

COMMENTS ON THE ART MARKET

VOLUME 117

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Baltimore Show

This is a final reminder that the gallery will be exhibiting at the Baltimore Summer Antiques Show from September 2 – September 5, 2010. If you are in the area, we do hope that you will stop by and say hello. Our booth is just inside the main entrance – #2103.

Stocks

Well, it is just more of the same – some up days and then some down days. On Monday, August 2nd, the Dow closed up over 200 points (10,674). The next day it was down 38 and on Wednesday morning the WSJ reported that “Stock Rally Hits a Wall; Dow Falls 38” – come on ... hit a wall? If the market hit a wall, it would be a lot more painful than that! But maybe the wall was a padded one --- you know, in a room where some of the analysts probably belong. Of course, that Wednesday the Dow added another 44 points because, as the WSJ reported Thursday morning: “Jobs Preview Helps Boost Dow, Dollar”; however, on Friday the jobs number did not match the preview so we all know what happened ... it initially dropped over 150 points but closed down only 21. Look, I know somebody is making a killing on the wild days ... if that person is reading my newsletter, please give me a call – I want in on that action!!!

As for my measly portfolio, amazingly I am still in the black (1.13%) – but who knows how long that will last since by the end of the month (August 26th) the Dow was below 10,000; down almost 700 points from August 2nd. Among my favorites: Citi is at \$3.66 – yuk! RIMM (which has been having a little trouble with the foreign govts.) is at \$46.84; MCD hit \$73.16; GE - \$14.50; Pfizer - \$15.90; BofA - \$12.47 and Oracle hit \$22.25. In addition, one of my readers pointed me towards a stock that is paying an 8% dividend – CTL. So I called my broker and he informed me that I already owned some of it ... never bought it, it just appeared in my account due to some merger, or spin-off, or something; so I bought a little more. The way I look at it, 8% is far better than the 0.0002% I am getting in the money accounts!

Tales from the Dark Side

I know that a number of our readers like this topic so here is one new member of the dark side and follow-ups on two I already covered.

Lucy Leffler Knopf – an auctioneer in Oregon – has found herself on the dark side. The Oregon Attorney General has filed a lawsuit against Ms. Knopf and her auction firm charging them with several violations of Oregon’s Unlawful Trade Practices Act and elder

abuse. They have charged that Knopf accepted material for auction and then either sold, or was unable to account for, the items. In addition, there were instances where the charges imposed for the sale of items left the consigner with almost nothing, or had them actually owing money to the auctioneer ... talk about seller’s commissions! It will be interesting to see how this one plays out.

Anthony Bonneau – former owner of T’s Family Auction in Cairo, NY, was sentenced to two and one-third to seven years in prison for failing to pay \$27,000 to Valerie Ducos after auctioning her art. The judge ordered Bonneau to pay \$27,363 in restitution and a \$1,368 surcharge. In addition he referred to the auctioneer as “a swindler, a drifter, and auction house grifter” --- hum ... might make good lyrics for a song.

Larry Salander – well, we have all followed this one since 2007 and judgment day finally arrived for Mr. Salander. On August 3rd Larry was sentenced to 6 to 18 years in prison and was ordered to pay \$114.86M in restitution ... what a laugh! Now Larry does consider himself an artist; however, if the results from a recent sale are any indication of how he will raise the money to pay back the millions (the pieces were selling in the \$75 - \$800 range) it is going to take hundreds of years for him to make a dent. And in case you are wondering, he will be eligible for parole in 2016.

Spanning the Globe

I am pretty sure that most of you, like me, can use a break from all the statistics I incorporate in my monthly newsletters. In addition, it appears that August was a rather quiet month in the art market – YES! So this month I have decided to cover specific results from some of the ‘other’ fields of collecting. As you will see, much like the art market, the best works are still commanding strong prices.

Doll & Toys

Over the past few months there have been a number of sales featuring antique toys and dolls and among the more impressive items sold were an Althof, Bergmann & Co. Santa sleigh and goat team (no reindeer here) that brought \$161,000 (est. \$100-\$200K) – the saleroom claims that this is the most expensive American tin toy sold, at auction, in the last 15 years. There were also two, nearly identical George Brown tin omnibus clockwork toys with “Broadway & 5 Avenue” stenciled on them. One brought \$17,250 and the other made \$37,375. Now you might wonder why one made so much more than the other? Turns out the more expensive piece had a small American eagle and shield stenciled on the side – it is all in the details. In a

Massachusetts sale a 28" tall Roullet & Decamps automation of a female magician made \$80,580 (est. \$25-\$35K); while the most highly estimated doll in the sale, a 25" Queen Anne lady (c.1720), brought only \$50,363 (est. \$50-\$70K). In addition, a Steiff Petsy teddy bear with blue glass eyes made \$16,590 (est. \$7-\$9K). And moving across the ocean to a sale in Cologne, Germany, a rare and unique 1909 Märklin Hexenhauchen brought \$54,450, while a 1905 Gunthermann Gordon Bennet racing coupe made \$28,070 and a rare Märklin stationary traction engine made a strong \$21,175.

Guns, Swords, Flags and More

Since the beginning of the year there have been a number of sales focusing on this field and among the more interesting items (at least to me) were a rare New Haven Arms Company volcanic lever action Navy pistol with detachable stock that made \$80,500; an 1876 Gatling gun which brought \$282,000 (I want one of those); Confederate Brigadier General Lloyd Tilghman's presentation flag, along with the inscribed sword and belt he was wearing when killed at the Battle of Champion Hill in 1863, that made \$59,750; and Henry Bowers's engraved New York map powder horn which made \$23,000. In London the £50 Lloyds Patriotic Fund sword and belt awarded to Lieutenant William Mulcaster for capturing 5 Spanish luggers in 1806 made \$91,240 while Jahleel Brenton's dueling pistols sold for \$31,000. At another sale a complete uniform from the Waterloo hero Lieutenant-Colonel Fiennes S. Miller CB brought £25,000 while his Waterloo medal made £29,000 – I'd be interested to see what one of Napoleon's Waterloo uniforms would bring!

Celebrity Memorabilia

Among the big news this summer was the Roy Rogers & Dale Evans Museum sale that took place in NY & Denver. The sale totaled almost \$3M with the top three lots being Roy's first silver parade saddle that made \$386,500; followed by Trigger – yes, he had him mounted – which brought \$266,500 and his 1964 custom Pontiac Bonneville Convertible coasted in at \$254,500. Even bigger news was made at a manuscript sale in New York when John Lennon's "A Day in the Life" lyrics were offered for sale and when the battle ended, the new owner paid \$1.2M. At a sale in Las Vegas, Michael Jackson's white Swarovski crystal glove from the 'Victory' tour made \$192,000; a tour jacket made \$66,000; a shirt \$56,250; a signed "Beat-It" jacket made \$132,000 and the jacket he wore in an interview with Barbara Walters made \$120,000. Christopher Reeve's *Superman VI* costume sold for \$32,500; Jimi Hendrix's Fender guitar made \$180,000 and the most 'unique' item was a set of 3 Marilyn Monroe chest x-rays from her 1954 visit to Cedars of Lebanon Hospital which made \$45,000 (est. \$800-\$1200) – let's face it, her chest was among her best attributes! Now note, I did say 'among'.

Sports Memorabilia

In California an autographed game-worn Mickey Mantle jersey (1955) brought \$125,323; a 1933 Goudey Nap Lajoie baseball card made \$113,938; Joe DiMaggio's 1946-49 game used bat made \$80,626; a bat used by Babe Ruth between 1918-21 fetched \$77,820 and a 1914 Providence Base Ball Club team photo featuring and signed by Babe Ruth made \$44,428. Other sales in California included a 1953 Jackie Robinson bat at

\$63,250; a 1940-42 Joe DiMaggio bat for \$46,000; Johnny Bench's batting helmet made \$13,800; Chili Davis's 1999 NY Yankees World Championship ring brought \$35,650; a Roberto Clemente glove autographed by 28 members of the Pirates team caught a bid of \$115,000 and a 1909-11 Honus Wagner T-206 tobacco card proof strip topped out at \$316,250. Many of these items are making far more than the ball players were paid ... I doubt the same thing will be said of today's players.

Comics

I am always amazed when I read the results from these sales since most of these items originally sold for pennies. Earlier this year a Detective Comics No. 27, the first appearance of Batman, was offered in a Texas sale and when the bidding ended a record \$1.07M was paid for this comic book (original price in 1939 was 10 cents and it has been reported that the seller bought the comic back in the 1960s for \$100). The previous auction record was held by Action Comics No.1, Superman's first appearance, which stood at \$317,000; though there are unconfirmed reports that this year a copy sold privately for more than \$1M. In addition a bound set of volumes 1 – 24 Action Comics made \$143,400 and the original Frank Miller cover art from Daredevil #188 made \$101,500.

And here is a very interesting/related story. A Southern family, whose bank had begun foreclosure proceedings, To read the rest of this article please visit our web site.

In Closing

The overall art & antiques market is still not firing on all 12 cylinders; but as we have seen, the really good items by artists and craftsmen from across the board (not just the top tier) are still commanding exceptionally strong prices.

I have always stressed the need to buy the best works available by the artists you like and today's market continues to illustrate why this is so important – even in these difficult times, good works are finding willing buyers and record prices are being achieved. This is an important lesson to remember as the different markets continue to improve; buying truly representative examples of an artist's work -- those that are in good condition, from the right period, contain the right subject matter and are priced appropriately -- will never be the wrong move.

Well, that is it for this month ... hope you have all enjoyed your summer.

Howard L. Rehs
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Gallery Updates: Our September hours are Monday – Thursday 10 am – 5:30 pm and all other times by appointment.

Web Site Updates: In case you have not noticed, we have begun updating the look of our web site. Works by the following artists have added to our web site: Emile Munier, Jack Gray, Georges Laugee and Hans Hofmann. And look for works by Blanchard, Cortes, Lovett and Swatland to be posted later this month.

Next Month: The cycle should be starting ... so look for more art market coverage.