

CHRISTIE'S THE KAI WUNSCHÉ COLLECTION 5/1/03

CHRISTIE'S THE KAI WUNSCHÉ COLLECTION DIE WEISSE VILLA MAY 1ST 2003 THIS CATALOG CONTAINS 190 PAGES AND 228 LOTS THE KAI WUNSCHÉ COLLECTION The magnificent Weisse Villa, located on the Harvestehuder Weg, Hamburg's most majestic street, was built in the neoclassical style in 1872. Originally designed by the architect Albert Rosengarten as a family residence for the merchant Baron Sally Horschitz and his family, it set the standard for neighbouring houses and its recent listing acknowledges its historical importance. The villa has an impressive history of ownership including the Prussian Crown, which bought it in 1912 as the official residence for the legation of the Prussian Emperor. Opulent rooms such as the Great Reception provided an appropriate setting for frequent official receptions and parties. Respecting the provenance as well as the taste for sumptuous interiors of the late 19th Century's aristocracy, Kai Wunsché decided to recreate the splendour of those days by forming this collection, representing luxury and splendour, lavishness and extravagance. The grand room-settings on the ground floor were striking in their vibrant colour scheme; silk-covered and trompe l'oeil painted walls in red and gold, marble and parquet floors, and ceilings with gilt-painted stucco work provided the ideal backdrop for his collection. The walls were divided by luxurious curtains (lots 81 and 197), pilasters or other architectural elements. Romantic Old Master paintings (lots 16 and 111), ornate clocks (lots 109 and 145), and ormolu appliques (lots 202 and 217) were shown here to their full advantage. There were a number of impressive chandeliers throughout the villa, the grandest of which (lot 126) adorned

the Great Reception, shown in situ on page 87 of this catalogue. A pair of fifteen-light floor standing candelabra added to grandeur of this historical room, as did a magnificent Berlin K.P.M. topographical vase (lot 135). made in Berlin in March 1859. The inscription on the gilt base states that this vase was given to the famous German physician Herrn Johann Lucas Schonlein as a present from Berlin's physicians. Details of the vase's two exquisitely painted cartouches are depicted on the inside covers of this catalogue. They show views of the Lange Brucke with the statue of the Great Elector before the Konigliches Schloss in Berlin to the front, and the Schloss Charlottenburg seen from the garden to the reverse. Compared with the Great Reception, the Buffet Room, Dining Room and Salon on the ground floor reflected a more private, but no less luxurious ambience. These slightly more informal rooms were decorated with elegant Napoleon III Aubusson carpets (lots 32 and 72) and ornate rococo furniture (lots 65 and 213). A pair of particularly charming parcel-gilt and walnut petite commodes (lot 67) are a fine example of the 18th Century works of art in Kai Wunsche's collection. The commodes are attributed to the Danish cabinet-maker Matthias Ortmann, who worked in Copenhagen between 1733 and 1757. Executed in the Danish rococo style of the 1760s, they are closely related to the a'uvre of this distinguished cabinet-maker. The Salon displayed an extraordinary cabinet on stand (lot 110). Created by the cabinet-maker Gervais-Maximilien- Eugene Durand, this piece is the essence of the 19th Century spirit. Specialising in the production of furniture in the style of the 18th Century Rococo, Durand worked in Paris during the last quarter of the century. Also in the rococo style and dating from the 19th Century are the pair of French ormolu-mounted kingwood and inlaid pedestals (lot 80), while a vitrine of the same period (lot 106) housed the fine collection of exquisite Russian gold cigarette cases (lots 82 to 89) and several charming snuff-

boxes (lots 90-101). In the Library, a French gilt-bronze wall-clock and its companion barometer (lot 175), with figures emblematic of Fame and Time, are more than likely to have been inspired by the work of the baroque craftsmen Andre-Charles Boulle and Jean Berain. Thesecond floor of the villa was devoted to Kai Wunsche's taste for the Empire style, which was reflected in both thefurniture (lots 198 and 201) and the chandeliers (lots 199 and 218). However, Kai Wunsche's main interest in Oriental ceramics was evident throughout the villa. Every single room was decorated with chargers, jardinières and vases. Furthermore, two important Chinese 18th Century reverse glass paintings (lots 121 and 122) and a pair of Ming pottery roof tiles of ferocious demons (lot 208) illustrate his fascination with the Oriental arts and crafts. A visit to the Weisse Villa in recent years has been a highly impressive occasion. The house itself, its park and the view over Lake Alster, created the most magnificent environment for a collection of this scale and style. Thesale of the Kai Wunsche Collection provides the opportunity to taste the golden era of aristocratic life in late 19th Century Hamburg. SALE 9775 B-3 S-1

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