

So you thought your calendar was crowded during the fall auction season? Think again. The London-based Bloomsbury Auctions has launched a photography department in its newly established New York branch, with its debut sale scheduled for October 17. Rick Wester, who has headed the photography departments of both Christie's and Phillips, de Pury & Company, is the department's international consultant, and John Cowey, former gallery manager of the Edwynn Houk Gallery, is head of the department. The junior specialist of the new department is Hannah Hayden, who had also worked at Phillips. According to Cowey, the inaugural sale is a select group of photographs ranging from 19th-century albums to such contemporary material as a Sally Mann landscape. "Our goal," he says, "is to provide more client services, to be more personally involved with the vendors and the buyers."

Wester, who was hired to help Bloomsbury enter the photography market in New York, will also be involved in the photography department of the London branch. In addition, he says, "I'm helping them in terms of the marketing and identity of Bloomsbury. We're helping them reshape their visual identity, redesign their catalogues, redesign their advertising, things like that. It's a lot of fun, and an aspect of the business that I've always enjoyed." Wester says he would like to see Bloomsbury excel in photography books in addition to photographs—a natural step, since the London firm is known for its sales of books and manuscripts. One highlight of the October sale is a set of 19th-century Russian albums that cover an expedition between 1860 and 1866 from Siberia across Russia. "It's one of the most stunning expeditionary albums anybody has ever seen," says Wester.

Helping Wester, both at Bloomsbury and in his private consulting and appraisal business, is Sarah Stout, former associate publisher of *Blind Spot* magazine. Stout is the associate director of Rick Wester Fine Art, which Wester founded last year. In addition to consulting and artist representation, Wester hopes to launch a series of exhibitions in temporary spaces in Chelsea this year. "This has been an opportunity to take 30 years of experience and spread it around and do all of the things that I've wanted to do," says Wester. "It's like being a professional uncle. I can close the door and let somebody else take care of the kids and get on with the fun stuff."

Bloomsbury is not the only auction house expanding into the photography market. Heritage Auction Galleries in Dallas, best known for sales of coins and memorabilia, has added a photography department as well, bringing in consultant and appraiser Lorraine Davis to head it. The department's first sale is December 12, but collectors can begin bidding online approximately six weeks before that. All of their sales have a virtual component, and thanks to the firm's own skilled photographers, says Davis, "You can zoom in on details of these objects really well," in order to inspect them online.

Speaking of online auctions, Artnet is back. The firm, which first launched online auctions of fine art back in 1999, only to close them a year later, began holding virtual auctions again in February. In addition to continuous sales of photographs, as well as other fine art, a thematic sale of contemporary color photographs was held in July, and another photography sale is planned for the fall, under the guidance of photography specialists Christopher Sweet and Susanna Wenniger. □

photograph

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