

## Auction Action In Charleston, S.C.

## Crowell &amp; Pleissner Top Copley's \$1.8 Million Winter Sale

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Copley Fine Art Auctions realized more than \$1.8 million in sales at the firm's winter sale, conducted at the American Theater on February 16 during the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, a weeklong gathering of decoy and sporting art enthusiasts. The sale, containing 345 lots, was an impressive 97 percent sold, extending Copley's stellar track record in the industry.

All eight cover lots sold. Thirty-nine items sold for five-figure prices, evenly dispersed between decoys and paintings. There was robust and active bidding from all platforms and across all categories, including paintings, prints, folk art and antique and contemporary decoys. The historic American Theater on King Street was filled with a buzzing energy throughout the sale as more than 500 bidders participated in person, over the phone and through the internet. New buyers in town for the exposition lined up to compete against

established collectors, dealers and institutions.

Copley's owner and principal Stephen B. O'Brien Jr. said, "Our commitment to realistic and conservative estimates continues to pay dividends in terms of our consignors' successes. Many offerings from the Winter Sale were fresh to the market and came from private single-owner collections or estates and were sold without reserve. We distinguish ourselves in the industry by providing thorough condition reports and accurate post-auction reporting. This gives our clients a great deal of confidence when making important selling and buying decisions."

The top lot of the sale was the A. Elmer Crowell turned-head "Dust Jacket" plover. Paddles on the floor competed with five phone lines on the lot, which made for lively bidding. The plover soared past the \$75/\$95,000 estimate, landing at \$156,000. The next highest decoy lot was a standing black duck by Ira D. Hudson, which

brought \$96,000, a world record for a decorative carving by the maker. The Canada goose by Charles A. Safford proved one of the better buys of the auction, coming in at \$48,000, below its \$60,000 low estimate.

Copley once again shattered world records for multiple artists, and proved that works with hunting dogs in action remain favorites. An oil on canvas of setters on point by Gustav Muss-Arnolt set a world record for the artist, soaring well above its high estimate of \$24,000 to land at \$33,600. Muss-Arnolt specialized in the depiction of field trial dogs. He worked as a judge in dog shows, served on the board of the American Kennel Club from 1906 to 1909 and demonstrated an incredible knowledge of a variety of sporting breeds in his paintings. A second Muss-Arnolt oil of dogs in action brought \$28,800, outstripping its high estimate of \$18,000.

Momentum continued when works by Harry Curieux Adamson, California's most important waterfowl painter, crossed the block. Both paintings by Adamson brought well above their high estimates, as the pintails sold to a phone bidder for \$21,600 on a \$10/\$14,000 estimate, and "Sanctuary — Wood Ducks" soared to \$20,400. "Autumn Grouse Shooting," a watercolor on paper by Ogden M. Pleissner, sold for \$42,000.

The sporting audience was wild for turkeys, with contemporary artist C. Ford Riley's oil on canvas of gobblers establishing a world record after active bidding on the floor. It eventu-



The sale's top lot was this turned-head "Dust Jacket" plover by A. Elmer Crowell (1862–1952), 10½ inches long, which finished at \$156,000.

ally sold for \$22,800, more than doubling its low estimate of \$10/\$15,000.

Copley continued its charitable and conservation-oriented efforts, with an acrylic bonefishing painting by Chet Reneson selling for \$7,800 to benefit the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust (BTT). Reneson was named BTT's Artist of the Year for 2018, and 50 percent of the proceeds of the sale will go directly to BTT to support research on bonefish, tarpon and permit, along with their sensitive ecosystems. A bronze by sculptor Walter T. Matia was designated to benefit the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to conserving birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. "Tides that Bind" brought \$4,800, and 100 percent of the proceeds will go to ABC.

The Canada Goose by Captain Charles C. Osgood achieved a world record for a goose by the maker, selling to a phone bidder for \$72,000. Osgood was a ship's captain

from Salem who sailed for California in 1849. While waiting to return with his cargo, he carved a rig that included this decoy as well as five other examples that reside in the collection of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont.

A running yellowlegs by famed Massachusetts carver A. Elmer Crowell, which is slated for inclusion in the upcoming book *Elmer Crowell: The Father of American Bird Carving*, shot above its high estimate of \$45,000 and brought \$72,000.

Interest and bidding for items from the Nelson collection remained strong. The Grant Nelson collection of shorebird decoys, one of the finest ever assembled, was built over two decades. The collector was highly focused on acquiring exemplary pieces with great form, surface and provenance. Decoys from this session were marked with the notable collector's ink stamp. The market responded well to his eye, as evidenced by the above-mentioned results for the turned-head "Dust Jacket" plover by Crowell and a Crowell turned-head "Dust Jacket" yellowlegs that brought \$57,000. This example, with its cranked and lifted head attitude, showcases the maker's unique ability to capture the semblance of movement in gunning decoys perhaps better than any other maker.

Interest in works by Massachusetts carver Lothrop Turner Holmes was strong, with rare early examples of a black-bellied plover and a yellowlegs both soaring over their high estimates to \$57,000 and \$14,400 on \$25/\$35,000 and \$5/\$8,000 estimates, respectively.

An iconic running curlew by Captain Robert Andrews landed at \$45,000. Andrews decoys are perhaps the rarest of the region's top makers, and this distinctly Smith Island curlew stands as the most iconic remaining decoy from the isle and perhaps the best of its kind to come to light.

The sale featured selections from the collections of Richard and Lynn Gove, Davison B. Hawthorne, Ernest and Carolyn Kramer, Blair Ledingham, Grant Nelson, John T. Orde-man, a descendent of Barrie and Bernice Stavis and Ronald S. Swanson.

Prices reported include the buyer's premium. Copley is preparing for its Sporting Sale 2018, which returns to Plymouth, Mass., on July 18–20. For information, 617-536-0030 or [www.copleyart.com](http://www.copleyart.com).



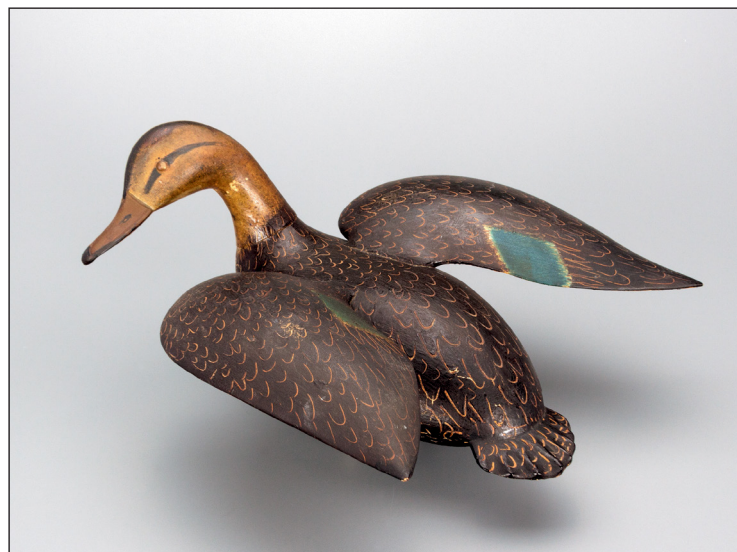
This Canada Goose by Charles A. Safford (1877–1957), 27 by 15 by 10½ inches, realized \$48,000.



Ogden M. Pleissner (1905–1983), "Autumn Grouse Shooting," watercolor on paper, 17½ by 27½ inches, sold for \$42,000



A Canada Goose by Captain Charles C. Osgood (1820–1866), 24½ inches long, was bid to \$72,000



Fetching \$96,000 was a standing black duck by Ira D. Hudson (1873–1949), 15 inches long.



Outstanding Running Yellowlegs, A. Elmer Crowell (1862–1952), 13¼ inches long, sold for \$72,000.