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## **The Winter Sale 2023 Sets Numerous World Records**

PLYMOUTH, MA - On February 24 and 25, Copley Fine Art Auctions' Winter Sale posted a **95% sell-through rate** and set several new world records yet again. The two-day auction, consisting of 657 lots, **surpassed \$2.2 million**. Richard Bishop's "Prairie Wings" soared to \$180,000, more than ten times the high estimate. The top decoy lot of this year's Winter Sale was the Ward Humpback Black Duck, with a \$70/90,000 estimate, selling for \$90,000. Jerry Mastin's Canada goose also set a new auction record for any West Coast decoy, landing at \$51,000.

Bidders participated via phone, absentee bids, the CopleyLive app, and two online platforms, Bidsquare and Live Auctioneers. Categories represented in the sale were antique and contemporary decoys, decorative carvings, paintings, prints, folk art, Americana, bronze sculpture, fish decoys, and gunpowder tins.

"We were pleased with the results overall. Anytime you set half a dozen world records for established artists, it means you are doing something right," stated Copley owner Steve O'Brien Jr.

### **Decoys and Decoratives**

The top decoy lot of this year's Winter Sale was the Ward Humpback Black Duck, which landed on the high estimate when it sold for \$90,000. The top shorebird of the sale, the Harmon Running Curlew by Nathan F. Cobb Jr., reached \$78,000. The swimming Massachusetts merganser, a recent find, proved to be an astute buy at \$42,000. "We were bringing this bird to market for the first time so we didn't really have any comparables," explains O'Brien, "While it does not have an identified maker associated

with it yet, I view it as one of the great merganser decoys from Massachusetts. With only three known, I am confident that these birds will rise to the top in the future.”

Contemporary carvings continued to see strength with Mark McNair’s wood duck drake more than doubling its high estimate and bringing \$10,800. The esteemed maker’s top shorebird lot was a turned-head golden plover which exceeded the high estimate, commanding \$3,383. Frank Finney carvings continued to be in high demand with the maker’s Owl and Crow Tree more than doubling its \$9,000 high estimate to reach \$22,140 and his Flying Woodcock Pair alighting at \$6,600. Works by Wendell Gilley also continued to create a buzz with a Great Blue Heron with Raised Wings by the Southwest Harbor maker achieving \$5,535.

Though this auction did not have any major working decoys by Elmer Crowell, the East Harwich master’s miniature avocet shot above its \$4,000 high estimate, reaching \$6,000. The Crowell Kingfisher with Yellow Perch landed just shy of its \$35,000 high estimate and sold for \$32,400. Shorebirds from Crowell also excited buyers with the Du Mont Early Hanging Greater Yellowlegs blowing past its \$20/30,000 estimate before settling at \$36,000.

Carvings from the Richard and Dorothy Wheeler Collection of Pacific Coast Decoys garnered attention. Bidders enthusiastically vied for the Jerry Mastin Canada Goose, carrying the important Pacific Coast work over its \$40,000 high estimate to \$51,000 and establishing a new world record for the maker. The Sleepy-Eyed Mallard by "Hi" Crandall cruised to \$16,800.

“It was exciting to introduce collectors to a number of decoys that have never before been seen in the modern marketplace,” states Copley decoy specialist Colin McNair.

**Paintings** were led by exceptional wildlife art. Richard Bishop's *Prairie Wings* shot well above its high estimate, reaching \$180,000. This pinnacle oil on canvas is the frontispiece to one of the most important books on waterfowl ever written, of the same title. Works by A.F. Tait continued to have success with *On the Qui Vive!*, an oil on canvas depicting four deer with flying mallards in the Adirondacks, landing at \$39,000. A bronze of quail by perennial favorite sculptor Walter Matia nearly doubled its high estimate when it sold for \$15,990.

Discerning collectors of fishing art showed up in force at this year's Winter Sale, as the top Chet Reneson work was a lively acrylic entitled *Too Hot to Handle*, which leapt over its high estimate to \$7,800. The Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, whose mission is to conserve and enhance global bonefish, tarpon, and permit fisheries and their environment, will receive 50% of the proceeds from the sale. The fly-fishing oil entitled *Flathead Camp* by Brett Smith achieved \$14,760, more than doubling its low estimate. Southern fishing paintings continued to perform well for two master fish artists: Mike Stidham's oil of permit on the flats reached \$16,800, clearing its high estimate and setting a new world record for the artist, and an oil of leaping tarpon by William Goadby Lawrence shot to \$15,600, also setting a new record.

Dog paintings on offer captivated collectors. A vivid oil on canvas by Julie Jeppsen, one of the top dog painters today, reached \$20,400. This marked the highest price ever for the artist's work at auction. Demand for works by Percival Rosseau continues to be strong, as the artist's oil of setters on point entitled *Pair of Aces*—a work small in size but bold in stature—made its way to \$72,000, easily outstripping its \$50,000 high estimate. This little gem set a record for the artist in terms of price per square inch.

Other wildlife art in high demand included David Hagerbaumer's watercolor, entitled *Dropping In - Wood Ducks*, which raced to \$10,455 on a \$2/3,000 estimate, a new high-water mark for the artist, continuing Copley's unmatched record in offering choice

works by David Hagerbaumer. Carl Rungius's *White Flag*, an etching of a leaping stag, bounded to \$11,070. John McAuliffe's *Col. Jim Douglass & His Trotters* galloped to \$8,400, far above its \$2/4,000 estimate. The firm has now sold many of this artist's top works.

Once again, unestimated lots proved to be popular; *Old Friends*, a 9 by 12 in. oil on board by renowned decoy carver Cameron T. McIntyre reached \$7,995, setting a record for the artist for a painting.

Copley continues to dominate the sporting art market, in this sale alone adding Richard Bishop, Julie Jeppsen, Mike Stidham, and William Goadby Lawrence to its growing stable of artists for whom they have set world records. This list includes Ogden Pleissner, Aiden Lassell Ripley, A.B. Frost, Edmund Osthaus, Francis Lee Jaques, David Hagerbaumer, Lynn Bogue Hunt, G. Muss-Arnolt, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, as well as modern masters Thomas Aquinas Daly, Chet Reneson, and Ewoud de Groot, among others.

Copley Fine Art Specialist Leah Tharpe reports, "During the two-day auction, we set at least half a dozen new record prices. Collectors lined up to bid, responding to quality, and we love to see these beautiful works find new homes where they will be lived with and appreciated as part of the sporting lifestyle."

### **Powder Tins**

Demand for antique gunpowder tins remained strong with a Du Pont New Formula Trap Powder Can bringing \$3,000 and a lot of two Hazard and two Du Pont powder flasks with brass labels reaching \$2,460.

In this sale Copley provided the convenience of phone, absentee, app, and online bidding. A full list of prices realized from Copley's Winter Sale 2023 is available at

[www.copleyart.com](http://www.copleyart.com). All prices include a 20% buyer's premium and an additional 3% for online purchases. All record prices cite [AskArt.com](http://AskArt.com) or *Decoy Magazine*.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC is currently accepting consignments for The Sporting Sale 2023, set to take place July 14–15. For a free confidential auction estimate, call Decoy Specialist Colin S. McNair or Fine Art Specialist Leah Tharpe at 617.536.0030 or email [info@copleyart.com](mailto:info@copleyart.com).

For hi-res images or more information, email [chelsie@copleyart.com](mailto:chelsie@copleyart.com) or call 617.536.0030.

### **Captions:**

#### **Bishop**

Richard E. Bishop (1887-1975), *Prairie Wings*, oil on canvas, 30 by 25 in., Estimate: \$10/15,000, sold for \$180,000

#### **Ward**

The Ward Brothers, *Early Humpback Black Duck*, Estimate: \$70/90,000, sold for \$90,000

#### **Cobb**

Nathan F. Cobb Jr. (1825-1905), *The Harmon Running Curlew*, Estimate: \$80/120,000, sold for \$78,000

#### **Kuhn**

Bob Kuhn (1920-2007), *Close but No Cigar*, acrylic on board, 13 3/4 by 23 1/4 in. Estimate: \$70/80,000, sold for \$78,000