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## Sotheby's New York to offer Important Mural by Rufino Tamayo, entitled *America*, in the November 18 Sale of Latin American Art



**Pictured:** Rufino Tamayo, *America*, 401.3 by 1423.4 cm (4.01 by 14.23 m), est. \$7/9 million

**New York, New York** – The November 18 Evening sale of Latin American Art at Sotheby's will feature Rufino Tamayo's impressive mural, entitled **America** (est. \$7/9 million). A truly magnificent and awe-inspiring mural, *America* was completed by Rufino Tamayo during an extraordinary five-month burst of production. Working at a feverish pace without assistants, Tamayo painted seven days a week to complete what was to be his most important mural. Today it is rightly hailed as one of his finest masterpieces, the crowning achievement of what was arguably his most glorious period. Of the five murals Tamayo executed in the United States, *America* is the only one currently held in private hands.

*America* was painted during a time in which Tamayo was riding an international wave of success with exhibitions at some of the most prominent galleries of the time, including Julien Levy, Pierre Matisse, Perls and Knoedler. At that time, Tamayo was already considered one of the most acclaimed artists of his generation, a reputation that has only grown in the ensuing years. Today Tamayo is indeed regarded as one of the great colorists of the twentieth century.

Executed in vinylite, an industrial synthetic paint favored by Tamayo for his large paintings because of its portability and its ability to free the artist from the constraints of architecture and of working *in situ*, *America* was painted in Mexico City and briefly exhibited there. It was then rolled and transported to Houston. Spanning over 13 by 45 feet, *America* unfolds majestically through a series of symbols that allegorically relay the heritage and richness of the Americas. Central to the composition is the figure of America, personified by a reclining female nude whose ample, white and sienna body stretches across much of the bottom half of the canvas, surrounded by her natural resources that suggest the abundance of the continent and the converging cultures that make the Americas truly unique.

A visual tour de force, *America's* monumentality not only derives from its grand scale, but from the sheer dynamic force of its aesthetic vision. Here Tamayo appears to have harnessed the metaphysical dimensions of Picasso's *Guernica*, the epic drama of the Mexican School and the Abstract Expressionist's embrace of the primitive and the mythic to create a work that successfully asserts the timeless values of civilization. By adopting an internationalist aesthetic, Tamayo presents a quintessentially modern and contemporary perspective. At the time Tamayo painted this work, he was already regarded as one of the most important artists of his generation, as is apparent from a statement made by the abstract expressionist painter Barnett Newman, who greatly admired Tamayo's work, in a 1945 article on Tamayo and fellow New York School painter Adolph Gottlieb. Newman wrote, "*Tamayo and Gottlieb, by their outstanding example as men of thought, are making a contribution to the art of America of such importance that its impact will have a profound influence on the art of Europe.*"

*America* was originally commissioned in 1955 for the Bank of the Southwest in Houston. In 1993, *America* was sold to a private collector for a record price and soon returned to public view. It has generously been on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art for the past fifteen years, where it was on view in the lobby atrium. Other important murals by the artist grace the walls of such prestigious institutions as the headquarters of the UNESCO in Paris, the Brown Fine Arts Center at Smith College in Northampton, MA, El Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, the Universidad de Puerto Rico in San Juan, the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas and the United Nations in New York.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium.

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