

CHRISTIE'S

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16th CENTURY VENETIAN PORTRAITS OF OTTOMAN SULTANS COMMISSIONED AS DIPLOMATIC GIFTS TO HIGHLIGHT ISLAMIC ARTS SALE

The fruits of an imperial initiative to create a definitive portrayal of the House of Osman



*From left to right: Sultan Orhan, Sultan Bayezid I, Isa Celebi, Sultan Mehmed I, Sultan Selim I and Sultan Selim II
Estimate: £800,000-1,200,000*

London – A group of six portraits of Sultans of the House of Osman, a prestigious diplomatic gift from c. 1600 to oil the wheels of diplomacy, will highlight the Art of the Islamic & Indian Worlds auction at Christie's in London on 28 October 2021, with an estimate of £800,000-1,200,000. Representing 250 years of Ottoman rule, the imperial gift commissioned from the finest Venetian artists for their Italian trading partners, represent the rulers of the Ottoman Empire from 1326 to 1574.

These Sultan portraits exemplify some principal characteristics of the Court style, then overseen by Veronese, the Court's official painter: the three-quarter bust format which gives the pose dynamism and immediacy by showing more of the figure's face and tilting the head. The textiles are given texture with the most luminous of colours, and the designs particularly of the gold and silver textiles are highly reminiscent of those used elsewhere by Veronese. Above all, each painting exhibits a characterisation and individuality that distinguish these paintings from any other Ottoman imperial portraits, imbuing life and vivacity to the figures. While Veronese is likely to have designed or given guidance on the design of the series, there are no surviving portraits from any of the known sets that can be attributed to his hand.

The set offered at Christie's can be traced back to the collection of Count Gustav Adelman von Adelmansfelden (1858–1938), and was kept in castle Berg in Bavaria, until 1935. It is not recorded how the Adelman's acquired the paintings, but the family had connections with the Ottomans as their ancestor, Konrad von Adelman, published a tract on the Ottoman army in Augsburg in 1525.

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