

# CHRISTIE'S

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RE-DISCOVERED MARBLE LIONS  
FROM THE TOMB OF CHARLES V OF FRANCE  
TO BE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON THIS JULY



**London** – This year, Christie's *Exceptional Sale* will be led by a magnificent Carved Marble Group of Two Addorsed Lions by André Beauneveu (circa 1335–1402), dating from 1364–66 (*illustrated above*). Originally executed to form part of the tomb of King Charles V of France at the Abbey of St. Denis, they were brought from France in 1802 by the English aristocrat Sir Thomas Neave (1761–1848), and have remained in the same collection ever since. Known to scholars only from an engraving of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of these lions represents a remarkable re-discovery. Celebrating the art of medieval Europe, while simultaneously representing technical brilliance, the lions' superlative quality means that they are worthy of any major museum or private collection.

**Donald Johnston, Christie's UK, International Head of Sculpture:** *'It is extraordinarily rare to offer any medieval work of art with such a fully documented provenance. The fact that this marble group was executed by one of the most important sculptors of the period and is part of an important royal commission makes it even more remarkable. The discovery of these lions in a private English collection is wonderful news for collectors and scholars who previously thought they had been lost during the French Revolution.'*

Documents show that Beauneveu was commissioned by the young King Charles V shortly after coming to the throne to execute four family tombs, including the King's own. One of the most important sculptors of late medieval Europe, Beauneveu took two years to complete the task after which he left the employ of the French crown, spending time in Flanders and – possibly – England, before ending his career at the court of Charles's brother, Jean, duc de Berry. The tombs in Paris were dismantled by the revolutionary government in 1793 and today only the three male effigies survive. The effigy of Charles V, lacking the lions which had rested at his feet, was restored to the Abbey of St. Denis, Paris, where it remains today.

Thought to be the first royal effigy sculpted *ad vivum*, the figure of Charles V has long been recognised as being superior to the other two surviving figures, and scholars suggest it is the only one entirely executed by Beauneveu's own hand. The sensitivity of the carving of the lions is notable and, like the effigy itself, they retain a beautifully polished surface. It is likely that this was because the archaeologist Alexandre Lenoir, who created a museum of French monuments during the upheavals of the French Revolution, recognised the superiority of the effigy of Charles V and removed it for inclusion in the new museum.

It is not known how the lions became separated from the main effigy but it seems probable that they were part of the sales held to support Lenoir's museum. It is known that Sir Thomas Neave visited Paris in 1802 during the brief period in the Napoleonic Wars when Englishmen could travel there, and that he purchased the lions at that time.

Other examples of tomb figures recently sold by Christie's include a pair of alabaster and a pair of marble Mourner figures from the tomb of Charles's brother, Jean, Duc de Berry (the latter sold in Paris in 2016 for €5,025,500). The duke was also a great patron of the arts and his tomb, executed in two stages in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was also vandalised at the time of the Revolution.

Since the inaugural auction in 2008, *The Exceptional Sale* platform continues to provide collectors with the opportunity to acquire outstanding sculpture and masterpieces of European decorative arts, many with celebrated provenance.

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Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.

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