

# A Framed Miniature Painting of P. T. Barnum and Tiny Tim.

The creator the America's most famous circus, P.T. Barnum had a long history of innovation, both in the marketing of attractions and the exploration of new types of performances and spectacles. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer **A Framed Miniature Painting of P. T.**

**Barnum and Tiny Tim** (\$2/3,000) for sale in the "Chapter I" Vito Giallo Auction, held on Monday, June 17th.

Phineas Taylor (P. T.) Barnum was born in Bethel, Connecticut in 1810, the son of an innkeeper and tailor Philo Barnum. Barnum was an entrepreneur from an early age, running at various points, a general store, a book-auctioning trade, a real estate firm, and

a statewide lottery. He opened a newspaper in 1831, "The Herald of Freedom," and soon found himself imprisoned for libel after he insulted church elders in an editorial. By the age of twenty-five, he had sold each of these businesses to begin his career as a showman.



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His career was kickstarted after he found a loophole in New York state law to “lease” an eighty-year-old enslaved woman named Joice Heth, who he forced to work for over ten hours a day, billing her as George Washington’s 161-year-old former nurse. After her death, Barnum had her autopsy performed in front of a paying audience. He earned significant sums from these works and founded Barnum’s American Museum in 1941, located on Broadway in Manhattan, where he exhibited an ever-changing mix of performances and exhibits, including albinos, giants, little people, jugglers, magicians, and detailed models. It was during this time that he began with Charles Sherwood Stratton or “General Tom Thumb.”

Charles Sherwood Stratton was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1838, the son of a carpenter. He was born with dwarfism and was only two feet, two

inches tall when he was hired to sing, dance, mime, and impersonate famous people by P. T. Barnum at the age of five. He was an immediate success and a year later he joined Barnum on a European tour, where he met Queen Victoria of England and attracted crowds wherever he went. The portrait offered at Michaan’s Auctions was painted during the French portion of this tour.

Stratton’s success was partially responsible for the acceptance of “human curiosities” or “freak shows” as a respected genre of performance in the United States, a change that allowed for the exploitation of thousands of people over the next hundred years. However, his legacy is not so simply understood, as Stratton was widely regarded by critics as a skilled performer on his merits as a professional entertainer. Nor was he unduly exploited by P. T.

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Barnum, as the performer became quite wealthy, owning several homes and a yacht before dying unexpectedly of a stroke in 1883 at the age of just forty-five.

It was during his European tour with Stratton that P. T. Barnum met the Swedish singer, Jenny Lind. He offered to advance her fee for 150 performances across the United States, a sum



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equivalent to \$4.5 million today. The tour was a huge success, even with Lind ending the run at only 93 shows, and he made his investment back four times over. Barnum used this money to build a New York theater, aimed at a family audience, and in doing so attempt to reclaim the theater as a moral art form. He continued to expand his businesses through the end of the Civil War, interrupted by a brief bankruptcy in 1856, from which he was saved by Charles Sherwood Stratton.

Barnum opened his circus, which would become the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus still operating today, at the age of sixty in 1870. The circus acts were drawn from his pre-existing labor force, and added its first animal, Jumbo, in 1882. At the same time, he began his political career, serving as a Connecticut state assemblymember from 1866 to 1869 and

was the mayor of Bridgeport from 1875-1876, running on a platform of morality and temperance. He also engaged in philanthropy, helping to found Bridgeport Hospital and Tufts University in Massachusetts, and died of a stroke at the age of 80 in 1891.

This painting of P. T. Barnum and General Tom Thumb (Charles Sherwood Stratton), pictures two lifelong collaborators in Paris during their European tour together in 1845. Barnum is shown seated on a Continental high-back chair, leaning his left arm on a table featuring a "Turkey red" table cover, set against a muted olive background. Stratton is pictured standing on the table, with his right hand on Barnum's left shoulder. Both are wearing formal dress and gaze directly towards the viewer, while Barnum's top hat is pictured on its side in the foreground.

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## **A Framed Miniature**

### **Painting of P. T. Barnum and Tiny**

**Tim** (\$2/3,000) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions "Chapter I" Vito Giallo Auction on Monday, June 17th. This sale will present an initial selection from the vast estate of the notable New York artist and antiques dealer, Vito Giallo, who is finally offering the most treasured items from his Madison Avenue store, in a special auction preceding our Summer Fine Sale. This collection, titled "Chapter I" to commemorate the recent publishing of Vito Giallo's memoir, features exceptional pieces across every department, headlined by bronzes and painted works in the Fine Art Department, as well as impressive collections of Silver & Objects de Vertu. Also included are important collectibles,

quality decorations, and admirable pieces in glass.

Also on June 17th, Michaan's Auctions Summer Fine Sale. This auction features an incredible selection, full of the season's most esteemed items. The sale is headlined by historically important works in the Asian Art Department, exquisite jewelry in the desirable Art-Deco style, and important works from notable American and European modernist artists. Also featured are fine examples of Persian carpets, sterling silver dishware, and an extremely rare book by an icon of American poetry.

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