



104 East 25th Street • New York, NY 10010
Telephone: 212.254.4710 • Fax: 212.979.1017
swanngalleries.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2015

Contact: Alexandra Nelson
Communications Director
212-254-4710 ext. 19
alexandra@swanngalleries.com

**DECEMBER 15 AUCTION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FINE ART IS SWANN GALLERIES'
STRONGEST OFFERING IN CATEGORY TO DATE**

New York— On **Tuesday, December 15**, Swann Galleries' will offer **African-American Fine Art**, featuring a newly re-discovered Norman Lewis painting, an important early-career modernist painting by Romare Bearden, and what is believed to be the first painting by Elizabeth Catlett to come to auction.

This sale is peppered with highlights and discoveries, headlined by Norman Lewis's *Untitled*, a previously unrecorded 1958 large, earth-toned oil painting from the artist's late 1950s body of abstraction. With this large canvas Lewis continued to explore "ritual" calligraphic figures while moving further toward color field painting. The preview for this auction will be the first time the painting has been publicly displayed, coinciding perfectly with the first comprehensive museum retrospective of Norman Lewis's work which opened this month at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Museum in Philadelphia. The painting is estimated at \$250,000 to \$350,000. Several other works by Lewis are included in the sale, including a 1943 lithograph, *Madam* (\$5,000 to \$7,000), from his period teaching at the new George Washington Carver School alongside Elizabeth Catlett and Charles White.

Two scarce paintings included in the sale are Romare Bearden's *The Annunciation*, oil on canvas, 1946 (\$120,000 to \$180,000); and Elizabeth Catlett's *Friends*, tempera on paper, mounted to masonite board, 1944 (\$30,000 to \$40,000). Bearden's piece comes from early in his career, a period in which he was working primary on paper and produced few large canvases like this one. Paintings from Catlett's New York period, prior to her move to Mexico in 1946, are very rare. Swann believes this to be the first painting by Catlett to come to auction. In addition to the painting, the sale also features Catlett's *Recognition*, a black marble sculpture from 1970 and an excellent example of her mid-career work (\$120,000 to \$180,000); as well as a large pen and ink drawing, *Juba*, 1951, by her husband, the artist Charles White. *Juba* is one of only a handful of large pen and ink pieces from the early 1950s that White exhibited in New York (\$75,000 to \$100,000).

Additional standouts in this cavalcade of highlights include Lois Mailou Jones striking oil on canvas, *Africa*, 1935 (\$60,000 to \$90,000), an early investigation of African imagery from her Harlem Renaissance period. This is the most significant oil painting by Jones to come to auction thus far. Alma

MORE

W. Thomas's 1971 acrylic on canvas vertical stripe abstraction *Fall Atmosphere* (\$50,000 to \$70,000) revels in natural autumnal tones that are also featured in Richard Mayhew's *New Hampshire Valley*, an early oil on canvas landscape, circa 1960 (\$20,000 to \$30,000). Another fine work of abstraction, Romare Bearden's *Wine Star*, oil on canvas, circa 1959-60, is a fine example of the artist's foray into color field painting.

Works from contemporary artists include Barkley L. Hendricks's 1978 oil and acrylic on canvas portrait *Tuff Tony* (\$120,000 to \$180,000), a fine follow-up to Hendrick's *Steve*, which brought a record \$365,000 at Swann in April 2015. Glenn Ligon's 1994 oil stick and pencil *Untitled (My Life in America)* is a maquette used for his 1994-95 exhibition *Equal Rights & Justice* at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta (\$75,000 to \$100,000). Sam Gilliam's raked polypropylene, acrylic, monoprint and color woodblock on collaged handmade paper, plastic and sewn fabrics, *Butterfly Days #12*, circa 1990, comes from his bright and dynamic *Butterfly Days* series (\$20,000 to \$30,000). The sale also features multiple oil paintings by Hughie Lee-Smith, including *Untitled (Figure at the Shore)*, circa 1960 (\$35,000 to \$50,000), part of his mid-career exploration of existential landscapes inhabited by isolated figures; and *Performers*, 1990, a significant later work in which Lee-Smith explores the mood and space between performers on stage (\$60,000 to \$90,000).

Additional artists featured in the sale include Benny Andrews, whose oil, canvas and painted fabric collage *Mother Earth*, 1970, showcases his mid-career work in three dimensional collage including fragments of found clothing (\$8,000 to \$12,000). Kara Walker's lithograph *Untitled*, 1998, and a bound pop-up book with offset lithographs and laser-cut pop-up silhouettes, *Freedom, A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times*, 1997, depict her signature tableaux of silhouetted figures (\$4,000 to \$6,000 and \$2,000 to \$3,000, respectively). Finally, Jonathan Green's color lithograph, *First Sunday*, 1995, exhibits Green's continued exploration of southern culture (\$5,000 to \$7,000).

The auction will take place on Tuesday, December 15 beginning at 2:30 p.m. The auction preview will be open to the public, with an exhibition opening Thursday, December 10 and Friday, December 11 from 10 p.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, December 12 from noon to 5 p.m.; Monday, December 14 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Tuesday, December 15 from 10 a.m. to noon.

An illustrated auction catalogue is available for \$35 from Swann Galleries, Inc., 104 East 25th Street, New York, NY 10010, or online at www.swannalleries.com.

For further information and to make advance arrangements to bid by telephone during the auction, please contact Nigel Freeman at 212-254-4710, extension 33, or via e-mail at nfreeman@swannalleries.com.

CATALOGUE AND DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST