

PRESS RELEASE

COLLECTION OF PRINCE FELIX YUSUPOV
AND HIS SPOUSE PRINCESS IRINA OF RUSSIA



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH 2016
HÔTEL DROUOT - PARIS





OLIVIER COUTAU-BÉGARIE

Commissaire-Priseur



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SALE AT HÔTEL DROUOT
Friday, November 4th 2016, starting at 2 p.m.

SPECIALIST
Cyrille Boulay



Collection of Prince Felix Yusupov (1887-1967)
And his spouse Princess Irina of Russia (1895-1970),
Granddaughter of Tsar Alexander III and unique niece of
Tsar Nicholas II,
Preciously kept for more than sixty years by M. Victor Contreras,
a privileged witness of the royal couple.

On November 4th, 2016 will be presented at Hôtel Drouot a precious and touching collection of more than 120 objects and historical memorabilias, which once belonged to Prince and Princess Felix Yusupov. This collection was kept with respect and nostalgia by M. Victor Contreras, who was, during the final years of their existence, a privileged witness of the royal couple.

Student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Victor met, during an official reception in 1958, the man that would become his guide, example and mentor throughout his life. The mutual affection between the couple and this young student aged 17 was so strong that he became their spiritual son, and moved into their place for five years. When the Prince passed away in 1967, and after the Princess' demise in 1970, the couple's unique child, Princess Irina Yusupov, Countess Sheremetiev, bequeathed this collection to M. Victor Contreras in loving memory of her parents. M. Contreras, who is now seventy-five and became one of Mexico's most prominent sculptors, is still an affable and handsome man, and is the last guardian of the royal couple's memory.

Prince Felix and his spouse, by their names, roles and actions are still considered nowadays as two of the most famous characters of the history of Imperial Russia. Their lives, begun in Russia under the splendor of the Imperial Court, ended after the Revolution in a lovely little town-house of the sixteenth arrondissement of Paris. Their fantastic and uncommon destinies, especially the key role that played the Prince in the assassination of monk Rasputin, whose criminal influence on the Imperial Family precipitated the fall of Tsarism, made them legendary characters.

All these items are fragments and witnesses of this great story. Will be put up for sale: portraits, busts, icons, costumes and wardrobes (est.: 1 000/2 000 € each) **(9-10)** that once belonged to Prince Felix Yusupov and his spouse, Princess Irina of Russia, such as the magnificent costume he wore during the Eglington Ball, in London, on July 11th 1912, that still remain the most iconic representation we know of Prince Felix Yusupov (est.: 25 000/30 000 €) **(1)**. He talked about this costume in his memoirs published in 1952: "A few days after I returned, I received an invitation for a



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their origin: “At this time of my life, I was obsessed with the idea of drawing. Until this moment, it was my wife, Irina, who brilliantly painted oneiric silhouettes, faces with gigantic eyes who seemed to belong to another world (ten drawings will be presented, est. 1 500/2 500 € each) **(15-17)**. In fact, I started drawing under the influence of my wife’s creations. I gave myself to painting as if I had been bewitched. But my creations were more of a nightmare, rather than beautiful creatures. I, who cherished beauty more than anything else, could only draw nothing but monsters (...) what I drew always ended up being grotesque and deformed, similar to the monsters that haunted the imagination of medieval artists (...). I stopped drawing as quickly as I had started to.”

Will also be presented a magnificent silver triptych, realized by the Gratchev House, that followed the Prince in all of his trips, representing Pantocrator Christ flanked by two protective archangels (est.: 25 000/30 000 €) **(11)**, as well as Princess Irina’s enameled and silver-gilt travelling triptych (est.: 35 000/40 000 €) **(16)**; the crystal carved seal engraved with the House of Yusupov’s coats of arm (est.: 4 000/6 000 €) **(14)**, used by Prince Felix to seal his personal correspondence;

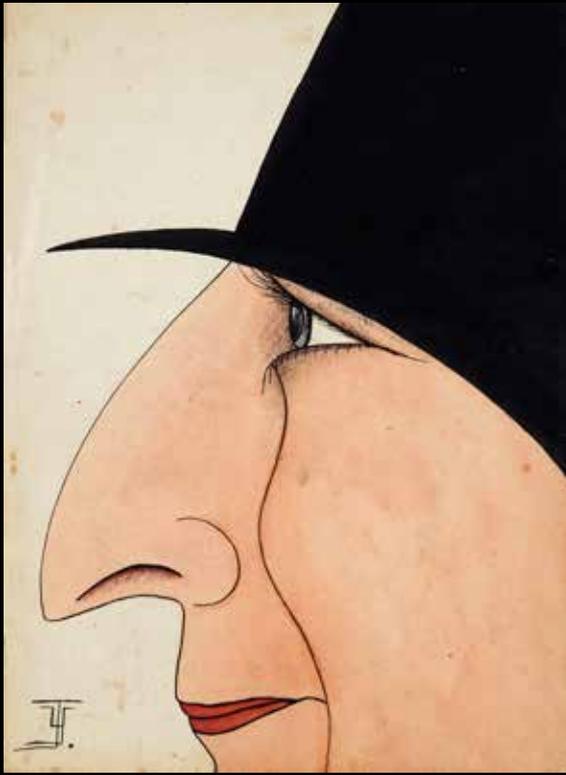
great costumed ball at the Albert Hall. At some point, I took advantage of a time off in Russia to order, in Saint-Petersburg, a Russian costume. I found some gold brocade with red flowers that dated back to the XVIth century. The costume was magnificent: adorned with precious stones and embroidered with sable, with a matching hat. I made quite a sensation. This night, I met all London and, the day after, my picture was in every newspaper.”

At this time, Felix was studying at Oxford. At the University College, he was, according to a witness, “of an unthinkable beauty, and the most beautiful teenager that had ever existed”. Surrounded by legends, he lived in an atmosphere of oriental mystery and phantasmagoria created by his great birth, his considerable wealth and the fairytale-like luxury of his family. After his wedding with Nicholas II’s unique niece, Princess Irina Alexandrovna of Russia, in 1914, he became a close friend of the Imperial Family.

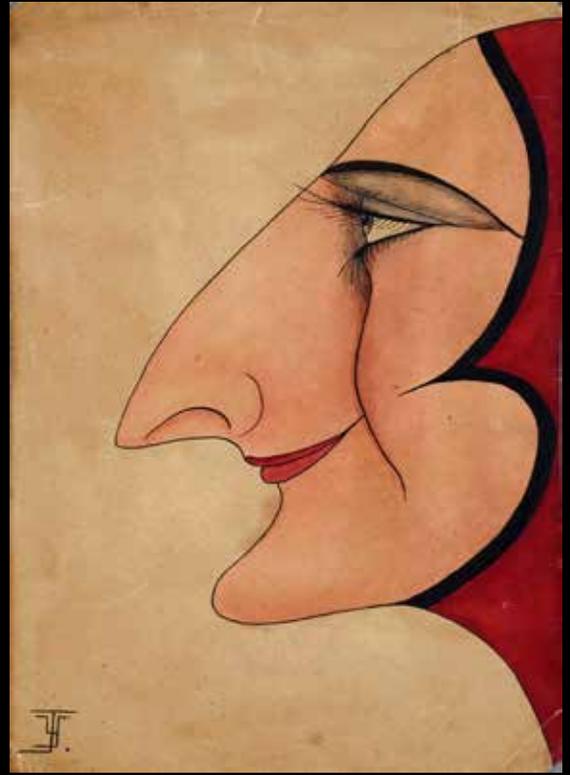
This exceptional ensemble also contains a collection of twenty-five visionary drawings **(2 to 8)**, representing the famous “grotesques” realized at the end of the 1930s by Prince Felix (est.: 2 000/4 000 € each). In his memoirs, Prince Felix explains



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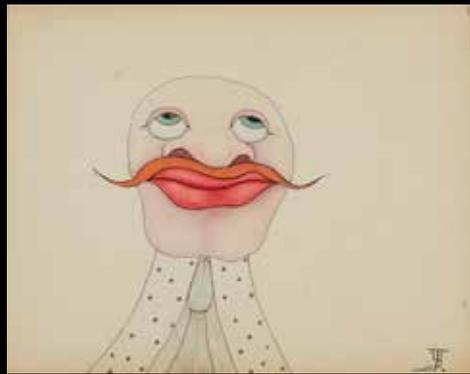
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an oval miniature representing his father, prince Felix Yusupov (1856-1928), dressed as a Chevalier Guard (est.: 4 000/6 000 €); an enameled portrait representing his mother, Princess Zinaida Yusupov (1861-1939) (est.: 1 000/2 000 €); Prince and Princess Felix Yusupov's guestbook, spanning from 1934 to 1943, containing hundreds of autograph signatures from famous people of their time (est.: 3 000/5 000 €); a precious album containing personal pictures, representing the couple and members of the Imperial Family (est.: 3 000/5 000 €); a book compiled by Prince Felix from printed and manuscripts quotations entitled "*my thoughts by famous men, Yusupov*" (est.: 3 000/5 000 €) **(19)**; many pictures representing his wife bearing the creations of Maison IRFE **(18)**, a clothing house founded in 1924 in Paris by the royal couple, and named after the initials of their given names (est.: 1 000/2 000 € each); a modern reproduction of Valentin Serov's famous portrait representing the young prince aged sixteen, posing in 1903 with his favorite dog, Gugusse (est.: 3 000/5 000 €), etc.



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Regarding private items, we will be presenting the Prince's personal rosary (est.: 1 000/2 000 €) **(13)**, Princess Irina's cigarette-holder in amber and mounted in gold (est.: 600/800 €), or even the crystal perfume bottles ornamented with their silver stoppers engraved with the Prince's cypher, and still containing the smell of his usual perfume (est.: 600/800 €).

Not to forget this wonderful small silver statue representing Jupiter Fulgur, attributed to Benvenuto Cellini and mounted on a gold stand by Cartier in New York, which was part of the few treasures that Prince Yusupov managed to save from the Bolshevik Revolution (est.: 200 000/250 000 €) **(12)**.

This historical sale will naturally impose itself as one of the key moment of the fourth trimester of 2016.

Cyrille Boulay



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SALE
Friday, November 4th 2016

PUBLIC EXHIBITION
Wednesday, November 2nd 2016
from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 3th 2016
from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
and Friday, November 4th 2016
from 11:00 a.m to 12:00 p.m.

at Hôtel Drouot.
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