

CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE | South Kensington | 2 November 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A CENTURY AFTER MODERN GREYHOUND RACING WAS BORN A RARE GREYHOUND MASCOT WITH ROYAL PROVENANCE LEADS CHRISTIE'S LALIQUE AUCTION



René Lalique, *Levrier, A*, designed in 1929 Estimate: £300,000-500,000

South Kensington, London - The venerable French glass, Lalique, comes to auction on 13 November at Christie's – the only auction house with a sale dedicated to the renowned glassmaker. One-hundred-and-twenty lots feature with estimates ranging from £500 to £500,000, making this is an unmissable opportunity for collectors of these extraordinarily designed vases, bowls, tableware, perfume bottles, mascots and lighting. All items on offer will be on view at Christie's South Kensington, London, 10-13 November.

The sale is led by a rare *Levrier, A* mascot of a racing greyhound (estimate: £300,000-500,000) *illustrated above*. Listed in contemporary publication, *The Decorative Art Year Book of The Studio 1931*, as designed for H.R.H. Prince George, later the Duke of Kent, in 1929 by the master glassmaker, René Lalique and is signed 'R. LALIQUE'. The model was never put into production and the current piece on offer is the only known example, sure to arouse the attention of dedicated collectors of both Lalique and car memorabilia. It is to be sold complete with the original chromium mount, together with a bulb, wiring and original blue coloured glass filter.

THE HISTORY OF THE LEVRIER, A



The exceptionally rare work *Levriër, A* was inherited by the present owner and has been in the family for over twenty-five years. Its history prior to this remains tantalizingly elusive. It is the most important of the thirty car mascots René Lalique designed between 1920 and 1931. Since the 1920s, following the invention of the motorcar by Karl Benz in the 1880s, and the introduction of the assembly-line method by Henry Ford in 1914, nearly all cars have been mass-produced to meet demand. Small metal sculptures began to replace the thermometers and safety valves topping automobile radiators, the most famous of

which was the Rolls-Royce *Spirit of Ecstasy*, also known as the *Flying Lady* in 1911. Well before manufacturers offered their own hood ornaments, affluent owners personalized the family car — Bentley or Bugatti, Hispano-Suiza or Isotta-Fraschini — with favorite designs, usually made of metal. Lalique's stunning glass mascots were a particularly luxurious way to personalize the most exclusive automobiles; his first car mascot was a direct commission from André Citroën. Soon Lalique was adapting a broad variety of his 250 perfume bottles and paperweight designs into mascots to sit above the car radiator. Whilst a number of the other models were originally conceived as paperweights, this masterpiece was only realised as a mascot, eloquently evoking a sense of movement and speed appropriate for the golden age of the motorcar. Today, Lalique's car mascots are still described as "*among the most treasured automotive accessories*".

GREYHOUNDS AND RACING

Often used as a mascot by sports teams, until the early 20th century the Greyhound was principally bred and trained for hunting and coursing, particularly deer. A number of historical figures and celebrities are recorded as having owned or raced greyhounds including many members of the British Royal family: William I, Richard II, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Queen Elizabeth I, James I, James II, Prince Albert, George V, Princess Mary, and others all had greyhounds as companions.

Greyhound racing, in its modern, recognizable form, was born in 1912, following Owen Patrick Smith's invention of the mechanical or artificial hare using circular or oval tracks. The sport, a development of 'coursing' using live game and a straight track, was introduced to Britain in 1926 with the launch of the Greyhound Racing Association, and the first British meeting was held at Manchester's *Belle Vue Stadium*. The sport's popularity grew and spread through cities and towns throughout the U.K. quickly; by the end of 1927 a total of forty tracks were in operation.

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Public Exhibition:

Saturday, 10 November: 11.00am – 5.00pm

Sunday, 11 November: 11.00am – 5.00pm

Monday, 12 November: 9.00am – 7.30pm

Tuesday, 13 November: 9.00am – midday

Auction:

Lalique

13 November 2011 at 2pm

Christie's South Kensington

Open seven days a week, Christie's South Kensington is one of the busiest salerooms in the UK attracting over 200,000 visitors each year. With over 100 sales and offering more than 20,000 lots annually, estimates start from £300. Interiors sales dedicated to home furnishings are held three times a month alongside regular Sunday sales of single-owner collections. Specialised sales for the avid collector are scheduled throughout the year according to category, and include Film Posters, Pop Memorabilia, Antiquities, Jewellery, 20th Century British Art and Chinese Works of Art, among others. In 2011 Christie's South Kensington realised the highest ever total for the second successive year with sales of £115.9 million / \$186.6 million.

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2012 that totaled £2.2 billion/\$3.5 billion. 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 over 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 and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £413.4 million/ \$661.5 million in the first half of 2012, an increase of 53% on the previous year.

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, and Hong Kong. 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, 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.*

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