

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Driscoll Babcock Galleries  
525 West 25th Street  
New York, NY 10001  
www.driscollbabcock.com

Tuesday-Friday: 10AM-6PM  
Saturday: 12-6PM

T. 212 767 1852



Albert Bierstadt, SUNRISE, c. 1885  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 inches

**THE SHOCK OF THE OLD: EPIC VISIONS IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN ART**

May 12, 2016 – June 25, 2016

DRISCOLL BABCOCK GALLERIES presents *The Shock of the Old: Epic Visions in 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Art*, a provocative riff on Robert Hughes' 1980 television series and book *The Shock of the New* which explored public reactions to Modern Art. In a distinctly contemporary setting, *The Shock of the Old* provides viewers an opportunity to reconsider the innovations and mastery of the painters of the Hudson River School. The Hudson River School was America's first native school of painters, and their imagery of the unfettered American landscape probed deeply into the psychological, political and sociological manifestations of the new nation and produced some of the greatest painters of the nineteenth century.

In 1825 Thomas Cole, a twenty-one year old contemporary artist, exhibited three paintings in New York which immediately attracted the attention and patronage of the great American artist Colonel John Trumbull. Trumbull then informed William Dunlap and Asher B. Durand – each in his own right iconic figures in the art world – of the shocking new paintings of the then-unknown young painter Thomas Cole. Dunlap and Durand rushed to buy the two remaining paintings, as Trumbull arranged to meet Cole, to whom he asserted, "You surprise me, at your age to paint like this." This moment ignited Cole's fame which "spread like fire" and inspired two generations of innovative American painting, loosely termed The Hudson River School, that had deep influence here in the United States and throughout Europe.

The vocabulary of the Hudson Rivers School artists explored the sublime immensity of the American landscape and beyond, with many artists traveling to the most remote parts of the United States, into isolated and inhospitable terrain, as well as to South America, Europe and the Middle East. The luminous light and dramatic contrasts of American views is exemplified in works by Martin Johnson Heade, Albert Bierstadt, John F. Kensett and Jasper Cropsey, along with others. The vivid sunsets, rugged mountains and restless oceans of the Hudson River

School show the expansive nature and overwhelming beauty of the American landscape with all its cultural implications for contemporary viewers.

Today, nineteenth century American paintings are being recognized as never before with the recent renovation and reinstallation of new American galleries at major museums throughout the country, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City, the Art Institute of Chicago and the formation of major new collections including the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas and The Minnesota Marine Art Museum in Winona. ***The Shock of the Old*** refreshes consideration of the "Old," in the context of new perspectives and new audiences.

### ABOUT DRISCOLL BABCOCK GALLERIES

Driscoll Babcock's program celebrates the dialogue between the past and the present—showing contemporary artists whose work is grounded in the history of art, yet engaged with the most pertinent issues of today, as well as selections from three centuries of historical American art.

As New York's oldest art gallery, Driscoll Babcock's 164 year history makes it one of the oldest cultural institutions in New York City. The gallery has shown some of the most influential artists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries - during their lifetimes - including George Inness, Winslow Homer, and Marsden Hartley. During the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the gallery has continued to present masterpieces by Milton Avery, Robert Duncanson, Arthur Dove, Stuart Davis, and Franz Kline, to name a few, and place these works in prominent institutions such as the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, as well as important private collections throughout the world.

Driscoll Babcock emphasizes that classic art can have contemporary significance, and that contemporary art can have classic pertinence.