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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Crowell and Frost Top Copley's Record-Setting \$3 Million Sporting Sale 2019

HINGHAM, MA - Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC (copleyart.com), the nation's premier decoy and sporting art auction house, realized over \$3 million in sales at the Sporting Sale 2019, held at Hotel 1620 on Thursday, July 25, in Plymouth, MA. The auction, consisting of 547 lots, was a solid 88% sold, extending Copley's stellar track record in the industry.

The auction saw robust bidding across numerous fields, including paintings, prints, decoys, folk art, canes, and vintage fishing equipment. Eight out of nine cover lots sold. Four lots reached six figures, and forty-four items sold for five-figure prices. Over 500 bidders participated online via Bidsquare and Copley Live, the sporting art industry's first app. Hundreds of additional bidders participated in person, by telephone, and by placing absentee bids. The auction saw new buyers lined up to compete against established collectors, dealers, and institutions.

Copley's owner and principal Stephen B. O'Brien Jr. reports, "We were quite pleased with the auction. What impressed me the most, aside from the strong results for the Crowell lots, was the participation by new bidders on decoys and paintings under \$5,000. When I looked at the buyers' list after the auction, I did not recognize half of the participants. This really bodes well for the future; with high-quality sporting art still affordable to those just entering the field, I am quite optimistic."

The top painting lot, Arthur Burdett Frost's *Fall Woodcock Shooting*, saw active bidding, ultimately selling for \$78,000 on a \$70/90,000 estimate. *Grouse Shooting*, by the same artist, brought \$34,800 on a \$25/35,000 estimate, and *Returning Home* sold for \$14,400, well over its \$6/9,000 estimate. This group of Frost paintings came out of the collection of Henry M. Reed, who in 1967 first published *The A. B. Frost Book*, the definitive publication on the artist. Reed owned dozens of Frost's works, which descended in the family. *Fall Woodcock Shooting* was on offer for the first time since the famed sale of the John T. Dorrance Jr. Collection in 1989.

Back-to-back lots by Edmund H. Osthaus held strong; *Covey of Quail* and *On Point, Up Hill* sold for \$48,000 and \$28,800, respectively. *Covey of Quail*, a rare painting by the artist depicting a group of birds in their preferred habitat, proved popular and exceeded its \$25/35,000 estimate. Harry Curieux Adamson's *Afternoon in Butte Sink, Spring* outperformed expectations, soaring to \$39,000.

"High-quality, fresh-to-market works with exceptional ownership history or rarity in terms of the artist's body of work proved desirable," said Leah Tharpe, Fine Art Specialist.

Oil paintings by Lynn Bogue Hunt sold well, as *Muskie Fishing* landed at \$11,400 on a \$8/12,000 estimate and *Flushed*, a vibrant painting of quail, a pointer, and a hunter, sold for

\$12,000, outstripping its \$8/10,000 estimate. An ink wash by dean of sporting art Frank W. Benson landed at \$10,200, going beyond its \$5/8,000 estimate. For contemporary sporting and wildlife works, bronze sculptures by Walter T. Matia all found buyers, with his curlew pair more than quadrupling its high estimate of \$1,500 to reach \$6,600. Chet Reneson's fishing acrylic *Casting at Shadows* sold for \$9,000, above its \$5/7,000 estimate.

The decoy and folk art session began with a selection of decoys from the Estate of Dr. Morton D. Kramer. The Earnest-Purnell Humpback Pintail Drake by the Ward Brothers of Crisfield, MD, made its \$70/100,000 estimate, bringing \$72,000. Other highlights from the Kramer Collection included two James Holly puddle ducks, a mallard and black duck, that each achieved multiples of their estimates at \$21,600 and \$12,600, respectively.

The top three decoy lots of the auction were the Harmon "Dust Jacket" Plover Trio by A. Elmer Crowell of East Harwich, MA, which brought a combined \$1.14 million. The turned-head plover achieved the high end of its \$250/450,000 estimate, bringing \$396,000. The feeding model reached \$420,000 on a \$300/500,000 estimate. The final plover of the trio soared past its \$180/240,000 estimate landing at \$324,000. This trio was showcased in a dedicated fifty-page catalog, and was offered in association with Ted and Judy Harmon's Decoys Unlimited, Inc. These results further demonstrated that Crowell "dust jacket" plover, and his feeding model in particular, are among the most sought-after in the decoy-collecting world. Attesting to their popularity, eleven of the top 100 decoys ever sold at auction have been Crowell "dust jacket" style plover, with the maker landing thirty of the top 100 spots. Put into context, the closest makers on the list are Nathan Cobb Jr. (1825-1905) and Augustus "Gus" Wilson (1864-1950), each with five of the top 100 birds sold.

Another carving by Crowell, the Long Open-Bill Calling Decorative Yellowlegs made its auction debut to great fanfare. Originally commissioned by legendary Crowell patron Harry Vinton Long (1857-1949), this shorebird saw plenty of action, more than doubling its high estimate of \$70,000 and achieving \$174,000.

A day ahead of the auction, Copley's parent company, Stephen B. O'Brien Jr. Fine Arts, LLC, released its latest book publication, *Elmer Crowell: Father of American Bird Carving*, at the auction preview.

A Safford Swimming Goose reached \$60,000, just making its estimate of \$60/90,000. The Combs Flying Pintail Decoy coasted in short of its estimate, but still set a world record for the maker at \$37,200. Ward Brothers protégé Oliver "Tuts" Lawson was well represented in the Kramer Collection. A flying black duck by the Crisfield native flew past its \$4/6,000 estimate on its way to \$11,400.

A major offering of over thirty Mark S. McNair carvings, many from the Kramer Collection, saw a 100% sell-through rate, with a mussel-eating eider leading the group at \$4,500 on a \$2,5/3,500

estimate. All three Jim Schmiedlin lots beat their estimates, the highest of which was a rare wigeon pair at \$7,200 on a \$4/6,000 estimate.

Copley's Decoy Specialist Colin S. McNair remarked, "I was pleased to see the recognition of great quality demonstrated in the strength at the top. Four fresh-to-market Crowell lots in a row totaled \$1.4 million and we went ten for ten on our top decoy lots." McNair attributes much of Copley's decoy sales success to the company's research process which includes "literally hundreds of X-rays each auction, and hours of UV lighting."

Copley's well-known recipe for achieving record results: single-owner collections, conservative estimates, and fresh-to-market quality, drove the auction's total to the highest level realized for any decoy and sporting art auction this year. The auction's 479 sold lots averaged over \$6,300 each, continuing Copley's high marks with this metric for over a decade. The Sporting Sale 2019 saw four additions to *Decoy Magazine's* "100 All-Time High Prices" list, bringing the firm's total to thirty-one. During the last decade, Copley's emphasis on quality has helped place more birds on this list than the rest of the field combined.

Copley provided the convenience of online bidding through Bidsquare, as well as the sporting art industry's first app, Copley Live. A full list of official prices realized from Copley's Sporting Sale 2019 is available at www.copleyart.com. All prices include a 20% buyer's premium (23% for online bidding), and all record prices cite AskArt.com and *Decoy Magazine*.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC, is busy preparing for the Winter Sale 2020 which returns to Charleston, South Carolina, February 14th and 15th. The auction will once again be held in conjunction with the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition which regularly sees over 40,000 participants every year. Last year Copley saw their strongest Winter Sale to date with over \$2.4 million in total sales. The sale is rapidly filling, with consignments being accepted through November 15 or until full. For a free confidential auction estimate, call 617.536.0030 or email info@copleyart.com.

For high-resolution images, please contact 617.536.0030 or info@copleyart.com.