

# CHRISTIE'S

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## PROMINENT COLLECTIONS TO HIGHLIGHT CHRISTIE'S SEPTEMBER SALE OF IMPORTANT AMERICAN FURNITURE, FOLK ART, SILVER, PAINTINGS, AND PRINTS



**New York** –Christie's is pleased to announce that the sale of *Important American Furniture, Folk Art, Silver, Paintings and Prints* on September 25 will be highlighted by several distinguished private and corporate collections, including property from The Westervelt Company, the Estate of Eric Martin Wunsch, and property from Thomas Molesworth's Ranch A Commission. Comprised of 240 lots, this sale of American Furniture is among the most cohesive ever offered at Christie's, with an array of exceptional objects that span from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Leading the sale are works from the collection of **The Westervelt Company**, formerly Gulf States Paper Corporation, based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Amassed over four decades for the company by Jonathan (Jack) Westervelt Warner, the former Chief Executive Officer, the collection includes masterworks by the leading American cabinetmakers of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as a selection of paintings, silver, and prints. The complete group of 120 lots is estimated to achieve in excess of \$1 million.

Highlighting the Westervelt Company collection is a magnificent federal satinwood-inlaid mahogany desk-and-bookcase (*illustrated left*; estimate: \$150,000-300,000). Epitomizing the sophistication and refinement in Federal-era America, it is likely that this piece was constructed between 1800 and 1810 for a wealthy, fashion-conscious patron. The execution is of the highest quality and, in all, the desk-and-bookcase is embellished with 47 *verre églomisé* panels, a meticulous technique by which the back of glass is gilded with gold or metal leafing. A *tour-de-force* of craftsmanship, this piece is even more remarkable

for its interesting past, having been discovered in Argentina in 1988. While the owners had assumed the work to be European, the uncovering of a Philadelphia newspaper clipping behind one of the panels revealed its American origins. Despite the presence of the Pennsylvanian newspaper clipping, dated 1800, the likenesses to contemporaneous Baltimore forms raises the likelihood that it was made further south. It is uncertain how the piece travelled to Argentina, but a popular theory is that the desk-and-bookcase was commissioned for General John Peter Van Ness of Washington D.C. and eventually was bequeathed to his niece, Marcia, and her husband, Sir William Gore Ouseley. A British diplomat, Ouseley was posted in Buenos Aires at the time that Van Ness' estate was divided and it is possible that the desk was shipped to Argentina in the 1840s and remained there after Ouseley's departure.



A pair of classical parcel-gilt card tables, attributed to master cabinet maker Duncan Phyfe, is also among the furniture highlights from the Westervelt Company collection (*one of two illustrated right*; estimate: \$100,000-150,000). A powerful expression of Neoclassicism, this pair of card tables epitomizes Phyfe's "ornamented Grecian style." Adopted by Phyfe in the early 1810s, this style marks a departure from his earlier, more delicate forms and his embrace of French and English designs, including those of his principal competitor Charles Honoré Lannuier. As the expensive sculptural supports were integral to their design, pieces such as these were usually reserved for Phyfe's more important commissions and, as a result, relatively few survive today.

Constructed in 1815-1830, a classical dolphin-base sofa wonderfully embodies New York's Classical style (*illustrated below*; estimate: \$50,000-80,000). While there are five known similar sofas, this example most closely relates to one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. While both displaying similarly carved dolphins and gilt leaf carving extending across the front seat rail, this lot is notable for its crest rail carved with eagles. The rare combination of dolphins and spreadwing eagles were drawn from antiquity, but also had contemporary references. Following the War of 1812, these motifs were bold expressions of the country's newfound confidence and sought to liken the young United States to the great Roman Empire.

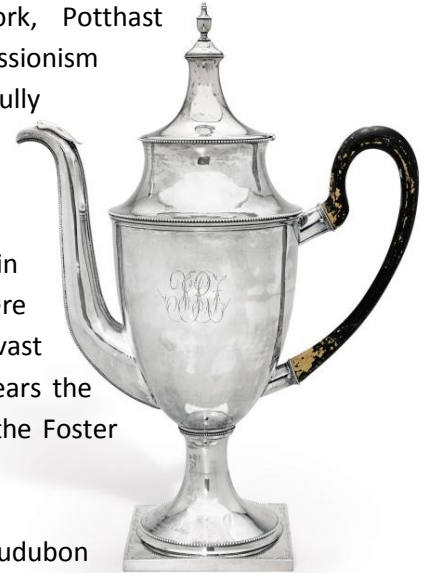






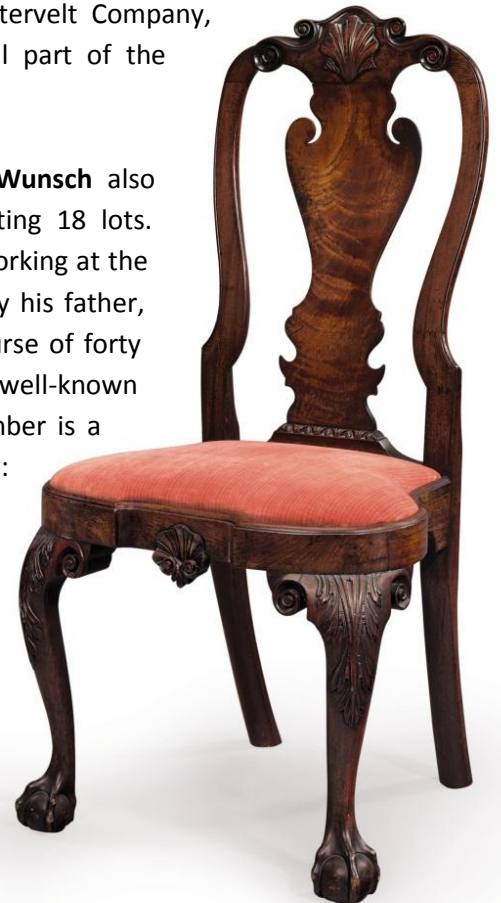
In addition to the furniture consigned by the Westervelt Company, a large selection of silver, paintings, and prints will also be available. *The Bathing Beach* by Edward Henry Pottahast (illustrated left; estimate: \$80,000-120,000) exemplifies the artist's interest in depicting working-class families at their leisure, despite his contemporaries' preference of focusing on the elegant lives of the upper class. In a vibrant style with bravura brushwork, Pottahast seemed to channel both French Impressionism and American Realism as he carefully captured a fleeting moment of working class life in New York.

A rare silver coffee pot, circa 1790, was created in the workshop of George Hendel in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (illustrated right; estimate: \$15,000-25,000). While there were numerous silversmiths working in that area in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the vast majority of surviving objects can be traced back to Hendel. The present coffee pot bears the monogram of Thomas and Rebecca Foster, for whom the lot was made, and features the Foster family arms.



Nineteen prints by Robert Havell, after John James Audubon are also among the highlights from the Westervelt Company (*Florida Jay [Plate LXXXVII]* illustrated left; estimate: \$7,000-10,000). To create the greatest illustrated book on birds, Audubon worked with Robert Havell of London. Audubon's resulting masterpiece, *The Birds of America*, is possibly the highest achievement in ornithological art today. The continued presence of many of Audubon's birds, as in prominent collections like that of the Westervelt Company, ensures that his legacy remains an integral part of the American landscape.

**Property from the Estate of Eric Martin Wunsch** also features prominently in the sale, representing 18 lots. While Mr. Wunsch spent much of his time working at the mechanical engineering company founded by his father, he eventually developed a passion for American decorative arts. Over the course of forty years, the collection he had amassed was unparalleled, rivaling those of well-known institutions. Among the highlights from his collection to be offered in September is a Queen Anne carved walnut compass-seat side chair (illustrated right; estimate: \$200,000-300,000). Also known as "Reifsnnyder" chairs, pieces of this design have been celebrated since 1929, the year that three identical ones were sold in the landmark sale of the collection of Howard Reifsnnyder. The chair acquired by Mr. Wunsch is of the highest quality, complete with double-volute and shell-carved crests, egg-and-dart carved shoes, compass seats with incurvated and shell-carved front rails, leaf-carved knees, and claw-and-ball feet. Possibly executed by Samuel Harding of Philadelphia in the late 1740s or early 1750s, or by his protégé Nicholas Bernard, this chair is a supreme illustration of the Queen





Anne style. A Chippendale carved mahogany turret-top table, created in New York between 1750 and 1765, is also among the property from Mr. Wunsch's collection to be offered (*illustrated left*; estimate: \$150,000-250,000). A masterful combination of curvilinear forms and exuberantly carved ornament, this table is an exceptional example of the early Rococo aesthetic in New York.

***The Annenberg Commission by Thomas Molesworth: Property from Ranch A*** is another exciting component of the September sale. This comprehensive collection of 28 pieces of furniture and objects designed by Thomas C. Molesworth (1890-1977), often

credited as the creator of the American Western

aesthetic, hails from the designer's very first commission near Beulah, Wyoming in 1933. It was this commission by Moses Annenberg, which would launch the young furniture maker's vastly successful career. The present owner inherited this fantastic Molesworth collection from their parents, who acquired the furniture when they purchased Ranch A in the mid 1950's with all the contents, shortly before it was featured in the October 1956 issue of National Geographic Magazine. For more information on these works, please click [here](#).



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#### About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in the first half of 2013 that totaled £2.4 billion/ \$3.68 billion. In 2012, Christie's had global auction and private sales that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion making it the highest annual total in Christie's history. 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 has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions 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 \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £465.2 million (\$711.8 million) in the first half of 2013, an increase of 13% on the previous year, and for the third successive year represents the highest total for the period in both company and art market history.

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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