

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Bendetta Roux

212.636.2680

broux@christies.com

FROM PARIS TO THE ORIENT AND BACK: ORIENTALISTS AND ACADEMICS AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK

Orientalist Art

Nineteenth Century European Art

October 25, 2006

New York – Two movements that existed side by side although their souls and roots were fundamentally different will be represented in the sales *Orientalist Art* and *Nineteenth Century European Art*, taking place on October 25 at Christie's in New York. The Orientalists thrived through travel and adventure and captured in their works the exotic allure of a mysterious and lush far-away part of the world. The adherents of the Academic Tradition – epitomized most profoundly by William Adolphe Bouguereau – rigorously followed centuries-old schemes framed by the prestigious institutions: the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, the *Salon des Beaux-Arts* and the *Académie des Beaux Arts*. Both movements produced excellent artists whose influence lingered on for generations and whose works currently grace museum walls and the houses of private collectors. It is only the 19th century that in all its whimsical diversity and openness could have formed the backdrop for two so dramatically different movements.

The Orientalists

Starting the day on October 25, will be a varied group of Orientalist paintings, led by an important selection of works by two American Orientalists, Edwin Lord Weeks and Frederick Arthur Bridgman.

Weeks, born near Boston, traveled to different locations in the Orient, using Morocco and India as his main sources of inspiration. Before giving in to a profound wanderlust, Weeks studied under Léon Bonnat at the *Ecole* in Paris in the mid 1870s. He established his reputation as an Orientalist

with his first submission of a painting to the Salon of 1878, which was followed by *Un embarquement de chameaux sur la plage de Salé, Maroc* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000), a large canvas executed in 1880 and the epitome of Weeks' Moroccan oeuvre. One of Weeks' great gifts, to create an *en plein air* scene in his studio, based on sketches and preliminary drafts, is singularly well represented in the present painting which depicts the transfer of camels onto barges. Also by Weeks are two works from his Indian period, *The Temple and Tank of Walkeshwar at Bombay* (estimate: \$380,000-550,000) and *A Street Market Scene, India* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). The superb level of detail suggests that in both cases, the artist completed the canvases in Paris upon the artist's return. *Temple Mount, Jerusalem* (estimate: \$80,000-120,000), executed in 1872, is one of the rare surviving paintings from the first half of the 1870's.

Born in Alabama and raised in Massachusetts, Frederick Arthur Bridgman became a student of the famed Orientalist Jean-Léon Gérôme who helped him develop a sense of capturing eastern experiences through a western lens. Bridgman traveled extensively in Spain and North Africa and his move to the Pyrenees, combined with the discovery of the Spanish painter Mariano Fortuny's works, deeply impacted his own work. *Tête à Tête* (estimate: \$100,000-150,000), painted circa 1878-1882, is one of the works that reflects Gérôme's influence masterfully. The figures are drawn with immaculate attention and the painting's realistic coloring and chiaroscuro betray the academic tradition. Also by Bridgman are *At the fountain* (estimate: \$80,000-120,000) and *Learning the Qur'an* (estimate: \$80,000-120,000), one of the artist's last works painted in 1921.

Also featured in the Orientalist sale is Arthur Von Ferraris, a Hungarian painter who began his artistic career in Vienna and subsequently moved to Paris where he studied under Gérôme and Jules Lefebvre. *Driving a Bargain* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) is one of the finest examples of Ferraris' oeuvre and shows many resemblances to Deutsch's *Orange Seller* which sold at Christie's New York for nearly one million dollars.

Nineteenth Century European Art

The sale is led by an exquisite group of six paintings by the Academic artist 'par excellence', William Adolphe Bouguereau. His work embodies the technical virtuosity that he mastered at the famous *Ecole des Beaux Arts* – for which he would become a professor after having won the prestigious *Prix de Rome* – but at the same time it aspires to loftier goals, ultimately serving as the visual personification of the principles upheld by the *Académie*, foremost Beauty and Truth. Bouguereau at the height of his artistic ability is revealed in *Le jour* (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000), painted in 1884 as part of a series of four allegorical works, all celebrating feminine beauty, form and color. All of the figures of the series are derived from the academic nude but also anticipate Bouguereau's *fantaisies* inspired by the ancient world and writings by Homer and Longinus. *Secrets d'amour* (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000) dates from a later period in the artist's career and is an exquisite

example of his *fantaisies*. Bouguereau found constant inspiration in antiquity, and his main aim remained to create compositions which were charming, gracious and delicate. In *Secrets d'amour*, a young girl is leaning against a fountain, an important and recurrent symbol in the artist's oeuvre. *Inspiration* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) is another fantasy painting and a formidable example of the artist's later work. The refinement and sophistication earned through years of sharpening technique and style give this painting grand allure. The theme of mothers and children entered Bouguereau's work from the 1865 onwards. *Le Reveil* (estimate: \$500,000-700,000), painted in that same year attests to the painter's new fascination. The model for the young girl could have been Emilienne Cesil-Beglier, one of the artist's favorite models from 1864 to 1867. *Jeannie* (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) provides a tender glimpse into the artist's love for Brittany where he spent several summers between 1866 and 1868 and painted *la vie rustique*. The little Breton girl depicted in the present painting reappears in several other canvasses. *Tête d'enfant* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000), painted in 1879, is a study for an important Parisian book titled *La Tasse de Lait*.

From another highly respected professor at the *Académie*, Léon Joseph Florentin Bonnat is *Samson's Youth* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000), painted in 1891. Bonnat studied at the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid before ultimately returning to Paris to study at the *Ecole* where he enrolled in the *atelier* of Léon Cogniet. He made his Salon debut in 1857 and the present painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1891. Bonnat rose to prominence as one of the most celebrated portrait painters of the Third Republic.

Also featured in the sale of Nineteenth Century European Art are Vincenzo Irolli's *Doni di Nozze* (estimate: \$500,000-700,000), executed circa 1930 and one of the largest paintings ever undertaken by Irolli; *As Good as Ever* by Arthur John Elsley (estimate: \$400,000-600,000), the quintessential 19th century narrative depicting children and animals, painted by Elsley at the height of his career; *Monseigneur en visite*, painted by Jean Georges Vibert (estimate: \$220,000-280,000) whose penchant for theater is delightfully present in this satirical work and Gustave Courbet's superb *Marine de Saint-Aubin* (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). *Marine* is a splendid example of the extraordinarily beautiful and delicate coloristic effects which are the hallmarks of Courbet's *paysage de mer* and his abilities to conjure not just an image but an entire atmosphere through the most minimal of means is apparent.

Auction: Orientalist Art

Nineteenth Century European Art

October 25 at 10 AM

October 25 at approximately
11.30 AM and 2 PM

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

October 21 - 24

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More information about Christie's sale of *Orientalist Art and Nineteenth Century 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.