

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **AN AMERICAN TREASURE CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF THE NATION TO BE AUCTIONED AT CHRISTIE'S**

#### **The Collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair January 21, 2006**

**New York** – An American painting of momentous national, cultural and historic importance is to be auctioned at Christie's New York on January 21, 2006. The full-length painting of *George Washington at Princeton* by Charles Willson Peale is estimated at \$10,000,000-15,000,000, and will lead *Property from the Collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair*, the most significant collection of American furniture to come to marketplace in the last decade.

One of eight known full-length Washington portraits painted by Peale during the Revolutionary War over a three year period between 1779 and 1781, this particular example is signed and dated 1779. Depicting George Washington as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, the work is an early example from this iconic and patriotic series, a series that established Peale as the premier portrait painter of colonial America. Six of the other full-length portraits are in institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the U.S. Capitol and Colonial Williamsburg.

With Princeton's Nassau Hall in the background and the Hessian flags draped in the foreground, the picture alludes to the notable American victories over the British forces at Trenton in December 1776 and Princeton in January 1777, Washington's first battlefield successes of the War. The picture emphasizes the victorious air of Revolutionary America, with a line of Redcoat prisoners marching behind Washington.

As these impressive portraits were finished, some were shipped to allied countries to gain favor for the fledgling Republic. In this sense, these portraits can be viewed as the earliest emblems of American diplomacy, conceived and executed before the triumph of independence.

The Blair Collection portrait is documented in an October 1779 letter written by Peale. In this letter, he requests that William Carmichael, bound for Europe, sell this “whole length General Washington.” Carmichael, the American charge d’affaires to Spain, arrived in Madrid and by 1782 had sold the work, though the purchaser is not known. It may have been acquired by the 13<sup>th</sup> Duke of Infantado in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as his son, the Duke of Pastrana owned it before his wife bequeathed it to a Capuchin school in Lecaroz, a small town in Spain’s Basque region. In 1918, an agent for P.W. French & Co. purchased the painting from the school and a year later sold it to Mr. and Mrs. J. Insley Blair. It was displayed in Blairhame, the couple’s Tuxedo Park, New York home and then descended in the Blair family.

**Auction:** The Collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair  
January 21, 2006

**Viewing:** Christie’s Rockefeller, New York  
November 26 – 30 (during the Important American Paintings view)  
January 14 – 19

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*Image available on request*  
*Visit Christie’s Web site at [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)*