

For Immediate Release

March 29, 2004

Contacts: *Andrée Corroon* 212.636.2680
 acorroon@christies.com
 Margaret Doyle
 mdoyle@christies.com

**RARE PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ALVIN LANGDON COBURN FEATURED
IN CHRISTIE'S SPRING SALE OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

*Auction to Include Strong Selection of Early Modernist and Avant-Garde Works
by Edward Weston, Alfred Stieglitz, Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy and Others*

Photographs
April 27, 2004

New York – An extraordinary selection of rare works by Alvin Langdon Coburn, spanning a 54-year period during which the pioneering artist contributed to the explorations of portraiture, Modernism, Surrealism and Vortography, is among the major offerings of Christie's spring sale of Photographs, on April 27 at Rockefeller Center. The sale will also offer an assortment of exceptional vintage photographs by Edward Weston from the collection of Allegheny College; portfolios by William Eggleston and Contemporary photographer Joel Sternfeld; and iconic images by Alfred Stieglitz, Man Ray, Dorothea Lange, Diane Arbus, and László Moholy-Nagy.

In 1901, at the age of eighteen, Alvin Langdon Coburn was already recognized by many of the most prominent critics of the time as a prodigy in the medium of photography. With the early support of his distant cousin and photographer, F. Holland Day, Coburn was ushered into the highly selective world of the Photo-Secession and quickly became aligned with many of its most influential members, among them Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, and Clarence White. Among the photographs by Coburn that were published in Stieglitz's legendary Camera Work

were *Mother and Child – A Study*, 1903 (estimate: \$20,000–30,000) and *Shadows and Reflections, Venice*, 1905 (estimate: \$120,000–180,000). In *Mother and Child – A Study*, a tender portrait of a mother nursing her baby, the influence of Gertrude Käsebier and Arthur Wesley Dow – with whom Coburn had worked – is easily detectable. *Shadows and Reflections, Venice*, made just two years later, is a natural evolution of Coburn's work, as its focus on the effect of light on the moving water of a canal made it a Photo-Secessionist icon. Only a year later, Coburn made *Portland Place, London* (estimate: \$60,000–80,000), whose atmospheric light represents his continued evolution into Modernism.

Coburn's *The House of a Thousand Windows, New York*, 1912 (estimate: \$70,000–90,000), was made after the artist had traveled to the American West, and clearly shows how he was able to transform his experience of the West's dramatic canyons and peaks into images of mountainous new skyscrapers that punctuated the sky above New York while towering over the sidewalks below. A documentation of the dizzying metamorphosis of the city skyline, *The House of a Thousand Windows, New York* is one of the earliest Modernist views of New York and predates even those of Paul Strand, Charles Sheeler, and Alfred Stieglitz. Two vortographs, both dated 1917 (estimates: \$180,000–220,000 and \$150,000–200,000), are dramatic examples of the artist approaching his final realization of the ideals of abstraction. The *Vortoscope* – a device of the Coburn's own invention – was made of three mirrors that acted as a prism, freeing the camera from recording the recognizable while also making reference to concrete subjects. The images that resulted were a combination of the most influential modern art movements of the early 20th century, including Cubism, Futurism, and Modernism. Also included in the sale are two works from Coburn's later career: *Fantasia*, 1957 (estimate: \$7,000–9,000) and *Basket-weaver, Madeira*, 1955 (estimate: \$7,000–9,000).

Six exceptional photographs by Edward Weston that originally formed part of the collection of Pennsylvania oil magnate and art patron T. Edward Hanley will be sold by Allegheny College, which acquired them in 1974 from Hanley's widow. The selection includes vintage prints of such classic images as *Nude on Sand, Oceano*, 1936 (estimate: \$70,000–90,000), *Pepper No. 30*, 1930 (estimate: \$70,000–90,000), *Charis, Santa Monica*, 1935 (estimate: \$50,000–70,000), and *Dunes, Oceano*, 1936 (estimate: \$40,000–60,000). From another collection comes Weston's *Bananas*, 1930 (estimate: \$30,000–40,000).

In 1994, Joel Sternfeld began the series *On this Site*, depicting a variety of locations where infamous crimes had taken place. For the artist, these places held meaning about the crimes themselves and questioned the innocence of what in some cases are beautiful landscapes where horrific events took place. A set of 53 color coupler prints made between 1994 and 2003, *On this Site: Landscape in Memoriam* will be offered in the sale (estimate: \$90,000–120,000).

