

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2006

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EXQUISITE WORK BY WIFREDO LAM, REDISCOVERED PAINTINGS BY TAMAYO AND, A SUPERB BOTERO LEAD LATIN AMERICAN ART SALE AT CHRISTIE'S

Latin American Sale

May 23 - 24, 2006

New York – On May 23 and 24 Christie's New York will fête Latin American Art with an evening sale offering major works by Wifredo Lam, Rufino Tamayo, Fernando Botero and Candido Portinari. The next day will see more works by 20th century and contemporary Latin American artists, some of whom have made their marks, others who are about to enter the canon of Latin American masters.

The cover lot of the sale is an enigmatic work on paper by Wifredo Lam, *Untitled*, executed in 1944 (estimate: \$600,000-800,000). Lam is decidedly Cuba's most valued and revered artists and the present work dates from one of the most innovative and productive decades of his artistic career, when after returning to his native island from Europe, Lam felt reinvigorated by his Afro-Cuban cultural heritage. The work shows a female figure – as if appearing from another dimension – carrying a sacrificial knife which gleams in the shimmering light. Against a masterful creation of atmospheric movement, the viewer is presented with a momentary glimpse of unfolding psychic drama. Influenced as a child by ritual ceremonies conducted by his godmother, Lam used this ceremonial pictorial language throughout his career, often evoking scenes that emanate trance and transformation.

Several works by the Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo are part of the sale, the most important being *Naturaleza muerta (Naturaleza muerta con dominós)*, 1931 (estimate: \$400,000-600,000). Profoundly influenced by Paul Cezanne's work, Tamayo became fascinated by the still-life as an artistic genre and from 1928 onwards and, he experimented with and developed its pictorial and iconographic possibilities. The present work bathes in an eerie atmosphere created by the presence of two light bulbs while the dominoes, red string and a bicycle wheel clearly evoke surrealist qualities. Unusual, but imbued with a very intimate poetic beauty, Tamayo's still lifes constitute an essential cornerstone of his artistic production. Also by the artist are *Dessert (Still Life with Glasses and Strawberry Pudding)*, 1939 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000) and *Mujer*, 1944 (estimate: 300,000-400,000). In *Dessert*, Tamayo graciously bows to the Old Masters, as he depicts an elegant composition, dominated by a dessert glass set in an almost sculptural way against theatrical curtains. The light reflected from the glass floats the scene, creating a tenuous glow and mysterious touch. Both works are extraordinary gems which, have been absent from the public view since entering a private collection since their execution. They are now finally available to the market for the first time.

A splendid work by Fernando Botero, *The Musicians*, 1979 (estimate on request) presents a favored theme of the Colombian artist, as he found them an excellent medium to express national identity and the lives of the Colombian middle class. This work was illustrated on the cover of the exhibition catalogue of the artist's first American retrospective which was held at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC in 1979. The painting shows a group of nine musicians, a bird and a jukebox, illuminated by a string of pale lights, facing the viewer attentively as if expecting the cue to begin to play. From the artist's sculptural production, three outstanding works will also be offered—*Still Life with Watermelon*, a bronze executed in 1976-1977, (estimate: \$350,000-450,000); *Reclining Woman on a Bed*, bronze, 1999, (estimate: \$180,000-220,000); and the whimsical *Horse*, bronze, 2003 (estimate: \$350,000-450,000).

A group of Brazilian works is led by Candido Portinari's *Enterro*, 1942 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000). From a technical and aesthetic viewpoint, *Enterro* is a masterfully executed painting and one of the earliest examples of Portinari's socially committed works, culminating in the series *Retirantes*. *Enterro* also is the first work in which the character of the wooden-legged man appears, used by the artist as a symbol of resilience and courage against the odds. The present painting was commissioned by Assis Chateaubriand, a wealthy patron of the arts and the founder of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, still one of Latin America's leading museums. Other Brazilian works include Portinari's *Moça penteando os cabelos*, 1941 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000); Emiliano di Cavalcanti's *Vaso na Janela* (estimate: \$70,000-

90,000); and Sergio Camargo's painted wood relief *Untitled (No. 368)*, 1972 (estimate: \$50,000-70,000).

The sale also features works by the Mexican artists Diego Rivera (*El Curandero*, 1948, estimate: \$120,000-160,000); and Ángel Zárraga (*Ex-voto, Martirio de San Sebastián*, 1911, estimate: \$250,000-350,000); Cuban artists Cundo Bermúdez (*Interior con espejo y puerta al mar*, 1965, estimate: \$20,000-25,000); Tomás Sánchez (*Orilla que se esfuma en lo blanco*, 1997, estimate: \$90,000-120,000); and Mario Carreno (*Guateque Nocturno*, 1948, estimate: \$70,000-90,000); and the Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto by whom the sale will include three works including a painted wood and metal piece, *Ocres con negro*, 1970 (estimate: \$60,000-80,000).

Auction: Latin American Sale

May at 7 p.m. and at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center May 23 – 24