

## Rare outing for six Shakespeare's First Folio copies in London



LONDON, April 24 (Reuters) - Six highly rare first edition collections of William Shakespeare's plays will go on show in London next week in what auction house Christie's says will be the largest display of the works in Britain.

The exhibition, which marks the 400th anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio in 1623, runs in Christie's London showroom from May 2 until May 26. The copies will then go back to their owners.

The editions were compiled by Shakespeare's friends and published seven years after his death. They contain 36 of the 37 plays he wrote, arranged for the first time as comedies, tragedies and histories.

"If we didn't have the publication of the First Folio, it is very likely that half of Shakespeare's entire output, so 18 plays, would not exist and these include plays such as 'Macbeth', 'Julius Caesar', 'All's Well That Ends Well'," Margaret Ford, Christie's international head of books, told Reuters at a preview on Monday.

"We don't know exactly how many copies were published, but the most likely guesstimate is 750 copies, and 235 copies survive in some form. The majority are imperfect, but there are some complete copies there as well."

In 2020, a First Folio sold for a record \$9.97 million at auction.

Five of the six copies come from private collections, and the sixth from the Senate House Library at the University of London.

"It's the only time that the public can see six copies of the First Folio together exhibited," Ford said.

"Six copies may not sound like a lot to the average person but... to put it in context, the last time that even four copies were exhibited was 100 years ago for the 300th anniversary when the British Library exhibited four of their copies."

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