

For Immediate Release

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AMERICAN MODERNIST MASTERWORKS PROVIDE A DISTINCT FOCUS THIS DECEMBER AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK

**Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture
December 1, 2005**



New York – Christie's Fall 2005 sale of *Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* will take place on Thursday December 1 in the Galleries at Rockefeller Center. Featuring 148 lots, the auction features an exemplary array of Modernist works, including masterpieces by Stuart Davis, John Marin, Marsden Hartley and Max Weber - and three lots consigned by The Museum of Modern Art. The sale is expected to realize in excess of \$25 million.

The American modernist market has been gaining considerable strength in recent seasons. With the rapid growth in the post-war and contemporary market, collectors who traditionally have bought in this category are showing increased interest in American modernism, an essential precursor to the international post-war art movements. Christie's auction offers such buyers an excellent opportunity to further develop their own collections in this field.

The modernist works are led by *Still Life with Flowers* by Stuart Davis (estimate: \$2,000,000-3,000,000). A student of Robert Henri and an early proponent of the Ashcan School, Davis was one of the first American painters to embrace Modernism after his encounter with the European avant-garde at the ground-breaking Armory Show of 1913 in New York. After raising enough money after his first one-man show at the Downtown Gallery in 1927, Davis traveled to Paris. The trip

galvanized his new visual aesthetic, combining his abstract exploration with forms inspired by Parisian façades and streets.

The works Davis created in 1930 upon his return to the United States are among the artist's most accomplished and advanced of his career. Among them, *Still Life with Flowers* perfectly illustrates this seminal period, with the integration of formal imagery, abstraction, pictorial concerns and fragmentation revealing the foundation for all of the artist's subsequent work. An icon of the most progressive trends in American painting, *Still Life with Flowers* was purchased by the State Department to represent the United States abroad in the 1946-47 exhibition *Advancing American Art* – and was sold to the current vendor, the New Trier Township High School District 203, Winnetka, Illinois in 1948 for \$62.50.

Sailboat, Brooklyn Bridge, New York Skyline, 1934 by John Marin is the most important work by the artist ever to appear at auction (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,500,000). More consistently than any other American artist of the early twentieth century, Marin captured the energy of dynamism of New York City. One of the most expressive and spectacular works of his oeuvre, the artist paints bold, geometric shapes outlined in black with various architectural references, including the Brooklyn Bridge and a sailboat on the East River. A densely packed portrait of the modern metropolis, this work in oil reveals Marin's dramatic use of different textures to convey his vision. Known primarily as a watercolorist, *Sailboat, Brooklyn Bridge, New York Skyline* offers collectors a masterpiece with the rare combination of subject matter, oil medium and an original hand-painted frame.

A vividly-colored work by Marsden Hartley, *Red Flowers and Sailboat*, 1935-36 (estimate: \$1,200,000-1,800,000) is a stunning culmination from his mature period and serves as a testament to one of America's leading and most original modern artists. Combining his early fascination with Kandinsky's art and color theory and his later absorption of Synthetic Cubism, this still life, one of the most significant subjects in his oeuvre, is a prime example of his multi-layered and richly colored florals of the 1930s.

Burlesque #2, 1909, by Max Weber embodies his crucial transitive period from 1909 to 1912 when his early European Modernist influences combined with his American sensibilities (estimate: \$600,000-800,000). Weber studied in Paris the three years prior to 1909, and had thoroughly immersed himself in the art scene. Initially painting the forms and subjects of his French mentors and contemporaries on his return, he soon diverged thematically to glorify the drama and excitement of America in the twentieth century. Manifesting the marriage of Modernism with American subject matter, *Burlesque #2* combines a Fauvist palette with simplified drawing, primitivism and a crowded composition depicting New York dancers surrounded by American flags.

Three modernist works offered for sale by The Museum Of Modern Art to benefit the Acquisition Fund include two paintings by Georgia O’Keeffe created during her Lake George period; *Corn No. III*, 1924 (estimate: \$800,000-1,200,000) and *Cedar and Red Maple, Lake George*, 1921 (estimate: \$400,000-600,000). The third work, *Morning Dunes*, 1958 by Milton Avery is a fine example of the painter’s style in the 1950s with its simplified forms and blocks of color, providing a highly important influence on Post-War American art (estimate: \$400,000-600,000).

Aside from the comprehensive selection of modernist works in the sale, the auction also features two notable Impressionist masterpieces – *Mother and Two Children*, 1906 by Mary Cassatt (estimate: \$3,000,000-5,000,000) and *Delaware Idyl* by Daniel Garber, circa 1930 (estimate: \$700,000-1,000,000). Mary Cassatt was the only American to be fully embraced by the French Impressionists and to exhibit with the group. The present painting, portraying the maternité theme constantly explored by Cassatt at the turn-of-the-century, is a superb example demonstrating the artist’s unique and thoughtful rendering of familial relationships composed in a highly developed and rich palette. A masterwork of American Impressionism, the picture has been de-accessioned from a University Art Museum.

Auction: Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture
December 1, 2005

Viewing: Christie’s Rockefeller, New York
November 26 – 30

More information about Christie's sale of *Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* 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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