

PRESS RELEASE

**Ancient, British, Islamic and World Coins
Historical and Commemorative Medals
Tuesday 27 June 2006**

This general sale included coins of all types as well as an important offering of Renaissance and later medals and realized a total of £430,000 with only 5% unsold by value.

In the section devoted to Islamic coins two Isma'ili pieces made strong prices - a Batinite fractional dinar of 'Ala al-din Muhammad III realizing £1,725 and a well preserved and rare Fatimid dirham of al-Mu'izz struck at Filastin (Palestine) in 359h (the earliest date known for Fatimid silver of this mint) selling for £1,265.

Ancient Greek coins included a beautiful 4th century BC stater of Locris Opuntii, depicting Persephone and Ajax, selling for £4,600; it had formerly belonged to the art historian Lord Clark of Saltwood, who wrote and produced the television series *Civilisation* for the BBC in the 1960s. Roman coins included three fine aurei of Aelius Caesar, Commodus and Septimius Severus which all exceeded estimates and sold for £8,050, £8,625 and £5,520 respectively, underlining the current strong demand in this area of the market.

British and World coins sold well with an American octagonal 50 dollars struck by Augustus Humbert at the US Assay Office in 1851, selling for £24,150, roughly four times its estimate and confirming the strong market in US coins at present. However the top price in the sale was the £48,300 paid for an excessively rare Australian pattern shilling of 1920 from the Melbourne Mint, of a type bearing a small star above the date. The coin is one of very few examples struck from dies produced for an experiment to reduce the fineness of the silver in order to bring Australian coins in line with their British counterparts (where, in 1920, following the Great War, the fineness of the silver coinage was reduced from sterling .925 fine to .500 fine). In the event, Australia decided to retain the sterling standard so that the 1920 star-marked coins were never needed.

Renaissance and later medals included a number of very fine contemporary pieces and registered strong interest throughout with a full audience in the saleroom as well as eight telephone lines open to collectors who were unable to attend in person. Virtually all the lots exceeded their estimates, often by a wide margin and the results were, in many ways, reminiscent of the record-breaking sales of the Gaines collection last year.

A great rarity was the mid 15th century self-portrait medal of Giovanni Boldù, an artist whose work was strongly influenced by Pisanello, and this quadrupled its estimate to sell for £18,400. A uniface medal of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V by the important Milanese sculptor and medalist Leone Leoni realized £9,200. Two 16th century medals by the Venetian artist Danese Cattaneo had previously been sold at Sotheby's in 1974; one of Pietro Maria Rossi, Count of San Segundo, with a scene of Rossi chasing Fortune on its reverse realized £9,775 while the other, of Elisabetta Quirini with the Three Graces as its reverse sold for double its top estimate at £13,800. Top price in this section of the sale was the £20,700 paid for a remarkably fine bronze medal of the five year old Giovanni Paolo Meli Lupi by Galeotti, the reverse showing the child in full armour looking up at and adopting the pose of his father. Other strong prices were £17,250 paid for a bronze-gilt medal of Pope Paul III with the Griffin of Perugia fighting a serpent on the reverse, £9,775 for a pair of silver trial strikings of a medal of Julius III for the Jubilee of 1550, of a type specifically praised by Vasari, and £11,500 for a fine silver medal of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II by Antonio Abondio.

The National Museum of History and Art in Luxembourg were successful in purchasing a rare northern medal of Maximilian Morillon by the famous medalist and sculptor Jacques Jonghelinck who trained under Leoni in Milan. The medal had not been seen since its appearance at Sotheby's in 1974 where it had realized £800; now it sold for £12,650, almost three times its estimate.

Among the British pieces a very rare repoussé medal of Sir William Parkhurst as Warden of the Mint in 1644 under Charles I by Thomas Rawlins, showing Parkhurst holding a Royalist badge of the king, realized £7,360.

Finally the British Museum acquired an interesting 1904 portrait medal together with its original wax model and plaster trial by the amateur medalist Lady Ethel Harris depicting the art historian Marion Harry Spielmann (1858-1948) for £630. Lady Harris's work was inspired by Renaissance medallic art and she was highly praised by G.F. Hill of the British Museum at the time; she went on to produce a book, *Portrait Medals of a Generation*, in 1928.

Please note that all prices quoted are inclusive of the 15% buyers' premium.