

Michaan's Auctions Caps 2020 With A Big Finish

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Fine art and fine jewelry of exceptional
quality and diversity were stars of

Michaan's Winter

Fine Sale on December 18, the

highlight of a year like no other for the Alameda, CA auction

house. In spite of its challenges, 2020 brought to Michaan's Auctions a wealth of fine property from remarkable estates and collections. These included jewels from the estate of Mr. & Mrs. Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr. and other Bay Area luminaries such as the late Sylvia Blumenfeld, and

from the Amir Mozaffarian collection, esteemed San Francisco jeweler since 1883. Specialist and

GIA Gemologist Elise Coronado presented these and many other fine jewelry consignments at Michaan's monthly Gallery Auctions and special sales. Property deaccessioned from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and from the historic Filoli Estate in Woodside, was also featured at Michaan's in 2020, presented by the Fine Art team and by Furniture and Decorations Specialist Jill Fenichell.

The auction calendar opened in January with a sizzling sale, the hammer total reaching \$673,500. Demand was high for Mid Century Modern furniture such as the superb table



(realized \$5,700) by the Bay Area's Arthur Espenet. One lot of Chinese flambé glaze porcelains sold for \$10,200, well over estimates; it was the first of many strong Asian Art sales in 2020 at Michaan's, where specialist Annie Zeng leads the department. A rare copper red glazed appleshaped water coupe sold in June for the realized price of \$324,000; the Chinese Jian-type 'oil spot' bowl was an October auction highlight, reaching \$7,800. Designer timepieces and estate diamonds shone in January, setting a trend of outstanding sellthrough for Michaan's jewelry department. February's Gallery Auction brought more diamond dazzlers and a wonderful range of fine works of art such as the Louise Nevelson collage, which sold for \$8,400. March saw the exciting launch of the Michaan's Auctions App, arriving just in time to support clients during California's pandemic restrictions, among the earliest and strictest seen in the USA. Michaan's App makes it easier than ever to browse and view auction catalogs from anywhere in the world. In addition to offering the app, Michaan's moved quickly to implement measures ensuring the health and safety of clients and staff, always a priority above all others.

All auction events, not only the Gallery and Fine Sales but also the popular monthly Annex Auctions, are now accessible online. Michaan's held auctions via multiple platforms for the remainder of 2020 and continues to offer this flexible, comprehensive service heading into 2021.



A development to celebrate this year was the arrival of Fine Art Specialist Jenny Wilson, who joined Kyrah Leal in Michaan's outstanding Fine Art department. This team brought to auction incredible artwork from prominent private estates and collections. California artists, from turn-of-the-century plein air landscapists to stars of the Bay Area Figurative Movement, continue to draw many buyers. But the scope of Michaan's fine art expertise is expansive, and 2020 saw strikingly diverse achievements, particularly in the Winter Fine Sale toward the end of this singular year. Making the biggest splash was David Hockney's 1980 "Pool Made With Paper and Blue Ink for Book," estimated at \$20,000-\$30,000. Bidders dove in deep, finishing at \$49,200, the final bid sending the work and its accompanying book back to England, Hockney's country of origin. Fine Sale bidders were thrilled to discover several Thomas Hart Benton works from a single collection, originally owned by a personal friend of the artist. Among these is lot 5041, the "Untitled Landscape" in oil on canvas (sold for \$20,000). This original work, thought to be lost, was resurrected into the canon of art history as our Fine Art Department worked with the

Thomas Hart Benton Foundation to establish the work's authenticity; it will appear in the Foundation's forthcoming Thomas Hart Benton Catalogue Raisonné of the Artist's Paintings. Another Winter Fine Sale triumph was lot 5048, "The Bather," Circle of Jean-Leon Gerome



(French, 1824-1904), a painting from the personal collection of W. Robert Morgan and his wife June, founders of the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara. After much research it was determined "The Bather" was done in Gerome's lifetime, but lacking more exhibition history, the work has not yet been included in the catalogue raisonné of the artist's works. Even so there were 6 phone bidders from London to LA vying for this beautiful and possibly historic work of art, which flew by its \$7,000-10,000 estimate and achieved \$39,975.

Lots 5049, 5050, and 5051, all works by the French artist Antoine Louis Barye, came from a private collection in Sonoma, CA. It's a good thing these works were sent to Michaan's before the onset of a massive California wildfire that raged for 23 days; the collection could have been destroyed. Instead, the three Barye bronzes sold at a combined total of \$16,912.

An important Czech work of art in the sale, lot 5061 ("Untitled Blue Heads") proved there is an active group of collectors ready to scoop up important works by artists from this country. The oil on canvas by the artist Jiri Sopko had an estimate of \$4,000-6,000, crushed through phone and Internet bidding with a final price of \$13,530, ultimately going to a bidder in the Czech Republic.

Lot 5064 was a work by the great American cartoonist Charles Schulz, creator of "Peanuts." This lot, featuring Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, and Linus in a classic original Sunday strip from 1959, raced to its final bid of \$39,975, proving that for generations to come, these rare works of American art will certainly continue to grow in value.

Lot 5066 was a beautiful work by contemporary artist Mr. Brainwash. An homage to Picasso's *Dora Maar*, this 2015 mixed media on canvas blew past its estimate of \$4,000-6,000 landing at \$10,455. Lot 5087 by Pierre Soulages, "Eau Forte XII," an etching with aquatint from 1957, fared quite nicely against its \$3,000-5,000 estimate with a final bid of \$15,990 making it the second highest auction record for this work, and the highest auction record for this work sold out of the United States. In Michaan's final auction of 2020, the Gallery Sale one day after the Winter Fine Sale, results were similar: Alexander Calder's lithograph, "Pyramids at Night," beat its \$1,000-2,000 estimate with a final bid of \$14,760, smashing the world auction record for this work.

With a sell-through rate of 100% in the Winter Fine Sale, fine jewelry once again flexed its power to ignite Michaan's Auctions. The extraordinary diamond and platinum necklace from the Fleishhacker estate realized \$84,000 (Lot 5026). Also offered was the long strand of natural saltwater pearls, with an emerald and diamond clasp and accompanied by a GIA report (Lot 5020). Estimated at \$5,000-\$7,000, it sold for \$12,000 to the high bidder among many enthusiasts for this rare and lovely find. Period jewelry from superb private collections was abundant in the December 18 Winter Fine Sale, as it was throughout the year at Michaan's. At the December Gallery Auction the following day, jewelry alone grossed over \$140,000.

Highlighted was a diverse collection of fine Native American jewelry pieces, a perennial strength of Michaan's jewelry department, which along with the entire Michaan's team is busy preparing for the auctions coming in the new year.

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