

Contact: Leah Tharpe, 617.536.0030, leah@copleyart.com

For Immediate Release – August 2010

RUNGIUS PAINTINGS HIT HIGH NOTES, PLEISSNER RUSHES PAST OLD RECORD AT COPLEY'S 2010 SPORTING SALE

BOSTON, Mass. – Copley's fifth annual summer auction was a huge success, with the much-anticipated collection of five oil paintings by Carl Rungius (1869-1959) out of the collection of H. Wendell Endicott headlining the record-breaking sale. These museum-quality works saw active participation in the room and on the overflowing phone banks, which brought outstanding results. *Humpback Grizzly* led the charge, realizing an auction-high sale price of \$460,000 on an estimate of \$300,000-\$500,000. *Bull Moose* followed closely behind, nearing its high estimate with a sale price of \$373,750 (\$200,000-\$400,000). *Near Summit Lake, British Columbia*, a striking image of cliff-side mountain goats, sold for \$316,250 on an estimate of \$200,000-\$400,000. The two smaller canvases brought over their high estimates, with *Coming Up the Valley* hammering at \$86,250 and *Toward the Skyline – Mountain Sheep* bringing \$69,000, each on a \$40,000-\$60,000 estimate.

The striking oil painting by Ogden M. Pleissner (1905-1983) titled *The Rapids* was the breakout of the sale, rushing past the previous high water mark for the artist of \$220,000, set in 1996. *The Rapids* saw fierce competition between bidders on the phone and in the room, and finally sold to a gentleman collector in the room for \$345,000, leaving its \$60,000-\$90,000 estimate far behind. Copley solidified its market leadership with further strong results for works by Pleissner, with *Early Morning* bettering its 2001 result at Christie's. This 1950 calendar image previously sold for \$49,350, while competitive bidding brought it up to \$71,875 on a \$50,000-\$70,000 estimate at the Plymouth sale.

Etchings by Boston artist Frank W. Benson (1862-1951) continued to be in high demand, and the notable offering of each of the "Big Four" etchings achieved strong results. *The Gunner* led the way with what is believed to be an auction record for any etching by the artist, selling for \$21,850 on a \$10,000-\$15,000 estimate. *Old Tom* and *Marsh Gunner* each sold for \$11,500, within their \$10,000-\$15,000 estimates, and *Winter Wildfowling* exceeded expectations, fetching \$10,925 on a \$5,000-\$10,000 estimate. Benson's exceptional watercolors also proved to be popular, with the best image *Two Duck Hunters* selling over its \$60,000-\$90,000 estimate for \$92,000 to a collector in the room. The fishing scene *Poling Out* was a relative bargain, estimated at \$60,000-\$90,000 and selling just above the low mark for \$69,000.

This year's sale included a significant offering of works by notable British sporting artists, and international participation in the bidding helped eighteen of the nineteen original watercolors by Archibald Thorburn (1860-1935) to find homes, with most selling within their estimates. The striking bird of prey *Gyr Falcon* sold for \$7,475, over its estimate of \$4,000-\$7,000. Works by Sir Peter Markham Scott (1909-1989) also performed well, with *Curlew's Early* bringing \$9,200 on an \$8,000-\$10,000 estimate and *Pinkfeet* surpassing its estimate of \$4,000-\$6,000 with a sale price of \$8,625.

Other highlights included strong results from American dog painters Percival Rosseau (1859-1937) and Edmund H. Osthaus (1858-1928). A small painting of two English Setters by Rosseau brought \$15,525 on a \$10,000-\$15,000 estimate. Osthaus' oil of two setters with haystacks sold within its \$20,000-\$40,000 estimate for \$23,000, and the watercolor of two setters by the same artist brought \$18,400 on a \$10,000-\$20,000 estimate.

A fine selection of paintings by Massachusetts artist Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969) was led by *Grouse with Bearberries*, a colorful and iconic oil painting that settled at \$48,875, splitting its \$30,000-\$60,000 estimate. One of the biggest surprises of the day's sale was *Skating in the Woods*, a charming New England winter scene that glided past its \$10,000-\$15,000 estimate to \$43,125, establishing a new world record price for a non-sporting scene by the artist.

Other sporting art results indicated a robust market in search of the finest, freshest works. An original oil painting by Roland Clark (1874-1957) titled *Dawn*, which was made into a color aquatint print by the Derrydale Press in 1939, found huge success, selling for \$37,375 on a \$10,000-\$20,000 estimate. *Duck Heaven* by Frank B. Hoffman (1888-1958), the frontispiece for the book *Lure of the Open*, shot past its \$25,000-\$35,000 estimate and landed at \$40,250. *Autumn Along the Oxbow – Mallards*, a 1969 oil by Harry Curieux Adamson (b. 1916) that is illustrated in the artist's monograph, brought the second-highest price for the artist at auction when it sold for \$26,450 on a \$20,000-\$30,000 estimate. With this, Copley has achieved two of the top three results for the artist since 1996.

Texas artist John P. "Jack" Cowan (1920-2008) performed well, with a goose hunting watercolor titled *Smorgasbord* selling for \$17,250 on a \$10,000-\$20,000 estimate. Works by Francis Lee Jaques (1887-1969) continued in their appeal to collectors, and his *Snow Geese* oil shot past its high estimate of \$10,000, selling for \$14,950. Bidding on *Geese at Aitkin's Rice Lake* propelled the painting to \$17,250 on \$15,000-\$25,000 estimate. Four works by Arthur Burdett Frost (1851-1928) came across the block, and the stellar *Taking Toll of the Covey – Prairie Chicken* proved the most appealing, hitting above its high estimate of \$50,000 at \$63,250. An extensive group of etchings by A.L. Ripley, Roland Clark, and Percival Rosseau all received strong nods, with the top lots by each of the artists going for \$2,650, \$1,035, and \$2,300, respectively.

Day Two led off with the Theodore Cross Collection of decoys by noted maker A. Elmer Crowell (1862-1952), of East Harwich, Massachusetts. The first ten miniatures were hotly contested on the floor and on the phone, and ultimately each went within or above its high estimate. The highest fliers were the miniature Wilson plover, which sold for \$6,325, and the miniature willet, which brought \$4,600. Among the life-size birds from Cross collection, the top seller was the Hudsonian curlew, which went for \$57,500, and the remaining decoys all sold within their estimates. Other successful sales of decoys by the maker included a pair of red-breasted mergansers with exceptional feather paint which sold for \$40,250, and a very rare flying common tern which brought \$23,000.

Carvings by Mark McNair (b. 1950) continued to show considerable strength following last year's successful offering by Copley. The top lot in 2010 was a preening swan that brought \$12,650 and was similar, though carved slightly earlier, to the swan purchased by the Shelburne Museum in 2009 for \$16,100. Results for carvings by the Ward brothers of Crisfield, Maryland, were mixed, though a hen mallard produced a highlight when competitive bidding caused the 1936 classic cedar decoy to break through its \$8,000-\$12,000 estimate, finally landing at \$19,550.

Two of the best shorebirds out of Virginia that crossed the block performed well, with a reaching curlew by Capt. John Haff selling for \$34,500 and a curlew by Nathan Cobb, Jr., out of the Mackey Collection, bringing \$34,500, within its \$20,000-\$40,000 estimate. Despite a conservative estimate of \$35,000-\$55,000, a yellowlegs by Fred Nichols passed.

A large majority of decoys found new homes, including a folky flying pintail by Ira D. Hudson of Chincoteague, VA, which sold for \$28,750, just under its low estimate of \$30,000-\$40,000. A stunning hissing goose by the same maker also hit its \$20,000-\$40,000 estimate, ringing in at \$29,900. A one-piece Mason curlew led the way for factory decoys, selling within its \$16,000-\$22,000 estimate for \$18,400. A unique and folky merganser out of the Peter Brams Collection sold over its \$10,000-\$20,000 estimate for \$24,150, and a lucky buyer scored a relative bargain by bidding \$9,200 for a spectacular miniature puffin by George Boyd, of Seabrook, NH, which is perhaps the finest of the species known.

Two major fish carvings in the sale sold, with a leaping brook trout by A.E. Crowell going within its \$4,000-\$6,000 estimate for \$5,463, and a brook trout plaque by Alexander Pope Jr. (1849-1924) soaring over its \$2,000-\$4,000 estimate to \$8,913. One of the day's greatest surprises was a set of twelve Wedgwood sporting dog plates designed by Marguerite Kirmse. This set of china, holding a \$1,000-\$1,500 estimate, broke through the high estimate selling for an impressive \$7,475. Internet bidding played a significant role in the sale of many decoys, with dozens of bidders watching the action in the room from their computers.

Though a number of exceptional decoys did not find buyers during the bidding, surprising no-sales included a matched pair of golden plover by Melvin Gardner Lawrence (1880-1930), out of Revere, MA, c. 1900. Two offerings from the Blair family went unsold, with a black duck by John Blair Sr., c. 1880, and a bufflehead drake by John Blair Jr., c. 1910 falling short of their \$30,000-\$60,000 estimates. However, interest continued after the auction, leading to the sale of the rare Augustus Aaron Wilson raised-wing black duck for \$105,000, one of only two of its kind.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC is busy preparing for its 2011 Winter Sale, and welcomes consignment inquiries. Please call 617.536.0030 for information regarding the upcoming auction or private sales. A full list of prices realized from Copley's 2010 Sporting Sale is available at www.copleyart.com.

IMAGES TO INCLUDE:

Carl Clemens Moritz Rungius (1869-1959), *Humpback Grizzly*, oil on canvas, 30 by 40 inches (\$460,000)

Ogden M. Pleissner (1905-1983), *The Rapids*, 1938, oil on canvas, 30 by 40 inches (\$345,000)

Frank W. Benson (1862-1951), *Two Duck Hunters*, 1926, watercolor, 24.25 by 17.5 inches (\$92,000)

Preening Black Duck by Augustus Wilson (1864-1950), South Portland, ME, c. 1895 (\$105,000)

Hudsonian Curlew by A. Elmer Crowell (1862-1952), East Harwich, MA, c. 1927 (\$57,500)