

# Copley to Sell Harry V. Long's Decoys by Crowell

by Jeanne Schinto  
Photos courtesy Copley Fine Art Auctions

On July 15, Stephen B. O'Brien Jr. of Copley Fine Art Auctions will open his annual two-day sporting sale at the Radisson Hotel in Plymouth, Massachusetts, by offering seven works by A. Elmer Crowell (1862-1952). They are being described by the firm as "the most important collection" of Crowell works "to have ever come up for auction."

Perhaps most noteworthy among them is a nesting Canada goose whose neck is curved as sinuously as a charmed snake's. Estimated at \$600,000/900,000, it is the third and, some believe, the most virtuosic of Crowell's famed "Long Trinity" of Canada geese, so named because the three were made for early Crowell patron Harry V. Long of Boston.

The son of a founder of the Boston Stock Exchange, Long (1857-1949) led a gentleman's life of leisure dedicated to his passions, which included hunting and fishing as well as

antiques and the arts. It is believed that he and Crowell were acquainted for many years and that Long commissioned directly from the artist beginning as early as 1895.

When Long died at age 92, all the Crowell decoys descended in the family. They had never before been publicly exhibited until September 2008, when they went on view at a small exhibit of Crowell works at the Mass Audubon's Visual Arts Center in Canton, Massachusetts.

"I had heard whispers that there was a third Canada goose that the family had held back, but I'd never seen it," said O'Brien, who has had a hand in the sale of one of the other two Long Trinity geese.

In 2000 at a joint Sotheby's and Guyette & Schmidt auction, O'Brien bought the preening example for a then auction record price of \$684,500. It went to a private collector whom he did not name, but press

reports have identified him as Thomas K. Figge. In September 2007 O'Brien handled the same goose again when he privately brokered it for \$1.13 million. The transaction marked the first time that any decoy was sold for seven figures.

A hissing example that is part of the Long Trinity was sold at Guyette & Schmidt in April 2004 for \$605,000.

O'Brien puts the date of the goose that he will offer in July at 1910-12, i.e., earlier than the other two Long Trinity birds. Its

rarity also extends to its form, which O'Brien said is "unlike any other Canada goose that I've seen by any other maker, let alone A.E. Crowell." Besides the S-shaped head, neck, and breast with a swept-back body, it has highly delineated crossed, raised wings.

A preening pintail drake with elaborate raised wings, a second major highlight of the Long collection consignment, is estimated at \$500,000/900,000. The only other known Crowell preening pintail drake once belonged to American sportsman and collector Russell B. Aitken (1910-2002). Probably the most recognized decoy in the world (published in numerous places, including national newspapers and magazines as well as books), it sold at Skinner in 1981 for \$48,000. In January 2003 the icon changed hands at a joint Christie's and Guyette & Schmidt auction for a then record price of \$801,500. (Figge is said to have been its buyer.) The same bird was later



A Long family photo, showing either Harry V. Long's son or brother hunting shorebirds.

privately brokered by O'Brien for \$1.13 million, tying the record sale that was part of the same deal.

The five other Long collection birds in the Copley sale are a yellowlegs in a highly unusual calling position; two classic ("dust-jacket") black-bellied plovers; a tucked-head merganser; and a swimming black duck.

The seven collectively are estimated at \$1.6/2.6 million.

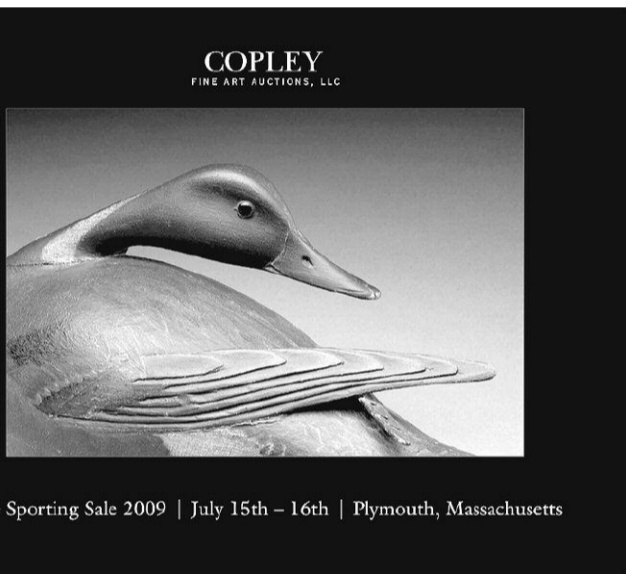
Considering that the last Copley sale, on July 23 and 24, 2008, totaled approximately \$3.2 million (including buyers' premiums) on 235 lots of artworks and 334 decoys and shorebirds, this current consignment is a probable barnburner. The predictions seem even more ambitious when compared to results of the youthful auction house's only other sales, one each in 2006 and 2007, which grossed \$2.3 million and \$2.6 million respectively.

The firm's relative youthfulness, compared to the other

well-established decoy auctioneers on the scene, means the consignment was a coup of sorts for O'Brien. Whether he considers it one, he certainly isn't saying. He is simply working to make this the historic sale it has the potential to be.

To that end, he has issued a special marketing tool—a poster. By his count, "thousands" went out in mailing tubes to the firm's entire list in April. A larger-than-life image of the preening pintail drake is on one side; smaller images of other lots fill the flipside. Asked how the poster idea evolved, O'Brien said, "We have a young intern, twenty-two years old, from Mumbai, who's a graphic designer. I gave her the images to make something with. It started out as a general flier, but then I came up with the poster idea. The birds are so important and so great, I really wanted people to take notice."

For more information, phone (617) 536-0030 or see the Web site ([www.copleyart.com](http://www.copleyart.com)).



## More Problems Connected to Salander

by David Hewett

As we have previously reported, the problems for disgraced Big Apple art dealer Lawrence "Larry" Salander have multiplied. The business—Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, LLC—is bankrupt, and Salander was indicted for numerous counts of grand larceny, forgery, securities fraud, and other felonies. On March 26, he was arrested.

On May 5, an agreement among bankruptcy creditors was announced. Bank of America's First Republic branch, which had loaned Salander \$28 million, with his inventory as collateral, will share the pot with the other approximately 400 creditors. (Salander owes around \$400 million. If all the assets were liquidated, and First Republic were then paid in full, there would have been nothing left to satisfy the unsecured creditors.)

In related litigation, three prominent creditors have filed suit in New York County Supreme Court against art dealer Joseph P. Carroll and Joseph P. Carroll Limited.

First, multimillionaire Morton A. Bender and former tennis superstar John McEnroe have charged Carroll with "conversion," "unjust enrichment," and "unlawful possession" of a valuable Arshile Gorky painting sold to Carroll by Larry Salander. Bender and McEnroe made the charges in a jointly filed complaint in early May. Bender charges he was invited by Salander in October 2004

to participate in the purchase of two Gorky works for \$4.19 million, with Bender's share to be \$2.04 million. Bender was to loan Salander \$2.155 million to be used to buy his 50% share. What Bender did not know at the time, he alleges, was that Salander had also approached McEnroe with the same offer: \$2.035 million for a 50% share in two Arshile Gorky paintings.

The paintings (*Pirate I* and *Pirate II*) were bought by Salander, who later sold *Pirate II*. For giving up his half-interest in the one sold, McEnroe was given a 100% interest in the remaining painting, *Pirate I*, and it hangs on his wall today. Salander transferred *Pirate II* to an entity named "The Seven Salander Children Group," and that entity then transferred *Pirate II* to Joseph Carroll, in exchange for "two paintings of lesser value," the complaint charges.

Bender and McEnroe demand that the *Pirate II* painting be returned to them and that they be awarded damages of not less than \$5 million. Joseph Carroll denies all charges and notes that he had filed UCC declarations with New York's secretary of state, giving notice that the painting was owned by him as early as October 2006.

On May 5, 2009, attorney Jeffrey Udell issued a statement on behalf of his client, Joseph P. Carroll. From that statement: "Joe Carroll is yet another victim of the deceptive conduct of Lawrence Salander.

Prior to purchasing the painting at issue in this case, Arshile Gorky's *Pirate II*, Mr. Carroll conducted his standard and extensive due diligence, the result of which revealed no ownership interest in *Pirate II* by either John McEnroe or Morton Bender. Mr. Carroll thus purchased the painting in the utmost good faith and acquired clear title to the work.

"It was not until several months after Mr. Carroll purchased the painting that he first learned that Mr. McEnroe was then claiming to have owned a 50% interest in the work. But shortly after that time, Mr. McEnroe announced that he had relinquished any interest in *Pirate II*. This lawsuit represents a sudden and complete about-face for Mr. McEnroe.

"Morton Bender likewise did nothing to alert the world to his supposed interest in *Pirate II*, which was unknown until March 2009—almost a year and a half after Mr. Carroll first consigned the painting on the market for sale—when Mr. Bender suddenly and maliciously interfered with Mr. Carroll's attempt to sell the painting.

"While Mr. Carroll is sympathetic to the plight of Mr. McEnroe and Mr. Bender, as apparent victims of Lawrence Salander, their meritless lawsuit barks up the wrong tree. This case is merely a shameless attempt to squeeze money out of yet another Salander victim, Mr. Carroll.

"Mr. Carroll is confident that he will prevail in court."

In his answer to the court complaint, Carroll noted that *Pirate II* had been consigned to Edelman Arts to sell for \$10 million and exhibited at the 2009 Armory Show. The complaint McEnroe and Bender filed had the effect of canceling the showing of the painting and halting Carroll's plans for a traveling museum exhibit slated to end in January 2012, Joseph Carroll stated.

The third person to file against Joseph P. Carroll is Earl Davis, son of the late artist Stuart Davis. He filed his complaint against Carroll, signed on May 5, in New York Supreme Court. It charges Carroll with conversion for his purchase of eight Stuart Davis paintings from Salander.

Earl Davis claims that Larry Salander sold Carroll at least 16 Stuart Davis paintings that had been consigned to the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries by Earl Davis, and that Salander never paid Davis for those paintings. Davis has since recovered eight of that group and alleges that Carroll has refused to return the remaining paintings to him. Davis asks that he be declared the owner of the Davis works sold by Salander, that Carroll return the eight missing paintings to him, and that he be awarded damages of not less than \$3 million.

Stay tuned; there's much more to be revealed about this sordid mess.