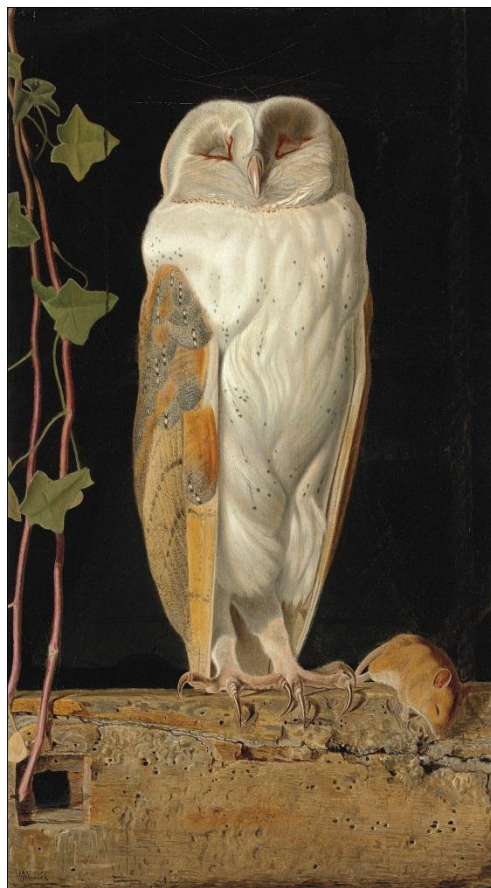


CHRISTIE'S

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OWL IN THE ATTIC

Rediscovered works to be offered in
Victorian & British Impressionist Art
auction in December



London - Christie's sale of *Victorian & British Impressionist Art* will take place on 13 December 2012 and will feature three rediscovered works by important artists of the Victorian age: Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), William James Webb (fl.1853-1878), and Frederic, Lord Leighton, P.R.A. (1830-1896).

Webb's *The White Owl*. 'Alone and warming his five wits, The white owl in the belfry sits', was discovered earlier this year by its owner having lain unnoticed in an attic for decades, *illustrated above*. Pricked by curiosity, they emailed an image of the painting to Christie's. Much to the excitement of the Victorian art specialists, research revealed that it was a lost work which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1856, where John Ruskin, the great Pre-Raphaelite art critic, had singled it out for praise. It will be exhibited to the public and offered at auction in December where it is expected to realise between £50,000 and £70,000.

The auction will also unveil two works which have not been seen in public for decades; Rossetti's *Washing Hands* has reemerged to be offered as one of the last great items from an important collection (estimate: £400,000 – 600,000). Leighton's *In St Mark's* comes to auction after having been unseen for almost fifty years (estimate: £100,000 – 150,000).

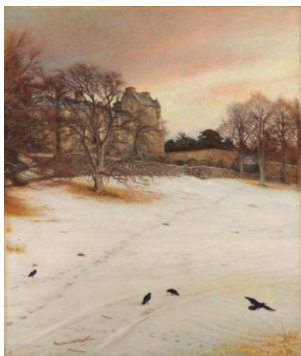


Washing Hands has been in the Quilter collection for over a century and was last exhibited in public in 1911, *illustrated left*. Sir Cuthbert Quilter, elder brother of Harry Quilter, art critic for *The Times*, was a wealthy industrialist who invested in the nascent telephone system, entered parliament, and was rewarded with a baronetcy in 1897. He formed an important collection of pictures including works by J.W. Waterhouse, Fred Walker, Burne-Jones, and earlier artists such as Turner and Constable. According to Rossetti himself, *Washing Hands* represents the end of a love affair. The lady has gone behind the screen to wash her hands; and the gentleman, her lover, has followed her there, and has still something to say, but she has made up her mind. Although the subject was evidently Rossetti's invention, it may have had some 'real life' counterpart in his Bohemian circle, where love affairs were by no means uncommon. His own infatuation with Jane Morris dates from the summer of 1865, the very moment when *Washing Hands* was conceived and executed.

Leighton's *In St Mark's*, an attractive but deeply felt and subtle picture, is a rediscovery. Recorded as 'untraced' by the Ormonds in their 1975 monograph, it has not been seen in public since it was offered at Christie's in November 1953 and has been hanging in a house in Africa until it was recently uncovered by a Christie's representative on a routine valuation, *illustrated right*. It was one of five works that Leighton showed at the Royal Academy in 1865 and is the product of his visit to Venice in the autumn of 1864. Leighton also explored this effect in more objective studies, presumably painted in the studio. There is something decidedly Pre-Raphaelite about this conception, and it is probably no accident that Leighton recently collaborated with them on the Dalziel brothers' illustrated Bible and the furnishing of William White's new church at Lyndhurst in the New Forest alongside William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.

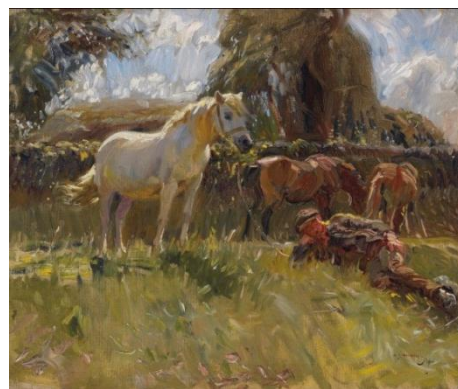


The auction will feature two works from the collection of John Schaeffer, *The Wrestling Scene in 'As You Like It'* by Daniel Maclise R.A. (1806-1870) and *Chivalry* by Sir Francis Dicksee P.R.A. (1853-1928), which come to auction after a six-month loan to Leighton House. Further works by Dicksee to be offered include *The House Builders*; rich in aesthetic detail, it was considered his greatest work when exhibited at the Royal Academy and was included in the 'Treasure Houses of Britain' Exhibition in Washington DC in 1985. This work shows Sir William Welby-Gregory, fourth baronet, and his wife Victoria, a member of 'The Souls', poring over the architect's model and drawings for Denton Manor, the house they were building near Grantham in Lincolnshire (estimate: £150,000 – 250,000, *illustrated left*).



Further highlights include a chilly and romantic Scottish landscape by Sir John Everett Millais, P.R.A (1829-1896); *Christmas Eve* (estimate: £150,000 – 200,000, *illustrated left*). It was painted late in 1887 from the west side of Murthly Castle, Perthshire and received its final touches on Christmas Eve. There is a pervasive sense of silence and stillness in this scene, with the cold winter light and the footprints and cart tracks in the snow the only trace of human presence. The picture is a fine example of Millais' late Scottish landscapes, of which he painted twenty-one in the last twenty-six years of his life.

Shrimp and the old grey mare on the Ringland Hills by Sir Alfred James Munnings shows the artist's two favourite models: the gypsy boy, Shrimp, and Munnings's old Welsh mare (estimate: £300,000 – 500,000, *illustrated right*). It was the horse dealer, James Drake, who introduced Munnings to Shrimp; in 1908, money changed hands between Drake and the artist, and Shrimp became Munnings's full-time model and horse-minder. In return, Munnings paid him a wage and bought him a new suit of clothes, consisting of a tight pair of 'dealer' trousers, a pearl-buttoned Georgian waistcoat, a cloth cap, and a bright red neckerchief. In this garb, he made a handsome model with the grey mare that Drake sold to Munnings in 1910 for twenty pounds, and the pair became the focal point of the artist's languid Norwich paintings. Further works by Munnings to be offered include *Idle Moments*; last offered at auction by Christie's in 1942 in a Red Cross sale where it was bought by the present owner's family. It has featured in major Munnings exhibitions and publications and has been on loan to the Sir Alfred Munnings Museum since 1978 (estimate: £200,000 – 300,000).



A selection of watercolours by the most celebrated of ornithological artists Archibald Thorburn features a splendid array of works spanning over twenty-five years of his working life and display his remarkable ability and skill with the subject matter in hand, whether it is garden birds, wildfowl on the shore, gamebirds or his work for ornithological publications. The majority of the works offered come from a single private collection formed over the last thirty years. *Frosty Morning: Pheasant in Winter* illustrates Thorburn's skill in portraying birds in their environment, but also capturing precisely the moment when he came across his subject, the nip of a frosty morning or the dampness of an autumn afternoon (estimate: £20,000 – 30,000, *illustrated left*). The collection also includes *Partridges and a bullfinch in the snow* (estimate: £35,000 – 45,000) and *Oyster Catchers, Redshank and Dunlin* (estimate: £8,000 – 12,000).

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