

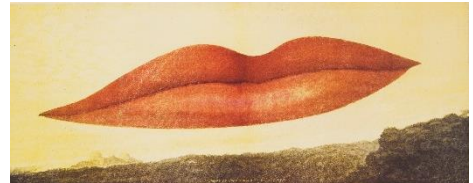
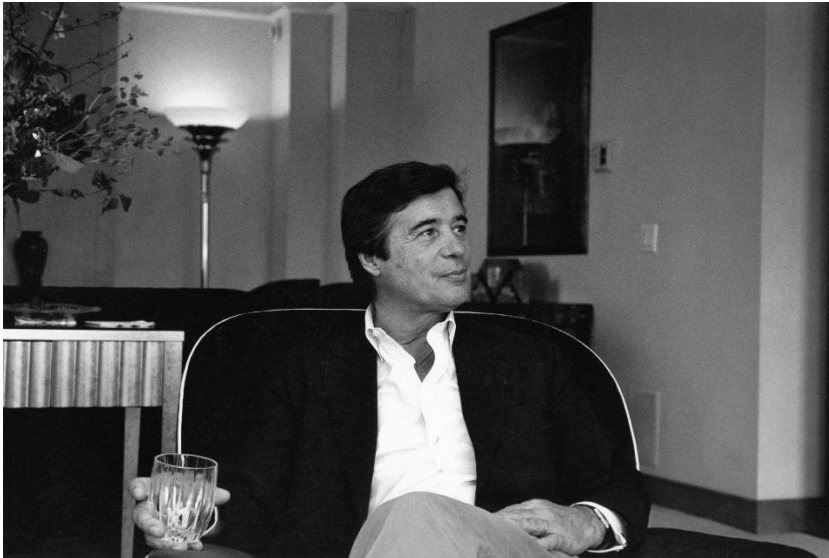
# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | LONDON | 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

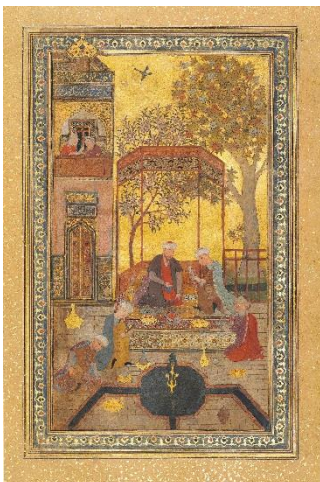
## The Oliver Hoare Collection

*"The function of objects is to make us dream." Oliver Hoare,  
Every Object Tells a Story, 2015*

Christie's London, 25 October 2019



**London** – On October 25<sup>th</sup>, Christie's will present the collection of the late Oliver Hoare (1945-2018). A highly influential and much loved art dealer who specialised in Islamic art, Oliver inaugurated Islamic sales at Christie's in 1975 when working for the auction house. Known for celebrating the remarkable stories of objects from across countless countries and eras, and the joy and intrigue that they could bring, Oliver assembled a collection of works of art for his exhibitions under the banner '*Every Object Tells a Story*' where a number of these pieces were shown. Comprising approximately 130 lots, the sale will include works of art from all over the globe, ancient and modern, with individual estimates from £300 to over £1.5 million.



Led by works from the Islamic world, the top lot is an exceptional 15<sup>th</sup> century Timurid manuscript – known as the *Jam-I Jam* – by Mawlana Shir Ali, with four illustrations by the celebrated and extremely rare artist [Kemal al-Din] Bihzad, which was once part of the Mughal Imperial Library; it is the earliest known work by the artist, produced with the calligrapher with whom he worked again on a manuscript now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (estimate: £1-1.5 million, *illustrated left*). Equally characteristic of the collector's eye is an arresting 17<sup>th</sup> century silver apple with bite marks; it opens to reveal a pomander in the shape of a skull, which is reputed to have been in the possession of King James II (estimate: £12,000-18,000, *illustrated above*). It was sold at Christie's in 1855 as part of the Bernal Collection.

**William Robinson, Christie's International Head of Group, World Art:** *"As head of the Islamic Department, I for many years enjoyed filling the position which was first created for Oliver. It therefore*

gives me huge pleasure that Christie's have been asked to handle the Oliver Hoare sale, his family actively wanting to encourage new collectors, and with them, new stories to be told. Oliver was such an enthusiast for each individual work, the story it can tell, that it came alive when he discussed it. Our aim is to recreate the spirit of Oliver: both the relaxed gallery ambience, with an encouragement of dialogue, and by conveying the simple wonder of arcane, intriguing and simply beautiful works of art."

**Oliver's children, Tristan, Damian and Olivia:** "Our father's interest in Islamic art can be traced back to his childhood when he was gifted a large silver coin from Persia; from that moment, it became a place of mystery and fascination to which he longed to go. That opportunity would only come after he became a student in Paris, from where he set off overland by train and then bus, taking more than a week to reach Tehran. He had a total fascination with all objects; both the modest and the masterpiece, and from across cultures - he loved their stories, their beauty and the potential to learn from them. This last point was perhaps the most important for him and the reason he never considered himself the owner of any object, his intention always being to learn what he could and then pass it on. It is in this spirit that the family are happy to offer this collection in the hope that others will be able to enjoy, learn and delight in these objects, just as he did."



The collection also features a *Mille-Fleurs Unicorn Tapestry*, a masterpiece of the Middle Ages created in Flanders between 1500 and 1530 (estimate: £120,000-180,000, *illustrated left*). This tapestry is from the suite of tapestries known as the 'Lady and the Unicorn'; a series of seven such *mille-fleurs* tapestries in the Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum New York, also display the initials

AE and are also from the La Rochefoucault family, as the present example is believed to be. Traditionally the Unicorn was a symbol of feminine chastity and the cult of the Virgin Mary and this tapestry shows an elegant, richly attired Lady seated with a Unicorn resting his head in her lap, with another Lady and a young man to her right.

*A l'Heure de l'observatoire – les amoureux* (*Observatory Time – the Lovers*) is one of Man Ray's most celebrated images (estimate: £30,000-50,000). This lithograph, one of only two known colour trial proofs before the edition of 150, is based on the painting of the same name which was executed from 1932-34. Depicting the lips of the photographer Lee Miller, floating in a sky above the Paris observatory, the painting was made in response to the ending of their relationship in 1932, and has become an icon of surrealism.

The source of the fascinating design for an unusual *Silk Heraldic Animal Rug*, possibly Kashan, Central Persia, *circa* 1910, remains somewhat of a mystery (estimate £15,000-25,000, *detail illustrated right*). A highly unusual composition comprising ninety-eight figures of heraldic, realistic and abstract form that are rich in moralistic and religious iconography.



Elsewhere in the sale, the diverse array of further highlights offered continues, including: a Maghribi Qur'an bifolium, Andalusia, *circa* 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century (estimate: £40,000-60,000); a unique gelatin silver print photograph by François-Marie Banier (b. 1947) depicting a table at Oliver Hoare's office with many of his favourite objects at the time, entitled *Untitled*, 2011 (estimate : £20,000-30,000); a giant marble foot that is reminiscent of the ancient foot of the Colossus of Constantine and the enormous Roman foot in the Piè di Marmo in Rome, which was probably created at the behest of a Grand Tourist to



the Eternal City dreaming of recreating its artistic glories in their own home (estimate: £15,000-25,000, *illustrated page 2*); an elegant, gilt-lacquered stucco figure of a Lama (estimate: £4,000-6,000) and a monumental George III library desk exhibiting exquisite craftsmanship and dating to the days of 'a gentleman with a library' (estimate: £10,000-15,000). It has aristocratic provenance, having been formerly the property of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

---

**PRESS CONTACTS:**

Hannah Schweiger | 020 7389 2964 | [hschweiger@christies.com](mailto:hschweiger@christies.com)

**Notes to Editors**

**About Oliver Hoare**

Oliver Hoare was one of the most influential art dealers in the Islamic world. Having joined Christie's in 1967, where he founded the Islamic Art department, he left in 1975 to establish his own business. He went on to advise a number of collectors and museums throughout the Middle East, as well as in Europe, the US and Japan, including the National Museum of Kuwait, the Nuhad Es-Said Collection (Beirut), and the Qatar National Museum. In 1994, he negotiated the exchange between the Iranian Government and the Houghton Family Trust whereby Iran recovered the most significant part of the 'Houghton Shahnameh', the most important illustrated manuscript ever created in Persia, in exchange for Willem de Kooning's painting 'Woman III' which was in the Tehran Contemporary Art Museum. He published 'Portraits of the Masters', the first comprehensive book on Tibetan portrait bronzes (two volumes, 2003 and 2005), and 'The Silent Orchestra', a catalogue of Islamic musical instruments (2005). In 2015, he hosted 'Every Object Tells a Story' at 33 Fitzroy Square, an exhibition that welcomed thousands of visitors and whose accompanying catalogue was chosen as one of the best art books of that year by the Evening Standard. The exhibition theme and title was repeated in 2017, this time at Sir John Lavery's old studio in Cromwell Place, where his choice of objects ranged from unicorn horns to Bactrian treasures.

Oliver's art dealing legacy continues through his two sons: Tristan who has a successful contemporary art gallery in Fitzroy Square which was established in 2009, and which specialises in emerging and established artists, and Damian, who continues his father's business.

**About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had auction sales in the first half of 2019 that totalled £2.2 billion / \$2.8 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie's offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

*\*Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

Images available on request

**FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON:**

