

HEADSPACE

HEADSPACE IS A MINIATURE INTERVIEW COLUMN THAT PROBES THE MINDS OF AUCTIONEERS, DEALERS, COLLECTORS AND CURATORS ON A WEEKLY BASIS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK.

Stephen B. O'Brien Jr

Owner, Copley Fine Art Auctions

What are you up to lately?

When the pandemic first broke, I was just finishing work on a foreword for an upcoming decoy book and was in the middle of our consignment period for Copley's upcoming July 23 Sporting Sale. I came down with something nasty, and, initially, was convinced that it was COVID-19. I sequestered myself from my family to the loft above our garage. After finishing emails and speaking with clients, each evening I would turn my attention to my fly-tying vice. I am an avid fly fisherman. In 2019 I was in the throes of trying to finish the book on the decoy carver Elmer Crowell, so my fly box coffers were pretty bare. One month of COVID-19 and my fly boxes were so full I couldn't get another hook in.



How has work changed for you?

The first major change was just the uncertainty of our market in general. We were just coming off our best Winter Sale ever, which grossed close to \$3.5 million. Clients started calling to ask me about selling and I replied, "No one knows, prices could be off 50 percent." Between my own uncertainty about how the broader markets would react and not being able to get out on the road, it was tough. Our bread and butter is handling estates and going out on the road for house calls — that essentially was shut down completely for two months. Fortunately, my fears about a possible market correction downward have thus far been proven wrong.

In what areas are you finding success?

I've been surprised by the resiliency of the sporting art and decoy markets thus far. I am almost embarrassed to admit that the first two quarters of 2020 have been our best since 2007. Our private sales have been shockingly strong, to the point that our inventory is starting to look like my pre-quarantine fly boxes. When this thing first hit, I think most people felt like the sky was falling. What I failed to realize was that, with everyone having all this time at home, people would become even more engaged and connected with their collections.

How do you think it will affect the industry in the long term?

I am the wrong person to ask. Markets go up and markets go down, but for me, it is all about the object. It is about that one piece you have to own. I often half-jokingly tell my clients that there is no broader art market; there is only a market for that one piece. As long as humans have an admiration for wildlife, the field will be healthy.

Have any advice right now?

Seek out counsel from trusted collectors and dealers, then only buy what you love.

Boxlots



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Worcester Art Museum Plans October Reopening

WORCESTER, MASS. — The Worcester Art Museum (WAM), which has been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 13, has announced that it will reopen to the public in early October 2020. This decision, made in consultation with the museum's Board of Trustees, allows time to make facility improvements prior to reopening and plan the robust exhibitions that will open in the fall.

"Delaying our reopening until the fall is the most prudent course for the Worcester Art Museum," said Matthias Waschek, the museum's Jean and Myles McDonough director. "It gives us an opportunity to address some internal facility needs and prepare for fall exhibitions and programs."

The October reopening date coincides with the opening of two important exhibitions

organized by WAM and that had been scheduled to run this spring: "The Kimono in Print: 300 Years of Japanese Design" (opening October 3) and "Kimono Couture: The Beauty of Chiso" (on view beginning November 7). The fall reopening date will allow time to make improvements to gallery and public spaces, as well as continue construction of the new Lancaster entrance stairs — begun in November 2019 and paused in March at the start of the COVID-19 shutdown — without interfering with the visitor experience.

When the museum reopens, it will look for guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and follow health and safety guidelines mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The museum is developing reopening protocols for the safety of visitors and staff,

including enhanced and increased cleaning schedules, hand sanitizing stations throughout the building and required masks and social distancing.

The museum also announced that it is adjusting its programming schedule for the fall, based on survey data. It has transitioned its popular studio art classes to online instruction for the summer and fall. In addition, museum staff is working to convert regularly scheduled fall public programming — such as Master Series Art Talks and the Community Day — to virtual experiences. Links to WAM's digital programs, such as virtual tours, art activities for children, and artists talks, can be found at www.worcesterart.org.

The Worcester Art Museum is at 55 Salisbury Street. For information, 508-799-4406.

ART @ HOME

Blast Of Art! Online Summer Camp

DEMAREST, N.J. & ONLINE — The Art School at Old Church (TASOC) has begun registration for Blast of Art!, its popular annual summer day camp for children ages 6 through 12. This year's Blast of Art! programing will be held online, but with the same great classes and the same greater teachers. Week 1 will run Monday, August 3 through Friday, August 7, and Week 2 will run Monday, August 10 through Friday, August 14.

All class sections are broken into three age groups, and there are four class offerings each week. Individual class lengths have been reduced to limit overall screen time but maximize creativity! Enrollment is available on a per-class basis, so all students can take between

one and four classes per day for each week. Class offerings are as follows:

Week 1:

Drawing & Cartooning: Comic Con
Dynamite Sculpture
Fun with Mini Clay
Needle Felting Creations

Week 2:

Art in Motion (optical illusion drawings, three-dimensional wire sculptures, and paper quilling techniques.)

Curious Creations (clay)
Drawing and Painting
Painting with Paper and Collage Fun!

Full information and registration links can be found at <https://www.tasoc.org/blast-of-art>.

Art & Home highlights interactive ways children can continue to engage with art, virtually or in person.