

For Immediate Release

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**FIVE J.M.W TURNER WATERCOLORS
TO HIGHLIGHT OLD MASTER PAINTINGS AUCTION
AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK IN JANUARY**



**Important Old Master Paintings
Christie's New York, 28 January 2009 at 10am**

New York – Christie's is pleased to announce an extraordinary group of watercolors by the great 19th century British artist Joseph Mallord William Turner. The five watercolors, including four landscapes and one rare study of a woman's face, will be among the highlights of Christie's Important Old Master Paintings auction on January 28, 2009. The group comes from the estate of well-known art collectors and philanthropists William and Eleanor Wood Prince of Chicago, IL. The couple previously owned Turner's masterpiece view of Venice, *Giudecca, La Donna della Salute and San Giorgio*, sold at Christie's in 2006 for \$35.8 million, the highest price ever achieved for an old master painting at auction in New York.

Viewed together, the five watercolors present a cross-section of Turner's evolving style from an early Lake District view painted in collaboration with his contemporary Thomas Girtin to a majestic late-career painting of the Swiss Alps that is among his most admired creations. Three landscapes in the group bear the distinction of having been originally owned by John Ruskin, the Victorian-era art critic and collector who championed Turner's distinctive style of landscape painting in his groundbreaking book *Modern Painters*.

A special preview of the Turner watercolors and other selections from the Wood Prince Collection will be held at Christie's King Street galleries in London through December 10. A New York preview will follow, beginning on January 24 and leading up to the auction on January 28, 2009.

The leading highlight of the group, *The Brunig Pass from Meiringen, Switzerland* (estimate: \$1,500,000 – 2,500,000; pictured - page 1), is recognized by experts as one of the most evocative of Turner's late, fully-finished Swiss watercolors. Executed in 1847-8, it depicts an Alpine valley as a great bowl of shifting light and shadow, captured in the moment the morning sun climbs above the mountain walls that surround it. A pale crescent moon lingers in the sky, and in the left foreground, the inhabitants of a small village busily set about their day, going to work in the fields, nursing children, or setting off on horseback. This vivid representation of the Alps' sweeping grandeur – believed to have been originally commissioned or chosen by Ruskin – has been in the Wood Prince private collection for more than 50 years.

View in the Domleschg Valley, Switzerland – also originally owned by Ruskin – is drawn from a sketchbook chronicling Turner's 1843 tour of Switzerland. The *plein air* study depicts the dawn mist rising from a river bed at the foot of a towering cliff. The ruins of a castle perch upon the cliff, and a ghostly village, nearly lost in mist, nestles below it. Though not a fully realized painting like *Brunig Pass*, the ethereal quality of the piece led to its selection for the Royal Academy's *Exhibition of British Art* in 1934 (estimate: \$300,000 – 500,000).

A small treasure of the group is *On the Mosel: Bernkastel, Kues and the Landsbut*, a remarkable study in soft blues and vivid ochres on blue sugar paper (pictured right; estimate: \$150,000 – 250,000). The drawing is remarkable as it has retained the blue pigment of the paper, giving it an overall freshness that is extremely rare in watercolors of this type. Its origin is traced to Turner's last visit to the Rhine Valley and its tributaries in 1839, when he created a series of brilliant sketches of the river and its gleaming white villages.



Head of a girl (estimate: \$30,000 – 50,000; pictured left) marks a rare insight into Turner's private life. The intimate study, rendered in watercolor and bodycolor on buff paper, depicts a woman with her head thrown back and lips parted in a gasp or laugh. The woman's anonymity and the apparent intimacy of the scene lend an especially suggestive and intriguing air to the image.



The earliest work by Turner in the Wood Prince Collection is *Skiddaw and Bassenthwaite Lake from Newlands, The Lake District, Cumbria*. A highly-detailed and expressive image, it is one of many between Turner and his equally famous contemporary Thomas Girtin. As young men, the two prodigies often worked in partnership to produce topographical landscapes for the private collection of Dr. Thomas Monro, the King's physician.



In *Skiddaw* (pictured above right; estimate: \$30,000 - 50,000), Girtin is believed to have been responsible for the drawing's pencil outlines, while Turner washed in the effects with sonorous hues of blue, green and grey.

Viewings:

London	Christie's, King Street	November 28 – December 5 December 7 - 10
New York	Christie's, Rockefeller Center	January 24 - 27
Auction:	Wednesday, January 28, 2009	10 am

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global art sales in 2007 that totalled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. For the first half of 2008, art sales totalled £1.8 billion / \$3.5 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 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai, Hong Kong and Zurich. Most 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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