

July 25, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

\$3.6M Sporting Sale 2023 Smashes Numerous World Records

PLYMOUTH, MA - On July 13 and 14, Copley Fine Art Auctions' annual Sporting Sale posted a **92% sell-through rate** and set multiple new world records. The two-day auction, consisting of 517 lots, **surpassed \$3.6 million**, with eight lots reaching six-figure results. The top painting lot, a watercolor by Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969) entitled *Dove Hunting*, shot to \$114,000, more than doubling the high estimate and setting a new world record for the artist. The top decoy lot of this year's Sporting Sale, The Safford Sleeping Goose by Charles A. Safford (1877-1957), sold for \$594,000, establishing a new world record for the maker.

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

"We brought a variety of nice sporting art to market in this sale, and collectors and dealers alike responded with strong interest and active bidding across platforms. From dog paintings and bird art to hunting and fishing scenes, many of the results exceeded our expectations and even set records as buyers took home beautiful, rare, and historic works. We are thrilled to work with so many happy collectors and consignors," stated Copley Fine Art Specialist Leah Tharpe.

Paintings were led by spectacular sporting art. Not only did Aiden Lassell Ripley's *Dove Shooting* capture bidders' attention, stretching way above the high estimate to

\$114,000; Copley was also 100% sold for the multiple Ripley watercolors and drawings on offer.

Discerning collectors vied for exceptional dog art at this year's summer auction. A lively oil-on-canvas depiction of a springer with a pheasant by Alexander Pope Jr. (1849-1924) achieved \$44,400. Pope's work was just one of many dog paintings on offer that excited collectors. Demand for works by British artist Thomas Blinks (1860-1912) continues to be strong, as the artist's oil of English pointers on the scent made its way to \$45,000, nearing its high estimate. *On the Scent, or Pair of Aces*, a vivid oil on board by Churchill Ettinger (1903-1984) outstripped its high estimate and reached \$14,400, the second-highest price ever at auction for the artist's work.

Collectors of fish art showed up in force at this year's Sporting Sale, as historic fish like the leaping trout by Samuel A. Kilbourne (1836-1881) splashed over its high estimate to a new world record for the artist at \$13,200. Chet Reneson's works continued to garner attention as bidders enthusiastically vied for *Surging Silver* which more than doubled its high estimate to hit \$18,000, setting a new highwater mark for any Reneson. The record didn't last long as just a few minutes later *Out of Reach*, an acrylic on board depicting bonefishing carrying a \$7,000 high estimate, shot to \$19,200, setting yet another world record for the esteemed contemporary artist. Similarly, *A Lone Single - Bonefish on a Fly* by Mike Stidham exceeded its high estimate and sold for \$10,200.

Copley continued its dominance with works by Arthur Burdett Frost (1851-1928), one of the country's top illustrators. *Autumn Woodcock Shooting* raced to \$72,000, selling within estimate, and *Winter Golf - Play the Like in Four!*, an important self-portrait of the artist golfing and his two sons as caddies, landed at \$46,800, just below its high.

The 1977 acrylic on illustrator's board entitled *The Cougar* by Bob Kuhn (1920-2007) achieved \$49,200, easily clearing its high estimate, and Ken Carlson's *Touched by Light*

- *Mute Swans* bested its high estimate when it sold for \$34,800. Of particular note was the renewed strength in the Frank W. Benson (1862-1951) print market. *Eagle Alighting*, a 1933 drypoint, sped past its high estimate, landing at \$6,600 and *The Retriever*, a charming depiction of a bird dog at work, brought \$5,700, well above its \$4,000 high estimate.

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

Decoys and Decoratives

The top Evans Collection decoy was The Safford Sleeping Goose, which set a new auction record for the North Shore maker when it sold for \$594,000. Dashing to \$150,000, The McCleery Boyd Merganser Drake also set a new auction record for New Hampshire's top maker George Boyd (1873-1941). The O'Brien Chambers Wood Duck by Thomas Chambers (1860-1948) sold for \$264,000, just \$6,000 shy of its record-setting 2018 result.

The top Ward Brothers carving of the sale, a "White Mallard Club" Pinch-Breast Pintail, achieved \$144,000, more than doubling its high estimate. The next highest Ward carving, The Ward Peregrine Falcon by Lemuel T. Ward (1896-1984), reached \$28,000.

The top contemporary carvers continue to set records, Frank Finney's flying wild turkey soared to \$48,000, landing within its estimate as a record result for any living decoy carver. Mark McNair decoys were in high demand with a long-tailed duck drake easily doubling its high estimate and bringing \$8,400. Close on its heels was a harlequin duck

by the esteemed maker which also doubled the high estimate, commanding \$5,700. The top carving by William Gibian (b. 1946), a preening mallard, cruised to \$3,600. The Mackey English Mallard Decoy by John English (1848-1915) created a buzz, achieving \$39,000.

“New buyers continue to be crucial for maintaining a healthy market and it was encouraging to see first-time participants active across the board. Our team has been highly engaged in numerous avenues of outreach including hosting public receptions, presenting previews, joining podcasts, lecturing at institutions and club events, and creating social media content and it is clearly making a positive impact in the market,” states Copley Decoy Specialist Colin McNair.

Powder Tins

Demand for antique gunpowder tins remained strong with a lot of three Dupont tins depicting eagles reaching \$4,200. A bright red Savage Arms Co. Smokeless Rifle Powder Tin climbed to \$1,920.

In this sale Copley provided the convenience of phone, absentee, app, and online bidding. A full list of prices realized from Copley’s Sporting Sale 2023 is available at www.copleyart.com. All prices include a 20% buyer’s premium and an additional 3% for online purchases. All record prices cite AskArt.com or *Decoy Magazine*.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC is currently accepting consignments for The Winter Sale 2024, set to take place next February. 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.

For hi-res images or more information, email chelsie@copleyart.com or call 617.536.0030.