incredible attention to detail. At the same time, as a representation of mid-Victorian middle class life, the portrait of Wyatt, seated in a chair, his four year-old granddaughter leaning affectionately on his knee, it is a charming work of utter simplicity and absence of pretension. It is estimated to fetch £600,000/800,000.

Among other notable works in the Victorian paintings section of the sale is a watercolour by Dante Gabriel Rossetti which takes its inspiration from Dante's Vita Nuova. Entitled Beatrice meeting Dante at a marriage feast, denies him her salutation, the watercolour's rich colour and dense composition demonstrate the originality of Rossetti's use of the medium at an early point in his career. Dating from the early 1850s it is estimated to fetch £200,000/300,000.

A magnificent London view, with its meticulous observation of the city skyline by John MacVicar Anderson has an estimate of £100,000/150,000. John MacVicar Anderson is known principally as an architect and is recorded as having exhibited designs for club houses, offices and country houses between 1856 and 1896 at the Royal Academy. The present oil painting shows the River Thames littered with a mass of hay-barges and narrow boats with Waterloo Bridge, the spires of numerous churches of the City of London and the majestic dome of St Paul's beyond.

Albert Joseph Moore's The Decorator, a painting of a young woman in classical draperies standing at a doorway, holding a vase of flowers in her right hand is estimated at £60,000/80,000, while a portrait of Frederic Leighton by George Frederic Watts, the outcome of one of one of the most notable artistic friendships of the 19th century, is expected to fetch £50,000/70,000. A highly atmospheric painting by Edward Lear depicting a monastery on Mount Athos, is estimated to fetch £40,000/60,000.

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