

For Immediate Release

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**CHRISTIE'S SALES OF 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN ART OFFER SUPERB
EXAMPLES BY BRETON, BOUGUEREAU, COROT AND OTHERS**

19th Century European Art

April 23, 2003

New York – Christie's spring sale of 19th Century European Art on April 23 at Rockefeller Center will offer an exquisite canvas by Jules-Adolphe-Aime-Louis Breton as well as a superb selection of Barbizon and French Realist paintings.

*Jules Breton devoted his talent to the depiction of life in the fields, painting moments of labor, rest, and the rituals of peasant life. *Le retour des champs*, 1867 (estimate: \$400,000-600,000), is an excellent example of Breton's style of synthesizing the real and the ideal without detracting from the naturalness of the scene. Breton was the first "peasant painter" to gain entry into L'Academie des Beaux Arts, and he had a distinct influence on the next generation of painters of rural life, including Leon Lhermitte, Julien Dupré, and Jules-Bastien Lepage. In the present work, three women and a child return from a day of work in the fields, with the delicate and subtly hued sky contributing to the atmosphere of grave serenity.*

*The recent discovery of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's *L'Atelier de Corot*, circa 1865-68 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000), which was painted at the pinnacle of Corot's career, constitutes an important addition to the artist's oeuvre. Previously undocumented, it belongs to the renowned and rare series of atelier paintings that rank among the most complex and thematically rich of Corot's entire production. Between 1865 and 1870, Corot completed a total of six paintings*

entitled L'Atelier de Corot, all of which are reworkings of a single subject: a solitary woman seated before an easel in the artist's own Paris studio, contemplating a Corot landscape. Other examples from the series are currently in the National Gallery, Washington; the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay, Paris; the Baltimore Museum of Art; and the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon. The version offered in this sale is the only one still in private hands.

William Bouguereau is represented in the sale by Le sommeil, 1864 (estimate: \$200,000–300,000), a painting of a mother and her children that was once owned by Théodore van Gogh. Le sommeil is a reduction of a larger work of the same title that the artist submitted to the Salon of 1864. The artist created this reduction not only because he was considering sending it to his engraver, as was his custom, but also as a kind of personal challenge, choosing to recreate a painting with which he was supremely satisfied.

Elizabeth Jane Gardner Bouguereau, the American wife of William Bouguereau, was the first woman to exhibit, and later to win a medal, at the Paris Salon. A native of New Hampshire, she moved to Paris as a young artist and became an accomplished painter. La becquée (estimate: \$200,000–300,000), which shows her husband's influence in terms of style, is among the finest paintings in her oeuvre.

Among the strong selection of French Realist pictures included in the sale is Julien Dupré's Au retour de la moisson, 1880 (estimate: \$180,000–250,000). Dupré is regarded as a leading exponent of the second-generation Realist painters, whose depictions of the toils of the French peasants were true to the ideals of Jean-François Millet and Jules Breton. Those in Dupré's circle were academically trained painters who nostalgically turned to the life of the French rural field laborers and farm workers for subjects untainted by the progress of the industrial age. The peasants, as depicted in the present work, were the embodiment of the most fundamental and consistent elements in human society, and Dupré's career was devoted to portraying the essence of rural life.

Irene and Frida (estimate: \$140,000–180,000), was painted by James Jebusa Shannon in 1904. Shannon was a highly successful expatriate American artist who relocated to Britain in the latter half of the 19th century, eventually becoming a member of the Royal Academy, president of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, and achieving knighthood in 1922. The young girls in the present work, Irene and Frida Mond, were the granddaughters of Dr. Ludwig Mond, who later became the first Lord of Melchet. The Mond family is best known for founding the Imperial Chemical Industries, which until recently was Britain's largest industrial company.

Fine 19th Century European Art

Immediately following the sale of 19th Century European Art, Christie's sale of Fine 19th Century European Art will offer works representative of a variety of European Schools, including excellent paintings by Corot, Lhermitte, Bouguereau and Rousseau.

Auction: 19th Century European Art

April 23 at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries, 20 Rockefeller Plaza

*April 17-22**

**Christie's will be closed on Sunday, April 20*

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.

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*Images available on request
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