

# Dr. Seuss, *Cat Detective*, serigraph.



Few American authors have been as widely read as Dr. Seuss, a children's book author and illustrator born Theodor Geisel. A staple of the American education system and the process of learning to read for millions of Americans, Dr. Seuss helped to create a new genre of children's books that

were both understandable to new readers and interesting in both plot and illustrations. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer one such illustration, **Dr. Seuss, *Cat Detective*, serigraph** (\$8/1,200) in our March Gallery Auction, to be held on Friday, March 15th.

The print's subject is a cat detective located at the bottom of the frame, hidden within a dynamic and confused city landscape. The cat wears a red fedora and brown jacket while hanging over the street, suspended only by its tail wrapped around a nearby chimney. Using a handheld telescope, it looks into the illuminated window of a nearby apartment building. Behind the cat, the cityscape itself is a fascinating

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mess of triangular forms, which create a bristling, frenzied sense of motion that is made friendly to the viewer by its pervasive use of light and pastel colors. The city emerges haphazardly from these hard points and edges, with buildings rendered from a variety of conflicting viewpoints. While the exact structure of the urban geography is uncertain, two small park squares centered around trees are visible in the middle and backgrounds, steps appear to connect the middle ground to the background, and there is a purple train on an elevated track that moves towards the left of the scene. The buildings appear to be primarily residential, with commercial offices and increased height appearing behind this train on the right of the frame.

This work depicts a city as a place of contradictions, delicately balanced in both composition and content. The

sharp points and hard angles evident in the architecture are balanced with the light and dreamlike color palette, while the energy present in the painting's foreground, which borders on frenetic, is itself balanced by the softer forms that dominate the background. The shifting perspectives in which the buildings are presented highlight Cubist influences, a choice which is stabilized by areas, especially in the foreground and background which use standard perspective to allow for a more realistic depiction of the space and subject matter. The cityscape, largely empty of life, is countered with a smattering of trees along the center line, while the cat's voyeurism is counterweighted by the unnaturally opened landscape, which invites the viewer's spectatorship.

This piece highlights the fantastical creations that defined the work of Theodor Seuss (Dr. Seuss)

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Geisel and is especially valued as it uses cats as subject matter. Also evident is his distinctive use of perspective and abstraction, which elevates cartoon orthodoxies with the inclusion of elements pulled from avant-garde experimentations. This work is additionally informed by his wide-ranging travels, which he cited as a necessary source of inspiration, a truth made evident by his combining of numerous distinct architectural forms and types of trees in this work. A posthumous reproduction of an original 1969 work made in watercolor and pencil, this piece comes at the tail end of his career, after the creation of his most acclaimed works, therefore representing both an experiment in technique and a return to form by the artist.

Theodor Seuss Geisel was born in the spring of 1904 in the town of Springfield, Massachusetts. As a young

German-American, Geisel had a difficult childhood, but excelled in school, eventually graduating from Dartmouth College in 1925. After attending the University of Oxford, he returned to the United States, eventually settling in New York after beginning his career as a political cartoonist. When his work inspired a company executive at a bug spray company to hire him for an advertising campaign, Geisel and his wife became very wealthy, allowing them to travel freely. During WWII he created political cartoons and movies for the US Army, before moving to San Diego upon his discharge from the service. It was in this period, the 1950s and early 60s, when he wrote his most celebrated works, still popular to this day, before his death in 1991.

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Auction on Friday, March 15th, which features many fine artworks from notable artists, in addition to excellent examples from the Jewelry and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by the Fine Art Department, which will be offering oil paintings by Frank Duveneck and a lithograph by Stow Wengenroth. Also included in the sale is a contemporary artwork by Pratchaya

Charernsook, a micromosaic gold brooch, and a pair of jadeite jade, diamond earrings.

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