

For Immediate Release
Friday, 21 May 2010

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

Contact: Hannah Schmidt +44 (0) 207 389 2964

hschmidt@christies.com

ENCHANTING BRITISH WATERCOLOURS & PAINTINGS: The Nicolette Wernick Collection at Christie's in June



Wednesday, 16 June 2010

The Nicolette Wernick Collection: British Watercolours & Paintings (1800-1950) at 11am

London – Christie's longstanding commitment to British Watercolours & Paintings continues this June with the auction of enchanting works from the *Nicolette Wernick Collection*. It will be offered for sale on the morning of Wednesday 16 June, followed by the strong various owner sale of *Victorian and British Impressionist Pictures including Drawings and Watercolours*. Comprising 91 works, which exemplify the Victorian's interest in legends, chivalry, fairytales, the paranormal and childhood, this collection was formed largely in the late 1970s, as the revival of Victorian Art started to gather pace. The sale showcases a lovingly curated array of charming works, led by *The Chase of the White Mouse* by **John Anster Fitzgerald** (1819-1906) (estimate: £180,000-250,000), *illustrated above*. The roll-call of leading artists featured from the period ranges from **Lawrence Alma-Tadema**, O.M., R.A (1836-1912), **Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones**, Bt., A.R.A., R.W.S. (1833-1898) and **Sir John Everett Millais**, Bt., P.R.A., R.W.S. (1829-1896) to **William Holman Hunt**, R.W.S., O.M. (1827-1910), **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828-1882) and **John Ruskin**, H.R.W.S. (1819-1900). Works with an estimate of less than £1,000 are offered without reserve, providing a remarkable opportunity for both new and established collectors to compete at every price level. The collection is expected to realise in excess of £1million.

"Having written, in 1987, 'For me, collecting has less to do with scholarship than...with childhood memories...of a world made beautiful through the artist's imagination', Nicolette Wernick is a collector whose eye, like that of the very best collectors, was directed by passion and with the instincts of a connoisseur. Her recognition of fine, rare and important art of the Victorian and Edwardian periods has resulted in this group of particularly arresting and evocative examples by each of the artists featured", notes **Harriet Drummond, International Head of British Art on Paper**.

John Anster Fitzgerald is chiefly known as one of the outstanding exponents of Victorian fairy painting, and is also known as 'Fairy Fitzgerald.' Having had no known formal artistic training, Fitzgerald was regularly exhibiting at the Royal Academy by 1845, at the age of 23. Dating from the early 1860s, *The Chase of the White Mouse* (estimate: £180,000-250,000) is one of the artist's most important and highly esteemed works, *illustrated above*. The star lot of the sale, this painting encapsulates all the key elements of Fitzgerald's fairy subjects, boasting iridescent colours and superb

detail. The playfulness and whimsy have been noted as being savagely undercut by touches of cruelty, characteristic of the darker undercurrent of so many fairytale stories.

Many artists in the collection were inspired by the intensity of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and by the writings of John Ruskin. This influence is clearly apparent in *Proud Maisie*, 1903, by **Anthony Frederick Augustus Sandys** (1829-1904) (estimate: £70,000-100,000), *illustrated right*. The captivating portrait in pencil and red chalk on paper was Sandys' most popular work. The motif of a woman biting her hair can be traced to the figure of Delia in Rossetti's *Return of Tibullus to Delia*, 1866-7. The sitter of *Proud Maisie*, Mary Emma Jones, was an actress known as 'Miss Clive' who first sat for Sandys in 1862, she went on to become his principal muse and by 1867 was the artist's common law wife and eventually the mother of his ten children.



Between 1853-4 **Sir John Everett Millais** produced a series of pen and ink drawings with modern-life subjects, mostly on the themes of love and marriage. *Married for Rank*, 1853 (estimate: £50,000-80,000) *illustrated left*, is a superb example from this group, which was executed at a time when Millais' own private life was in a turbulent state. He had recently returned from a fateful holiday with his mentor and patron John Ruskin and his wife, during which Millais and Effie Ruskin fell in love. One of the most notorious scandals of the Victorian period, Ruskin's marriage went on to be annulled and Effie later married Millais in 1855. This drawing was exhibited alongside *Married for Money* and *Married for Love* (now in the British Museum) at the Royal Academy's memorial exhibition for the artist in 1898.

Amongst the many smaller treasures in the sale, highlights include works by **Edmund Dulac** (1882-1953), **Henry Justice Ford** (1860-1941), **Sidney Harold Meteyard** (1868-1947), **Edward Robert Hughes**, R.W.S. (1851-1914) and **Jessica Hayllar** (1858-1940). The cover lot is *The Little Mermaid (At the mere sight of the bright liquid they drew back in terror)*, 1911 by Dulac (estimate: £30,000-50,000), *illustrated right*. This watercolour illustrates an episode from 'The Mermaid' in the *Stories of Hans Christian Andersen*, 1911, for which the artist executed a total of 28 colour illustrations. The book, published by Hodder and Stoughton, was a great success and previously watercolours from this publication have secured auction records for the artist.



Henry Justice Ford was also highly regarded for his book illustrations, which accompanied fairy stories and legends edited by Andrew and Leonora Lang for Longmans. His work *Venus's Fly Trap* (estimate: £20,000-30,000) reflects the influence on his work of fellow artist Burne-Jones. *The Annunciation: an illustration to Longfellow's 'Golden Legend'* is by **Sidney Harold Meteyard** (estimate: £20,000-30,000) *illustrated left*, who was closely associated with the Arts and Crafts movement in Birmingham, but unlike William Morris, saw each illustration as a highly finished easel picture which remained essentially independent of the text. *Oriental Poppy and Colens in Cloisonné vase, with a fan on a faux bamboo table* by **Jessica Hayllar** (estimate: £8,000-12,000)



is an attractive example of the still life works featured, whilst *Trees at Twilight* by **Edward Robert Hughes**, R.W.S. (1851-1914) (estimate: £6,000-10,000) provides a stunning window to forgotten memories of evening skies and childhood dreams, fuelled by bed time stories.

###

Images available on request

Visit Christie's on the web at www.christies.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

To view all lots and cataloguing for this collection please click to view the online catalogue:
<http://www.christies.com/eCatalogues/index.aspx?id=D0B5E13F57C29FE9852576D9004FC185>

Sale dates and public viewing: The Nicolette Wernick Collection: British Watercolours & Paintings (1800-1950)

Viewing: 11 – 15 June 2010: Christie's London, 8 King Street, St. James', London, SW1Y 6QT

Sale: 16 June 2010: Christie's London, 8 King Street, St. James', London, SW1Y 6QT

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2009 that totalled £2.1 billion/\$3.3 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.