

First Fine Art Sale of 2010 a Success at Moran's

Pasadena, CA — Impressionist landscapes, Western works, and California School watercolors took center stage on February 16th at John Moran Auctioneers' first California and American Art Auction of 2010. Well over three hundred bidders from across the country registered for the auction, with a third of them bidding online through Artfact.com.

Moran's nation-wide reach was nicely demonstrated when a lovely oil, Lot 81, by Hew Hope, PA artist Fern Coppedge (1883 — 1951), attracted a full bank of phone bidders from the East Coast and Midwest. The competition drove the final price of "Summer", a scene of the Delaware and Raritan Canal near Lumberville, to \$86,250 from a pre-sale estimate of \$25,000 — 35,000 (all prices include the 15% buyer's premium.) Also drawing numerous East Coast bidders was a marvelously detailed scene of old New York City, identifiable from the painted street sign as Gold Street in lower Manhattan. The "x 44" oil by Henry A. Ferguson (1845 — 1911), Lot 148, achieved the third-highest auction price for the artist, realizing \$23,000 (estimate: \$7000 — 10,000.) Other East Coast works that performed well were a coastal with crashing waves and a brilliantly lit, cloud-filled sky marine by specialist Frederick Judd Waugh (1861 — 1940), Lot 76, which brought \$10,925 (estimate: \$3000 — 5000), and a two-piece lot by Robert Swain Gifford (1840 — 1905), a coastal and a scene of an Indian encampment, that realized \$9,200 (estimate: 2000 — 3000).

California Impressionists continue to shine at John Moran's, which has led the market in this collecting area since its resurgence in popularity in the 1980's. Lot 15, a glorious oil by Jean Mannheim (1863 — 1945) of a woman reclining beside a lily pond titled "Happiness", is believed to portray the artist's daughter. Aptly titled, the "x 39" work exudes joy in its bright palette, lush brushwork, and the smile and relaxed pose of the sitter. The final selling price of \$54,625 far exceeded the pre-sale estimate of \$20,000 — 30,000, and set a new second-place record for the artist. A watercolor by Gunnar Widforss (1879 — 1934) of the interior of a redwood grove, Lot 30, displays his supreme ability to describe fine detail in this difficult medium. It also shot past its pre-sale estimate of \$10,000 — 15,000, realizing \$21,850. A poppy field landscape (Lot 32) by Granville Redmond (1871 — 1935) measuring only 12" x 16" but including all the most desirable elements of his exuberant Impressionist style, performed nicely at \$46,000 (estimate: \$30,000 — 40,000), while another small gem, Lot 5, a beautifully colored and structured snowy landscape in oil by George Gardner Symons (1863 — 1930) measuring 8" x 10", realized \$5750 (estimate: \$2000 — 3000).

A carefully edited group of California Style watercolors was responsible for much of the excitement on Tuesday, due largely to an intriguing and historically important series of eleven "x 31" watercolors by Chinese-American artist Jake Lee (1915 — 1991). Chronicling the activities of Chinese people in early California through scenes of commerce, industry, agriculture and cultural events, the colorful paintings are full of lively and witty detail and are not only some of the best examples of the artist's work known to exist, but had been missing for many years. Originally commissioned by the owner of a restaurant on Grant Street in San Francisco's Chinatown to decorate his dining room, the series had been placed in storage after the restaurant was sold. Their memory preserved by photographs that had taken in situ, they roused keen interest when they suddenly resurfaced at John Moran's. Each painting was sold individually, each with an estimate of \$3000 — 5000. The first painting to go on the block, a scene of a New Year's Dragon Dance, sold within the estimate, but was the only one to do so, as bidding for the remaining paintings grew increasingly competitive. By the time the dust settled, six of the paintings had broken the previous record price for the artist. Two of them, Lot 94, a depiction of workers forging the Transcontinental Railroad through the Sierra Nevada, and Lot 118, a scene of workers mining for gold, realized \$16,100 each. Lot 116, of shoemakers in a shop, brought \$12,650. Lot 117, of a shrimp camp, and 119, of winemaking in Napa Valley, each realized \$11,500. A scene of craftsmen making Chinese lanterns, Lot 115, brought \$8050.

Another collection of watercolors came to the market directly from a descendant of the artist Lee Blair (1911 —

1993). Three works by Blair, his wife Mary (1911 – 1978) and brother Preston (1908 – 1995) each more than doubled their pre-sale estimates. Moran’s was delighted to establish the first significant auction record for Preston Blair with the sale of his striking night scene of Victorian houses on Los Angeles’s Bunker Hill (Lot 86) for \$6,900 (estimate: \$1000 – 2000.)

Highlights in the category of Western art included a portrait of an Indian, “John Hunter,” (Lot 45) by Canadian artist Nicolas de Grandmaison (1892 – 1978) that brought \$19,550 (estimate: \$4000 – 6000), and a gorgeously lit Gilbert Gaul (1855 – 1919) scene of a Sioux camp featuring an Indian on horseback at sunset (Lot 51) that sold for \$14,950 (estimate: \$4000 – 6000).

John Moran’s next California and American Art Sale is scheduled for June 15th, 2010. Consignments are now invited. John Moran also conducts monthly Estate Auctions of fine antiques, decorative arts and European art. The next Estate Auction will be held on March 16th, 2010 and will feature Tiffany art glass, Native American artifacts, and European paintings. This two-session sale will begin with the no-reserve, un-catalogued Discovery Sale at 3pm. The fully catalogued Evening Session will begin at 6pm. Bidding is available from the floor, by telephone, absentee or online at www.Artfact.com. All auctions are held at the Pasadena Convention Center in Pasadena, CA.

For more information, or to view the catalogue, please visit www.johnmoran.com, or call 626-793-1833, or email info@johnmoran.com www.johnmoran.com