

Press Release London

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## Sotheby's London To Offer Two Landmark Portraits by Johann Zoffany of the Celebrated Actor and Theatrical Manager David Garrick

-- The Pair of Paintings Represents the First of the Artist's Famed Conversation Pieces Ever Produced --



*The Garden at Hampton House, with Mr and Mrs David Garrick taking tea (pictured left), and The Shakespeare Temple at Hampton House, with Mr and Mrs David Garrick (pictured right) by Johann Zoffany, painted in 1762, est. £6-8 million\**

**SOTHEBY'S LONDON**, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2011, is delighted to announce the sale of the two most important works by Johann Zoffany to appear on the market in recent years. Both commissioned by David Garrick, Britain's greatest actor, they depict him with his family and friends in the garden of his house on the banks of the river Thames at Hampton. Painted in 1762 they have only appeared once on the open market, when they were sold in 1823 from Garrick's estate, and have descended in the family of a distinguished private collection ever since. From 2007 until 2010 the paintings hung together on loan at Tate Britain, in London, and are highlights in the recently published book on Zoffany by Mary Webster. They will be offered together as part of Sotheby's Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011 with an estimate of £6-8 million.

Emmeline Hallmark, Sotheby's Head of Early British Paintings, comments: "*These exceptional conversation pieces are masterly examples of the artist's early style and his genius for compositional originality. Johann Zoffany's remarkable ability to paint lively figures in a moment of private interaction, to catch a fleeting expression and to portray a likeness won him the reputation as one of the foremost painters in Britain at the time. As such, he secured the patronage of David Garrick, the most famous celebrity of his day, and these two works are superb examples that represent their close friendship, as well as artistic relationship which endured over the course of their lives.*"

These beautifully detailed paintings represent a major landmark in Zoffany's career. Their success ensured the artist's reputation and set him on a course that would ultimately lead to Royal patronage and a position in the first rank of painters in England. Painted not long after his arrival in England from Germany, they are the first conversation pieces the artist ever produced (conversation piece denotes a group portrait of individuals engaged in conversation) and depict not only a distinguished sitter and close personal friend of the artist, but his most important and influential early patron.

Conversation pieces by Zoffany of this quality and importance are exceptionally rare, and not for over a decade has anything comparable been on the open market. In June 2001 Sotheby's established the world record price for a single work by the artist with the sale of *The Dutton Family* in the drawing room of Sherborne Park, Gloucestershire, which sold for £3,523,500. In the past 20 years, only three other works by Zoffany valued at over £1 million have appeared at auction. To have a pair of this importance for sale is unique. In his day Zoffany was one of the most celebrated artists in Britain and enjoyed extensive Royal patronage at the hands of both George III and Queen Charlotte.

In 1769 Zoffany was expressly nominated to the newly formed Royal Academy by the King on a footing equal to the founding members, and he made a public sensation with his famous group portrait of that distinguished body of men when it was exhibited in 1772. As well as the Royal Family, Zoffany was heavily patronised by the most discerning and important cognoscenti among the British aristocracy and gentry, as well as by leading figures in the

literary and academic world, and the artist's works are now housed in many of the great collections of the world, including the Louvre and the Royal Collection, as well as Tate Britain and the National Gallery in London.

### **Johann Zoffany (1733-1810) and his acquaintance with David Garrick**

One of the most painted men in England, and a noted connoisseur and collector, David Garrick was perhaps the most famous man of his day and possibly the first true self-publicist and international celebrity. An actor of extraordinary skill and energy he transformed the eighteenth century stage, revolutionising not only theatre production, but its moral and social status as well. He was equally almost single-handedly responsible for bringing about a renaissance in the work of William Shakespeare in this country, and his 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee, held at Stratford-upon-Avon, cemented the bard's position as the greatest dramatist in the English language in the heart of the nation. Garrick, who had been tutored as a young man by his friend, the great Samuel Johnson, was a great admirer of Shakespeare, and the engaging intensity and heightened realism of his performance reinvigorated the great playwright's work for a new generation. His promotion of Shakespearean theatre took on a more active role when he assumed the management of the Drury Lane Theatre, which under Garrick's administration became unquestionably the leading theatre in the country, and a bastion of Shakespearian drama. In 1755 he commissioned the leading architect of the day, Robert Adam, to erect a temple in Shakespeare's honour in the grounds of his villa at Hampton-on-Thames, for which he commissioned a life size marble statue of the bard from Louis-François Roubiliac (now in the British museum), which can be seen in the second of the two paintings by Zoffany – Roubiliac's sculpture being visible through the open doorway.

In early 1762, shortly after his arrival in Britain, David Garrick commissioned Zoffany to paint a scene from his play *The Farmer's Return*, with Garrick himself in the role of the Farmer and Mrs Bradshaw as the Farmer's Wife. The painting was a revelation, and proved hugely popular with the public when it was exhibited at the Society of Artists exhibition later that year. Its success, which ensured continued publicity for Garrick himself, immediately established

Zoffany's name and confirmed to Garrick that he had found an artist who could demonstrably enhance his profile, and that of his Drury Lane theatre company. Following the success of *The Farmer's Return*, Garrick invited Zoffany to stay with his family at their villa in Hampton-on-Thames in the summer of 1762, a privilege he did not extend to any other major artist, and it was here that the present conversation pieces were executed. The paintings are evidence of the beginnings of a close personal friendship, as well as a collaborative relationship beneficial to both artist and patron which would last throughout Garrick's life.

#### *Mr and Mrs Garrick taking tea, and The Shakespeare Temple*

The first of the pair of paintings, *The garden at Hampton House, with Mr and Mrs David Garrick taking tea*, depicts Garrick surrounded by his family taking tea by the river Thames in the grounds of their villa at Hampton, outside London, in the company of close friend and neighbour Colonel George Bodens, and features a manuscript, which no doubt, contains the latest draft of one of Garrick's own plays. Zoffany's skill in rendering the likeness of each individual character within the picture, and in capturing their unique characteristics, as well as his astute observation of the interplay between each, is offset by the beautiful, grand sweeping vista down the Thames. The picture contains, therefore, not only a portrait of each individual member of the family, but a portrait of a substantial part of Garrick's property. It is a scene of domestic tranquillity that reflects the ease and grace of the family's relaxed, yet very social summer days at Hampton.

The style of the second painting, *The Shakespeare Temple at Hampton House, with Mr and Mrs David Garrick*, is beautifully constructed, with a delicate balance between landscape and architecture; the work conceived as a pendant and painted only slightly later than the first. The view is reversed and the artist has set his easel at about the spot where the tea table was in the former picture. We again see Garrick and his wife, this time set against the backdrop of Garrick's Shakespeare Temple (designed by Robert Adam and erected in 1755-56 in homage to the great bard), inside which can just be seen Louis-Francois Roubiliac's life sized marble sculpture of Shakespeare. Playing among the columns of the temple is a small boy, probably

Garrick's nephew George, the son of Carrington Garrick, whilst entering from the right a servant brings out a tray of tea.

Both paintings are featured as highlights in Mary Webster's new book entitled *Johann Zoffany 1733-181*, which was published by Yale University Press in May 2011.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

**Notes for Editors:**

The Property of a Nobleman  
JOHANN ZOFFANY R.A.  
Frankfurt 1733 - 1810 London

THE GARDEN AT HAMPTON HOUSE, WITH MR AND MRS DAVID GARRICK TAKING TEA; AND THE SHAKESPEARE TEMPLE AT HAMPTON HOUSE, WITH MR AND MRS DAVID GARRICK

A pair, both oil on canvas, held in Maratta frames, each 99.7 by 125cm.; 39 1/4 by 49 1/4 in.