

For Immediate Release

March 20, 2007

Contact: Bendetta Roux 212.636.2680 broux@christies.com

BOLD BOLDINI AND BEGUILING BOUGUEREAU: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

19th Century European Art and Orientalist Art
April 12, 2007

New York – On April 12, Christie's New York will present *19th Century European Art and Orientalist Art*, focusing on European and American painters who discovered and expressed the enigma and lushness of the Orient such as Frederick Arthur Bridgman and Felice Schiavoni as well as figureheads of 19th century European painting including William Adolphe Bouguereau, Arthur John Elsley, Giovanni Boldini, Mihaly Munkacsy and Alexej Alexejewitsch Harlamoff.

The Orientalists

Over the past three seasons, the market for Orientalist works has widened tremendously with a very active collecting community located in the Middle East. The sale this time will not only offer a selection of paintings by Western artists who traveled to the Orient, but will also include sculpture, drawings and etchings as well as some Orient-inspired jewelry.

An extraordinary highlight of the sale is *Roxane in Jean-Baptiste Racine's Bajazet*, an exquisite portrait of Rachel Félix, one of the greatest stage actresses of the 19th century, in Oriental dress. The painting is attributed to Eugène Devéria (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). France became enamored of the ways and fashion of the Ottoman Empire after the first Ottoman envoy was sent to the Court of Louis XIV in 1669. From a diplomatic point of view the meeting was a disaster but the impression left by the theatrical presentation and exoticism of the envoy was profound and only three years after the visit, Racine's *Bajazet* – a play set in Constantinople during the reign of Sultan Amurat - premiered in Paris. Almost a century later, the *Académie Française* staged it again, this time with the incomparable

Rachel Félix in the role of Roxane. The painting is an extraordinary depiction of Rachel in Ottoman attire. The attention given to every detail of her dress as well as jewelry reveals superb craftsmanship and a sense for drama – obviously influenced by the great Jean-Etienne Liotard.

By Rudolf Ernst is the wonderfully luxurious *Entering the Palace Gardens* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000), a *tour de force* of Ernst' Orientalist oeuvre, in which the artist pursues photographic exactitude and academic precision alongside his signature boldness in juxtaposing vibrant colors. The striking, bright pink flamingo is beautifully set off against the lavender of the irises while the sapphire glow of the man's cloak almost radiates against the brilliant emerald green of the oxidized bronze door. With this painting, Ernst succeeds wonderfully well in capturing the exotic and pulsating colors of the East and conveying the magnetism and splendor of the foreign lands.

One of the greatest travel works in the sale is Pierre Tetar van Elven's breathtaking *A View of Jerusalem, seen from the East, with the Temple Mount and the Lion's Gate* (estimate: \$60,000-80,000). The eastern wall of the Temple Mount is visible above the garden, along with the mosques upon it. The Dome of the Rock appears on the left side. One olive tree symbolizes the Garden of Gethsemane. Tetar van Elven combines elements from the three major traditions of landscape painting commonly employed by topographical painters in Europe: Claude Lorrain, Canaletto and the 17th century Dutch painters.

The Orientalist sale will further include *Outside the Mosque* by Frederick Arthur Bridgman (estimate: \$80,000-120,000); *An Arab Encampment in Wadi Feiran, Egypt* by Edward Lear (estimate: \$30,000-50,000); and a series of color engravings by Antoine Ignace Melling (estimate: \$4,000-6,000). Immensely powerful and impressive is *Studies of Black Men*, painted circa 1870 by Henri Alexander Georges Regnault (estimate: \$20,000-30,000). The work is a reflection of Regnault's first foray into the Orientalist genre, and shows an exquisite painterly quality, contrasting the dark brown of the skin against the cream-colored background. Scholars believe this sketch may belong to a small group of preliminary sketches Regnault made for his monumental canvas *Summary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Granada*.

Nineteenth Century European Art

The softly shining highlight of the sale is William Adolphe Bouguereau's *Chansons de printemps*, 1889 (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,500,000), a monumental and important work from the artist working at the height of his powers. In his 'fantasy paintings' of which *Chansons* is a splendid example, Bouguereau strived to express the ultimate Ode to Beauty, borrowing ideals of form and contour from ancient Greek and Roman statuary as well as from the great masters of the Renaissance. The painting depicts a young girl – the model Gabrielle Druzner – seated in the heart of a woodland glade with blooming flowers, two putti flanking her, the ultimate renewal of spring. Bouguereau was very

pleased with this work and chose it as his entry into the World Exposition in Paris in 1889. Louis Comfort Tiffany was equally charmed by it and it became the motif of one of his most famous glass windows.

One of the masters of 19th century Victorian childhood portrayal, Arthur John Elsley, is presented with *Never Mind*, 1907 (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,500,000), a pivotal work in Elsley's oeuvre and the cover of the catalogue raisonné of the artist. In this delightful, large-scale painting, Marjorie Elsley, the artist's only child, is depicted, attempting to put her arms around a large St Bernard's neck. Elsley almost certainly must have studied animal anatomy for the dogs, particularly the collies and St Bernards he portrays, are anatomically correct. The work of another famous Victorian childhood painter, Fred Morgan, is also offered: *Bob Apple* (estimate: \$300,000-400,000). Morgan was the eldest child of the artist John Morgan RBA, and a very successful artist whose work was well-known among the Victorian middle classes.

A Woman Carrying Firewood and a Pail by Jean-Francois Millet (estimate: \$600,000-800,000) was created during the same years the artist painted *The Gleaners* (now in the Musee d'Orsay) and *The Man with a Hoe* (now at the Getty Museum). The theme of a country house wife returning from a local well carrying a pail of water with which to prepare the family dinner was one of the themes which absorbed Millet during the second half of the 1850's. Among Millet's many 1850's Barbizon paintings, *Woman Carrying Firewood and a Pail* is notable for the particular beauty of its soft green and golden-brown color scheme, and for its careful finish. Millet's fellow countryman, Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier painted *Dimanche à Poissy* in 1850 (estimate: \$350,000-450,000) and when shown at the *Salon* in Paris in 1850-51 it was acquired by the Duc de Narbonne, and later exhibited again at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1855. Meissonier was celebrated for his ability to characterize a figure through personal gestures and for the virtuosity with which he rendered details, both extraordinary given the small scale on which he painted. The present work is a more ambitious composition but with miniature figures who still reflect an amazing display of body language. In *Dimanche à Poissy*, Meissonier celebrates the bourgeois leisure that would be identified with the Impressionists 25 years later.

An interesting case of crosscultural development is Alexej Alexejewitsch Harlamoff – Russian by birth but French by education and artistic expression. The artist studied in St Petersburg but after a scholarship allowed him to continue his artistic formation in Paris, he remained true to the City of Light, eventually becoming one of its main portraitists and painting celebrities of his time such as Alphonse Daudet, Ivan Turgenev and Pauline Viardot-Garcia. *Happy Moments* (estimate: \$350,000-450,000) is created at the height of Harlamoff's powers and presents a complex composition of three children. Through strategically placed focal spots, the artist draws the viewer's attention in a

very sophisticated and intriguing way from one child to the next, creating an interesting interplay of gazes and movements.

One can not help but smile while observing the vibrant and energetic virtuoso style Giovanni Boldini displays in *Il Marchesino à Versailles* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). This stunning, jewel-like oil belongs to a group of small scale paintings Boldini executed *en plein air* on the grounds of Versailles from circa 1875-77. With the illustrious summer court of Louis XIV as the perfect backdrop, Boldini's male and female protagonists pay homage to the rococo period as demonstrated by this work, in which the elegant Marchese is donned in 18th century court attire. Boldini executed these works on commission from his art dealer Goupil who had a ready market for these paintings in America and Europe.

Auction: 19th Century European Art and Orientalist Art

April 12 at 10 a.m.
and 2 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

April 6 – 11

Christie's Los Angeles, 360 North Camden Drive, Beverly Hills

March 27 - 30

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2006 that totaled £2.51 billion / \$4.67 billion. This 36% increase over 2005 marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service, and international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, photographs, collectibles, wine, cars and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets such as China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Dubai, Mumbai and Russia. Christie's also offers its clients worldwide access to its sales through Christie's LIVE, its unique, real-time online bidding service.

#

Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

More information about this sale can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.

