

## **ROERICH PAINTING REDISCOVERED IN AMERICAN WAREHOUSE EXPECTED TO SELL FOR £200,000 IN SOTHEBY'S RUSSIAN SALE**

A MONUMENTAL painting by one of Russia's most internationally renowned early 20th century artists, re-discovered recently after lying forgotten in a warehouse for more than 50 years, is to be sold in Sotheby's Russian Sale in London on Wednesday, October 7, 1998.

Entitled *The Treasure of the Angels*, the massive canvas, which covers an entire wall, is the work of Nicholas Konstantinovich Roerich. It shows a procession of angels carrying spears and shields outside the walls of the Holy City, a medieval Kremlin in the Northern Russian landscape. It is expected to fetch £180,000-220,000.

Arguably Roerich's most significant work of the period, the picture was completed in 1905 at the time of Russia's proto-Revolution. It was inspired by Byzantine art, probably as a design, never executed, for a large fresco for the Church of the Holy Spirit in Talashkino, an artist's colony from the beginning of the century until the Revolution.

Rather than sell the painting, Roerich kept it for several decades in his family collection. It was exhibited all over Europe and was taken by the artist as he moved from Russia to Scandinavia, to England and finally to America where he was to settle. In 1923, a museum dedicated to his work was established in New York and the *Treasure of the Angels* hung over the central staircase. A well known picture of the artist shows him standing on the staircase of the museum with the painting in the background.

The museum closed in the 1930s during the Depression, and its collection was acquired by its chairman, Louis Horch. The *Treasure of the Angels* was rolled up and put into storage and in 1971 the Horch family donated it to the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, outside of Boston, where it was once again consigned to a storeroom. The masterpiece will be on public view for the first time in more than half a century when viewing begins for the Russian Sale at Sotheby's London on Sunday, October 4 1998.

In addition to this important re-discovery, the sale will feature fine works from a number of important Russian artists, including an arresting canvas by Sergei Yurievich Sudeikin entitled *Harlequin and Pierrot*, possibly a double self-portrait (estimate: £25,000/35,000). This painting is being sold by a direct descendant of Murray Hoffman, a contemporary of the artist with whom Sudeikin shared studio space and often painted in Woodstock, New York. The canvas was given to Hoffman by the artist as a gift.

The work, dating from 1927, belongs to Sudeikin's American period, the latter half of his career after he left Russia for Paris and then New York. The painting is thought to be a double self-portrait, the stylised, almost masked, features of the Harlequin's face mirroring that of the Pierrot with whom he shares a game of cards while on the table is a third face; that of Tragedy.

The sale includes a number of impressive portraits, including a characteristic piece by Konstantin Egrovich Makovsky, brother of the genre painter Vladimir, entitled *Portrait of a Young Russian Beauty* (estimate: £25,000/35,000). Executed in a head and shoulder format which the artist favoured, known in Russian as *glovka* or little head, the painting exhibits a masterly use of bright, complementary colours and painstaking attention to detail for which Makovsky was known.

Additional painting highlights in the sale include a work by Timofei Andreevich Neff, painter to the Imperial Court and the favourite artist of Nicholas I. *Female Nude with Draperies in a Landscape* (estimate: £28/35,000) should be viewed in the context of his academic training, including the Dresden Academy and repeated visits to Rome including a direct meeting with the Nazarenes. Also of note is *A View of the Bay of Naples with the Castel Del'Ovo as Seen from Posillipo* by Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky (estimate: £100,000/120,000).

Elsewhere in the sale, a 127-piece porcelain dinner service is part of the Babigon service designed for the Grand Palace of Peterhof by the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory under Nicholas I and II and Alexander III. The service was completed in 1824 and additional pieces were made from 1839-1840, doubling its original number. Neo-classical in style, each piece is painted with a band of gold foliage against a pale gray background within further burnished gilt and puce coloured bands, on a white background. The 127 pieces, which include 25 dinner plates, are estimated to sell for £40,000 to £50,000.

Additional decorative highlights include an important pair of ormolu-mounted malachite tazze, from the early 19th century (estimate: £30,000/35,000) and an impressive console table with the base formed as an Imperial eagle, circa 1870, which was most likely produced for an ambassador's residence (estimate: £25,000/35,000). Enamel pieces in the sale are highlighted by a jewelled gold-mounted guilloché enamel snuff box by Fabergé workmaster Michael Perchin, circa 1890 (estimate: £18,000/22,000) and an impressive silver and enamel nautical cigar box by Grachev, emblazoned with crossed banners of the Imperial Russian Navy (estimate; £15,000/ 18,000).

The sale will continue with icons, Russian pictures and works of art being offered on Thursday, 8 October 1998. Included in this sale will be a series of original and period photographs of the Imperial family, highlighted by a well known image of Prince Felix Yusoupov dressed in his famous costume and bearing the sitter's autograph. Estimates for photographs range from £400 to £3,000.