

# Soulis Auctions shines spotlight on giants of American Regionalism art movement, Oct. 14

*Featured: Important Thomas Hart Benton works with family provenance, art by John Curry, Grant Wood, Arthur Kraft; two stunning Birger Sandzen paintings*

LONE JACK, MISSOURI, USA, October 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Pride in "homegrown" artists who've gone on to achieve success on the national or international stage is what spurred the meteoric rise of Regionalist art. Perhaps no other part of the country has embraced the Regionalist art movement with more fervor than the Midwest, leading to the theme of Soulis Auctions' October 14 event. The 320-lot Fine & Decorative Arts Auction is highlighted by original works created by luminaries of Midwest Regionalist and Kansas City art, including "The Big Three": Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood.



Thomas Hart Benton's painting and associated textile 'Benton Family on South Beach,' estimate \$60,000-\$90,000

America's heartland is where painter, muralist, printmaker and art educator Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) was born and spent most of his life. He also studied in Paris, lived in New York City for 20 years, and summered on Martha's Vineyard for half a century, all experiences that broadened his artistic horizons and ultimately brought him global recognition.

Benton was a champion of Realism whose initial opposition to the Modernist movement seemed untenable, but in the early 1920s, Benton reconsidered and opted to explore the new style. That sea change in Benton's career is embodied in an associated pair of artworks to be auctioned on October 14th as one lot. His mixed-media painting on board, executed circa 1922, is titled [Benton Family on South Beach](#). The 13.75-inch by 9.5-inch work served as the study for a much larger (53-inch by 33-inch) textile which he envisioned his wife, Rita, embellishing with needlework. The linen panel was never fully stitched, thus leaving much of Benton's original

composition visible.

The study was museum-exhibited in 1990-91 and published in Henry Adams' reference *Thomas Hart Benton: Drawing from Life*. Commenting on the study and its ultimate realization in large format on linen, Adams observed: "This is clearly quite a unique and personally significant piece from a pivotal moment in Benton's artistic development." Both the painting and unfinished needlework come from the family of the Bentons' close friend Ann Constable and will be offered as one lot with a pre-sale estimate of \$60,000-\$90,000.



Birger Sandzen (Swedish/American, 1871-1964), 'Smoky River,' 1921, oil on canvas, estimate \$60,000-\$90,000

The auction also includes several 1930s large-format, low-edition lithographs signed by Benton, with estimates in the \$2,000-\$20,000 range; as well as an endearing portrait by Margaret Brisbane (American, 1901-1970) which the Bentons commissioned in 1934 and, through photo-documentation, are known to have displayed in their home. It depicts Rita Benton with the couple's young son, T.P., and is consigned by a gallery owner who acquired it directly from the Thomas Hart Benton Trust. Estimate: \$3,000-\$4,000.

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The 'Benton Family on South Beach' painting and associated textile represent a pivotal moment in Thomas Hart Benton's artistic development.”

*Henry Adams, Author of  
'Thomas Hart Benton:  
Drawing from Life'*

A signed [Arthur Kraft](#) (Kansas City, Mo., 1922-1977) World War II-era mural, measuring 5ft by 7ft, is especially noteworthy because it pre-dates by several decades the period during which Kraft became widely recognized as an Expressionist. “To the best of my knowledge, this mural, which is a stark depiction – in a Realistic style – of the struggles brought on by World War II, has never before

been recorded. Because it is so early, and because it was painted in a style not previously connected to Kraft, we believe it will be of great interest not only locally but also at a national level,” said Soulis Auctions' owner and auctioneer, Dirk Soulis. Estimate: \$3,000-\$5,000

Two beautiful landscapes by Birger Sandzen (Swedish/American, 1871-1964) which have been held in an institutional collection for 102 and 93 years, respectively, are among the sale's top highlights. Both are listed in the Sandzen Memorial Gallery's card catalogue and are consigned by a rural Kansas library that acquired them directly from the artist.

Sandzen viewed his paintings as “nature studies” and, as he wrote in a letter to his brother, he strived for “the simplest possible means of expression.” In other words, every brushstroke had meaning. His 1921 oil-on-canvas titled *Smoky River* is a quintessential example of that approach, masterfully portraying a verdant waterside scene with light and shadow in counterpoint to lush, languid trees. Sized 30 inches by 40 inches, the artist-signed work is estimated at \$60,000-\$90,000.

Like *Smoky River*, the second Sandzen oil is from the artist’s desirable Middle Period. Titled [Golden Aspens](#), the 1929 depiction of aspen trees alongside a lake displays a robust palette of intense colors applied in high relief. The library’s acquisition of *Golden Aspens* was reported in the June 12, 1930 edition of *The Lindsborg (Kans.) Progress*, which noted that members of the institution’s art association had had their hearts set on purchasing the painting ever since it was exhibited the year prior. Soulis will offer the artwork with an \$80,000-\$120,000 estimate.

An impressive European artwork in the auction lineup is the 1928 *Portrait of Wanda Styka with Sons Andrzej and Juliusz* by Thadeus ‘Tade’ Styka (Polish, 1889-1954). Known for his Art Deco-era paintings of high society and celebrity subjects, Styka spent most of his life in Paris and New York. His portrait of his sister-in-law and her two young sons skillfully connects the viewer with the sitters through their expressive eyes and interactive gestures. Measuring 46 inches by 35 inches, this compelling work is estimated at \$8,000-\$12,000.

A Louis Vuitton chassure (shoe trunk) – almost certainly a commissioned item – is a work of art in and of itself, with 25 neatly fitted shoe compartments and eight slide-out drawers. No current or historical documentation of a trunk of its type and size could be found during research



Rare circa-1920 Louis Vuitton chassure (shoe trunk), likely a commissioned piece, estimate \$6,000-\$8,000



Arthur Kraft (Kansas City, Mo., 1922-1977), WWII-era mural, early to mid 1940s. 5 x 7ft, estimate \$3,000-\$5,000

conducted by Soulis Auctions staff. LV-stamped and serial-numbered, the luxury case is expected to sell in the range of \$8,000-\$12,000.

The auction is replete with high-quality art and decorative goods of all types, including Tiffany Studios and other lighting, palace-size and other Persian carpets, fine silver, French art glass, Asian arts, and hundreds of paintings and pencil-signed prints from several popular genres, including Modern and Southwestern.

Soulis' Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023 live gallery auction will commence at 11am CT/12noon ET. Preview by appointment or from noon till 5pm every day of the week prior to the auction. Gallery address: 529 W. Lone Jack Lee's Summit Rd., Lone Jack (suburban Kansas City), MO 64070. All forms of remote bidding will be available, including live via the Internet through LiveAuctioneers, Invaluable or Bidsquare. To reserve a phone line, leave an absentee bid or obtain additional information about any item in the auction, call 816-697-3830 or email [dirk@soulisauctions.com](mailto:dirk@soulisauctions.com). Visit Soulis online at <https://soulisauctions.com/>.

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Thadeus 'Tade' Styka (Polish, 1889-1954), circa-1927 portrait of his sister-in-law Wanda (Mrs. Adam) Styka with young sons, estimate \$8,000-\$12,000

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