

Press Release

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Courtney King/Kristin Gelder

Tel: (212) 606-7176

Fax: (212) 606-7381

SOTHEBY'S NEW YORK TO OFFER EDWARD HICKS' ICONIC MASTERPIECE *THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM WITH THE LEOPARD OF SERENITY* ON MAY 22, 2008



Edward Hicks, *Peaceable Kingdom with the Leopard of Serenity*, 1846-1848, 26 by 29 ½ in., est. \$6/8 million

New York, New York – On May 22, 2008, Sotheby's is proud to offer a masterpiece of American 19th century painting, *The Peaceable Kingdom with the Leopard of Serenity*, by the most celebrated American folk art artist, Edward Hicks, of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Arguably one of the most important and beautifully preserved examples of the more than sixty-two versions of this profound subject painted by the artist, this work boasts an exceptional provenance, which includes the artist's great-granddaughter, Mabel Willets Abendroth, and her son, William P. Abendroth, Jr. Later sold to Kennedy Galleries, New York, it was acquired by a private collector and has been exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, as well as at the American Folk Art Museum, New York, where it has been on view since 2000. This iconic work will be offered in a separate

single lot sale immediately following the auction of *American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* and is estimated to sell for \$6/8 million*.

Dara Mitchell, Director of the American Paintings department, said, “*The Peaceable Kingdom with the Serene Leopard* is Hicks’ transcendent example of this subject and a work of great importance to American Art. In the present work, the artist reveals the full height of his technical abilities.”

Edward Hicks’ *Peaceable Kingdoms* paintings, which have been written about by scholars for many decades, became his most effective tool for preaching the Quaker doctrines of salvation through light, harmony and peace, and the Peaceable Kingdom on earth. The present work, dated 1846-1848, was a late work in the artist’s career, created towards the end of his life, and demonstrates Hicks’ psychological and spiritual power as a profound observer of human character and aspiration.

Nancy Druckman, Director of Sotheby’s American Folk Art department, said, “The present work is one of the clearest and most powerful expressions of the American ideals of reconciliation and peace ever to be set down on canvas, and it is the one of greatest psychological and spiritual depth.”

The format of this painting, which boasts clear and radiant colors, is unique within Hicks’ oeuvre – a nearly square format of considerable size – into which the artist has painted five additional sheep, more than the number depicted in other *Peaceable Kingdoms*, lending a pastoral quality to this work. The animals are studies in human character. The figures, both animal and human, are presented with clarity and force, distributed evenly within the pictorial space. Present are the young Goddess of Liberty with the American Bald eagle, the lion and the lamb, the little child of the Biblical prophesy of Isaiah and William Penn’s Treaty with the Indians, which Hicks and other Quakers viewed as an important example of living in harmony. The spotted leopard, which serenely extends across the composition as though basking in a spotlight across a stage, was typical of Hicks’ last years, representing a fusion of opposites that reveals the painter’s inward longing for reconciliation.

*Estimates do not include buyer’s premium.

For more information, please contact the Sotheby’s Press Office: 212-606-7176.

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