

George Demont Otis, Olema Creek, oil.

The Marin County wilderness has been a subject of inspiration for artists for as long as the historical record exists, with works from indigenous artists, early American pioneers, and modernists all evident of an

appreciation for the untamed wilderness and striking beauty of the region. One such artist, George Demont Otis, took up residence in the town of Kentfield and quickly created an important body of landscape works that highlight the



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county. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer **George Demont Otis, Olema Creek, oil** (\$7/10,000) for sale in our April Gallery Auction, held on Friday, April 19th.

This painting features a sunny scene from rural Marin, centered around Olema Creek. This creek is a small waterway along the California coast north of San Francisco, flowing from its origin north of Stinson Beach, traveling along Highway 1 before passing through its namesake town of Olema, merging with Lagunitas Creek just south of Point Reyes Station, and entering Tomales Bay. In the painting, it winds its way through the bottom of the frame, the creek's steep banks lined with various trees, including a large eucalyptus in the distant left of the canvas. To the right is a large A-frame building, likely a barn, with a small wagon visible against the white walls

and a white picket fence. A significant hill is visible in the background, while the right side of the image is framed by a large tree, its leaves glowing green in the sunlight, alongside several smaller shrubs and flowers.

This painting highlights the serenity and natural beauty of rural life in northern California, and especially in Marin County, which has long served as a willing subject for artists. Notably, the artist's chosen subject matter, from which the painting takes its name, is a slowly winding creek rather than the more tumultuous Pacific Ocean located less than five miles away. Also relevant is the prominence of the barn in the frame, constructed in a traditional manner, the white picket fence, itself a symbol of American landownership, and the horse-drawn wagon. Each of these motifs represents a conception of a small-land ownership that is

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quintessentially American and together paint a picture of an idealized rural life separated from the harsh realities of early 20th century industrialization and urban living.

This piece is typical of George Otis's body of work and especially his work after he took up residence in the small town of Kentfield, located at the base of Mount Tamalpais in Marin County. Like many of his works, this piece is centered around a moving body of water, usually a river or creek, and is dominated by trees of significant height. Equally evident in his body of work is an appreciation for rural living, as small homes and other buildings are frequently nestled amongst the landscape. The inclusion of evidence of human life, but not people themselves, is an interesting throughline that places his work in a unique position amongst many of the more modernist-inclined

prominent early 20th-century landscape artists.

George Demont Otis was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1879. Orphaned at a young age, he briefly lived with his aunt in a small town two hours by train from Kansas City and was eventually placed with a family living in Chicago. Shortly thereafter, he began studying at the Chicago Fine Art Academy (now the School of the Art Institute of Chicago), before continuing his studies in Philadelphia and New York. He briefly played professional baseball, which he primarily used as a means of funding his art training, and in 1900 he returned to Chicago to teach art and work as a set designer for the Opera House. He would further develop this trade, after a brief stint in Colorado, by working in Hollywood as a scene designer for MGM. Abruptly quitting this work, he traveled around the Southwest before

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moving to San Francisco, where he made frequent trips to paint in Nevada before eventually settling in Kentfield. He continued to paint for the remainder of his life before passing away in 1962 at the age of 82.

George Demont Otis, Olema Creek, oil (\$7/10,000) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions April Gallery Auction on Friday, April 19th. The sale features excellent furniture pieces from the Asian Art Department, in addition to important works from notable artists, and a number of fine jewelry pieces from the Fine Art and Jewelry departments.

The auction is led by the Fine Art Department, which will be offering oil paintings by George Demont Otis and Gideon Jacques Denny, while the Asian Art Department offers a 12-panel folding screen and a hanging rug. Also included in the sale are platinum, diamond, and gold items from the Jewelry Department.

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