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**Massive Moorcroft vase makes a new high**

The quarter-century-old auction record for Moorcroft pottery has been broken with the sale of a massive *Flambé Landscape* pattern vase for £32,000.

Probably produced for exhibition in the late 1920s, the 15½in (38.5cm) high shouldered form vase is decorated with tubelined tall trees and hills and glazed in green and blue with a flambé sky.

It sold comfortably over its £15,000-25,000 estimate at Kinghams in Moreton-in-Marsh on April 16. With 26% buyer's premium the price was just over £40,000.

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Left: Kinghams' specialist Michael Jeffrey together with the record-breaking Moorcroft vase sold at **£32,000**.

**The National Antiques Fair of Wales**



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SCAN TO BUY TICKETS

# Pendant pictured in 17th century deathbed scene discovered and up for sale at London fair

by Laura Chesters

A memento mori pendant depicted in a celebrated 17th century family portrait on the theme of grief, mortality, and religious faith has been discovered and is offered for sale at a London fair.

The Charles I heart-shaped gold and enamel pendant worked with a lock of blonde hair will be taken to the *Treasure House Fair* in June by Martyn Downer Works of Art in Cambridge, priced around £650,000.

The item inscribed and dated 1634 had been owned by a London couple, collectors of memento mori, for 30 years. However, it was not until a visit to Manchester Art Gallery that they realised it is pictured in the much-studied family portrait *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of His Wife*, being worn by Sir Thomas.

The lifesize oil on panel was commissioned from the Cheshire artist John Souch (c.1593-1645) following the death of Lady Magdalen Aston during childbirth in 1635.

Sir Thomas stands beside his sole surviving child, three-year-old Thomas, and an empty wicker cradle. Lady Aston is shown both in life and in death. An inscription reads *The seas can be defined, the earth can be measured, grief is immeasurable.*

The discovery of the

pendant suggests the portrait also marks the death of Aston's six-year-old son, Robert, the previous year. The engraved inscription in Latin translates as: 'Your Robert died 4th May 1634 In whom was our delight, through whom was our consolation, with whom the hope of his parents first perished.'

Sir Thomas (1600-45) was a courtier, theologian, soldier and poet. Knighted by Charles I, he fought for the Royalist cause in the civil war before his capture by Parliamentary forces in Staffordshire. He died of wounds received while attempting to escape. The jewel remained at Aston Hall in Cheshire until the 1862 sale of the collection of Sir Arthur Aston.

The owners contacted dealer Martyn Downer to research the pendant and offer it for sale. He said: "The discovery of this extraordinary object propels us back to the rituals of mourning in the age of Shakespeare and offers a vivid new insight into a celebrated family portrait. Treasured and lost for 400 years, its emergence into the public gaze testifies to the love



of a father for his adored child."

He added that it is likely to have survived due to its modest intrinsic value. "If it had contained expensive gems, it may not have survived and could have been broken up."

The former Sotheby's jewellery specialist takes a stand on his own at the *Treasure House Fair* for the first time (previously he has shared a space). The theme for his showcase this summer will be death.

## Gunpowder Plot link

Also at the event, which runs at Royal Hospital Chelsea



1. Two views of the memento mori pendant of Sir Thomas Aston (1600-45) to be offered at *Treasure House Fair* by **Martyn Downer Works of Art**, priced around **£650,000**.

2. *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of His Wife* painting at Manchester Art Gallery, including the pendant. (Image © Manchester Art Gallery/Bridgeman Images.)

3. A ring once owned by Sir Thomas Tresham (d.1559) to be offered at *Treasure House Fair* by **Greens of Cheltenham**. Engraved with the Tresham arms, the ring descended through the family, notably appearing around the neck of Sir Thomas's grandson in an engraving now in the British Museum. (Image © Greens of Cheltenham/Jon Stokes Photography.)

from June 24-30, Greens of Cheltenham will offer a historic Tudor gold and rock crystal ring.

The jewellery, probably intended to be worn over a gloved thumb, was made for Sir Thomas Tresham (d.1559), a knight and one of England's most ardent Catholic recusants.

However, in 1605, when the

family was implicated in the Gunpowder Plot (Francis Tresham is widely believed to have written the Montague Letter that revealed the conspiracy), they were expunged from the historical record.

The ring was sold at auction in Paris in December 2025 and will now be offered at the fair with a six-figure asking price.



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**The discovery of this extraordinary object propels us back to the rituals of mourning in the age of Shakespeare and offers a vivid new insight into a celebrated family portrait**