

## **Copley's \$4.8 Million Record-Shattering "White Glove" Sporting Sale 2017**

PLYMOUTH, MA - Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC ([copleyart.com](http://copleyart.com)), the nation's premier sporting art and decoy auction house, realized \$4.8 million in sales at The Sporting Sale 2017, held at Hotel 1620 on July 27 and 28 in Plymouth, MA. The two-day sale was over 92% sold by lot, extending Copley's stellar track record, and the sold lots achieved an impressive 118% of their high estimate.

Sessions I and II of the Donal C. O'Brien, Jr. Collection of Important American Sporting Art and Decoys were 100% sold with an outstanding average price per lot of over \$27,000 per decoy. This smashed the average price per lot from the sale of the Distinguished Collection of Dr. James M. McCleery held in 2000, making the sale of the O'Brien Collection the most successful decoy auction of all time.

Nineteen world records were achieved for artists or decoy makers in this historic sale. Eight items sold for six-figure prices, including seven decoys and one painting. There was robust bidding across all categories, including paintings, prints, folk art, and antique and contemporary decoy carvings.

Copley's owner and principal, Stephen B. O'Brien, Jr., said, "We had two great days of pinnacle works featuring the best the field has to offer. The O'Brien Collection has always embodied excellence and over the coming decades it will continue to symbolize the very best. As a result, buyers showed up in force to our first ever 'white glove' sale."

Three out of the five O'Brien cover lots more than doubled their average estimates. The top lot and top decoy of the sale was the Thomas Chambers wood duck drake which sold for \$270,000, more than doubling its estimate (\$80/120,000) and setting a record for the carver and also a national record for any Canadian decoy.

The next highest decoy lot was the pintail drake by John English, which brought \$246,000, shattering the old record for the maker and becoming the highest priced decoy ever to come out of the Delaware River region (\$80/120,000). The Canada goose by Charles E. "Shang" Wheeler shot to \$198,000, smashing the world record for this important carver as well as for the Connecticut region, and the Crowell plover sold for \$174,000. Great decoys with strong provenance and exceptional form led Copley's most successful sale in the company's eleven-year history.

All five cover lots of the Sporting Sale Sessions III and IV saw competitive bidding, with three landing within estimate and two climbing over their estimates. The preening goldeneye drake by A. Elmer Crowell surpassed its high estimate of \$80,000 and sold for \$90,000, and the Bunn/Bowman running golden plover rose above its high estimate of \$30,000 to \$48,000.

The O'Brien Collection got off to a strong start with the first lot, a high-head pintail drake by Illinois carver Charles Walker, rocketing past its high estimate of \$40,000 to a sale price of \$58,800. The auction room was packed as staff added more chairs throughout the first ten lots. The decoy and folk art collecting community showed up in force, and bidding action came from phones, floor bidding, and internet platforms.

The first nine lots all sold above estimate, a trend that would continue throughout the day. The first world record set, for the Chambers wood duck, saw protracted bidding between a full phone bank. There was plenty of competition for this pinnacle carving which carried over to the following lot, a goose by fellow Canadian, George Warin, selling for \$43,200, a record for the maker and well above its \$15/25,000 estimate.

An early swimming pintail drake by John R. Wells sold to a buyer in the room for \$25,200, over its \$12/18,000 estimate, as did a canvasback hen, also by Wells, which went for \$20,400 on an \$8/12,000 estimate.

Several lots later, estimable auctioneer Peter Coccoluto had the energetic room laughing as competition for the English pintail drake gathered steam, ultimately selling to a bidder in the room and garnering enthusiastic applause. A wigeon drake by John Blair, Sr. brought \$102,000, surpassing its \$50/70,000 estimate.

The turned-head "dust jacket" black-bellied plover by Crowell saw active bidding on the floor and phone banks until it eventually sold on the phone for \$174,000 (\$125/175,000). Interest in Crowell's works continued with several miniatures selling well and a semi-palmated plover landing at \$39,000, tripling its \$10/15,000 estimate when it sold to a buyer in the room.

Interest in shorebirds from the O'Brien Collection was strong, with a willet by John Dilley bringing \$66,000 on a \$25/35,000 estimate and a red knot by the same maker going for \$27,600, well above its \$12/18,000 estimate. Shorebird carvings with lower estimates consistently outperformed expectations as well, with an early yellowlegs by Joel Barkalow bringing \$9,000 on a \$3/5,000 estimate and a Long Island peep selling for \$3,300, above its \$1/2,000 estimate. Each sold to a bidder in the room. A rare tern by Obediah Verity soared to \$42,000, smashing its \$18/24,000 estimate.

The momentum continued with the Mackey-Wheeler goose landing above its \$80/120,000 estimate at a record \$198,000 to a phone bidder, followed by highly competitive bidding from the full phone bank that led to a preening black duck hen by Louis C. Rathmell selling for a record \$51,000, quadrupling its low estimate (\$12/18,000). Another black duck by the maker, this one a high-head drake, sold for \$45,000, significantly above its \$12/18,000 estimate.

Bidding for the Barber-O'Brien ruddy duck (\$80/120,000) was active, with an internet bidder battling phones and the floor to drive the sale price to \$234,000. The next lot, a redhead drake by the North Carolina carver Lee Dudley, shot to \$66,000, outstripping its \$20/40,000 estimate.

A whimsical root-head yellowlegs with a conservative \$1,500-\$2,500 estimate proved in high demand as it shot to \$20,400, soaring to five-figure status. A bufflehead drake by Charles E. Jester sold for a record \$27,600, almost tripling its high estimate (\$7/10,000), as an unsuccessful phone bidder competed against the floor buyer.

Carvings by the Ward Brothers, Lemuel and Stephen, of Crisfield, Maryland, maintained their perennial popularity with a buzzing phone bank as the McCleery-Ward canvasback hen shot to \$84,000, quadrupling its low estimate (\$20/30,000). The drake sold for \$72,000 on the same estimate, and a rare gunning green-winged teal drake brought \$28,800, above its \$18/24,000 estimate.

A ruddy turnstone by Massachusetts carver Lothrop Holmes rocketed to \$102,000 on a \$40/60,000 estimate after competition between several phone bidders. Significant action came

from the room when an early gunning black-bellied plover by A.E. Crowell sold for \$33,000 to the floor (\$30/35,000). A few lots later, another Holmes bird, a canvas-covered long-tailed duck, brought \$51,000, just clearing its \$30/50,000 high estimate.

Allen P. Stuart's goldeneye hen brought six times its high estimate, selling for \$30,000 (\$4/5,000), a record for the maker, and a goldeneye hen by Joseph Lincoln of Accord, Massachusetts, shot to \$36,000, tripling its high estimate (\$8/12,000). An exceedingly early root-head merganser by Roger Williams, the earliest named decoy maker, doubled its high estimate (\$3/6,000) and brought \$12,000, a record price for a Williams decoy.

Fish carvings sold well, with a northern pike decoy by Oscar Peterson leading the way at \$9,600 on a \$3/5,000 estimate.

Active bidding in the room and on the phones saw eight shorebirds by Harry V. Shourds swept by a single buyer. A curlew led the way at \$18,000 on a \$6/9,000 estimate, another smaller curlew brought \$16,800 on a \$5/7,000 estimate, and bidding picked up to a quick pace as a red knot sold for \$12,000, tripling its high estimate (\$3/4,000).

As the decoy portion of the sale wrapped up, interest and enthusiasm stayed strong. A pintail drake by John R. Wells outstripped expectations, selling for \$13,200 and more than doubling its low estimate (\$6/9,000), and a redhead drake from the Carriage House Rig shot to \$12,000, quadrupling its low estimate (\$3/5,000).

The 104 decoy lots of Session I of the O'Brien Collection all found buyers, with a vast majority exceeding their high estimates.

Roland Clark's *Break of Day - Pintails* started off the painting and works on paper with a bang when it brought \$33,000 on a \$20/30,000 estimate. The oil *Sunset - Black Ducks* by the same artist shot to \$20,400 on an \$8/12,000 estimate. Interest in Clark's works continued with a very small oil of canvasbacks soaring to \$2,760, more than doubling its high estimate (\$8/1,200).

A duck hunting watercolor, *Early Morning - East Harbor* by John Whorf, more than doubled its low estimate with a sale price of \$6,600 (\$3/5,000).

The first casting of an iconic duck hunting bronze by William J. Koelpin set a new world record for the artist when it sold for \$30,000, well above its \$8/12,000 estimate, outstripping Copley's previous record price for the artist.

Copley solidified its status as a leading seller of historic ornithological art when William Broderick's oil on board, titled *Three Hobbies on a Branch*, brought \$15,600, well over its estimate of \$4/6,000 and setting a world record for this British artist and hawking expert. Copley continued to produce excellent results for sought-after bird work when *Virginian Partridge*, a Havell edition after John James Audubon, rose to more than three times its high estimate of \$20,000 and sold for \$63,000.

The stately barn owl gouache by Edwin Penny, sold for \$6,000, five times more than its high estimate of \$1,200. A watercolor of sanderlings and piping plovers by Massachusetts painter Robert Verity Clem more than quadrupled its high estimate of \$1,500 and brought \$6,600. Arthur P. Singer brought twelve times the high estimate with his work *Tanagers and Euphonia*, selling for \$4,800 on a \$3/\$400 estimate. *Hummingbirds*, a watercolor and gouache by John P.

O'Neill, brought close to seven times its high estimate and sold for \$2,040 on a \$200-300 estimate, setting a world record for the artist.

Canadian bidders showed strong interest in a rare painting by conservationist Hans Albert Hochbaum, as *Suitors in Pursuit* set a world record, selling for \$5,700 on an estimate of \$4/\$600.

Aiden Lassell Ripley's work proved to be in high demand. *Grouse Under Pines* sold for \$51,000, above its estimate of \$20/\$30,000, and *Grouse on a Hard Pine* went to a buyer in the room for \$51,000, just over its high estimate of \$30/\$50,000. Arthur Burdett Frost's *Bay Snipe Shooting* soared above its high estimate of \$50,000 to \$75,000 as interest stayed strong all the way through the final painting of this session.

Day two and Sessions III and IV of the Sale hit the ground running with a collection of carvings by Mark S. McNair. The cormorant doubled its high estimate of \$1,800, bringing \$3,600. A hollow golden plover performed well, nearly doubling its high estimate of \$1,800 and selling for \$3,300. McNair's feeding yellowlegs saw active bidding both on the floor and on multiple phones and ultimately brought \$3,000, double its high estimate of \$1/\$1,500.

A series of lots by A. Elmer Crowell showed that this famed maker's carvings are still in demand with the majority falling within their estimates. Notably, the preening goldeneye drake rose to \$90,000, surpassing its high estimate of \$70/\$80,000. A golden plover by the East Harwich, MA, carver brought \$13,200 on its \$7/\$10,000 estimate.

A preening black duck by Samuel Smith Toothaker surpassed its high estimate (\$9/\$12,000) and sold for \$15,600. The ruddy turnstone by John McAnney met its high estimate and brought \$9,000. A golden plover pair carved by Joseph W. Lincoln of Accord, MA, soared above its high estimate of \$8,000 and sold for \$14,400.

Demand for decoys remained strong throughout the day, with a thirty-seven-lot stretch of carvings finding buyers. A running golden plover carved by Bunn/Bowman saw active bidding through the phones and desk and surpassed its high estimate of \$30,000 to sell for \$48,000. Bidding on the Carriage House Rig pintail drake battled out between floor and phone bidders. This rare carving ultimately sold for \$12,000, well above its high estimate of \$8,000. The Markham Rig bufflehead pair saw active bidding and rose above the high estimate of \$5,000 to a sale price of \$6,600.

Maker Jim Schmiedlin performed well through a run of nine lots. His turned-head pintail drake, which sold for \$5,700, above its estimate \$2/\$4,000, saw competitive bidding over the phone, internet, and at the desk. Schmiedlin's hooded merganser pair also performed well and sold over the high estimate of \$6,000, bringing \$7,800. An exceedingly rare miniature woodcock by George H. Boyd of Seabrook, NH, surpassed its high estimate of \$3,500 and rose to \$5,400.

John Tully's Atlantic salmon model brought \$8,400, above its high estimate. A double trout plaque by Lawrence C. Irvine saw competitive bidding and ultimately sold for \$4,800 to a buyer in the room. A decorative desk with carved fishing motifs by William F. Herrick surpassed its high estimate of \$2,000 and sold for \$3,600. An owl-handled cane almost tripled the high estimate of \$900 and sold for \$2,640.

Session IV of The Sporting Sale got off to a strong start with the deluxe edition Benson book nearly tripling its high estimate of \$500 and selling for \$1,440. The proceeds from the sale of this lot will support the Bill Andersen Memorial Fund at the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust.

Hunting dog paintings continued to find active buyers, as Gustav Muss-Arnolt's oil of setter and pointer performed well and sold for \$21,600, above its estimate of \$12/\$18,000. Percival Rosseau's oil of two setters landed between the estimate and brought \$25,200 on \$20/\$30,000. Lyne Bogue Hunt's *Honoring the Point* rose up to \$21,600 on a \$14/\$18,000 estimate.

*Supper in Camp*, an important work by Arthur Burdett Frost, led the final session when it more than doubled the average estimate of \$80,000 and brought an impressive \$168,000, the second-highest result for the artist and topped only by Copley's sale of *Quail - A Covey Rise* in 2015 for \$180,000.

Copley provided the convenience of online bidding through Bidsquare as well as the sporting art industry's first native app, Copley Live. The sale featured items from the Donal C. O'Brien, Jr. Collection of Important American Sporting Art and Decoys, the Collection of Harry and Judy Bextel, Barrie and Bernice Stavis, Rafe Lapham and Martha Andrea, Grant Nelson, and the Estate of Francis Gowen, among other notable collections.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC is preparing for its Winter Sale 2018 which returns to Charleston, South Carolina, in February, in conjunction with the Southeastern Wildlife Expo, with consignments accepted through November 15 or until full. For a free confidential auction estimate, call 617.536.0030 or email [info@copleyart.com](mailto:info@copleyart.com). A full list of official prices realized from Copley's Sporting Sale 2017 is available at [www.copleyart.com](http://www.copleyart.com). All record prices cite [AskArt.com](http://AskArt.com) and *Decoy Magazine* and include a 20% buyer's premium.

Images to include:

Thomas Chambers (1860-1948), Wood Duck Drake, c. 1900, Sold for \$270,000 **WR**

John English (1848-1915), The English Pintail Drake, c. 1880, Sold for \$246,000 **WR**

Lee Dudley (1860-1942), The Barber-O'Brien Ruddy Duck, c. 1895, Sold for \$234,000

Charles E. "Shang" Wheeler (1872-1949), The Mackey-Wheeler Goose, c. 1935, Sold for \$198,000 **WR**

A. Elmer Crowell (1862-1952), The Turned-Head "Dust-Jacket" Black-Bellied Plover, c. 1900, Sold for \$174,000

Arthur Burdett Frost (1851-1928), *Supper in Camp*, gouache and watercolor, 17 by 26 ½ in., Sold for \$168,000

John Blair, Sr. (1842-1928), Wigeon Drake, c. 1880, Sold for \$102,000

Lothrop T. Holmes (1824-1899), Ruddy Turnstone c. 1855, Sold for \$102,000

A. Elmer Crowell (1862-1952), *Preening Goldeneye Drake*, c. 1914, Sold for \$90,000

The Ward Brothers, *McCleery-Ward Canvasback Hen*, c. 1932, Sold for \$84,000

Ogden M. Pleissner, *Down's Gulch*, oil on canvas, 24 by 36 in., Sold for \$84,000

after John James Audubon (1785-1851), *Virginian Partridge*, 1830, hand-colored engraving, 25  
⅝ by 38 ¼ in., Sold for \$63,000

Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969), *Grouse on a Hard Pine*, oil on canvas, 27 by 40 in., Sold for  
\$51,000

Charles Sumner Bunn or William "Bill" Bowman (1865-1952 and 1824-1906), *Running Golden  
Plover*, c. 1890, Sold for \$48,000

Obediah Verity (1813-1901), *Rare Tern*, c. 1880, Sold for \$42,000

Allen P. Stuart, *Goldeneye Hen*, c. 1900, Sold for \$30,000 **WR**

William J. Koelpin (1938-1996), *Storm Warning*, 1990, bronze, Sold for \$30,000 **WR**

Gustav Muss-Arnolt (1858-1927), *Setter and Pointer*, 1898, oil on canvas, 13 by 18 in., Sold for  
\$21,600

Robert K. Abbett (1926-2015), *Late Day Woodcock*, 1978, oil on board, 23 by 32 in., Sold for  
\$20,400