

John Moran Auctioneers to offer original Maxfield Parrish oil

John Moran Auctioneers is pleased to offer an original Maxfield Parrish oil painting, "Knave of hearts" at February 17, 2009 Sale.

"Knave of Hearts" was created by the renowned painter and illustrator in 1924. At this time Parrish was the best-known and most widely disseminated artist in America, his images for magazines, advertisements, calendars, and books, particularly children's books, having been reproduced by the millions. The prints of his oil paintings that were commissioned specifically for reproduction were displayed in a vast number of American houses, and the demand for Parrish's visions of a fantastical world, painted in rich colors with enchanting details, remained insatiable well into the 1940's. The distinctive dream-like quality of his paintings and illustrations is enhanced by his use of high contrast and his technique of applying multiple layers of thin oil paint, alternating with layers of varnish, which created a glowing surface. His use of cobalt blue became such a trademark that it was often referred to as "Parrish Blue."

Born in 1870 to the Philadelphia etcher and landscape painter Stephen Parrish, Maxfield Parrish originally intended to study architecture and enrolled at Haverford College. Deciding to devote himself to art, he moved on to the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts and the Drexel Institute, where he attended classes taught by the important illustrator Howard Pyle. Pyle influenced Parrish heavily, though the young artist had already developed a style of his own. His early work as an illustrator of magazine covers, particularly Collier's, established his reputation and earned him a prosperous living. He worked in Philadelphia until 1898, when he moved to a house called "The Oaks" on an estate in Plainfield, New Hampshire. Except for a stretch of time in the first decade of the century spent in Arizona recovering from tuberculosis, he lived at "The Oaks" until his death in 1966. He had four children with his wife, Lydia, from whom he grew estranged, and after 1905 shared his household with Susan Lewin, his muse and the model for most of his important paintings and murals.

Parrish illustrated books for such famous authors as Kenneth Grahame, L. Frank Baum, and Edith Wharton, among others. During the last thirty years of his career he painted only landscapes. Among the large number of murals he created are "Old King Cole", in the St. Regis Hotel in New York and "The Pied Piper" in the bar at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco.