

For Immediate Release

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LUXURY AND LURE – THE RETURN OF THE ORIENTALISTS

Orientalist Art

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“Je retournais à l’Orient et à la sagesse première et éternelle...”
(“I returned to the Orient and to the first and eternal wisdom...”)

‘Une Saison en Enfer,’ 1873, Arthur Rimbaud



Gustave-Clerence-Rodolphe Boulanger

La Cour du Palais de Dar Khdaouedj El Amia

Oil on canvas

Estimate: \$500,000-700,000

New York – The “Orient” - its vibrant colors and sounds, its irresistible magic and mystery - drew hundreds of European artists into its orbit, mesmerizing them with all the allure and ease of a snake charmer. Some simply succumbed to the pervasive lushness of the places they visited but many of these curious artistic explorers returned to their native lands with tantalizing images that captured the oriental spirit in all its glory. Following the extremely high prices realized by the Orientalist

paintings offered in the April 19th Century European Art sale in New York, and a highly successful stand-alone *Orientalist Art* sale that took place in June in London, Christie's New York will present its own separate sale devoted to *Orientalist Art*, on October 26. The sale comprises 45 paintings and includes works by the most sought after artists such as Brest, Boulanger, Ernst and Deutsch.

Gustave-Clarence-Rodolphe Boulanger traveled for the first time to the Middle East in 1845 and executed numerous sketches of the places he visited. His artistic response to the lavish and luxurious surroundings he encountered is splendidly reflected in *La Cour du Palais de Dar Khdaouedj El Amia, Alger* (estimate: \$500,000-700,000), a fabulous masterpiece and the highlight of the upcoming sale. The scene shows an intimate yet plush gathering of a family around the pool in the center of the grand courtyard. While the ladies of the household are lounging comfortably, dressed in precious fabrics such as silk and lace, the men are depicted smoking tobacco and drinking Turkish coffee. The family scene is completed by a little child in the background, carelessly dragging a doll behind her and a Nubian servant holding a baby. The indisputable 'grandeur' of the painting and its importance as a historical work of art, are considerably enhanced by the identification of the palace as the Palais Dar Khdaouedj El Amia or House of the Blind. Probably constructed in the 16th century, the palace passed through the hands of several illustrious owners before it became the property of Lalla Khdaouedj, the blind daughter of the treasurer of the Dey in Algeria, hence its name. Today, the palace is the Musée des Art Populaires, located on the rue du Divan near the Souk El Djemma (the Friday Market).

A fascination with the imperial grandeur of the court of the Ottoman Empire also was at a peak during the 19th Century, and artists like Fabius Brest worked in the capital city of Constantinople either under the direct patronage of the Sultan himself or for other distinguished nobles of the city. Brest's ambitious painting titled *Le Beiram; cérémonie de baise-main à Constantinople, sous le sultan Mahmoud* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) was exhibited in the Paris *Salon* of 1865 and is a reworking of a famous 18th century painting by Kapidagli Konstantin in the collection of Topkapi Palace Museum titled *A Reception at the Court of Sultan Selim III before the Gate of Felicity at the Topkapi Palaca, Istanbul*. Where Kapidagli's representation of the reception focuses largely on the guests attending, all sporting white headdresses, Brest's painting clearly reflects a typical 19th century interest with architectural details, offering a splendid slightly sideways view of Topkapi Palace.

A stunning play with colors comes to life in Ludwig Deutsch's painting *The Orange Seller* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000). Baskets filled with brightly-colored oranges form striking contrasts with the blue garments worn by the two women sellers and their client. Another interesting detail is that Deutsch used the same, obviously favorite, model for the orange seller, as he did in *The Sable Vendor*, of the same year, which sold for just over \$1 million in June at Christie's in London.

More information about Christie's sale of *Orientalist 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.