

SOTHEBY'S TO SELL THE SANTA ANITA COLLECTION OF TEN HIGHLY IMPORTANT PAINTINGS BY SIR ALFRED J. MUNNINGS FROM THE LOS ANGELES TURF CLUB

***-- Most Important Group of Munnings Paintings To Come to Auction --
-- Collection To Go on Exhibition in Los Angeles and London Prior to December 1 Evening Sale in New York --***

New York, New York - Ten highly important paintings by Sir Alfred J. Munnings, the 20th century master of English sporting art, from the Los Angeles Turf Club at Santa Anita Race Park, will be sold at Sotheby's New York in a special evening sale on December 1, 1998. The collection is comprised of views of the racing world's most prestigious racetracks at Cheltenham, Newmarket and Epsom including three paintings formerly owned by Walter Hutchinson, the founder of the National Gallery of British Sports and Pastimes. It is estimated to bring in excess of \$10 million.

Nancy Harrison and Benjamin Doller, Senior Vice Presidents of the 19th Century European Paintings department in New York, said: "This is the most important group of Munnings paintings to come to auction and we are absolutely delighted that Santa Anita have decided to sell their remarkable collection through Sotheby's, who have been the leaders in the market for Sporting art for the past fifteen years. The market for top quality works by Munnings has never been stronger, with his name attracting international interest from those who recognize his pre-eminence in the field of 20th century sporting art. The Santa Anita collection represents an unprecedented opportunity for collectors to acquire works of such exceptional quality and provenance."

In 1924, Munnings made his first trip to America and soon afterwards established a relationship with the New York art dealer E.J. Rousuck. He began importing Munnings' paintings into the United States and organizing exhibitions to spread the artists' reputation throughout America. Dr. Charles Henry Strub, the founder of the Santa Anita Race Park, formed the Munnings collection to be offered by Sotheby's, with the guidance of Rousuck, and together they assembled some of the finest examples of the artist's work.

The Santa Anita Collection represents the extraordinary range of Munnings' vision. The three paintings from the Sporting art collection of Walter Hutchinson are *In the Saddling Paddock, March Meet, Cheltenham*; *Under Starter's Orders, The Start, Newmarket*; and *Why Weren't You Out Yesterday?* They date from the late 40's and early 50's, when Munnings was President of the Royal Academy and was at the height of his mature style. Hutchinson's collection was dispersed at his death in 1951.

Under Starter's Orders, The Start, Newmarket, is the most important picture in the sale and is estimated at \$3,000,000-4,000,000. Painted in 1947, the horses are chomping at the bit, ready for the off. There is an incredible sense of movement from left to right across the canvas as the jockeys pull on the reins to hold their horses back, their rainbow colors shining in the sunlight. Munnings always spoke of the racecourse at Newmarket at his favorite and wrote about the dramatic moment before the race begins: "seeing visible beauty; the grouping, the movement -- color, all dependent on the lighting, the sky. Orange satin, cerise and white, blue and yellow, emerald green -- a large field waiting, waiting, regrouping."

Also from 1947 is *In the Saddling Paddock, March Meet, Cheltenham*, which shows jockeys, trainers, grooms and horses preparing in the paddock before the big race. More than half of the painting is dominated by a panorama of the distant hills behind the paddock. There is an ominous, patchy light across the hills which is picked out in mauves, greens and blues. The sun shines brightly on the paddock area below but a chilly vernal wind lifts the coat-tails of a gentleman who stands beside his jockey offering a few last minute words of advice. The painting is estimated at \$2,500,000-3,500,000.

The picture that best epitomizes Munnings' familiarity with hunting society and characteristic humor shows three women taking a break from the hunt, surrounded by a pack of hounds. An elegant woman smoking a cigarette and riding a beautiful gray mare, turns towards her companions, both seated on bays and riding side-saddle and asks them "Why weren't you out yesterday?" It is estimated at \$1,500,000-2,000,000.

The *Winner at Epsom* (see illustration on page 1) is a colorful evocation of the moments when the Derby winner, one of the greatest races in the world, is led into the unsaddling ring. The elegant thoroughbred, its flanks glistening with sweat after the race, is being held by a groom, while the victorious jockey removes the saddle for the weigh-in.

Crowds of men, turned out in traditional morning dress, race down the stairs from the stand to admire, in Munnings' words: "the one particular animal (which) occupies the thoughts of all who are waiting there." Other groups stand beside the railings discussing the race. Munnings always loved these few moments after a great race and recalled in his biography: "For years and years my next hurried move has always been to the grass Ring with the white rail, where the winner is led. The surrounding pebbled enclosure is quickly crowded - everyone waiting to see the Derby winner." The painting is estimated at \$700,000-900,000.

The Collection will go on exhibition in Los Angeles and London prior to the exhibition and sale in New York.