Selling in the room for \$37,375

was Winter Solstice by Aldro T.

canvas was the top Hibbard in

the sale and was also the sale's

A 29" x 35" oil on canvas of

on the phone for \$21,275.

Motif #1 by Emile Gruppe sold

top lot overall.

Hibbard. The 28¾" x 33¾" oil on

WWW.AAAWT.COM

A Hibbard Heyday

by Jeanne Schinto

Carl W. Stinson Inc., North Reading, Massachusetts

by Jeanne Schinto

Photos courtesy Carl W. Stinson Inc.

Welcome Subscriber 75667 (Logout or View Account

A single-owner collection of 20 oil paintings by Aldro T. Hibbard (1886-1972), who lived and worked in New England for most of his life, sold for a total of \$217,350 (including buyers' premiums) at Carl W. Stinson's auction on November 25, 2008, at the Hillview Country Club in North Reading, Massachusetts. The sale offered 575 lots, but Hibbard's landscapes of This Hibbard winter landscape, a Vermont, his adopted hometown 23¼" x 29" oil on canvas, sold to of Rockport, Massachusetts, and a phone bidder for \$27,600.

other subjects were what brought art dealers and collectors from New York, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, and elsewhere to bid in person. Carl's son Douglas W. Stinson, principal auctioneer, said there were also phone bidders from as far away as California and Canada, with the latter vying for the Hibbard scenes of the Canadian Rockies. "Some people are saying the art

market is off by twenty percent right now. I can't say I saw that occur yesterday," Doug Stinson observed the day after the sale. Having the sale on a Tuesday and before one of the biggest travel days of the year (the Wednesday before Thanksgiving) was "a calculated risk," said Stinson. "But we thought it was best not to compete with every other auction house that would have its sale on a Saturday or Sunday. Certainly, I think it paid off." The preview felt like a beehive. Hibbard paintings were laid out

on tables, where the hungry congregated. Previewers also stood three deep waiting to get a look at the jewelry, silver, and other fresh estate items on offer. At auction time 270 live, absentee, and phone bidders were registered and ready. The auction house does not offer Internet bidding.

For a truly refreshing change, most of the action really did take place in the auction room. Items were held aloft by runners, one of the nimblest being the auction house's namesake, who also acted as prompter, providing extra descriptive details as pieces went on the block.

The Hibbard paintings belonged to the estate of a physician who lived

and practiced north of Boston. An art collector and an amateur painter

herself, she took classes with Roger W. Curtis (1910-2000). Curtis was

director of Hibbard's Ledgendsea Gallery, founded in Rockport by the

Hibbards from Curtis in the 1970's, according to correspondence and

in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The unnamed doctor bought her

artist and his wife in 1929. Later Curtis was proprietor of his own gallery

other provenance paperwork available at the preview. Present-day dealers professed to having known for years about the doctor's Hibbard collection, but it was the Stinson firm that the heirs called when they wanted to sell. Carl, who founded the auction house in 1962, had appraised them in 1983. The paintings were offered unreserved. That's why they had no estimates,

said Doug Stinson, who was a teenager when his father first saw the

collection. "Let the marketplace reflect what they're truly worth," he said

he told the doctor's family. To would-be bidders he said, "They've come to auction to be sold." To the many people who phoned asking for his predictions, however, he did unofficially estimate the top paintings at \$20,000 to \$35,000. The quality of two of the Hibbards stood out. Each was a winter scene of Vermont, where starting in the 1920's the artist began to build his reputation as "New England's finest snow painter." (The phrase is from Aldro T. Hibbard [1886-1972]: A Realist by Nature, the catalog for a

recent Hibbard exhibition of the same name at Vose Galleries of Boston.

For more information, see the sidebar.)

Cape Cod, where Hibbard was born.

For a scene of snowy mountains with a bird's-eye view of little snowtopped houses, a steepled church, and a horse-drawn sleigh in the valley, 11 phone bidders were readied. The Hibbard postcard, as this type of idyllic Hibbard painting is known, went to one of the 11 at \$27,600, making it the second to top lot of the group.

The other contender for best Hibbard in the sale was much more tightly

focused than his usual winter landscapes, more intimate, being essentially

a closeup of one of the distant views. It showed a single snowy farmhouse

enclave of a barn with red door, a wooden wagon with blue wheels, and a figure trudging through deep snow toward a yellow clapboard house. Winter Solstice was its title, Doug Stinson announced at the auctioneer's podium. According to a 1973 appraisal available to previewers, this largest (28¾" x 33¾") Hibbard in the sale was sold to the doctor for \$1300. Here it sold to a collector in the room for \$37,375. Given their smaller sizes and less highly sought subject matter, the 18 remaining Hibbards also did very well. A circa 1920 Provincetown

waterfront scene went on the phone at \$18,400. Two scenes of Vermont

in autumn sold for \$11,500 each. So did a scene of a beach in winter on

In his student years, Hibbard studied at the School of the Museum of

Fine Arts, Boston. When he graduated in 1913, he won a Paige Traveling Scholarship and went to Europe. This sale's European Hibbards dated from that postgraduate period, which extended into 1914. Three room bidders tried for the largest of the Venetian paintings, a 171/4" x 23½" oil on board, with one paying \$8625 for it. A smaller (9½" x 11¾") picture of a canal and gondola went to an absentee bidder at \$4600. Two

8½" x 9½" oil on canvas depictions from the same study trip of England's

Hibbards was another smallish Venetian harbor scene that sold in the

Thames River sold for \$2875 each. The least expensive of the 20

room for \$805. The only figural Hibbard work on offer, Woman in Doorway, purportedly a scene in Barcelona, fetched \$2012.50. While Hibbard's name conjures winter in Vermont, it is equally associated with another place and season-summertime in Rockport. In 1920 Hibbard opened the Rockport Summer School of Painting and Drawing. The following year he became a founding member of the Rockport Art Association, and the organization's first headquarters was

his studio. Rockport's Motif #1, a fishing shack on the harbor, is famous

as a subject for painters drawn to the beauty of the Cape Ann region. For

many springs, it was Hibbard's responsibility to choose the exact shade of

red that the town would paint it. At the Stinson sale, there was a painting

of fishing boats by Hibbard that showed a corner of Motif #1 and all of

Motif #2, a gray fishing shack right next to it. The painting sold in the

room for \$16,100. In 1925 Hibbard married Winifred Jackman. They honeymooned in Carmel, California, and the Canadian Rockies. That's how Hibbard's paintings of those places can be dated so precisely. (That's also why they invariably elicit ribald comments—e.g., why was he painting on his honeymoon anyway?) On November 16, 2005, a 30" x 34" oil on canvas of the Carmel coast by Hibbard sold at Christie's in Los Angeles for \$60,000 (est. \$20,000/30,000). According to the Web site Artfact, it is the public

auction price record for a Hibbard. At the Stinson sale, a small (171/2" x

honeymoon trip, sold on the phone for \$10,350. The same bidder paid

the same price for an untitled scene that was considered another view of

14½") oil on board of Bow River, Canada, also presumed from the

the Canadian Rockies.

Massachusetts, collection.

Since the whole sale grossed about \$610,000, the Hibbards obviously accounted for a hefty percentage, but beyond those works a number of other noteworthy items brought strong prices and generated excitement. One was an oil on canvas of Motif #1 by another Cape Ann favorite, Emile Gruppe (1896-1978). Shirley Erwin, the nonagenarian former owner of Rockport's Peg Leg Inn and Cap'n Peg Leg restaurant, bought it directly from the artist, Doug Stinson told his audience. It sold on the phone for \$21,275. Bidders also went for paintings by Charles P. Gruppe (Emile's father), Robert Spear Dunning, and William Starbuck Macy,

and an array of Japanese woodblock prints from a Wayland,

In addition to the Stinson family, at least one other antiques business family was represented in the room. Not there for the art, John Delaney, his wife, Barbara, and their son John Jr. bought what turned out to be the sale's second to top lot—Shirley Erwin's Aaron Willard tall-case clock. Doug Stinson said Erwin bought it in 1940 for \$1500 from a dealer in Haverhill, Massachusetts. When the inn was established in the 1950's, she and her husband, Hermon, moved the clock into that space. After they sold the inn, the clock went into their Rockport home. Inside the

clock case's door were pasted a couple of repair labels from the 1920's,

both from George B. Jackson of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, whose

printed advertising slogan stated, "At your own home. No go, no pay." By then, the clock was probably 100 years old. With competition from phone bidders and others, the Delaneys bought the Willard for \$34,500. They also bought an early 19th-century New Hampshire tall-case clock that was owned by the collectors who consigned the Japanese woodblock prints. Signed in multiple places by J.D. Jones of Pittsfield, the clock fetched \$8050. A third tall-case clock from the same period, an unsigned New Hampshire example, consigned by the estate of William R. York Jr. of Boston's Beacon Hill, brought \$4025. The Delaneys took that one too.

Well-respected dealers based in West Townsend, Massachusetts, the Delaneys bought the lyre wall clock from the York estate for \$4600. It was from the shop of Boston clockmaker John Sawin (1801-1863). They did not try for the fourth tall-case clock in the sale. Actually, it is the kind often referred to as a hall clock. In a heavy, ornately carved case with nine long tubular chimes for striking the hours as well as playing various chimes on the quarters, it was signed by its retailer, Tiffany & Company. tall-case clock occurred, led by Providence, Rhode Island, businessman

Hall clocks like these generally date from the 1890's, when a revival of the Walter Durfee. This one, circa 1900, came from a Cape Cod consignor and sold to a bidder in the room for \$4312.50. Other good performers were a piece of worm-decorated redware that sold for \$5750; jewelry from the estate of Mrs. Allyn Forbes of Cambridge, Massachusetts, most significantly a gold necklace, signed Buccellati, that sold for \$8050; and four separately offered folk art whales, carved by

Clark Voorhees, that brought a total of \$10,407.50. Bargains included a Seymour-attributed chest for \$3450 and a pair of English knife boxes at \$2300. A collection of cufflinks in 15 lots brought \$12,448.75. Beyond the prices, the sale was a reminder of two important truths: auctions can be exciting if most of the players are present—or at least

For more information, phone (781) 259-3200 or see the Web site (www.StinsonAuctions.com).

bidding by phone rather than computer; and good stuff continues to

emerge from the households, estates, and collections of New England.

Originally published in the March 2009 issue of Maine Antique Digest. (c) 2009 Maine Antique Digest

This ad space now available.

Call 1-877-237-6623 for details.

comments powered by Disqus



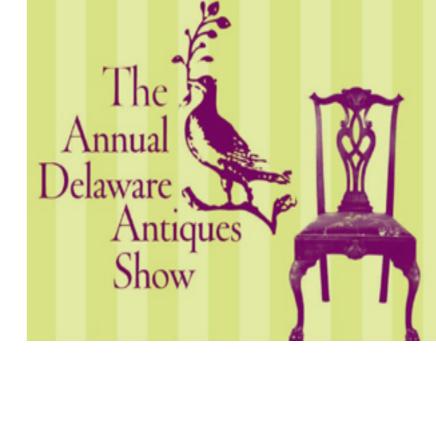












Got it!