

For Immediate Release

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GLITTERING ICONS AT CHRISTIE'S THIS AUTUMN



Archangels Michael and Gabriel, circa 1400
Russian (Pskov)
Estimate for the pair: £90,000-100,000

Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World

Christie's South Kensington

27 November 2006

London – A pair of rare and early Russian icons are among the highlights to be offered in a dedicated sale of *Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World* to be held at Christie's South Kensington on Monday 27 November 2006. The sale features religious artefacts from the main Orthodox Christian countries from the 14th century through to the 20th century. Nearly 100 exquisite icons from both Greece and Russia will be included, together with a diverse selection of ecclesiastical works as well as private devotion icons. This auction is one of five devoted to Russian Art in London from 28-30 November 2006. The sales will include *Important Russian Pictures, Works of Art, Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World, Russian Books* as well as *British, Continental and Russian Pictures*. Presale viewing for the Russian Week sales will take place in London from 24-28 November 2006. (Separate press release available).

A unique and exceptionally early pair of Russian (Pskov) icons of *Archangels Michael and Gabriel, circa 1400* (estimate for the pair: £90,000-100,000) is one of the star lots of the sale (*illustrated above*). Beautifully executed and in good condition, they are representative of the Russian icon painting of the period, with each red-winged angel set against a golden background. The pair was formerly in the celebrated Hann Collection, having been acquired from the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow in the 1930s.

A monumentally sized icon, *The Mother of God of the Passion*, Cretan, first half of the 16th century (estimate: £80,000-90,000) is another highlight of the sale. This icon retains the typical features of Cretan icons of the period with angular, geometric folded clothing and fine white brushstrokes on the flesh.

A large icon of *St John the Baptist*, circa 1700, from North Greece or Mount Athos (estimate: £90,000-100,000) is also in the sale. This work is thought to have been hung on the iconostasis, a screen that separates the nave from the sanctuary. Skilfully painted, a dark clothed St John with shining orange wings is set against a bright gold background. A further highlight from Mount Athos is *The Mother of God with Prophets*, dated 1641 (estimate: £40,000-50,000), signed by an unrecorded artist, Antonis. This example is a typical monastic work which visualizes the ascetic spirituality by combining the visual image with verses from liturgical scriptures. Set within a twisted gold frame, against a gold background, sits the Mother of God with child flanked either side by archangels, prophets and hymnographers.

The sale also features a selection of ecclesiastical works ranging from vestment accessories to objects of benediction including a number of crosses from Mount Athos, mainly 18th century (estimates range from £800-1,200). Among the highlights is a pair of rare small wooden carvings showing scenes from the life of Christ, Russian, 16th century (estimate: £4,000-6,000 each). They are thought to have been used as decoration from either a piece of furniture or casket. In addition, the sale boasts an exceptionally unusual and rare Greek 17th century painted casket (estimate: £12,000-16,000). Decorating the outside of the casket is a depiction of the Holy Trinity surrounded by medical saints on the other sides. This casket would have been used to keep Holy Myrrh which is extracted once every ten years from the Patriarch in Constantinople. Holy Myrrh was considered so important that the casket bears the holes that would have nailed it to a fixed place within the church to secure it from theft.

A selection of small private devotional icons is included in the sale. These range from traditional wooden examples, both Greek and Russian, 18th to 20th century (estimates range from £300 to £16,000) alongside elaborate and decorative *oklads*, made of either silver, silver-gilt, and or enamel. Among those covered by enamelled *oklads* is a presentation triptych, Russian, 1896-1908 (estimate: £12,000-16,000). Here, the central panel depicts the *Mandylion* flanked by Saints Sergei and Nikolas, within a frame of elaborate cloisonné enamel in pink, green and blue. On the reverse is a charming inscription from a group of friends dedicating the triptych to a friend who was leaving to go on a trip. In addition, there is also a selection of Easter Eggs, made of either porcelain or papier mache, which date mainly from the late 19th and early 20th century. The subject matter painted on each relates principally to Easter subjects (estimates range from £150-1,200).

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Images available on request

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Russian Art Week at Christie's in London – 28-30 November 2006

Calendar of sales:

28 November - Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World	South Kensington
29 November - Important Russian Pictures	King Street
29 November - Russian Works of Art	King Street
30 November - Russian Books	King Street
30 November - British, Continental and Russian Pictures	South Kensington