

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

For Immediate Release

May 12, 2009

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**FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA:
AMERICAN PAINTINGS AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK MAY 20**

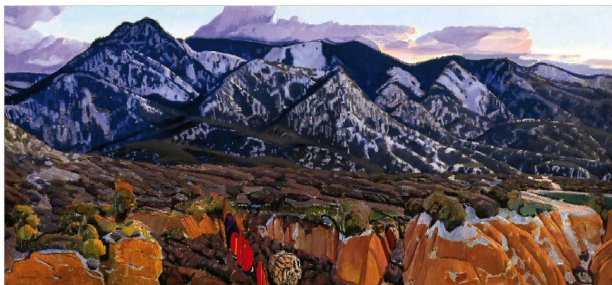
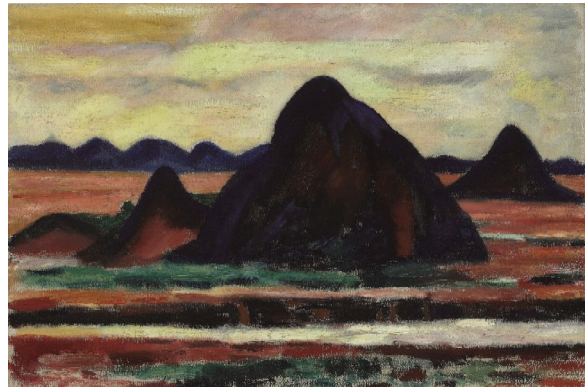


New York – On May 20, Christie's will present its *Important American Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture* sale, showcasing the best of 19th and 20th century American art in all its diversity of style, influence, and subject matter. Highlights include exceptional works by American masters Milton Avery, Marsden Hartley, Richard Edward Miller, Albert Bierstadt, Ernest Leonard Blumenschein, and Henry F. Farny, among others. The sale of over 140 works is expected to realize in excess of \$20 million.

A key highlight of the sale is Milton Avery's *Sketching by the Sea* (pictured above - estimate: \$600,000-800,000), a bright, abstracted composition that will make its first appearance at auction after more than six decades in a private collection. Painted in 1944, the masterful work is representative of the most critical period in Avery's career, when he fully developed the distinct lexicon of shapes, forms, and

interlocking patterns that came to define his most notable works. *"I like to seize the one sharp instant in Nature, to imprison it by means of ordered shapes and space relationships,"* wrote Avery. *"To this end I eliminate and simplify, leaving apparently nothing but color and pattern."* Using this instructive format, Avery produced some of his most notable abstract masterpieces and became an important influence on the generation of post-War artists that followed him, including Mark Rothko and Adolf Gottlieb, among others. With *Sketching by the Sea*, Avery creates tension and balance through his selection of complimentary and contrasting color and shapes. While he simplifies the scene to the broadest possible forms, he invigorates the shapes with his sophisticated use of variegated hues, creating an elegant composition that appears as fresh today as when it was painted 65 years ago.

A generation prior to Avery, Marsden Hartley (1877-1943) was among the East Coast artists and writers who journeyed West to New Mexico and became captivated by the awe-inspiring expanses around Taos and Santa Fe. As Hartley wrote of his surrounding, *"any one of these beautiful arroyos and canyons is a living example of the splendour of the ages."* His brilliant landscape from 1919, *New Mexico* (pictured right - estimate: \$500,000-700,000), is a key highlight of the upcoming sale. With its simplified topography and saturated hues of red, blue, and green, the work is an emotionally wrought composition that conveys the sense of loneliness and yearning that permeates many of Hartley's greatest works. The painting is entirely fresh to the market, having remained in the collection of the late artist James N. Rosenberg since its purchase in 1921.



An artist equally enamored with the New Mexican landscape was Ernest Leonard Blumenschein (1874-1960), a musician and painter who founded the Taos Society of Artists in 1915 with the goal of educating the public about the American Southwest through art. Blumenschein's work is represented in the sale by *Untitled (Mountain Wood Gatherers)* from circa 1926, a sprawling landscape of towering hills and backlit clouds highlighted by a colorful procession of Taos Indians engaged in a daily ritual (pictured above left - estimate: \$1.5-2.5 million).

Elsewhere in the sale are several outstanding examples of Western art by Blumenschein's fellow Taos Society members, including several paintings formerly owned by noted Western art collector Harrison Eiteljorg and gifted to the Indianapolis Museum in the 1970's. Among them are Oscar E. Berninghaus's *Fiesta Day in Taos Pueblo* from circa 1940 (estimate: \$300,000-500,000), an expansive,

multi-figural view of traditional Fiesta Day activities in Taos; Ernest Martin Hennings's *Laguna Pueblo Mission Church* (estimate: \$250,000-350,000), a sun-washed depiction of a traditional pueblo church; and Walter Ufer's vibrant *Taos Landscape with Indians* (estimate: \$180,000-240,000). The works are being sold to benefit future acquisitions for the museum.

Another leading work in the sale is *Oregon Trail* (pictured right - estimate: \$2-3 million) by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), a compelling nighttime scene that captures the U.S. Government's early expeditions to settle the Pacific Northwest. Other artists had made expeditions throughout the West as early as the 1830's, but Bierstadt was famed above all in his ability to convey an image of the wondrous region to the American public. Here, he uses a dramatic combination of firelight and moonlight



to spotlight the pioneers on the trail and create a complete narrative of the rugged, evolving landscape. Related works of this same theme are housed in museum collections around the U.S., including the Mead Art Museum, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Butler Institute of American Art.

Rounding out the excellent selection of Western paintings in the sale is a group of four works by the Cincinnati-based artist Henry F. Farny (1847-1916), including *Indian Encampment* from 1892 (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) and *Mountain Pass* from 1894 (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). Farny's attention to detail in his depictions of Native American culture was unrivalled; he used detailed on-site sketches and photography to capture highly accurate depictions of the people he encountered during his travels throughout the American West.



The American Impressionist movement is represented by Richard Edward Miller's *Café de Nuit*, a masterful depiction of turn-of-the-century café society (estimate: \$700,000-1,000,000). Unlike the French painters who used the cafés of Paris to portray the reality of modern urban life, the classically-trained Miller (1875-1943), a Missouri native, was drawn instead to its decorative veneer – “women in their fancy clothes; flower stalls; rosy, polished marble tables and shining glassware”. As an excellent example of the artist's emerging painting style, *Café de Nuit* bears the

distinctive color palette and varied brushwork that would set Miller apart from his contemporaries, a cluster of ambitious early 20th century painters living north of Paris who collectively became known as the Giverny Group. Like other major works in the upcoming sale, *Café de Nuit* is fresh to the market, having been in a private collection in California for the last three decades.

Sculpture Highlights



At nearly four and a half feet tall, *Indian and Eagle* (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) by Carl Paul Jennewein (1890-1978) is an inspiring work originally created for the Tours War Memorial, in Tours, France. Depicting a crouching Native American releasing an eagle, the figure is rendered with idealized musculature and an overall rhythm of line and form that brilliantly illustrates Jennewein's mastery of the bronze medium. The present work is one of only four known casts; the other three are currently in public collections in South Carolina, at Ball State University Museum of Art in Indiana, and at the Tours War Memorial in France.

Following on recent strong results for Frederic Remington sculpture, Christie's is pleased to offer three iconic bronze works by the artist this season, including small and large versions of *The Broncho Buster* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000 for the larger version; \$50,000-70,000 for the smaller) and *The Cheyenne* (estimate: \$250,000-350,000).

E-catalogues are available online at www.christies.com/#/american-sale-0509/4/0/0/0

Viewing: Saturday, May 16 – Tuesday, May 19 at Christie's, 20 Rockefeller Plaza

Auction: Wednesday, May 20 at 10am

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2008 that totaled £2.8 billion/\$5.1 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 600 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 70 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.

* Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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