

## FORMER COLLECTION OF VICOMTESSE DE COURVAL

### A Paris Showcase close to the Champs-Élysées



**Nicolas Lancret: *Les Agréments de la Campagne***  
(estimate: €150,000–200,000 / \$205,100-273,500)

**Elizabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun: *Portrait of Lady Perceval (1804)***  
(estimate: €120,000–150,000 / \$164,100-205,100)

**Pair of Qianlong Celadon Vases**  
(estimate: €300,000–500,000 / \$410,300-680,900)

**Paris, 28 January 2014** - Sotheby's is delighted to offer for auction in Paris, on **25 March 2014**, a refined collection redolent of the Belle Époque, assembled by Vicomtesse de Courval. This lady of exquisite taste was born Mary Ray (1835-1902) into an important Francophile family in New York. She was a lover of the arts, perfecting her eye during trips to Europe with her family, and in 1856 she married Arthur Dubois de Courval and moved to France. Her passion for Paris auctions enabled her to

acquire some remarkable works of art, which were showcased in her town-house at 6 rue Paul-Baudry, just behind the Champs-Élysées.

Madame de Courval's descendants enriched this luxurious collection and perpetuated the taste of this great French aristocratic family by acquiring further paintings and fine furniture. This rare, 118-lot ensemble has a very feminine feel, and is devoted principally to refined and elegant 18<sup>th</sup> century works of art in a variety of genres – *scènes galantes*, female portraits, country scenes, still lifes – that conjure up the century of the Enlightenment.

The auction offers the chance to discover the taste of the great French families of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and how their sense of beauty has been transmitted from generation to generation.



Pictures form the heart of the collection, led by the portrait of an illustrious figure in London high society, **Mrs Spencer Perceval** (1804), by **Elizabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun**, who immortalized the most eminent personalities of Europe with a gentleness that established her reputation as the greatest portraitist of her era. This pastel is a superb example, and renders Lady Perceval's beauty with great subtlety (**est. €120,000–150,000 / \$164,100-205,100**).

Continuing the female theme is an oil-on-panel **School of Fontainebleau** portrait of **Sabina Poppea** (c.1580), a Roman courtesan clad merely in a transparent veil, which she holds in place with mock modesty while gazing teasingly at the viewer. It is subject that enjoyed great popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (**est. €40,000–60,000 / \$54,700-82,070**).



Another jewel in the collection is a *scène galante* by **Nicolas Lancret**, **Les Agréments de la Campagne** or *The Delights of the Countryside* – a typical work by this gifted pupil of Watteau, showing a charming group of young people playing and dancing in a pastoral setting. The harmonious composition reflects the tastes and manners of the bourgeoisie in 18<sup>th</sup> century France (**est.**

**€150,000–200,000 / \$205,100-273,500**).

Also by **Nicolas Lancret** is *The Hunter*, a preparatory study for his *La Halte du Chasseur* now in a British private collection. Although the style is typical of Lancret's mature works, this is a rare portrait in an oeuvre otherwise dominated by country scenes and *fêtes galantes* (**est. €20,000–30,000 / \$27,360–41,035**).



Other major lots include a **rare pair of large Qianlong celadon china cornet vases with late Louis XV ormolu mounts (c.1770)**, of unusual size (22in tall and 11in wide) and remarkable for their delicate chasing. Just one other mounted pair of similar dimensions is known; one of these two pairs originally embellished the Paris town-house of François-Michel Harenc de Presle (1710-1802) in Rue du Sentier (**est. €300,000–500,000 / \$410,300–680,900**).

The sale also includes *L'Amour Menaçant*, a white marble sculpture from the **circle of Etienne-Maurice Falconet** dating from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is engraved with Voltaire's punning words 'qui que tu sois, tu vois ton maître; il l'est, le fût, ou le doit être' (*whoever you are, you see your master; he is, was, or should be*). This charming subject was much appreciated by Madame de Pompadour, who commissioned a marble version from Etienne-Maurice Falconet. This sculpture is a reduced version of a subject then much in vogue (**est. €25,000–35,000 / \$34,200–47,900**).



Another highlight of the collection is a pair of **patinated- and gilt-bronze Empire Egyptian candelabra**, 2ft 8in tall. This is a rare design among the works of art produced in Paris around 1800 in the wake of Napoleon's Return from Egypt. The quality of its casting and chasing is outstanding (**est. €60,000–100,000 / \$82,070–136,790**).

**Viewing:** Thursday 20–Tuesday 24 March (except Sunday 23 March)