

California Impressionists Weather the Storm at John Moran's October 13, 2009 California and American

Pasadena, CA - While a rare, heavy rainstorm pounded outside, all was sunshine and roses inside the Pasadena Convention Center in Pasadena, CA on the evening of October 13th, 2009, as John Moran Auctioneers held the third of their 2009 California and American Painting Auctions. With 183 lots, the sale featured an impressive array of landscapes, coastals and floral studies by top California Impressionists and Regionalist painters. Works by Granville Redmond, William Wendt, Maurice Braun, Jack Wilkinson Smith and many others drew a large crowd and demonstrated that the market, though more focused than in previous years, remains strong.

Some of the most hotly contested bidding was generated by Lot 58, a depiction of a view well loved by Pasadena residents and artists since the early 20th century, that of the landmark Colorado Bridge from the edge of the Arroyo Seco canyon (photo 1). This large (28”x38”), panoramic scene of the Beaux Arts structure set against the San Gabriel mountains, bathed in a gorgeous sunset glow, was painted by Howard R. Butler (1856 – 1934), a member of the National Academy who is primarily associated with New York and New Jersey, but who spent several years in California and is known as a specialist in landscapes and paintings of solar eclipses. With dueling phone bidders opening the bidding, the battle was eventually won by a floor bidder who held out to a final price of \$14,950, on a presale estimate of \$4,000-6,000.

Another top performer by a Pasadena artist was a lyrical foothill landscape, lush with wildflowers and a misty atmosphere, painted by John Frost (1880 – 1937) in 1929 (photo 2). Displaying the influence of the artist's sojourn in Giverny and of his friendship with pre-eminent California Impressionist Guy Rose, the 18”x22” work, Lot 51, carried a pre-sale estimate of \$30,000-40,000. The winning bid came in over the phone lines, at \$54,625.

The Norwegian-born California landscape specialist, Paul Lauritz (1889 – 1975), was well represented in the sale with six works. John Moran holds ten of the top twelve auction records for this individualistic and highly respected artist, including the top two, so it was no surprise that his works performed well on Tuesday. Lot 84, Nine Lake Basin, High Sierras, a grand 28”x32” view of snowy peaks displaying Lauritz's signature bold textures, solid forms and confident brushwork, brought \$19,550 (pre-sale estimate \$10,000-15,000), while Lot 48, the exquisitely colored “Old Road” (also known as “Road to Laguna”) (photo 3), a 32”x36” oil estimated at \$15,000-20,000 realized \$23,000.

Leading artist Franz Bischoff (1864 – 1929) was also featured with multiple works, including a last-minute sale addition, Lot 145A, a signed ceramic vase painted with roses (photo 4). Bischoff, known as the “King of Rose Painters”, began his artistic career as a ceramics painter, eventually founding his own ceramic art school. After settling in Pasadena he included a ceramic workshop in his Arroyo Seco studio. The vase offered at John Moran's on Tuesday was a prime example of his fine work in this medium, and the buyers seemed to appreciate this, bidding it up to a final price of \$16,100, the second highest price on record for a Bischoff ceramic.

Among the many California Regionalist works in the sale, including watercolors by Emil Kosa, Jr., Millard Sheets, Phil Dike, Rex Brandt and Milford Zornes, was a remarkable 1937 oil (photo 5) by Lee Everett Blair (1911 – 1993). With an unusual aerial viewpoint, looking down over the treetops on picnickers in Los Angeles's Griffith Park, the 30”x34” painting attracted many bids, and in the end realized a new world record for the artist of \$9,775, almost double the estimate. Moran's now holds the top three records for the artist.

Several other new artist records were set during the evening, including those for California artists Darwin Musselman, Wilfrid Mills, Bjorn Rye and Merrell Gage, the sculptor.

John Moran's next major California and American Paintings Auction is scheduled for February 16, 2010 at the Pasadena Convention Center in Pasadena CA. Consignments for that sale are still open, and early highlights include a fresh-to-the-market Granville Redmond poppies landscape and a landscape with barn by Society of Six member August Gay.

Moran's next, and final, 2009 auction is their Estates Auction, including fine jewelry, scheduled for December 8 at the Pasadena Convention Center in Pasadena CA. This two-session sale will begin with the no-reserve, un-catalogued Discovery Sale at 3pm. The fully catalogued Evening Session will begin at 6pm. Previewing for both sessions begins at noon. Bidding is available from the floor, by telephone, absentee or online at www.Artfact.com. For more information, to register, or to view the catalogue, please visit John Moran's website at www.johnmoran.com or call 626-793-1833.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

PHOTO 1:Moran.Butler.October09.jpg: This stunning view of Pasadena's Colorado Street Bridge by Howard R. Butler, inspired intense bidding at Moran's October sale, realizing \$14,950.

PHOTO 2:Moran.Frost.October09.jpg: John Moran offered this lovely work by John Frost with at the October auction, where it realized \$54,625.

PHOTO 3:Moran.Lauritz.October09.jpg: Paul Lauritz's "Road to Laguna" was fresh to the market at John Moran's October sale, having descended through the family of the original owner, who purchased it from the artist. It realized \$23,000.

PHOTO 4:Moran.Bischoff.October09.jpg: This last-minute addition to John Moran's sale ended up fetching the second highest auction price ever for a Franz Bischoff ceramic, \$16,100.

PHOTO 5:Moran.Blair.October09.jpg: Setting a new record for Regionalist Lee Everett Blair, this oil of Griffith Park, circa 1937, realized \$9,775 at John Moran's.

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