

# Strauss & Co

Fine Art Auctioneers | Consultants



# The Contents of Harcroft House, Constantia, Cape Town

Monday 18 November 2019

9.30am: Session One

12.30pm: Session Two

4.00pm: Session Three

## VENUE

End of Norton Dingle Drive, Constantia, Cape Town

## PREVIEW

Friday 15 November to Sunday 17 November from 10am to 5pm

## LECTURES

Saturday 16 November at 11am: *The History behind Harcroft House*

Conducted by Sophie-Louise Fröhlich, Decorative Arts Specialist

Sunday 17 November at 11am: *Behind the Scenes at Harcroft House*

Conducted by Vanessa Phillips, Joint MD & Senior Decorative Arts & Jewellery Specialist

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PUBLIC AUCTION BY

**Strauss&co**

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J GINSBERG, C WELZ, V PHILLIPS (MD),

B GENOVESE (MD), AND S GOODMAN (EXECUTIVE)









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OPPOSITE

Lot 440 A set of ten large Chinese ink and colour on paper scroll panels, Qing Dynasty, 19th century (detail)

## Introduction



Charles Rycroft at Harcroft House, Constantia

The history of Harcroft is bound up in an extraordinary love story which began in 1936, when British born Charles Louis Rycroft flouted the conventions of the time to marry a divorcee, Muriel Susan Elizabeth Parsons. Harcroft Estate, situated on the banks of the Ayer Tawar river in Perak, Malaysia, was a rubber plantation comprising the estate and the factory which Charles's father, George Henry Rycroft, and his business partner, John Hartley, had purchased in 1919. Merging their two surnames, it was registered as Harcroft Rubber Estates Ltd. In 1924 Charles was called into the business and the company began manufacturing and exporting crepe rubber, used mainly to sole shoes, to countries as far afield as Egypt, Palestine, Spain, France and America. The plantation flourished and developed a substantial workforce. Not only was Charles clearly a tour de force; he enjoyed the mutual appreciation and respect of his staff, some of whom referred to him as "Uncle Charles"

The building of Harcroft, the residence, was a labour of love. It included every comfort and reflected the Rycrofts' superb taste – evident in the wonderful antiques that they acquired in Perak and during their extensive travels to China, Japan and America. However, in December 1941 everything changed with the Japanese invasion of Malaysia and the bombing of Singapore. Despite the chaos,

the regular bombing of neighbouring Penang and the resultant blackouts, normal life at Harcroft was maintained. In anticipation of what was to come, Charles deployed some of his workforce to help local volunteers to receive bombers at the aerodrome situated fifteen miles from Harcroft, which was to be a refuge for evacuees should the need arise. The factory's drying sheds were to house 3 000 soldiers.

As the invasion began, however, the aerodrome had to be destroyed and flight seemed the only option. Although they helped many of their friends leave Malaysia, the Rycrofts delayed their own departure for as long as possible. Ultimately, the time came when they had no choice but to leave. They bade a quick farewell and left for Kuala Lumpur by car, intending to return when it seemed safe. Sadly, this was not to be. Air raids increased and bridges were blown up as the Japanese advanced, making it impossible for them to go home. Their only remaining option was to travel to Singapore. Never one to be idle, upon arrival Charles became involved in the Auxiliary Fire Service, taking over command and repeatedly putting himself in danger. Muriel became a constant source of inspiration and strength to women who had lost husbands and partners and were now travelling on their own.

Eventually it became necessary to leave war-torn Singapore, so in February 1942 Muriel boarded the last ship loaded with women and children bound for India. In her diary she recounted the harrowing trials and tribulations of being one of 1 300 refugees on a luxury liner with capacity for only 200 passengers. Due to unrest and on the advice of the military, Muriel left Bombay that same year and made safe passage to Cape Town where she took up residence at the Mount Nelson Hotel. She filled multiple diaries in order to keep Charles's memory alive and joined the Empire Club, which was rooted in British traditions and had become a meeting place for evacuees, Malayan and other, where news was exchanged and posted.



Lot 47 A Chinese ivory figure of a female warrior, Qing Dynasty, 19th/20th century (part lot) (see item in image on opposite page - bottom left)

Harcroft Estate, Perak, Malaysia, pre 1941, post 1945





Charles, meanwhile, had been captured by the Japanese in April 1942, when Singapore fell. He was transferred to Changi internment camp for civilians. Not one of the family's numerous letters reached him and it was only a year later, on their wedding anniversary in June, 1943, that Muriel learned of his whereabouts. Indian troops liberated the prison in September, 1945, and Charles was amongst those freed. After a joyous reunion in Cape Town, he and Muriel returned to England and Charles resumed the family businesses.

They finally returned to their beloved Harcroft in 1946. It had suffered the ravages of war but the remaining staff were overjoyed to see them and they set about rebuilding the property. Anti-British sentiment was rife and the area was still in a state of unrest by 1949. An estate guard was put in place to protect the estate and factory. Perak, the province in which Harcroft was situated, was only to gain independence from British rule in 1957. Despite the setbacks, these were happy and prosperous years, with various staff presentations, including the pair of silver three-branch candlesticks which feature on the auction.

Eventually, the estate and factory were sold to a Chinese couple and in the 1950s the Rycroft's left Malaysia and retired to Cape Town. They found a suitable property in the heart of Constantia and purchased it on 8 March, 1951. The land was the most southern part of Klaassenbosch Farm and a portion of erf 118, Constantia, which had been subdivided in 1886. Arnold Spilhaus, founder of the Spilhaus emporium, bought the remaining Klaassenbosch Farm in 1906 and after his death in 1946 it was divided and sold off in sections.

The new Rycroft home had previously belonged to the Baxter family, who were great supporters of the arts. Charles and Muriel named their estate Harcroft and developed it and the manor house to its present Arts and Crafts style. The similarities

between the two properties are numerous and antiques from Harcroft, Malaysia, found a new home in Harcroft, Cape Town. Added to these were others which confirm their superb taste as collectors. The emphasis lies in the oriental, and the jades, ivories, scroll paintings and furniture are a testament to this.

As well as having access to Muriel's diaries, we are indebted to her for her love of compiling photograph albums that provide a wealth of research material, images of the interiors of both homes and glimpses into their daily lives. Muriel died in 1974 and in 1981 Charles married the widow, Louise Jackson, Muriel's long-time friend. Charles and Louise were passionate about the preservation of endangered species and were able through the HARCROFT Foundation, to give valuable assistance to The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in Jersey and became good friends with Lee and Gerald Durrell. Louise continued her support after Charles's death in 1998. She was well known for her love of animals and through her generosity and compassion many species are now well on their way to being saved. Louise remained at Harcroft until her death in 2014, aged 106. It is thanks to her dedication to Charles's memory that the house has been so well preserved, allowing us to step back in time and experience the rich history that pervades the grounds and home.

It is with great pleasure that Strauss & Co will auction the contents of Harcroft House in Constantia, Cape Town on 18 November 2019.



Lot 188 A pair of Chinese green fluorite crystal and gilt-metal mounted vases and covers, late 19th century (part lot)  
(see item in image on opposite page - bottom left)



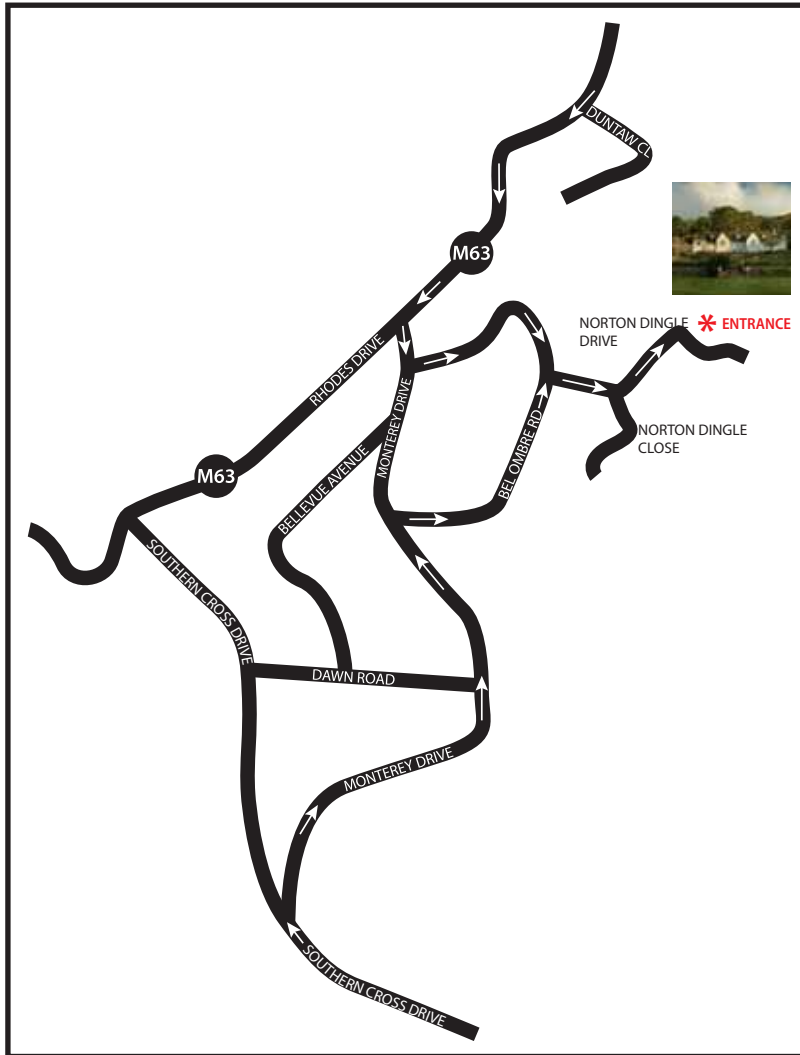
# Harcroft House, Cape Town, South Africa, post 1951



# Directions

Harcroft Estate, End of Norton Dingle Drive, Constantia, Cape Town

## ROAD MAP:



## AERIAL VIEW OF PROPERTY INDICATING ACCESS:



## PARKING:

### Preview Days and on the Auction Day

Parking will be available on the premises in the Paddock which is accessed from the end of Norton Dingle Drive, Constantia

If full, please use road parking.

A shuttle service will transport clients to the house and/or marquee and back.

All vehicles are parked at the owner's risk although a parking attendant will be on duty.

# Important information for this sale

The Preview will take place in the house and two outside rooms, whereas the Auction will take place in the marquee as shown in the map on the previous page.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE:

**The house must be cleared by 5pm Thursday 21 November. Please arrange payment and collection by then.**

Enquiries: +27 (0) 21 683 6560 | +27 (0) 78 044 8185

## REFRESHMENTS AND FOOD:

Refreshments and food will be on sale on preview days. Proceeds will benefit various charities.

## REGISTRATION:

In order to avoid queues and unnecessary delays, advance registration is advised.

### During the Preview

Registration forms will be available at the Registration Desk on Verandah One (accessed from the Library and the Sitting Room) during preview days. Pre-registered paddles will be available for collection at the Registration Desk on the day of the sale.

**On the day of the sale** the Registration Desk will be located at the entrance to the marquee.

## PAYMENT:

All lots sold will be invoiced to the name and address that appear on the registration form. Buyers are required to arrange payment within 7 days of the date of the sale.

Payment can be made *in situ* at the Bids and Payments Office located at the end of the passage upstairs and accessed from the service stair (see page 15).

Items will only be released upon proof of payment (see also Methods of Payment on page 13).

Payment and immediate collection will avoid delays, storage, shipping agent's transport and insurance costs.

## BIDDING:

### Prospective Bidders

In accordance with the Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008, prospective bidders are required to register before bidding. In order to register we require your full names, a copy of your identity document, proof of your physical address, postal address and telephone numbers.

**New Local Prospective Bidders** who have not previously registered with Strauss & Co are required to register **at least 24 hours before the auction commences.**

The following will be required in order to bid:

- Copy of ID or passport
- A holding deposit of R5 000\*

**New International Prospective Bidders** will be required to provide the following in order to bid:

- Copy of ID or passport
- At least two copies of invoices showing proof of previous purchases from other international auction houses or galleries.
- A holding deposit of R30 000\*

*\*This amount will not be deducted from the credit card provided. It is merely a "hold" on the funds and is automatically released after 7 days.*

## INSURANCE:

### Please note:

Strauss & Co does not provide insurance on sold lots. It is therefore advisable to pay and collect immediately.

## COLLECTION OF PURCHASES:

### 1) From Harcroft House

Purchased lots can be collected during the auction and from Tuesday 19 to Thursday 21 November 2019 from 9am to 5pm.

**No collections can be made from Harcroft House after this time. The premises must be cleared by 5pm Thursday 21 November for collections only. Please access the house from no. 6 Duntaw Close (off Rhodes Drive).**

### 2) From Strauss & Co, Johannesburg

Clients wishing to collect from Strauss & Co Johannesburg may make use of the Stuttaford Van Lines consolidated shipment. Please indicate clearly on your Shipping Instruction Form if you would like Stuttaford Van Lines to quote, or inform a member of staff. Unless specified by buyers, items will not be insured in transit.

Transport costs and insurance costs (if you are using Stuttaford's insurance) are for the buyer's account and must be paid directly to Stuttaford Van Lines who will invoice clients following approval of quotes. Payment of purchases can be done at Strauss & Co upon collection of purchased lots from the Johannesburg office.

**In order to take advantage of the consolidated shipment to Johannesburg which offers clients reduced rates, it is imperative to approve Stuttaford Van Lines' quotes immediately.**

Strauss & Co Johannesburg : 89 Central Street, Houghton.  
Tel: +27 (0) 11 728 8246 | janine@straussart.co.za.

## Uncollected Purchased Lots

Uncollected purchased lots remaining after close of business on Thursday 21 November, will be removed by Stuttaford Van Lines to their warehouse and will be available for collection, by appointment, from Monday 25 November, Monday to Friday from 9.00am until 4.30pm. Removal and insurance charges are at the buyer's expense and will be incurred for all purchases removed by Stuttaford Van Lines from Harcroft. These will be payable to Stuttaford Van Lines upon collection of purchased lots. Lots will be removed and stored by Stuttaford Van Lines, subject to their Conditions of Business. Lots will only be released to the buyer or an authorised representative upon presentation of proof of payment issued by Strauss & Co and settlement for the removal, handling and storage charges due to Stuttaford Van Lines.

A removal handling charge and the first week's storage of R200 plus VAT per lot will be incurred for purchases removed by Stuttaford Van Lines. A further storage charge of R150 plus VAT per lot per week or part thereof, will be levied thereafter.

Stuttaford Van Lines  
65 Bofors Circle, Cnr of Kinghall Avenue and Bofors Circle,  
Epping 2, Cape Town

## Door to Door Delivery Service

A representative from Stuttaford Van Lines (national deliveries) and Relttem Removers (in and around Cape Town) will be available on the sale and collection days to provide advice and to receive instructions from clients for the packing, delivery and forwarding of purchases. They will also provide quotations for delivery upon request.

## Stuttaford Van Lines

Tel +27 (0) 21 514 8700  
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john.spangenberg@stuttafordvanlines.com

## Relttem Removers

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# Buying at Strauss & Co

A step by step guide for buying at auction

## 1. BROWSE UPCOMING SALES

The sale can be viewed on our website:  
www.straussart.co.za

Catalogues can be purchased from our offices or by subscription.

### Cataloguing information

1. **Descriptions** include size, date, medium and attribution of the lot. Where possible, provenance, literature, exhibitions and additional notes are also included.
2. **Estimates** are given for all lots and are based on recent prices achieved for comparable property, taking into account quality, condition and provenance. Estimates are exclusive of Buyer's Premium and VAT.
3. **The reserve** is a confidential figure between Strauss & Co and the seller below which a lot may not be sold. It never exceeds the lower estimate.

The auction preview occurs prior to the auction, as listed at the front of the catalogue. You will have the opportunity to view the lots coming up for sale. Specialists are available at the preview to advise, discuss and help you with the lots you are interested in.

Condition Reports are available on request and are advisable if you are unable to attend the preview.

Saleroom notices amend the catalogue description of a lot after our catalogue has gone to press.

## 2. CREATE A STRAUSS & CO ACCOUNT

Get in touch and share your details with us.

Pre-registration is advised.

Registrations forms will be available at the Front Counter throughout the preview and on the day of the sale.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR ALL BIDDERS

In accordance with the Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008, prospective bidders are required to register before bidding. In order to register we require your full names, a copy of your identity document, proof of your physical address, postal address and telephone numbers. Prospective Bidders who have not previously registered with us are required to register at least 24 hours before the auction commences. We will require a holding deposit (see page 11).

## 3. BID IN THE SALE

If you are unable to attend an auction there are other ways to bid:

### Telephone Bid

If you prefer to bid by phone, we will call you from the saleroom and bid on your behalf.

### Absentee Bid

Submit your maximum bid and we will bid for you. We will confirm your bids by sms.

To arrange a Telephone or Absentee Bid please complete a bidding form and email: bids@straussart.co.za or contact our Client Services Departments:

Cape Town +27 (0) 21 683 6560

Johannesburg +27 (0) 11 728 8246.

Remember to check our terms and conditions regarding charges, including buyer's premium which is added to the hammer price on each lot.

## 4. IF YOUR BID IS SUCCESSFUL

You will receive an invoice and payment instructions shortly after the sale. All the lots you purchase will be invoiced to the name and address that appear on the registration form. Please arrange payment and collection immediately after the sale.

## How do I Pay and Collect?

All the lots you purchase will be invoiced to the name and address that appear on the registration form. Please arrange payment and collection immediately after the sale.

## How much will I pay (Live Auctions)?

If you are successful, you will pay the hammer price plus the buyer's premium on each lot as follows:

12% for lots selling over R10 000,  
15% for lots selling at and below R10 000 + VAT on the buyer's premium on each lot.

## Methods of payment

Payment may be made by:-

- a) Electronic Transfer (EFT)
- b) Cheque under R500 000 (by prior arrangement)
- c) Credit cards acceptable to Strauss & Co: Mastercard, Visa and Diners Club
- d) Direct Cash deposit into our Current Account  
Strauss & Co  
Standard Bank: Killarney  
Bank code: 007205  
Current Account No: 001670891  
Swift address: SBZA ZA JJ

## Insurance

Please note: Strauss & Co does not provide insurance on sold lots. It is advisable therefore to pay and collect immediately.

## Collection of Purchases

**See Important Information for this Sale (see page 11).**

All purchased lots must be collected from Harcroft House by 5pm on Thursday 21 November 2019, unless otherwise stated. Uncollected lots will be removed by Stuttaford Van Lines to their warehouse. Removal and insurance charges are at the buyer's expense.



Lot 16 A large Canton famille-rose vase, Qing dynasty, late 19th century

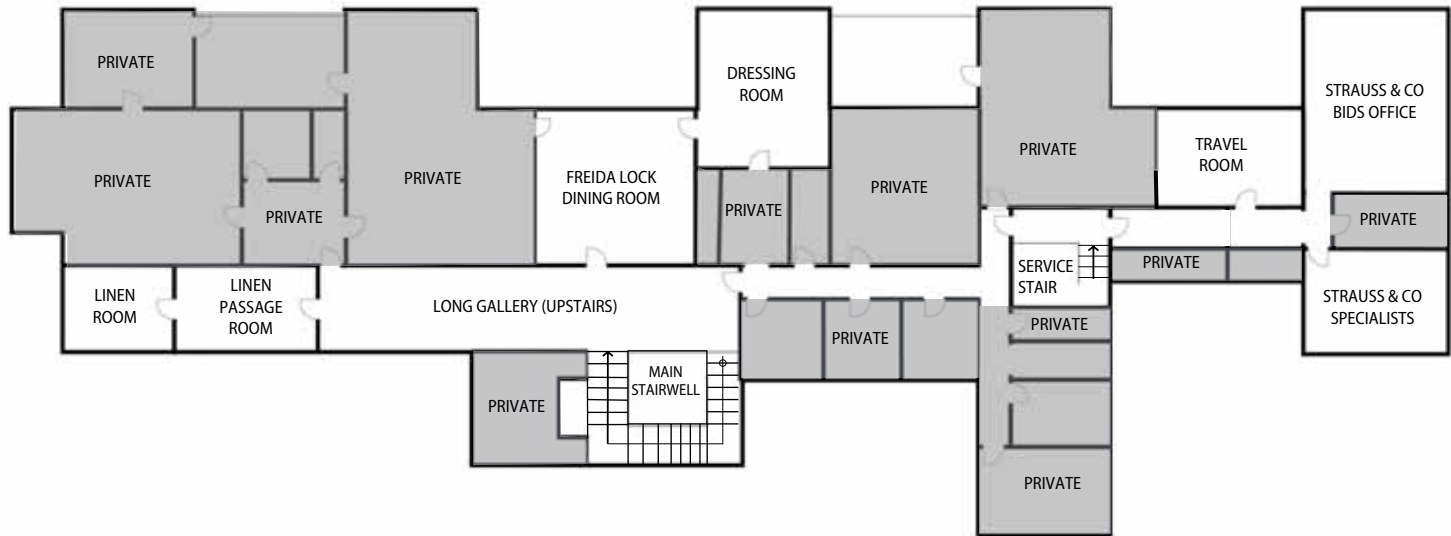


Harcroft House, Cape Town, South Africa, 2019





## First Floor Plan



## Ground Floor Plan

