

MARC-ARTHUR KOHN



COLLATI: Portrait de Guendaline Talbot, Princesse Borghèse (est. €50,000-60,000)

**THE TRAGIC DESTINY OF THE BRITISH ARISTOCRAT
KNOWN AS ROME'S MOTHER OF THE POOR**

**PORTRAIT OF LADY GWENDOLINE TALBOT,
PRINCESS BORGHESE (1817-40)**

TO BE AUCTIONED IN PARIS ON APRIL 13

A portrait of an English Catholic Princess, known in Rome as the *Mother of the Poor*, will be offered for sale at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris on 13 April 2012 by **MARC-ARTHUR KOHN**.

The 1838 portrait, in its original gilt gesso frame, is one of 24 lots from the Ruffini-Borghese Collection to be featured in a highly selective 110-lot sale, which also includes a superb private collection of French 18th century furniture and *objets d'art*.



PRINCESS GWENDOLINE BORGHESE (1817-40)

THE SAINT OF ALTON TOWERS

Gwendoline Catherine Talbot was born in Cheltenham on 3 December 1817; her father John Talbot, Constable of Ireland and the most prominent British Catholic of his day, became 16th Earl of Shrewsbury & Waterford in 1827. She married Prince Marcantonio Borghese in Rome in 1835, and died in 1840 aged just 22. Her tomb in the Borghese Chapel is inscribed to the *Madre dei Poverelli*, in tribute to her tireless charitable and hospital work, and her unbridled generosity towards the poor.

The 100 x 75cm portrait by Roman artist Collati, in its original gilt gesso frame, shows the dreamy-eyed Princess, aged 20, seated in a black shawl with broad lace collar. We learn from Gwendoline's biography, published in 1843, that 'Mr Collati, an excellent portraitist' asked the Princess to sit in a black velvet dress, whereupon Princess Gwendoline – renowned for her abhorrence of vanity – retorted that the one she had on would have to do. Collati then asked her to don her Turkish shawl – but she told him she had recently given it away. In the end, she posed for the portrait wearing a shawl borrowed from one of her servants! The portrait remained at the Villa Mondragone in Frascati, near Rome, until the villa was sold by the Borghese family in 1896. (A pencil portrait of Gwendoline, made in Rome by the great French artist Théodore Chassériau just before she died, is now in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum.)

LIFE AMONG THE GOOD AND THE GREAT

By the time she was 5, Gwendoline Talbot had visited Rome, met Pope Pius VII, and been presented to Princess Charlotte of Prussia, future Tsarina of Russia, in Spa. Her childhood was split between Rome and the English family seat of Alton Towers, with much travelling in-between; her diary evokes family peregrinations to Lausanne, Vichy, Naples, Vienna, Bohemia, Hungary, Saxony, and Prussia, helping her become fluent in Italian, French and German.

.../...



GWENDOLINE BORGHESE by Collati (€50-60,000) & Chassériau – and her sapphire brooch (€30-40,000)



.../...

The Talbot family lived mainly at Alton Towers from 1827. Her father commissioned Augustus Pugin – architect of Big Ben and the interior of the Houses of Parliament – to remodel Alton Towers (now home to one of the U.K.'s most popular theme parks), and financed new Catholic chapels across the Midlands, earning the sobriquet 'Good Earl John.' He was also mightily connected: Gwendoline was invited to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton by William IV, to keep company with and Queen Adelaide's teenage niece, the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar; and later to Windsor Castle, where William IV called her the 'greatest beauty in the realm.'

Gwendoline's elder sister Mary married Prince Filippo Doria in 1832. Gwendoline herself returned to Rome in 1834, visiting en route the Princess of Thurn & Taxis, then the spas of Ems, Carlsbad and Bad Kissingen, where she met the Queen of Bavaria. In Italy she explored Lake Maggiore, Milan and Florence before reaching Rome where, on 11 March 1835, she married Marcantonio Borghese. She was revered for her charity work and ministry to the sick; in the words of her biographer Alexander Zeloni, she was 'one of those angelic beauties brought to life by Raphael.'

Marcantonio succeeded his father as Prince Borghese in 1837. When, in early 1840, the family returned to England, Gwendoline was pregnant with her fourth child. They stopped in Paris and London before reaching Alton Towers, where her third son was born in July 1840, just before the visit of Dowager Queen Adelaide and the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar. Shortly after the family's return to Rome, Gwendoline caught scarlet fever, dying a few days later on October 27, at the age of 22. On the day of her funeral it is reported that 'all Rome wore mourning; every window and balcony and terrace was dressed with flowers.' She was buried in the Borghese Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, with her tomb inscribed *Qui riposano le ceneri della madre dei poverelli...* A requiem with 100 musicians was sung in the church of San Carlo al Corso, and sonnets were written in her honour in no fewer than 14 languages – including Albanian.

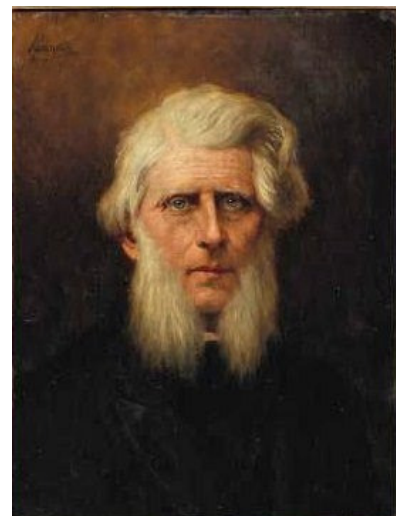
Tragedy continued to haunt her family: soon after Gwendoline's death, her three sons died of measles. Only Agnese, her eldest child, survived, later becoming the Duchessa di Sora.



Boittoni: Camillo Borghese
€20,000-30,000



Canevari: Adélaïde de La Rochefoucauld
€60,000-80,000



Piancastelli: Marcantonio Borghese
€90,000-100,000



THE BORGHESI COLLECTION

FROM BAROQUE BRONZES TO NAPOLEONIC SAPPHIRES

The 24 items from the Ruffini-Borghese Collection come from the estate of Giovanna Ruffini Valletti Borgnini, grand-daughter of Théodora Martini – wife of Prince Scipion Borghese (1871-1927). Other items from her collection were recently acquired by the Italian State, and are now on display with the rest of the fabled Borghese Collection at the Borghese Gallery in Rome.

The Collection includes several **family portraits** of immense artistic and historic importance. Gwendoline's husband *Marcantonio Borghese V* is shown in venerable old age (c.1880) by Giovanni Piancastelli, who became the first Curator of the Borghese Gallery in 1902 (€90,000-100,000). There are also portraits of Gwendoline's father *Francesco Aldobrandini Borghese* (€20,000-30,000); of her mother-in-law *Adélaïde de La Rochefoucauld* (1854), a former lady-in-waiting to Empress Josephine, by Giovanni Battista Canevari – an artist who showed frequently at the Royal Academy in London (€60,000-80,000); of Adélaïde's sister *Félicie de la Rochefoucauld* (c.1846), attributed to Canevari (€45,000-50,000); and, by Boittoni, of Francesco's elder brother *Camillo Borghese* (c.1820), who married Napoleon's sister Pauline Bonaparte (€20,000-30,000).

The sale also includes the gold and **multi-sapphire brooch** given to Gwendoline by her husband (€30,000-40,000). This **dazzling virtuoso showstopper** was made in Rome by Fortunato Pio Castellani, re-using sapphires from a tiara formerly owned by **Pauline Bonaparte**. Even more spectacular are **two bronzes** which have remained in the Borghese family for centuries – **ascribed to Susini after models by Giambologna**. A crisply cast *Lion Attacking a Horse* (17th century), height 29cm, recalls a version in the Art Institute of Chicago (1610-20), with similarly brown magnificent patina and absence of base (€30,000-40,000). An early 18th century casting of *Silenus Carrying the Infant Bacchus*, 33cm tall, with darker brown patina, is similar to a bronze in the Bayerische Nationalmuseum in Munich, attributed to Massimiliano Soldani (€50,000-60,000). In each case the published estimates reflect enticingly modest reserves.



Silenus & the Infant Bacchus (€50-60,000)



Lion Attacking a Horse (€30-40,000)



COLLECTION OF A CONNOISSEUR

THE GLEAM AND GLAMOUR OF 18TH CENTURY FRANCE

A pair of magnificent, slightly later bronzes also feature in the supreme-quality 21-lot Private Collection of a Connoisseur, also to be sold by Kohn on April 13, and the subject of a separate, lavishly documented 96-page catalogue.

These bronze figures, after Augustin Pajou (c.1790), uniquely combine dark brown patina, gilded bronze and white marble plinths. They embody *L'Amour Volage* – a cupid on a rock with a butterfly on his arm – and *L'Amour Fidèle* – a girl by a rose-bush holding a spaniel (€60,000-80,000). A marble version of the pair can be admired in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The Private Collection also features a majestic, lyre-shaped clock (Paris 1743) topped by ram's heads connected by swags, the case attributed to Boulle and the dial signed Jean-Baptiste Baillon, clockmaker to Queens Marie Leszczynska and Marie-Antoinette. Other lyre-shaped clocks attributed to Boulle can be found in the Getty Museum, the V & A and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (€150,000-200,000).

Equally impressive are an Imari white porcelain *Hen* (Edo Period, c.1700) with coloured tail feathers and a Louis XV openwork oromolu rococo stand (€80,000-120,000); a pair of Louis XVI fluted gilt-bronze candlesticks designed by Jean-Charles Delafosse (€120,000-150,000); and a pair of three-branch wall-lights in the form of hunting-horns, ascribed to Jean-Jacques Bachelier, with oak-leaf shafts ending in ribbons and tassels (€80,000-100,000). An almost identical pair were acquired by Marie-Antoinette in 1782, and similar wall-lights can be found in the Italian Hall of the Palace of Pavlovsk near St Petersburg.

Furniture highlights include a rococo giltwood console (€180,000-250,000) designed by Nicolas Pineau in 1727 – the year he returned to France after a decade spent in Russia, where he had succeeded Alexandre Le Blond as the leading French decorator in 1719 (famously designing Peter the Great's Great Cabinet at Peterhof); and a Louis XVI oromolu-mounted, two-tiered mahogany *commode en console* stamped Pierre Boichod (€160,000-180,000). Similar openwork commodes were made for Madame de Pompadour and the Dauphin.



IMARI HEN
€80-120,000



LOUIS XV CONSOLE after Pineau
€180-250,000



LYRE CLOCK
€150-200,000



HUNTING-HORN LIGHTS
€80-100,000



A RICHLY VARIED ARRAY OF EXQUISITE WORKS OF ART **FIVE 17TH CENTURY TABLE-CLOCKS FROM SOUTH GERMANY**

The sale also features 65 lots of varied provenance, including an extraordinary series of **five gilt-brass table-clocks** made in southern Germany during the 17th century. Four of them were shown at the *Inventors of Time* exhibition at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Arras in 2009.

The most spectacular is an *Heraldic Lion* automaton clock signed Caspar Pfaff (Augsburg c.1630), whose eyes and mouth **open and close every hour and quarter**; the movement is encased in the octagonal ebony stand (est. €130,000-150,000). Also from Augsburg comes a table-clock (c.1600) in the form of a delicately engraved Renaissance tower with turrets, on an ebony base (€60,000-80,000).

From the same period is a rectangular *astronomical indications* table-clock (South Germany), whose **four glass-panelled sides reveal the movement** (€70,000-80,000). Slightly later are a table-clock à remontoir d'égalité (c.1640) of hexagonal form (€50,000-60,000), and a square table-clock (c.1660) with **openwork strawberry flower decor** (€30,000-40,000).

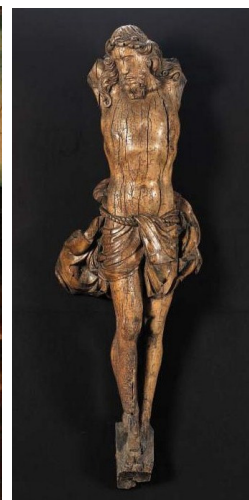
Rather more naïve in style is an oak-panelled **Sermon of John the Baptist**, signed R.L. (Burgundy 1547), which shows a curious male figure perched in a tree apparently mocking the saint, who seems to be beckoning him to climb down (€50,000-70,000). Other religious works range from a limewood **Christ** (Rhineland, 17th century) – an imposing **1.63m (5ft 4in)** tall and, despite lacking his arms, an image of perfect serenity (€6,000-10,000) – to an alabaster plaque showing **Christ Carrying the Cross**. The plaque is thought to originate from late 16th century Flanders, although the figure of Christ on his knees recalls a late 15th century engraving by Martin Schongauer, and the rearing steeds in the middle ground, with their flowing, Leonardesque manes, evoke Birago's illumination *October* (c.1490) from the *Sforza Hours* in the British Museum (est. €9,000-10,000).



LION CLOCK
Augsburg, c.1630
€130,000-150,000



SERMON OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
Burgundy, 1547
€50,000-70,000



LIMEWOOD CHRIST
Rhineland, 17th cent.
€6000-10,000



A TOPINO TRIO

MARQUETRY PAR EXCELLENCE

The sale's 65 lots of varied provenance include three items of Louis XVI furniture by Charles Topino (c.1775-80), each richly adorned with different types of marquetry in exotic coloured woods: a secretaire with **exuberant floral marquetry**, similar to a Topino commode owned by the 6th Earl of Rosebery (€200,000-250,000); a *bureau à gradin* with **village-scene and landscape marquetry** (€100,000-120,000); and a *table à gradin* with Chinese-style **kitchen utensils** – bowls, tea-pots, cups and saucers, jug, bottle, ewer and basin (€60,000-80,000). These fabulous examples of intricate woodwork, carving and staining reflecting Topino's stylistic originality and technical mastery – as showcased during a meteoric career that lasted from just 1773 to 1789.



TOPINO : Louis XVI bureau à gradin with village-scene and landscape marquetry (€100,000-120,000)

MARC-ARTHUR KOHN

THE RUFFINI-BORGHESE COLLECTION – A COLLECTION OF A CONNOISSEUR

Friday 13 April 2012 (2pm)

Hôtel Drouot – 9 rue Drouot – 75009 Paris

VIEWING

Marc-Arthur Kohn – 24 avenue Matignon, 75008 Paris : 3-10 April 2012 (11am-1pm & 2-7pm)

Hôtel Drouot : 12 April 2012 (11am-6pm) & 13 April 2012 (11am-noon)

IMAGES & FURTHER INFORMATION

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