

For Immediate Release

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GUSTAVE MOREAU'S MYSTICAL DESDEMONA TO LEAD CHRISTIE'S SALE OF 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN ART

**19th Century European Art
April 19, 2005**

New York – On April 19, Christie's will again focus on one of the most scorned and lauded periods in European artistic history – the incomparable 19th Century. An intriguing mélange of different artistic perspectives and standards, styles and techniques, the sale of 19th Century European Art never fails to offer astonishing highlights as well as new insights into the depths and reach of 19th Century painting.

Spanish and Italian Schools

A subdued background, a traditional dress and then an irresistibly sensual gaze staring one straight in the eye - Ignacio Zuloaga y Zableta knew how to capture attention. The painting of *Mercedes* (estimate: \$250,000-350,000) attracted substantial interest even in its early existence as witnessed by an exhibition history mentioning Rotterdam (1905), Barcelona (1907), New York (1909) and the West Coast some years later. Zuloaga's influences all seem to converge in this extraordinary portrait: Velasquez, Zurbaran, Goya and Degas have left traces of their exquisite styles and techniques in the execution of *Mercedes*. The portrait of *Maria Luisa Isabella Spada Veralli – Principessa Potenziani e di San Mauro* by Vittorio Matteo Corcos (estimate: \$250,000-350,000) was painted around the same time and shows a delicate and almost fragile looking figure languishing on a *chaise longue* in a peach satin gown. This is the 19th Century at its best – the vast plain of difference between *Mercedes* and *la Principessa* is almost unconquerable.

Orientalism

After having been dormant for several seasons, Orientalist works are back en vogue and this sale offers several masterful examples. Noteworthy is the extremely lively scene by Edmé-Alexis-Alfred

Dehodencq, *Le conteur marocain* (estimate: \$350,000-550,000) which beautifully captures the teeming life and bustling streets of Morocco. This particular painting stands among Dehodencq's most important works, being commissioned by the King of Portugal, Don Fernando. Interestingly, Christie's New York sold a sketch of the same composition in October 2004. A powerful image is *The Palace Attendant*, by Ludwig Deutsch (estimate: \$300,000-500,000), painted in 1901, a year after Deutsch received the gold medal at the *Exposition Universelle*. Nubia, a land of great natural wealth had been the origin of many great civilizations and Deutsch reflected this grandeur in the portrayal of its people. *The Palace Attendant* is an exquisitely executed work which conveys the nobility, strength and grace of the palace guard in minute detail.

Victorian Pictures

One of the pinnacles of Victorian painting is surely to be found in the work of James-Jacques-Joseph Tissot by whom the sale offers several works. The misty atmosphere of *Dans la serre* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) underlines the masterly play of the subtle color contrasts where the soft grays and browns of the lady's costume are set off by the white and pink azalea blossoms. *A Meeting at a Riverside Café* (estimate: \$600,000-800,000) is an example of Tissot's earlier work representing figures in historical dress which also applies for *Jeune Femme à l'éventail* (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000).

Two much-loved Victorian themes are revealed in *Sain et Sauvé* by Marcus Stone (estimate: \$200,000-300,000), telling the tale of a happy home-coming of a French soldier after the Franco-Prussian war and *A Mischievous Puppy or Tit for Tat* by Charles Burton Barber (estimate: \$200,000-300,000) shows a scene in which his second daughter is being pulled of a cushion by an all too playful puppy.

Dutch, Belgian, German, Austrian, Russian and Scandinavian Schools

This section offers a blend of North European schools and movements and includes *The Flower Seller* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000), a ravishing full length portrait by Eugène Blaas of a youthful woman with a basket of flowers at her feet and *Das Einfädeln der Nadel* by Isidor Kaufmann (estimate: \$80,000-120,000), one of the most important painters of the Jewish genre.

Plein Air Paintings

Exquisite in its execution and its subject theme, is a collection of plein air paintings, brought together by John R. Gaines and now being sold by the estate. Lured by the wildness of nature and attracted by the ancient ruins of Rome's ancient past, 19th Century artists left the studio behind and armed with paint boxes, easels and brushes, ventured into the Italian campagna – open air painting was born. The genre evokes a subtle tenderness and reveals an intensely personal dialogue between the painter and his natural surroundings, qualities that can easily be discovered in the works offered by the Gaines estate. One of the highlights is the breathtaking *Capriccio View of Rome with the Monte de Giustizia and Villa Montalto Negroni* by Alexandre-Hyacinthe Dunoy (estimate: \$60,000-80,000). The

work shows a faithful rendition of the Monte de Giustizia with some artistic liberties, giving it a *capriccio* flavor. Also included are two sketchy works by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot; *Ville d'Avray-Anciens bord de l'étang* (estimate: \$70,000-90,000) and *Paysage Montagneux* (estimate: \$60,000-80,000). A master of skies, Paul Huet unveils his heavens in three subtle paintings; *Light Breaking through Clouds: two studies* (estimate: \$10,000-15,000) and *Sunset over the Sea* (estimate: \$20,000-30,000).

Barbizon, Realist and French Landscape Paintings

A splendid 'sea-landscape' by Gustave Courbet, *La Plage de Saint-Aubin* (estimate: \$300,000-400,000) heads this section. Courbet was fascinated by the sea as a natural phenomenon, not as a romantic idea. His *paysages de mer* capture the splendor of this eternal element effortlessly and the present painting is a beautiful rendition of a perfectly pleasant summer's day at the beach with a contemplative sky and quiet waters. Several Corots are being offered, of which *La Moissonneuse à la faucille* (estimate: \$500,000-800,000), a portrait of a young woman, represents the lesser well-known Corot. It is mainly his later portraits which found Corot's reputation as a truly 'modern' artist, revered by Picasso, Degas and Cezanne alike.

French Paintings

Precious, rare, sumptuous and jewel-like are all adjectives that come to mind when admiring Gustave Moreau's *Desdémone* (estimate: \$1,500,000-2,500,000). Painted in 1875-78, Moreau used Shakespeare's *Othello* as a source of inspiration for his magnificent Desdemona, but rather than depicting precise historical references, the artist wanted to recreate an atmosphere. The heroine is shown as a dreaming princess, seated on a lavishly ornate throne in a rich neo-Byzantine décor. Moreau has deliberately transformed *Desdémone* into an otherworldly figure, thereby evoking an emotional reaction and setting the stage for the viewer's own mystical experience.

La Belle Epoque

Ravishing in an opulent Belle Epoque way is Conrad Kiesel's *After the Ball* (estimate: \$150,000-250,000). Vibrant brush strokes bring life to the bold colors and add luxuriant texture to the paint surface, complimenting the lace and the fabrics that adorn the figures of two delicately portrayed ladies. In Kiesel's handling of the figures, the stylistic influences of masters like John Singer Sargent are apparent.

Auction: 19th Century European Art

April 19 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center April 15 - 18

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Images available on request

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

More information about Christie's sale of *19th Century European Art* 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.