

CHRISTIE'S

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CHRISTIE'S RUSSIAN ART SALE FEATURES MASTERWORKS FROM THE NICHOLAS ROERICH MUSEUM SOLD TO BENEFIT FUTURE ACQUISITIONS



NICHOLAS ROERICH (1874-1947)

White and heavenly, from the series *His Country*
tempera on canvas
Painted in 1924
35 x 46 in. (89 x 117 cm.)
£500,000-700,000



NICHOLAS ROERICH (1874-1947)

The Host of Gesar Khan
dated and numbered 'No. 6/1931' (on the stretcher)
tempera on jute
36 x 54 in. (91.5 x 137.2 cm.)
£500,000-700,000

"Nowadays, it is thought important to demand freedom for people, but it is equally important to grant freedom to things. Things must be allowed their own lives, their own freedom to move and exist under whatever new conditions life leads them to, free to go wherever they are most wanted and needed." – Nicholas Roerich

London – Christie's announces two magnificent masterworks by Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), among the highlights in the Russian Art auction in London on 1 June. *White and Heavenly* from the series *His Country* (estimate: £500,000-700,000) and *The Host of Gesar Khan* (estimate: £500,000-700,000), paintings both reflecting themes inspired by Roerich's Central Asian expedition, will be sold to benefit the acquisitions fund of the Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York. These extraordinary paintings have exemplary provenance and have never appeared at auction before.

Daniel Entin, Director of the Nicholas Roerich Museum, New York, comments: *"In order to enrich and build as representative a collection as is possible, we are offering for sale two wonderful paintings, each quite different from the other, to acquire works that are of equal importance in the Roerich oeuvre, but of a period insufficiently represented in our collection. It is painful to see well-loved paintings go out the front door of the museum, maybe not to be seen again. But, to quote Roerich himself, these paintings have their own lives to live, their own freedom to go where they are wanted."*

Painted in 1924, during Roerich's first year living in India, ***White and Heavenly*** is an outstanding example from the artist's series *His Country*, dedicated to the interpretation of the Himalayan landscape. India became more than another travel destination for Roerich. It was where he embarked on a new chapter in his life, recalibrating his search for mission and identity and continuing to work towards spiritual fulfillment. *White and Heavenly* shows the snow-capped Himalayan peaks

and clouds from a high vantage point, where the earth and heavens meet, a place of transition that no doubt had particular significance for him in his own spiritual journey. Roerich presents a glimpse of the world, devoid of the narratives and figures that sometimes fill his other work, and depicts light and texture with brushwork that verges on abstraction. No other works from the series *His Country* are left in private hands, presenting a unique opportunity for collectors.

The Host of Gesar Khan was painted in 1931, another prolific year when Roerich returned to his estate in Kullu, India after spending a year and a half in New York and Europe running his various institutions and promoting his Peace Pact for the preservation of cultural heritage worldwide. *The Host of Gesar Khan* evokes the image of Gesar, the great semi-mythical King, venerated widely throughout Central Asia. The epic of King Gesar is a narrative cycle that originated in northeast Tibet around the 12th century and relates the heroic deeds of the hero-king Gesar. Roerich became fascinated with Gesar during his Central Asian expedition. To him, Gesar was a symbol of the triumph of good over evil, the great Saviour on par with Maitreya Buddha, on whom rested the hopes of humanity for the new era of truth, justice and beauty. In the painting, the story unfolds amidst a magnificent setting in the mountains. The many layers of the composition give it a depth and dynamism that makes it seem like the viewer is embarking on a descent into the valley. The warm, rosy light of dawn touches the warriors, and the bright green earth in the foreground, contrasts sharply with the dark mountains. Roerich captures the quiet moments before battle, embedding the atmosphere with all signs that point to victory.

ABOUT NICHOLAS ROERICH (1874-1947)

One of the most visually striking and distinctive artists in the Russian canon, Nicholas Roerich's diverse choice of subject matter — ranging from early Russian architecture, set designs created for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes to the powerful and moving depictions of the Far East — has historically and consistently had wide appeal. Trained as an artist as well as a lawyer, Nicholas Roerich was broadly talented and had a varied and long career that established him as an internationally renowned cultural figure. In addition to his impressive *oeuvre* of exquisite paintings and works on paper, Roerich's commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage led him to become deeply involved in the establishment of international organizations and the treaty known as the Roerich Pact. Following the devastating effects of WWI, together with a team of international legal experts, the artist composed the Roerich Pact, which enshrined international efforts to ensure the protection of culture. Roerich's humanitarian activities led him to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and his works of art were praised throughout his lifetime and continue to be actively sought by collectors across the globe.

To read the **auction e-catalogue**, [click here](#).

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About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2014 that totalled £5.1 billion / \$8.4 billion, making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. 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 around 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 & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totalled £916.1 million (\$1.5 billion).

Christie's has a global presence with 53 offices in 32 countries and 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. 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, New Delhi, 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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