

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT | LONDON | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 01 MARCH 2021

شاهکار هنر دوره قاجار

## IMPORTANT QAJAR PAINTING TO LEAD CHRISTIE'S ISLAMIC ART AUCTION ON 1 APRIL 2021

A DISCOVERY AT BONNET HOUSE MUSEUM & GARDENS IN FLORIDA



A Qajar painting depicting a Persian New Year, *Norouz*, procession from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, measuring 256x442cm estimate GBP 1,000,000-1,500,000

**London** – Christie's next sale of *Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds*, which takes place on 1 April 2021, will be led by a recently rediscovered Qajar painting of the utmost importance. The painting, depicting a Persian New Year, *Norouz*, procession, was bought by the artist and collector Frederic Clay Bartlett (1873-1953) in the early 1920s in the US, to be hung in his studio at the family's winter retreat "Bonnet House" in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The Bartletts were important collectors of French Impressionist and Modern art. His collection in this field was donated to the Art Institute of Chicago, where the 25 paintings comprise the Art Institute's Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection. As for the art collection at Bonnet House Museum & Gardens, it comprises works by Frederic Clay Bartlett and Evelyn Fortune Bartlett, as well as objects collected throughout their lives, creating a historic artists' estate.



**Patrick Shavloske, CEO, Bonnet House Museum & Garden** commented: "Bonnet House Museum & Gardens has been honored to steward this incredible painting since Evelyn Fortune Bartlett preserved her beloved Fort Lauderdale, Florida home as an historic house museum in 1983. But the time has come for the Qajar painting to move to a new home that is better positioned to give the artwork the care and honor it so richly deserves. Proceeds from the Qajar

painting sale will be used by the museum to conserve its paintings by Frederic Clay Bartlett and Evelyn Fortune Bartlett as well as the historic Bonnet House itself, also an artful creation of the Bartletts."

*The painting in situ at the studio of Frederic Clay Bartlett at Bonnet House Museum & Garden*

The monumental painting to be offered at Christie's dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was painted as demonstration of royal power. It is the largest of its kind ever to appear at auction, measuring 101 x 174 inches and will be offered with an estimate of GB Pounds 1,000,000-1,500,000. Only one other fragment of a similar painting has come under the hammer. That was slightly smaller and sold at auction in 1975.

Qajar art is recognizable for its distinctive style of portraiture, and the present work includes a total of 24 portraits of dignitaries and princes at a Persian New Year celebration, during the so called *Saf-e-Salam* or 'greetings queue'. Represented are sons, sons-in-law and grandsons of Fath 'Ali Shah (1722-1834), the second ruler of the Qajar dynasty. They are painted standing in three ranks of eight according to age. Each is depicted at three quarter length with their arms folded, in full court dress with profusely jeweled crowns, belts, swords and armbands wearing costumes of red, tan, blue, black and gray.

Commissioned by Fath 'Ali Shah, this painting would have been completed by a team working under the supervision of the principal court artist, 'Abdullah Khan. Fath 'Ali Shah was the first shah to reunite the country after seventy years of unrest and to mark this turning point in history, he created a new capital Tehran. His reign is noted for its elaborate court protocol, pomp and tremendous cultural production in all fields, including architecture, silver, paintings, theatre, literature, to name a few.

The Bonnet House Museum & Gardens painting is a display of Persian royal glory – all figures submitting to the Persian king. The original complete composition would have depicted Fath 'Ali Shah enthroned in the centre with the most senior sons. All of the figures in this undated panel are identified by Persian inscriptions, which is a feature also seen on other known examples. As part of the *Norouz* ceremony the Shah presented each of his chief courtiers with a complete brocade coat and a shawl, which they can be seen wearing in this painting.

**Sara Plumbly, Head of Islamic & Indian Art Department** commented: "It is a great pleasure and an honor to have been part of this painting's 'rediscovery' and to be able to bring it to the market for the first time in over 100 years. Frederic Bartlett bought this masterpiece at a time when Qajar art was under-appreciated. He bought it simply because it captured his eye as a painting of high quality and real decorative power – an artist's appreciation of art. It is an outlier in the collection of Bonnet House and their decision now to separate it from the core collection in order to secure the future of the wider

Bonnet House collection is perfectly understandable. We hope to fulfill Bonnet House's wish to find a new home for the painting where it will be able to be seen and appreciated by many for the masterpiece that it is."

### History of Bonnet House



Hugh Taylor Birch purchased the Bonnet House site in 1895 and gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter Helen and her husband, Chicago artist Frederic Clay Bartlett in 1919. The newlyweds began construction of Bonnet House in 1920 as a winter retreat where Frederic could pursue painting and Helen could compose music and poetry. Tragedy struck in 1925 when Helen died from breast cancer. Frederic's visits to Bonnet House then became sporadic until 1931 when he married Evelyn Fortune Lilly. With this marriage, a renaissance occurred on the site as Frederic

and Evelyn entered a prolific period of embellishing Bonnet House with the decorative elements that delight visitors to this day.

Frederic died in 1953, but Evelyn continued to return each winter until 1995. Today, the estate is a preeminent house museum dedicated not only to historic and environmental preservation, but also to learning and creative expression – much like the Bartletts and Birches themselves.

---

#### PRESS CONTACT:

Alexandra Kindermann | +41 79 1014196 | [akindermann@christies.com](mailto:akindermann@christies.com)

#### About the Bonnet House Museum & Gardens:

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Bonnet House Museum & Gardens is a 35-acre subtropical estate and historic house museum located in the heart of Fort Lauderdale. Bonnet House, Inc. is a nonprofit, 501c3, whose mission is to preserve this unique historic estate of Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett. Through enjoyable and enriching cultural experiences, the Museum connects today's community to the Bartletts' architectural, artistic and environmental legacy. Bonnet House is located at 900 North Birch Road, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304 and is open for tours Tuesday-Sunday from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, visit [www.bonnethouse.org](http://www.bonnethouse.org).

## About Christie's

Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. 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 clients and online sales are offered year-round across all categories. Christie's global presence is spread across a network of international salerooms and 61 representatives and offices. Christies.com provides detailed articles and videos on the objects offered for sale alongside the latest advances in digital viewing tools to make Christie's accessible to all.

*\*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:**

