

Auction House

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THE LOIRE VALLEY, France—The “garden party” sales that Vendôme, France-based auctioneer **Philippe Rouillac** holds each June at the 17th-century **Château de Cheverny**, 100 miles southwest of Paris, have become a summer highlight on every French connoisseur’s social calendar. More than mere buzzy fetes, the auctions are important showcases for Loire Valley heirlooms. Past highlights have included **Charles Wilson Peale**’s 1782 portrait of **George Washington**, which sold for €5.2 million (\$8.2 million) in 2002 and is now hanging in the dining-room corridor at the White House in Washington, D.C. This year’s sales, held June 6, 8 and 9, are likely to appeal once more to U.S. patriotism, with 100 lots from the archives of the **Comte de Rochambeau** (1725–1807), the French general who helped Washington’s troops defeat the British in the Battle of Yorktown. Among the offerings are coded letters from Louis XV (€3,000–5,000; \$4,700–7,900 each), and the bergère in which Rochambeau died (est. €60,000–80,000; \$95,000–126,000). The sale also includes 75 late 18th-century French swords and sabers valued between €100,000 and €150,000 (\$158–237,000); a cache of 250 17th-century French gold coins unearthed last year by a 22-year-old Portuguese mason in Montrichard, south of Vendôme (est. €100–200,000); and a recently discovered 10-foot-high lifesize drawing by the Neoclassical artist **Pierre- Paul Prud’hon**. The picture depicts the silver, mother-of-pearl and lapis lazuli mirror that the French silversmith **Jean-Baptiste Claude Odiot** designed for the city of Paris in honor of **Marie Louise of Austria**’s marriage to **Napoléon**, in 1810, and that the widowed, penniless empress had melted down in 1823. The drawing is expected to fetch between €10,000 and €15,000 (\$15,800–23,700).

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