

AUGUST 5, 2020
COPLEY'S AUCTION REPORT

Copley's 2020 Sales Soar Over \$6 Million After Adding Nearly \$1 Million in their First Live-Streamed Auction

HINGHAM, MA - Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC (copleyart.com), the nation's premier decoy and sporting art auction house, followed up their February \$3.4 million Winter Sale with private sales totaling over \$1.7 million, a \$270,000 hybrid single-lot private auction, and their recent \$957,000 live-streamed sale. Owner and principal Stephen B. O'Brien Jr. reports, "We created Copley Live five years ago as the decoy industry's only app. To see exponential growth in the number of bidders using it is highly rewarding. With the industry moving in this direction, we are able to seamlessly continue handling top collections and estates in the customized fashion that our clients have come to expect."

The company's first live-streamed auction achieved several world record prices and offered online, absentee, and telephone bidding. More than 740 bidders participated on all available platforms and across all categories, including antique and contemporary decoys, Wildlife and Sporting art, and Americana. Notably, more than 150 new bidders registered to take part in the scaled-down one-day sale. The two online platforms, Copley Live and Bidsquare, saw a steady stream of active bidding throughout the sale. The auction, consisting of 296 lots, was 94% sold by lot, extending Copley's unrivaled track record within the industry. O'Brien states, "We were quite pleased with the results. When COVID-19 hit, we took a more conservative approach towards our summer auction and pivoted some of our top decoy consignments to private sales."

The July 23rd auction started with a flurry of bidding when an oil and acrylic painting of an antlered deer head by David Allen (b. 1960) leapt to \$4,200, setting a new world record for the artist. Just a few lots later, Thomas Aquinas Daly's *Electric Mountain* blew past its \$8/12,000 estimate, stretching out to \$16,800 and beating the previous world record for the artist, also set by Copley.

The top painting lot of the sale was a quail hunting watercolor by Ogden M. Pleissner (1905–1983) which landed at \$37,200. Other fine art highlights included two watercolors by Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896–1969), *A Pair of Pheasants* and *Pheasants Near the Old Farm*, which brought \$16,800 and \$14,400, respectively. *The Runaway*, an acrylic painting depicting bonefishing by Chet Reneson (b. 1934), sent bids running well past its \$5/7,000 estimate to finish at \$10,800.

Copley's Fine Art Specialist Leah Tharpe comments, "I was heartened to see many new collectors participating from across the country, driving the fine art to 95% sold by lot. Some

buyers set records and some picked up bargains. Works from the Estate of Alfred F. King III, late owner of The Sportsman's Edge in New York, were 100% sold by lot."

Leading the works on paper was a lot of three deluxe Derrydale Edition books by Roland Clark (1874–1957) which sold for \$10,200, within the \$8/12,000 estimate.

The top lot of the sale was the O'Brien-Nelson Hollow Nantucket Curlew, carved in the late-19th century by Charles F. Coffin (1835–1919), which set a new world record, landing at \$108,000. The price realized by this iconic shorebird represents an all-time high for any Nantucket decoy at auction, besting the Webster Raised-Wing Golden Plover, which sold for \$102,000 in Copley's Winter Sale 2020. "Nantucket shorebirds are just starting to get their due and gain some traction in the market," notes Copley's principal. "Our last two sales have produced back-to-back world records. The island's hollow shorebird decoys are representative of some of the most refined decoys ever created in North America."

Works by A. Elmer Crowell (1862–1952) continued to be in high demand, with an Open-Bill Calling Yellowlegs hitting its high estimate of \$90,000, double the price it achieved when it last sold out of the Rowland Estate at auction in 2013. The Crowell P. W. Whittemore Rig Willet went past its high estimate of \$35,000, landing at \$38,400, and a rare Alighting Tern reached \$16,800, within its \$15/20,000 estimate.

"This auction was in step with our strong private sale season this spring," reports Copley Decoy Specialist Colin S. McNair. "Historically, decoy collectors are known for their get-togethers. With all the spring decoy shows canceled, what would that mean for our first remote public auction? Looking at the numbers, it is great to see that we are moving on comfortably into the 21st century, aided by the obvious tech advances as well as digital X-rays. Bidding on Copley Live more than doubled from the previous auction. A review of the top 20 lots revealed that 15 sold to clients who have never attended a Copley auction.

"We did not head into the auction blindly. After seeing six phone bidders drive a price record for the Illinois River region in our one-lot private auction back in May, prospects looked good." In that auction, Copley sold a Charles Schoenheider Sr. merganser pair for \$270,000, adding to their growing list of regional records, which includes decoy lots from Massachusetts, Canada, both the Upper and Lower Chesapeake, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and the Delaware River.

A sleeping black-bellied plover carving by Melvin Gardner Lawrence (1880–1930), which graced the front dust-jacket cover of the Museum of American Bird Art's *Massachusetts Masterpieces* book, landed at \$42,000 on a \$30/50,000 estimate, a new world record for the maker. Mason Decoy Factory works performed well, with a mallard from the rig of G. K. Schmidt clearing its \$15,000 low estimate on its way to \$16,800 and a mallard pair reaching \$15,600 on a \$10/15,000 estimate.

A full list of prices realized from Copley's Sporting Sale 2020 is available at www.copleyart.com. All prices include a 20% buyer's premium (an additional 3% for online purchases is not reflected in the prices listed above), and all record prices cite AskArt.com, *Decoy Magazine*, and Copley's Past Auction Database.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC is preparing for the Winter Sale 2021, currently scheduled to take place in conjunction with the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition in Charleston, SC, in February. If COVID-19 restrictions prevent the auction from taking place in Charleston, the sale will follow the July format. Copley already has some major estate consignments for the Winter Sale and will be making announcements in the coming weeks. Contact Decoy Specialist Colin S. McNair or Fine Art Specialist Leah Tharpe at 617.536.0030 or email info@copleyart.com regarding consignments for the sale and free confidential auction estimates.

For high-resolution images, please contact Chelsie Olney at 617.536.0030 or chelsie@copleyart.com.

Images available upon request:

Charles F. Coffin (1835–1919), O'Brien-Nelson Nantucket Hollow Curlew, Estimate: \$125/175,000, Sold for \$108,000

A. Elmer Crowell (1862–1952), Open-Bill Calling Decorative Yellowlegs, Estimate: \$60/90,000, Sold for \$90,000

Ogden M. Pleissner (1905–1983), Quail Hunting, watercolor, 15 by 29 in., Estimate: \$40/60,000, Sold for \$37,200

Thomas Aquinas Daly (b. 1937), *Electric Mountain*, oil on board, 20 by 30 in., Estimate: \$8/12,000, Sold for \$16,800