THE LOUIS GRANDCHAMP DES RAUX COLLECTION
“An Eye for Elegance”

The Most Significant Collection of French 17th and 18th Century Paintings
To come on the Market for 20 years will be offered for Sale
At Sotheby’s Paris on 26 March 2015

Anne Vallayer-Coster, *Portrait of a Woman with Violin* (1773)
Est. €300,000 400,000

Paris, 14 January 2015 - Sotheby’s, in association with Artcurial and the Cabinet Eric Turquin, is delighted to present the Louis Grandchamp des Raux collection - the most significant collection of French 17th and 18th century paintings to be offered at auction for the last twenty years. The sale will take place at Sotheby’s in Paris on 26 March 2015, after a travelling exhibition in New York and Brussels.
Built up over more than 25 years, this magnificent collection consists of around 50 paintings, mainly from the French and North European schools. It provides an overview of 17th and 18th century French painting that is both consistent and refined, with works from the greatest masters of the period, such as François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, François Desportes, Louyse Moillon, Anne Vallayer-Coster and Hubert Robert, together with lesser-known artists like Pierre-Antoine Lemoine and Nicolas-Bernard Lépicié.

The dedicated collector Louis Grandchamp des Raux poured his passion into his collection. He faithfully followed the advice of specialist in the field, particularly Expert Eric Turquin, humbly acknowledging that he owed everything to them.

Eric Turquin said: ‘I met Louis Grandchamp des Raux in the 1980 (...) It was the start of a project that lasted nearly 30 years. He was initially drawn to Dutch and Flemish painting from the first half of the 17th century. Then, as he explored painting with increasing passion, his taste naturally developed – firstly for 17th century French painting, then for that of the 18th century, whose delicacy and refinement he relished. The great step forward came with the purchase of two major Desportes, some Boucher, and finally some Fragonard: the crowning achievement of his approach as an aesthete and collector. The sale of this collection of paintings is tremendously exciting. It illustrates the many stages of this journey, which is more or less the path I followed myself at the beginning of my career as a specialist.’

**MASTERPIECES OF 17TH AND 18TH CENTURY FRENCH PAINTING**

The collection contains numerous masterpieces, including a *Portrait of a Woman with Violin* executed in 1773 by Anne Vallayer-Coster, one of the very few women painters who managed to establish herself in a realm still dominated by men (estimate: €300,000-400,000 / $354,000-470,000). Singled out by Marie-Antoinette, Vallayer-Coster carved herself out a niche at court, and received numerous still life commissions from the royal family. This painting is a rare example of the few portraits we know by this artist. Clearly influenced by her predecessor, the genius Jean-Siméon Chardin, it evinces an approach to the portrait that is both poetic and psychological. She draws us into the intimate world of the model: a young violinist who has broken off her musical exercises to peruse her score, and seems lost in thought.

Another talented woman painter, and a veritable master in the art of the still life, was Louyse Moillon, who produced *Still life with peaches on a pewter plate* at the age of 24 in 1634 (estimate: €400,000 - 600,000 / $470,000-709,000). She goes right to the heart of the matter, inviting the viewer to contemplate peaches presented very simply, with striking realism. She gives the fruit a leading role, staging them in a subtle play of light and shade in a sober, refined composition.
Another painting by the artist is a *Still life with basket of bitter oranges and pomegranates*, which she painted in around 1650 (estimate: €350,000 - 450,000 / $413,000-530,000). Here she remains faithful to her artistic invention, opting for a simple composition where the treatment of colour is nonetheless very different from the previous work.

A royal commission for the antechamber of Louis XIV's apartment at Marly in 1702, the triple portrait of the bitches Bonne, Nonne and Ponne (*Hunting scene with dogs, partridges and pheasants*) is incontestably one of François Desportes' masterpieces (estimate: €250,000- 300,000 / $295,000-354,000). In this house where the king sought refuge from court etiquette, the iconographic theme was nature. A particularly accomplished preparatory sketch for the painting, now in the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris, this oil on paper is highly appealing with its generous substance, subtle palette and harmonious colours.

**MAJOR WORKS OF THE NORTHERN EUROPEAN SCHOOL**

Louis Grandchamp des Raux's collection really began with some masters of the Northern European school originally belonging to his family. The still life genre, which was extraordinarily popular in France during the 17th century, is illustrated in the collection with some marvellous examples by artists who have always been keenly admired.

*Still life with grapes, cherries and strawberry plant* by Isaac Soreau is a composition of considerable refinement (estimate: €150,000 - 200,000 / $177,000-236,000). Each fruit, treated separately with an acute sense of detail, reveals all the painter's love for the Flemish tradition initiated by Jacob van Hulsdonck, his master and first source of inspiration. His mastery of the subject, shored up by an unrivalled technique, makes him one of the subtlest painters of still lifes.

*Bouquet of flowers in a glass* by Jan Frans van Dael (estimate: €100,000 - 150,000 / $119,000-177,000), is an excellent example of the artist's virtuosity in line with the tradition of flower painting by Northern artists who were particularly esteemed for their precise brushwork and sense of harmony. The work rivals those of the greatest exponents of the genre active in Paris, like Jan van Huysum and Gérard van Spaendonck.
Jacob van Hulsdonck takes the line adopted by his French and Flemish predecessors with a highly classical staging of his *Still life with peaches, plums and grapes in a basket on a table*. The colours are appealing, and the fruits have a beautifully appetising bloom. There is no question that the artist demonstrates considerable mastery of his art here (estimate: €250,000 - 300,000 / $295,000-354,000).

**GREAT MASTERS OF 18TH CENTURY PAINTING**

François Boucher raised the genre of pastoral scene, which he reinvented by enlivening it with figures in modern costumes, to the rank of the most noble subjects in the 18th century, particularly through his fine, delicate and subtle brushwork, which can also be full, rich and generous. *Pastoral scene with washerwomen and a couple by the water*, which features in this collection, is a model of the artist’s abundant technical skill (estimate: €120,000 - 180,000 / $142,000-213,000). His vigorous workmanship is imbued with thick strokes that enhance the poetry of his composition. This attractive pastoral scene reflects all the charm of François Boucher’s work.

During his first stay in Italy between 1756 and 1761, Jean-Honoré Fragonard discovered the scenery around Rome with its landscapes and inhabitants. The Italian countryside with its rocks and waterfalls, luxuriant vegetation and extraordinary light left an indelible impression on the young painter for the rest of his career.

The poetry emanating from *Italian landscape with staircase* lies above all in the subtle treatment of light, making play with the rays of sunshine that illuminate the marble statues and white dress of the woman in the foreground, while the parasol pines provide shade to the carefree strollers wandering around in this leafy setting (estimate: €200,000 - 300,000 / $236,000-354,000).

Classified as a Historic Monument in the 20th century, like all the furniture in the Château de Ferney-Voltaire where it was kept, Joseph Vernet’s *Fishermen departing at dawn* of 1747 offers a picturesque vision of the Italian coast, instantly wafting the viewer to the idealised Italy of the 18th century. Thanks to his meticulous rendering of this atmosphere, Vernet was enormously successful among those who went on the Grand Tour. He earned a glowing reputation in both Italy and France, particularly as from 1746, when he began to participate in the Salon (estimate: €400,000 - 600,000 / $470,000-709,000).

While allegory was a subject little treated by Nicolas Lancret, the arts of the stage and music were recurring themes in the work of Antoine Watteau’s poetic follower.
This exquisite little painting in grisaille is a preparatory version of the frontispiece for the Second Book of Pieces for Harpsichord by François Dandrieu, a brilliant harpsichordist and composer who was appointed organist of the Chapelle du Roi in 1721 (estimate: €100,000 - 150,000 / $119,000-177,000). This frontispiece was engraved by Charles-Nicolas Cochin in 1728. Lancret also produced the frontispiece for Dandrieu's Third Book of Pieces for Harpsichord, published in 1734. There are few differences between the preparatory version and the engraving by Cochin, apart from the arms carried by the putto on the right, which are those of France in the composition here and those of the Conti in the engraving, reflecting the dedication of Dandrieu's work.

When it was exhibited at the Salon of 1761, the painting The Bride of village by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, now in the Musée du Louvre, was a considerable success, and all the critics unanimously acclaimed the painter's genius. The Portrait of a young woman in a white headscarf from the Louis Grandchamp des Raux collection is similar to one of the figures in the centre of this composition (estimate: €80,000 - 120,000 / $94,000-142,000). This painting is one of the most speaking examples of the artist's talent for illustrating the domestic life of his times.

With his View of Saint Peter's Square in Rome through Bernini's colonnade, Hubert Robert gives us a poetic interpretation of this grand esplanade, conveying all the splendour of Rome's architecture (estimate: €80,000 - 120,000 / $94,000-142,000). The artist has composed a highly spontaneous view in the treatment of its composition, particularly the figures, depicted with lively, instinctive brush strokes. Nonetheless, the painter remains faithful to the exactness of the scene and shows us Saint Peter's Square in a highly realistic manner. Combining simplicity with grandeur, the painter evinces a genuine mastery of perspective in this view, drawing the viewer into the scene.

MAJOR WORKS BY LESSER-KNOWN ARTISTS

Louis Grandchamp des Raux had a talent for spotting significant works by artists who were unjustly less well-known. This was the case with the exquisite little portrait of Madame Lagrenée, wife of the painter Louis-Jean-Francois Lagrenée the Elder (1725 - 1805), by Nicolas-Bernard Lépicié. This delicate picture shows his model immersed in her thoughts, heedless of her book. The refined composition combines a style influenced by Flemish painting with all the delicacy and poetic refinement of a Chardin (estimate: €20,000 - 30,000 / $24,000-35,000).
The appearance of a work by Pierre-Antoine Lemoine on the market is always a major event. *Still life with grapes, peaches and Chinese vase (estimate: €150,000 - 200,000 / $177,000-236,000)*, magnificently succeeds in suggesting the flavours of the fruits shown in the painting, which have a fresh and voluptuous texture. Pierre Antoine Lemoine established himself incontestably as one of the key figures in the history of French still life, proving a worthy heir of Caravaggism, while revealing an individual style and providing a new perspective on this pictorial genre.

**SALE**

Sotheby’s, Paris  
Thursday 26 March 2015 at 7pm

**EXHIBITION**

Artcurial

- Brussels  11 February 2015
- Paris  20 - 23 March 2015

Sotheby’s

- New York  24 - 28 January 2015
- Paris  24 and 25 March 2015

* Estimates do not include the buyer's premium; prices include the hammer price and buyer's premium