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Auction Action In New York City



A top collector of Mason decoys, Hinesburg, Vt., dealer Loy Harrell had only good things to say about Copley's selection of the factory birds. Favorites included, left, the mallard drake salesman's sample of circa 1910, \$12,650, and the mallard, right, one of a pair from a rig commissioned by George K. Schmidt of Chicago. Of the latter, O'Brien said, "The conditional is phenomenal. It sat in a bank vault and was never used." The circa 1905 pair brought \$48,875. To Harrell's right is, top, "Two Loons," a 1990 oil on board by John Swan, \$920, and, bottom, "Hunter Retrieving Duck," an 1893 oil on canvas by Arthur Beckwith, \$1,725.

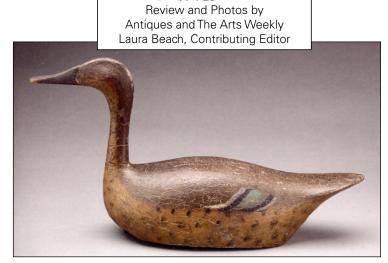


Copley Fine Arts Chairman Stephen O'Brien Jr with the sale's top lot, left, "In the Cedar Swamp," \$241,500, an oil on canvas by Carl Rungius. Right is Bob F. Kuhn's 1974 acrylic on board "A Two Brooks Idyll," \$17,350. From left, a circa 1920 Sandhill crane by Gus Wilson, South Portland, Maine, \$4,600; swimming bluebill drake by John Blair Jr, Philadelphia, circa 1920, with John Blair Sr's Belgian shotgun, \$13,800; eider drake by Amos G. Wallace, West Point, Maine, circa 1910, passed at \$6/8,000; and a carved eagle plaque by John Haley Bellamy, Kittery, Maine, circa 1890, sold within estimate at \$21,850.

Copley's Winter Sale Hits \$1.9 Million



Copley Fine Arts was disappointed that this complete set of 25 mint-condition miniature waterfowl carvings by A. Elmer Crowell, East Harwich, Mass., circa 1915 and housed in their original, custom-made wood and glass case, passed in the room at \$95,000 (\$100/150,000). "I don't think I adequately conveyed how important this set is. Sets that are put together piecemeal never have this kind of quality or consistency," said O'Brien.

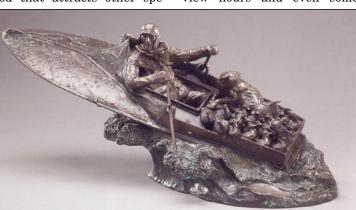


Only seven pintails — three drakes and four hens — from the Kankakee Marsh of Indiana have surfaced. The pintails' first appearance at Christie's in 2007, where this and another hen together made \$90,000, touched off something of a fever. "It was a completely new decoy form," explains O'Brien. At Sotheby's, a hen and a drake went for \$200,000. The present example is from Herman R. Trinosky's hunting rig and was probably made by Trinosky. Estimated at \$50/70,000, it sold to the phone for \$63,250.

Rungius Wildlife Painting Leads, But Decoys Find Solid Support

Stephen O'Brien Jr, chairman Copley Fine Art Auctions, started his career as a dealer

NEW YORK CITY — cialty dealers and collectors in staff, an arrangement benefithis field. Last year, in an effort and chief executive officer of to reach buyers in Manhattan for Americana Week, he introduced his January Sale at Walin decoys and sporting art of lace Hall on Park Avenue in historical interest. He hosts an the East 80s. Copley and Keno annual summer sale on Cape Auctions share the space, pre-Cod that attracts other spe- view hours and even some



"We almost doubled the record price for a bronze by William J. Koelpin," said O'Brien. Measuring 27 by 12 by 11½ inches, "Storm Warning" of 1880 sold for \$20,700, exceeding estimate. It is number one from an edition of 24.



"We are lucky to have with us here today a living legend," O'Brien said, introducing Mark S. McNair, a carver from Craddockville, Va. NcNair's swordfish weathervane, circa 2010, crossed the block at \$11,500. Son Colin McNair is a decoy specialist with Copley Fine Art Auctions. Rear left is Louis Agassiz Fuertes' 1924 oil on canvas "Wild Turkey." It was knocked down in the room to Erik Brockett of Arader Galleries in New York for \$86,250, doubling the high estimate.

ing all involved. Though Copley is still working out the exact formula, it is clear that cross-pollination benefited the January 16 Winter Sale. The auction of 465 lots of decoys, folk art and fine art exceeded last year's total of \$1.5 million, grossing just over \$1.9 million, and setting ten new auction records. It is worth noting that Copley's 15 percent buyer's premium on bids up to \$1 million is lower than any of his Americana Week competitors. All prices shown here include the premium. The company registered more than 532 bidders.

The January Sale was close to 90 percent sold by lot. That said, several major lots failed to sell, including two cover lots: Alexander Pope's canine portrait "Waiting for Master," estimated at \$100/200,000, and Charles Birch's large, circa 1920 carved and painted swan decoy, estimated at \$90/120,000. It appears that potential buyers were scared off by aggressive reserves.

The morning session started with 24 lots of contemporary bird carvings before moving quickly to decoys from the Mason Factory, in operation between 1896 and 1924. Masons are a known quantity with an avid following. In good condition, they fly. Copley opened with a mallard drake salesman's sample of circa 1910. Seven phones lit up before the premier grade, twothirds-size sample was hammered down for \$12,650.

The next lot was a circa 1905 premier grade snaky head mallard pair. From a rig commissioned by Chicago banker George K. Schmidt, whose brand marks their bottoms, the decoys for years were stored in a bank vault and are in pristine condition. They made \$48,875.

Mason shorebirds were also solid, with most selling within



This black-bellied plover was made by Obediah Verity of Seaford, N.Y., around 1880. Estimated at \$25/40,000, it fetched \$28,750. "We had it a few years ago and it sold for about the same price," said O'Brien.

estimate. Leading the flock tion and consistency. Among Midwestern wateren plover of around 1905. It fowl decoys, a pintail hen from the Kankakee Marsh in Indi-

It is never a surprise when carvings by Cape Cod master A. Elmer Crowell (1862–1952) set the pace, as they did on January 16. The top price for 2007, where this and another life-size carvings was \$69,000, hen together made \$90,000. the amount paid for a black-The carving is attributed to bellied plover of circa 1910 and Herman R. Trinosky. Experts for a Hudsonian curlew of Linda and Gene Kangas write about 1930. A top price for a about the Kankakee Marsh miniature was \$3,105 for a carvings in their book, Great stilt of about 1929. Lakes Decoys.

"We sold all the life-size mantel birds, and most within estimate," said O'Brien. He was disappointed that one of his key lots, a complete, circa 1915 set of 25 mint-condition miniatures in their original, custom cabinet passed at \$95,000 (\$100/150.000).

was a salesman's sample gold-

left the room at \$18,400.

"We sold the set three years ago for \$92,000," said O'Brien, noting that no assembled set

exceeded their \$20/40,000 estimate. A Ward brothers swimming Canada goose, \$27,600

> \$1,955 (\$3/4,000), were good Reels and duck calls had

ana achieved \$63,250. It is one Copley closed the day with of only seven drakes and hens 225 lots of sporting paintings, of this type known. The group prints, sculpture and reference first surfaced at Christie's in

\$18,400.

Compton, R.I., fetched \$46,000.

books. Leading the afternoon session was "In the Cedar Swamp" by Carl Clemens Moritz Rungius (1869–1959), a painter of Western wildlife. Phone bidders pushed the oil on canvas toward the high end of its \$150/250,000 estimate, topping out at \$241,500. Other top decoy lots included The brilliant oil on canvas the Dexter and Gardner willet,

Charles Perdew fetching

of the same rig as the famous Gardner and

"Wild Turkey," painted in 1924 by naturalist and Harvard \$46,000, and two record-setting flying ducks by Chauncey professor Louis Agassiz Wheeler, \$48,875, which Fuertes (1874–1927), doubled high estimate, selling to Erik Brockett of Arader Galleries in New York for \$86,250, a record (\$30/50,000), and a black duck, for the artist at auction.

Also highlighting the paintings category was Richard Goodwin's oil on canvas strong showings, with a pair of trompe l'oeil "Hanging Game,"



Dexter dowagers in the McCleery sale at Sotheby's in 1990. Unfortunately it didn't photograph well," said O'Brien. The circa 1885 hollow turned-head willet from Little This matched set of fancy duck and crow calls dates to circa 1940 and is one of only circa 1940 carved and painted four known sets by Charles calls by Illinois carver P. Perdew of Henry, Ill. In

selling for \$18,400.

\$37,375, and George Browne's oil on canvas "Yellow Birch and New Snow," \$19,550. Ogden ner (1905–1983) watercolors ranged in price from \$6,900 for the fishing scene "Poling up The River" to \$48,875 for the hunting composition "Driven Grouse.

original condition, the pair

neared its high estimate,

"The market for John Whorf has been unsettled, so we were pleased with the \$8,625 we got for the watercolor 'Early Morning East Harbor," O'Brien

Bronzes were another area of success. The house nearly doubled the record price at auction for a bronze by William J. Koelpin, whose "Storm Warning" of 1880 sold for \$20,700 against an estimate



James W. Marshall, a carpenter and prospector, carved this hat stand in 1848 from redwood grown in Yosemite Valley. Anna Glud a part-time prospector, acquired the carving and donated it to the Oakland Chapter of Women and Girl Workers in the Civil War. Estimated at \$8/10,000, this interesting piece of Californiana achieved \$27,600.

Copley Fine Arts Auctions has scheduled its 2012 Sporting Sale for July 12 and 13 in Plymouth, Mass. The auction will include a collection of seven Rungius paintings from a private collection of wildlife art, dog portraitist Percival Leonard Rosseau's painting of two English setters and the casting of Charles Shreyvo gel's bronze "The Last Drop." For information, 617-536

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