

For immediate release
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Copley Fine Art Auctions Sends Prices Soaring for Antique Decoys and Fine Art

Boston, Mass. – At the historic Boston Park Plaza Hotel, Copley Fine Art Auctions held a highly successful inaugural antique sporting art and waterfowl decoy auction on July 26 and 27. The near-400 lot Sporting Sale stirred collectors' interest with superb examples of American paintings, folk art, decoys, and fishing collectibles. About 300 bidders attended over both days, with many more bidding by phone and through Artifact's eBay Live.

The top lot was an outstanding river scene by New England impressionist Frank W. Benson (1862-1951). The 1927 oil on canvas, titled "Salmon Fishing," was competitively bid up to \$747,500, including the buyer's premium. Works by Frank Benson were very well received. An etching of a leaping salmon sold for over \$6,600 and a rare collection of twelve ink wash prints, one of two known complete sets, sold for \$20,700. In addition, one of two known complete sets of Benson's seven stone lithographs sold for \$29,900.

Aiden Lassell Ripley was also well represented in the Sporting Sale. A Ripley watercolor of a quail shooting scene was purchased for \$42,550 and an oil on canvas, titled "Five Grouse," topped out at \$51,750. Paintings by other sporting artists, such as Ogden M. Pleissner, Roland Clark and Alexander Pope, also did very well. The Sporting Sale featured two wonderful Pleissner watercolors, "The Golden Hour," which sold for nearly \$72,000, and "Setting the Decoys," which was bid up to \$52,900. An excellent oil on canvas of pintails by Roland Clark exceeded its estimate of \$10,000 to \$15,000 at \$17,250. "Flying Mallard," an oil on canvas by Alexander Pope Jr., also surpassed its estimate of \$15,000 to \$20,000 at \$24,150. A magnificent oil on canvas, "Wide Awake, Raquette Lake," painted by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait in 1879, was purchased for \$52,900. Renowned sporting artist Richard Bishop was also well represented with an oil on canvas of geese in flight, titled "Up and Away," selling for \$14,950.

The Sporting Sale set two world records for oil paintings by William McKendree Snyder and Francis Lee Jaques. The Snyder oil on canvas depicting an English setter with quail sold for \$20,125 and "Seven Swans," an oil on canvas by Jaques, sold for \$33,350.

In addition to the sale's first-class paintings and etchings, a fine selection of five Currier & Ives prints also brought strong prices. The first in the group, "Brook Trout Fishing, An Anxious Moment," was bid up to \$6,325, and each of the prints followed with comparable sales prices.

Leading the dozens of decoy lots was a finely-carved greater yellowlegs by either Charles Summer Bunn (1865-1952) or Bill Bowman (1824-1906). Described as "one of the finest Bunn/Bowman shorebirds known to exist," the well-preserved carving reached \$97,750 (with premium). Another shorebird decoy that exceeded expectations was an important yellowlegs by Ira Hudson, which was pictured twice in *Shorebird Decoys* by Henry Fleckenstein, Jr. and surpassed its estimate of \$10,000 to \$15,000, selling at \$23,000.

Several lots piqued the interest of multiple bidders who nearly tripled their pre-sale estimates. Among the wildfowl decoys, a rare, circa-1875 blue wing teal hen by George Warin, which was discovered in a boat shed on Rice Lake in Ontario, soared to \$27,600 from a \$6,000 to \$8,000 estimate. An elegant white wing scoter drake by Joseph Lincoln brought nearly \$30,000 and a striking high-head Canada goose by Dave "Umbrella" Watson was bid up to \$25,300. The opening lot of the Thursday session, a rare glasseye wood duck drake from the Mason Decoy Factory, climbed to \$31,050, setting the tone for the rest of the sale. An important swimming brant by Nathan Rowley Horner, which came to the block mid-way through the Thursday session, was bid to a final selling price of \$22,425.

Other items of interest included a 51" long salesman's sample canoe attributed to the Penobscot Canoe Company, Old Town, Maine. This beautiful canoe, in near-mint condition, brought \$17,250. The lone firearm in the Sporting Sale, a Purdy 20 gauge double barrel shotgun with intricate engraving by Purdy's master engraver Hunt, sold for

\$40,700. A rare sea trout model carved and painted by celebrated Scottish artisans John and Duhie Tully landed at \$9,200. A superb Nantucket lightship basket, made by Jose Formosa Reyes in 1967, with a beautifully rendered ivory pheasant on top, jumped to an impressive \$7,475 selling price from an estimate of \$2,500 to \$3,500. The sale also featured an intricate miniature carving of a quail pair with chicks by A.J. King which exceeded its estimate of \$2,000 to \$3,000, selling for \$9,775.

Organized by renowned sporting art dealer Stephen O'Brien Jr. and seasoned entrepreneur Jonathan Nash, the two-day sale proved a resounding success with a total exceeding \$2.4 Million. Consignments are now being accepted for Copley Fine Art Auction's next sale. For more information, contact Jon Nash at 617.536.0030.

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Images are available as jpegs. Please contact Katherine Schofield at 617.536.0030 or Katherine@americansportingart.com.