

Locally owned Bilibin painting auctioned at Christie's

A locally owned painting attributed to Russian artist Ivan Bilibin has been auctioned off at Christie's Rockefeller Center location in New York, fetching a closing price of \$100,000.00. The painting belonged to the Labrie family of Rye, who own the Collector's Art Gallery. The winning bid was placed over the telephone by a Russian national.

Ivan Iakovlevich Bilibin (1876-1942) was an influential painter, graphic illustrator, and stage designer, whose themes were based on stylized Russian folk and medieval art. Born outside St. Petersburg, Bilibin studied at the St. Petersburg Acade-



Courtesy photo

"THE BLACK HORSEMAN from the Russian fairytale 'Vassilissa the Beautiful,'" attributed to Ivan Bilibin (1846-1942).

my of Fine Art under Ilya Repin and was a member of the Mir Iskusstva movement. His distinct style and subject-matter

embraced the country's spirit and history, breathing new life into the ancient world of Russian fairytales and folklore.

In 1899, Bilibin was commissioned by the Imperial Stationary Office to produce a set of fairytale books for children. Among these was the tale of Vassilissa the Beautiful, a courageous heroine of Russian folklore, published in 1902. The painting owned by the Labrie family features a scene from this tale. Executed in oils on canvas, this unusually large picture (62" x 74") depicts the Black Horseman, whom Vassilissa encounters while wandering in the forest. The size of the paint-

ing and the techniques used indicate that it was most likely executed in the early 1930's.

The Bilibin painting was part of an extensive inventory of rare Eastern European art at the Collector's Art Gallery. Said the gallery's Russian-born curator Albina Colden, "We thought it was interesting that in the end, the Bilibin piece was purchased by a Russian buyer. Over seventy years after its completion, the painting will return to the homeland it so lovingly depicts."

For more information, call the Collector's Art Gallery at 433-0016 or visit www.collector-sartgallery.net.