

RARE REDISCOVERED 12th-CENTURY ZODIAC BASIN TO MAKE AUCTION DEBUT

As Part of Sotheby's Arts of the Islamic World & India Auction
On 31 March 2021

Sotheby's spring sale of *Arts of the Islamic World & India* on 31 March celebrates the production of historic objects, paintings and manuscripts from across a multitude of continents and over ten centuries. The auction will be led by a **magnificent twelfth-century silver-inlaid scalloped basin adorned with astrological designs (est. £1,000,000-1,500,000)**, measuring fifty centimetres in diameter. Crafted in the shape of the sun and featuring the zodiac signs, solar symbols, planets, animal heads and anthropomorphic calligraphic scripts, this rare basin was made to symbolise the universe and harness its energy – evidence of a counterculture of astrology in the Muslim world, which predated Islam and continues to this day. A courtly object, the dish would have been made for a ruler in order to assert their power within both an earthly and cosmic sphere whilst also having a protective and auspicious function. It has never previously been exhibited, having remained in the same private family collection for decades, so is set to make its auction debut.



Continuing the theme of astronomy is a **unique 14th-century Astrolabe, the only known version created by a Muslim artist in a Christian-ruled city (est. £600,000-800,000)**. Made in Tudela, which was part of Muslim Andalusia until 1119 when the city was taken by the Christian king, Alfonso I of Aragon, this rare astrolabe speaks to the vibrant intellectual exchange between Islam and Christendom at the cultural crossroads of Medieval Spain.



Among the fine carpets and rugs is a **beautiful mid-16th-century silk prayer rug (est. £300,000-500,000)**, a royal commission from the court of the Safavid shah of Iran when artistic production reached a peak of technical refinement. It is one of very few in existence, with the last similar piece offered at auction in 2010. Using ten different colours of dye, the quality is comparable to that of manuscript illumination.



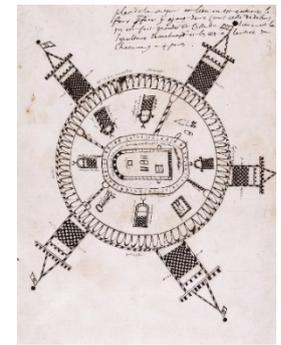
An **exceptional mother-of-pearl casket (est. £250,000-350,000)**, designed with panels of floral trees and vines against a background of spiralling stems, this piece exemplifies the complex workmanship of Gujarat in the sixteenth century. Capturing the imagination of European courts, furnishings of mother-of-pearl from India were listed in Royal inventories since the early sixteenth century. It belongs to a rare group of objects, most of which are now in museum collections, and with less than ten known caskets from this period, is one of the most outstanding in terms of the quality of its design, execution and condition.



Amongst the paintings in the sale is a **newly-discovered 16th/17th-century portrait of Süleyman the Magnificent (est. £80,000-120,000)**, vividly capturing on copper the acuity and presence of the iconic Ottoman ruler at the age of forty-three. The vibrant Venetian brushwork opens a window onto a narrative of artistic exchanges between Venice and the Ottomans in the 1530s. Also from the Ottoman world are a group of textiles from the collection of Viscount and Lady d'Abernon and a pristine crimson velvet double catma panel.



The sale also offers the **first known European representations of the Holy Sites of Islam, Mecca and Medina, by Sir Jean Chardin (est. £60,000-80,000)**. Chardin set off for the Middle East in 1664 and spent eleven years travelling. In Persia, he was appointed Royal Merchant by the Safavid Shah and back in England, King Charles II appointed him jeweller to the royal court and knighted him. These drawings were made according to information given him by a Muslim he met in the course of his travels and depict the colonnade, the Ka'aba, the buildings and minarets. The drawings were formerly in the collection of polymath John Evelyn (1630-1706), who was one of the founders of the Royal Society.



A large-scale and hitherto unpublished **miniature painting of the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (est. £40,000-60,000)**, circa 1870-71, depicts one of the most magnificent and cosmopolitan courts in the whole of India, the floor lined with fine carpets and the characters glittering with jewels. His famous gold throne, used for state occasions and now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, can be clearly seen in the richly-coloured work.



Among the manuscripts in the sale is **an exceptional Mamluk Qur'an dated 1514 AD (est. £300,000-500,000)**, which as a complete manuscript signed by a well-known master is a great rarity. It is a very fine example of the high-quality manuscript production in the late Mamluk period. Made for the Chief Justice of Jerusalem and Nablus, through its patronage and ownership the Qur'an bears ties to two of the holiest places of Islam – Jerusalem and Medina.



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