

For Immediate Release

October 9, 2007

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FROM TIGER HUNTS TO LANGUISHING LADIES: THE FABULOUS 19TH CENTURY

**19th Century European Art and Orientalist Art
October 24, 2007**

New York – East meets West once again as Christie's New York presents its *19th Century European Art and Orientalist Art* sale on Wednesday October 24th, 2007 – a sale that reflects the immense richness of themes, styles and techniques typical of the 19th Century. Encompassing the exotic allure of the Orient as well as the classic tradition of Europe, the sale features some of the grandest artists of the 19th century. Rudolf Ernst, Edwin Lord Weeks and Edwin Long's exotic talent rises from the East, while the West's academic rigueur is embodied through the works of Giovanni Boldini, Georges Vibert, Alexandre Cabanel, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Franz Von Stuck and Alphonse Mucha.

The Orientalists

Like a journey to the depths of a mysterious and unknown land, the Orientalists, which start off the October 24th sale, will awaken one's sense of exotic scents and evoke travels through ancient times.

A brilliant highlight of the sale is *The Return from the Tiger Hunt* (estimate: \$650,000-850,000). Dating back to 1896, this magnificent oeuvre represents one of the finest and favorite works of one of the most celebrated and sought-after Orientalist artists of the 19th century : Rudolf Ernst. Born in Vienna in 1854, the son of the architectural painter Leopold Ernst, the young Rudolph began his travels through Morocco, Tunis, Turkey and Egypt early in life. Heavily influenced by the academic style of Jean-Louis Gérôme, Ernst is famous for the precision of detail and the intensity of color in his paintings. The bold and elegant color

combinations of the hunters' costumes and the photographic precision of the painting, confirm Ernst's signature style. Also by Ernst, is an exceptional work that confirms the artist's vast knowledge of Middle Eastern culture, architecture, costume and decoration, *Outside the Selim Türbe, Constantinople* (estimate : \$500,000-700,000).

Born near Boston, Edwin Lord Weeks traveled far from his home-town to encounter and capture scenes from the great city of Lahore, "the gateway to India", in 1888. Captivated by the great mosque of Vazir Kahn, Weeks used the building in a series of paintings. In *Steps of the Mosque Vazir Khan, Lahore*, (estimate: \$500,000-700,000) the artist paints the mosque close-in, almost as if the grand steps and the entry door form an operatic stage set – exotic and full of colorful detail – for the drama of daily life in the city square. For Weeks, it was the perfect subject – a complex, colorful, exotic architectural backdrop in a brilliant sunlit setting, serving as the perfect foil for an opulent array of animals and figures from noble to common.

Very well received at the 1880 Royal Academy, Edwin Long's *The Assyrian Captive* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) is a splendid example of the exploration of the ancient world. The harp by the young girl's side demonstrates the employment of captives as musicians at the time, and their duty to 'entertain their masters with their native melodies'. Devoted to archaeological accuracy, Long's *The Assyrian Captive* is both an artistic and historic masterpiece.

Nineteenth Century European Art

Commissioned by Empress Eugénie of France at the height of Alexandre Cabanel's international success as history painter, portraitist to Second Empire France and powerful academic official, *Ruth Revenant des Champs* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) breaks sharply from the traditional imagery of the humble Old Testament heroine and suggests that the Empress herself may have had a hand in defining the artist's subject. Following completion of the work, *Ruth revenant des Champs* went directly to the Empress' apartments in the Tuileries Palace and since its sale from Eugénie's estate in 1927, the painting has been lost to public records. Its reappearance today significantly expands our knowledge of Cabanel's work.

Another striking highlight of the sale is Constantinos Volanakis' *The Rescue from the Collision of Two Passenger Ships* (estimate: \$380,000-450,000), a bold painting that captures both the romanticism of a life on the sea and the toils and harshness of life on the waves. Born in Crete in 1837, the artist moved to Trieste on the coast of Italy later in life where his talent and passion for seascapes and observation of vessels was born. In this picture-like painting,

Volanakis' passion for seascapes is evident and his obsession to detail demonstrates that he is, indeed, the master of his chosen genre.

A masterful, jewel-like panel, entitled *The Model and the Mannequin – Berthe in the Studio* (estimate: \$350,000-450,000), is another vibrantly rich highlight of the sale. Belonging to a group of small-scale paintings most likely datable to 1871-1877, this piece by Giovanni Boldoni is a true connoisseur's picture. Created especially for the rising middle class and the already established wealthy classes, the series celebrates the aesthetic and costumes of the 18th Century.

Another colorful masterpiece is Jehan Georges Vibert's *Le départ des maries, Espagne* (estimate: \$250,000-350,000). Completed in 1873, the artist's penchant for the theatre is evident in this work. Vibert is famous for his long and active association with the stage and all aspects of theatrical life in Paris. His wife was an actress in the *Comédie Française*, and the multitalented artist himself was also a playwright for the *Palais Royale*, *Variétés* and *Vaudeville*.

Symbolism

It has been said that to Franz von Stuck, a religious subject was simply an opportunity to bring out the strictly human element – a talent deftly demonstrated in the *Expulsion from Paradise* (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). The most famous and successful Symbolist painter in Germany, Stuck's composition is clear and uncluttered yet imbued with emotion.

A softly-hued highlight of the sale is Alphonse Mucha's *Spring Night* (estimate: \$180,000-220,000). A tightly controlled palette of green and grey hues, punctuated only by the flesh tones of the figures and the white and pink of the apple blossoms creates, a mysterious yet tranquil picture. The dream like quality of the surface and the composition recalls Odilon Redon while the palette choice is reminiscent of Franz von Stuck, and the subject matter wholly Symbolist in concept.

Barbizon

Predominantly landscape artists who rebelled against classical traditions of the day to look at nature in a new way, the Barbizon painters were the first to take their passion out-of-doors and catch the effects of light with a new sensitivity– a feat impossible in the confines of a studio. One such leader was Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. *La Sente aux vaches* (estimate: \$150,000-250,000) reflects the talent to capture the effect of the diffuse, pale sunlight and

mist enveloping the idyllic pastoral landscapes of the French countryside. The figure and animals merge into the landscape and are in complete harmony with their surroundings.

Rivière et Falaise, by Gustave Courbet (estimate: \$120,000-180,000) is yet another Barbizon masterpiece in the sale. Just as its artist's relationship with the land was physical, so was his process of transferring that vision onto canvas. He built his landscapes from dark to light, bringing the painting to life the same way sunlight brightens the greens of the forest – from almost black, to emerald, to chartreuse. *Rivière et Falaise* exemplifies Courbet's guiding force and muse : his native region of France-Comté. This work and *Paysage de mer* (estimate: \$150,000-250,000) will be featured against a backdrop of other masterpieces at the Courbet Retrospective Exhibition to be held at the Grand Palais in Paris. (*Running through the 28th of January 2008*)

Auction: 19th Century European Art and Orientalist Art Oct. 24 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center October 20 - 23

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