

CHRISTIE'S
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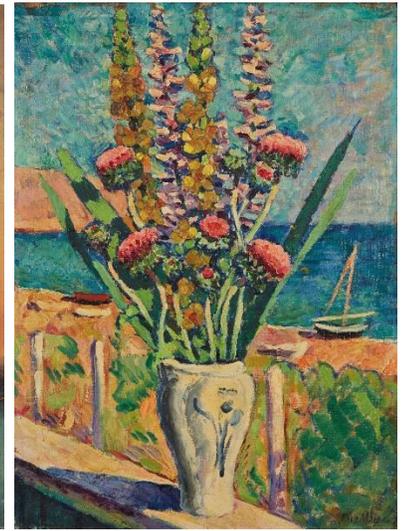
**MUSEUM MASTERPIECES AND WORKS FROM
OVER 50 PRIVATE COLLECTIONS LEAD THE
- RUSSIAN ART AUCTION -
1 JUNE 2015, LONDON**



NIKO PIROSMANI (1863-1918)
Arsenal Hill at night
oil on oilcloth - 110.8 x 87.9 cm
Painted in 1907-1908
estimate: £800,000-1,200,000



IVAN AIVAZOVSKY (1817-1900)
American Shipping off the Rock of Gibraltar
oil on canvas - 108.2 x 133.8 cm
estimate: £2,000,000-2,500,000



ILYA MASHKOV (1881-1944)
Flowers with the sea beyond
oil on canvas - 73 x 54 cm
Painted in 1916
estimate: £400,000-600,000

London – Christie's Russian Art sale on 1st of June will offer a selection of works by numerous highly sought-after artists including Ilya Mashkov, Niko Pirosmani, Nicholas Roerich and Ivan Aivazovsky. Session II will offer Russian Works of Art from the esteemed workshops of Fabergé, private and Imperial porcelain factories and renowned sculptors. This sale continues Christie's distinctive focus on offering works from private sources (over 75%), many of which are appearing at auction for the first time in history.

Ivan Aivazovsky's *American shipping off the Rock of Gibraltar* is one of the finest examples by Russia's superlative maritime artist to ever appear at auction. Of museum quality, this work was painted in 1873 and sold for the first time at Christie's in 2007, establishing a new world auction record for the artist at £2.7 million, which was maintained for five years. An artist who enjoyed the patronage of three successive Tsars, in this work Aivazovsky captures the dawn of the steam age, depicting an American ship crossing the waters of the Mediterranean (estimate: £2,000,000-2,500,000, *illustrated above centre*).

Nicholas Roerich, author of the second most expensive painting ever sold in a Russian Art sale, is represented with two paintings, *White and heavenly*, illustrated right, and *The Host of Gesar Khan*, both offered from the Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York to benefit the museum's acquisition fund. *White and heavenly* is part of the 'His country' series, which consists of twelve paintings in museum collections, presenting a unique opportunity for collectors to acquire the only example likely to appear on the market. *The Host of Gesar Khan* is the largest known work devoted to this theme, which represented for the artist the triumph of good over evil (estimate: each work £500,000-700,000 – see separate press release [here](#)).



Fewer than ten oils by Niko Pirosmani have ever appeared at auction; due to the turbulence of the early 20th century and the artist's working method, many of Pirosmani's paintings have not survived. *Arsenal Hill at night*, painted in 1907-08, is one of the most significant examples known to exist outside of museum collections. Painted directly onto black oilcloth, the present work is distinguished by both its provenance, having been presented to the French poet, writer and critic Louis Aragon as well as its unusual subject matter: an engaging landscape rather than a tavern still life (estimate: £800,000-1,200,000 *illustrated on page one left*).

Works from Ilya Mashkov's most lauded period, the 1910s, are rarely seen at auction but are the canvasses responsible for his reputation as one of the most important artists of Russian modernity. *Flowers with the sea* beyond unusually combines a still life and a landscape; Mashkov reconciles the two themes in a distinctly modern manner, his brushstrokes demonstrating his liberation from academic realism while his use of colour to structure the composition signals his admiration for the French modernists. The canvas is rendered all the more interesting by the verso, an incomplete still life with fish likely dating to circa 1912 and closely related to a finished composition in the collection of the Regional Ulyanovsk Art Museum (estimate: £400,000-600,000, *illustrated page one right*).

The sale also include important paintings by Ivan Shishkin, Nikolai Sverchkov, Alexander Bogomazov, Alexander Volkov, Filipp Maliavin and Alexandre Iacovleff among others.



The Russian works of art section will offer 165 lots and is highlighted by a salmon pink guilloché enamel desk clock. This spectacular desk clock was made by Faberge's most celebrated workmaster, Michael Perchin, whose workshops created the most exquisite objects, using refined guilloché enamelling and applied varicolour gold decorations, inspired by eighteenth-century French goldsmiths. This clock is previously unseen at auction and has been held in a private Italian collection since the early 1900s (estimate: £80,000-120,000, *illustrated left*). Also by Fabergé but the work of another famous and distinctive Russian silversmith, Feodor Rückert (best known for his lavish cloisonné enamels), is a beautiful kovsh in Pan-Russian style, decorated with an

alkonost, an iconic image of Russian folklore. The alkonost is a creature with the body of a bird and the head of a beautiful woman which emits such entrancing sounds that those who hear them forget everything they know and seek nothing more ever after (estimate: £40,000-60,000).

Russian and Soviet porcelain represents a large part of the works of art section, including a very rare and important porcelain group devoted to the Papanin polar expedition, which took place in 1937-38 and received much attention as a prominent Soviet achievement. The 40 cm. high porcelain sculpture was made by the Lomonosov porcelain factory in late 1938, after the expedition returned safely. This particular example is offered from a private collection and is appearing on the market for the first time (estimate: £40,000-60,000, *illustrated right*).



Christie's will also offer 55 lots from another important private porcelain collection which includes military plaques, plates, figures and Easter eggs by the Imperial Porcelain Factory and others. This is part IV from one of the most important private Russian porcelain collections known, which was assembled over a 50 year period and is also offered at auction for the first time. Part III of this collection doubled its pre-sale estimate in November 2014 with a result of £925,000 for 61 pieces.

A monumental and rare bronze sculpture of Spinoza by Mark Antokolskii is another highlight of the Works of Art section. Antokolskii's sculptures epitomised the heights reached in Russian realism in the nineteenth century and were admired for their psychological complexity. 'Baruch Spinoza' is one of Antokolskii's most celebrated compositions (estimate: £50,000-70,000, *illustrated right*).



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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers around 450 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. Private sales totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion).

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, New Delhi, Mumbai and Dubai.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

