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M G A Z I N E

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Edward Moran 1886

Natural Selections

Copley Fine Art Auctions brings more than 500 lots to its 10th annual Sporting Sale

July 25

**Copley Fine Art Auctions’
Sporting Sale**

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Stephen O’Brien Jr. has a special connection to painter Aiden Lassell Ripley—the Copley Fine Art Auctions owner authored the 2009 230-page book *The Art of Aiden Lassell Ripley*, documenting the sporting artist’s early life and work, including illustrations and murals. Ripley’s (1896–1969) watercolor *Woodcock Shooting* is expected to bring in between \$30,000 to \$50,000 at Copley Fine Art Auctions’ 10th annual *Sporting Sale* July 25 in Plymouth, Massachusetts,

which features more than 500 sporting art lots up for sale.

The auction includes both decoys and works on paper and canvas, with more than 300 decoy lots cataloged. Highlights include more than 25 shorebird decoys from a private collection, whose owner collected the carvings over 40 years. The works on paper and canvas selection features many works that have been illustrated in books, magazines and catalogs. Led by a major offering of more than 25 etchings and paintings from a Southern private collection, offerings include *English Snipe Shooting*, a watercolor by A.B. Frost (1851–1928), from his *Shooting Pictures* folio, estimated at \$40,000 to \$60,000; *Fading Light*, a watercolor by Ogden M. Pleissner (1905–1983), featuring bold figures and estimated at \$30,000 to \$40,000; and *Marsh Gunner*, a 1918 etching from an edition of 150 by Frank W. Benson (1862–1951), expected to fetch between

\$4,000 and \$6,000. Additionally, five rare pieces painted by Harry Brown Baker (1868–1946), an illustrator who lived in and traveled around the American West in the late 1890s and beyond, will be offered.

“This auction has a really good cross section of decoys, decorative carvings, etchings, original oils and watercolors by some of the top sporting artists of the golden era of illustration,” says O’Brien. “Many of these pieces are coming out of estates and have not been available for decades.”

The decoy selection includes those from a variety of regions, from New England and New York to the South to the Mississippi Flyway to the Pacific Flyway. Charles Perdew (1874–1963), known for his preening decoys, is represented by his circa 1935 *Preening Mallard Hen*, which O’Brien says is one of the finest examples to ever come to market because of its excellent condition, with a provenance that includes ownership by Lewis Barkhausen, co-founder and former president of conservation nonprofit Ducks Unlimited. O’Brien says the piece, estimated at \$80,000 to \$120,000, has everything collectors look for in decoys, including beautifully applied paint. Another Perdew piece, *Mallard Drake*, circa 1900, shows the influence of one of Perdew’s mentors, decoy carver Henry Ruggles (1830–1897), and is estimated at between \$25,000 and \$35,000.

Historically prominent decoy-maker A. Elmer Crowell (1862–1952) is represented with his circa 1920 *Black-Bellied Plover*, estimated at between \$30,000 and \$50,000, while Augustus A. Wilson’s (1864–1950) *Preening Eider Hen*, circa 1900, is the rig mate to a



Ogden M. Pleissner (1905–1983), *Fading Light*. Watercolor, 15 x 21 in. Estimate: \$30/40,000



Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969), *Woodcock Shooting*. Watercolor, 19 x 29¼ in. **Estimate: \$30/50,000**



Frank W. Benson (1862-1951), *Marsh Gunner*, 1918. Etching, ed. of 150, 10⅞ x 8⅞ in. **Estimate: \$4/6,000**



A.B. Frost (1851-1928), *English Snipe Shooting*, 1895. Watercolor and gouache, 14 x 21½ in. **Estimate: \$40/60,000**

drake sold in Copley’s 2013 *Winter Sale* that achieved \$170,000—this piece is estimated between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

Copley Fine Arts Auction decoy specialist Colin McNair, a decoy carver who will have his pieces on display during the preview Friday, July 24, says this sale has one of the most diverse offerings of decoys to date.

“As decoy specialists, we are passionate about history, and we delve

into the nature of the birds and the incredible stories of the men who made and used them,” says McNair. “Great decoys are painted sculptures that hold their own well outside the context of birds and hunting, and I’m excited about continued discovery of this art form. As one of the very few true original American art forms, I think decoys share a lot of commonalities with the art of the early West. Both draw an intimate

link to the past and present us with a window into a time and place that is thoroughly American, familiar but largely lost.”

The auction includes an evening preview with drinks and hors d’oeuvres Friday, July 24, between 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. The McNair sale and exhibition is from 3 to 7 p.m. and includes a live carving demonstration by Colin’s father, Mark, at 4 p.m. ■