

**EGYPTIAN, CLASSICAL & NEAR EASTERN ANTIQUITIES TO BE SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S IN
NEW YORK ON DECEMBER 8, 2000**



(Greek pottery Olpe from the Geometric Period, dating to the 8th century B.C)

New York, N.Y. – On December 8, 2000, Sotheby's in New York will offer for sale Egyptian, Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities, featuring an impressive group of more than 30 Greek vases, a rare and important Sasanian silver-gilt dish, and an elegant marble torso of the Eros of Centocelle. In addition, fine examples of marble and bronze sculpture, ancient jewelry and decorative objects will also be included in the sale of 313 lots.



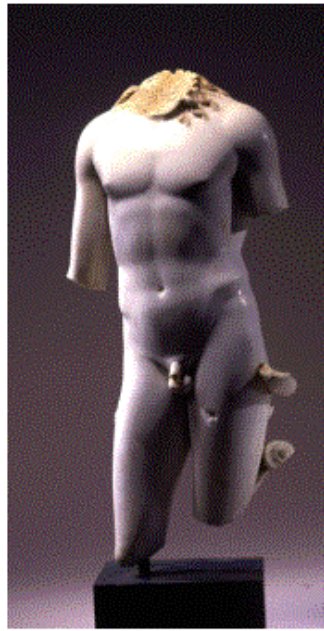
Highlighting the sale is an impressive group of more than 30 vases consigned from various private and public collections with estimates ranging from \$1,500/90,000. Among them is a wonderful Greek pottery Olpe (pictured on page 1) from the Geometric Period, dating to the 8th century B.C. One of the largest and finest of its type to appear on the auction market in many years, this vessel is decorated with a repertoire of Greek decorative designs on the body and a single snake winding up the handle. At the time of its creation, artists were beginning, for the first time, to introduce the human figure, and this object represents the sophisticated manner in which they were able to successfully render geometric design. Measuring over 20 inches in height, the jug is estimated to fetch \$20/30,000.

An Athenian black-figure amphora, circa 530 B.C. which illustrates the Greek heroes of the Trojan War, Achilles and Ajax playing a board game, a subject made famous by the amphora painted by Exekias in the Vatican, is another Greek vase included in the December sale. Homer recounts that the camps of Achilles and Ajax stood at the two vulnerable ends of the Greek encampment before Troy; however, no literary source survives for the moment illustrated, so it is possible the scene was created by painters rather than poets. Where the vase by Exekias is very sophisticated and incised with lavish detail, this representation, attributed to the Swing Painter, is simpler in style, leaving to question which figure is Achilles and which is Ajax. The relationship between the two warriors was always complicated and in this representation it is intriguing to weigh each detail of positioning and dress – pondering the question of which hero was the better and more worthy warrior. Estimated at \$40/60,000 this amphora is one of 150 vases of this subject which survive, and one of very few which remain in private hands.



Attributed to the Rycroft Painter is an Attic Black-Figure Hydria, circa 500 B.C. (pictured above). Like the aforementioned vase of Achilles and Ajax, this hydria depicts another scene with connections to the Trojan War. The body is decorated with a scene of Peleus and Thetis in a horse-drawn chariot joined by Apollo and two goddesses. It was at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis that the seeds were planted for the start of the Trojan War, when Eris instigated an argument between Hera, Athena and Aphrodite as to which one was the fairest. This in turn led to the judgement of Paris, the abduction of Helen and through the union of Thetis and Peleus, Achilles, the greatest of the Greek heroes, was born. The shoulder of the vase is painted with Herakles wrestling with the Nemean Lion, the first of his twelve labors as sentenced by Hera. Measuring over 18 inches in height, the hydria is estimated at \$60/90,000.

Consigned by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a Marble Torso of Eros, Roman Imperial, circa 2nd half of the 2nd century (pictured left). Perfect in its proportions and preservation of the ancient polished surface, this relatively small representation of the Eros of Centocelle, measures 20 inches in height and is estimated to sell for \$40/60,000.



Among the rarest objects in the sale is a Sasanian silver plate with Royal Hunter, circa 6th century A.D. (pictured on page 2) At its height, the Sasanid realm was centered in present-day Iran and Iraq, and stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean to the borders of India. With an empire comparable to that of Rome or Byzantium, the power of the King, at least in theory, was absolute and their glorified representations on silver vessels such as this one are famous. The technique is remarkable; with the parts in highest relief produced by adding separate pieces of silver, and the remainder created by carving away the background. Measuring more than 7 inches in diameter, this dish is the first of its kind to appear at auction in nearly 50 years.

A sculptural highlight of the sale is a Marble Portrait Head of a Woman, Alexandrian circa 2nd half of the 1st century B.C / 1st half of the 1st century A.D. This elegant portrait, of perhaps a member of the Julio / Claudian Family, is rendered in the typical Egyptian manner of only conceiving the most important parts of the sculpture in marble imported from Greece, and the rest of the sculpture in limestone for example. Her slender neck, rounded chin and prominent upper lip, coupled with a very characteristic hairstyle suggest that perhaps this portrait could be of Agrippina Minor or Antonia Minor. Consigned by a European private collector this marble head is estimated at \$20/30,000.

Another highlight from the selection of Greek vases is a group of Three Fragments from an Attic Black-Figure Panathenaic Prize Amphora, circa 500-490 B.C. Attributed to the Kleophrades Painter, the three pieces shows fragments of a scene including Athena and two runners. and is estimated to fetch \$20/30,000. Every four years the Athenians celebrated the Panathenaic Festival in honor of their city goddess Athena with musical and athletic competitions. The victors were awarded one metratres (over ten gallons) of olive oil from the sacred groves of the goddess contained in amphorae of this kind.



Also included in the sale is a selection of gold, bronze, glass and bead jewelry with estimates ranging from \$1,200/15,000. Highlights include a Greek gold wreath dating to the 4th/3rd century B.C. with pairs of laurel or olive leaves attached with gold wire, estimated at \$5/8,000; three gold bracelets, Egypt, Roman period, circa 1st/2nd century A.D. estimated at \$3/5,000; and a selection of group lots of Egyptian faience and glass bead necklaces dating from 2000 B.C – 200 A.D. with estimates ranging from \$1,500/3,500.

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