

Informed Collecting: Dealers' Insights

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR: QUESTROYAL FINE ART, NEW YORK, NY

Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)

Like Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt's name is synonymous with the American West. Painting in the late nineteenth century, Bierstadt celebrated America's westward expansion with his grand, naturalistic compositions. His awe-inspiring oil paintings significantly shaped how Easterners conceptualized the hitherto unseen West.

Though *Home of the Rainbow*, *Horseshoe Falls*, *Niagara* and *Sunset in the Mountains* do not form part of Bierstadt's Western *oeuvre*, they are strong representatives of his style. Both works reflect his naturalistic approach that roots the images to recognizable landscapes while incorporating a sense of drama.



Prices for Bierstadt paintings range from \$60,000 to \$7.3 million (the latter, an auction record set in May 2008). *Sunset in the Mountains* is priced at \$120,000. Although expertly painted, this smaller work costs less than his American scenes as it likely depicts a landscape inspired by his travels abroad. *Home of the Rainbow* is priced higher (at \$495,000) because it represents an identifiable part of the American landscape, Niagara Falls, which places it among Bierstadt's more sought-after works. High quality western scenes can bring prices well into the millions.

▲ Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), *Home of the Rainbow, Horseshoe Falls, Niagara*. Oil on canvas, 16-3/4 x 22-1/4 inches. Signed lower right. Priced at \$495,000.

◀ Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), *Sunset in the Mountains*, 1859. Oil on board, 6-12 x 5-11/16 inches. Monogrammed and dated "1859" lower left; inscribed "John Francis Esq With the Compliments of A Bierstadt" on verso. Priced at \$120,000.

William Trost Richards (1833-1905)

A noted Hudson River School master, William Trost Richards created precise, yet emotive American seascapes. His watercolors and oil paintings exhibit a keen awareness of the details and poetic depths found in foam-capped waves, distant horizons, and the graceful movement of weather-worn trees.

Much admired in his own day, Richards's work remains a centerpiece of private and public American art collections, bringing prices between \$20,000 and \$500,000. Although known for his oils, Richards's watercolors are also highly desired. Both his contemporary colleagues and today's collectors consider him a premier watercolorist, capable of producing incredible detail within the medium.

Beach Scene and *Sundown, Atlantic City* were painted during what is considered



Richards's best period: the 1870s. During this decade, he created a number of highly finished, exquisite watercolor compositions that parallel his oils in quality and significance. These works offer collectors a more approachable opportunity to acquire a fine example from Richards's *oeuvre*.

▲ William Trost Richards (1833-1905), *Beach Scene*, 1875. Watercolor on paper, 11-3/4 x 18-3/16 inches. Signed and dated "1875" lower right. Priced at \$85,000.

◀ William Trost Richards (1833-1905), *Sundown, Atlantic City*, 1874. Watercolor on paper, 11 x 17-5/8 inches (sight). Signed and dated "'74" lower left. Priced at \$85,000.