

Grogan & Company, Dedham, Massachusetts

Fire Screen "Possibly" Going Back to White House

by Jeanne Schinto
Photos courtesy Grogan

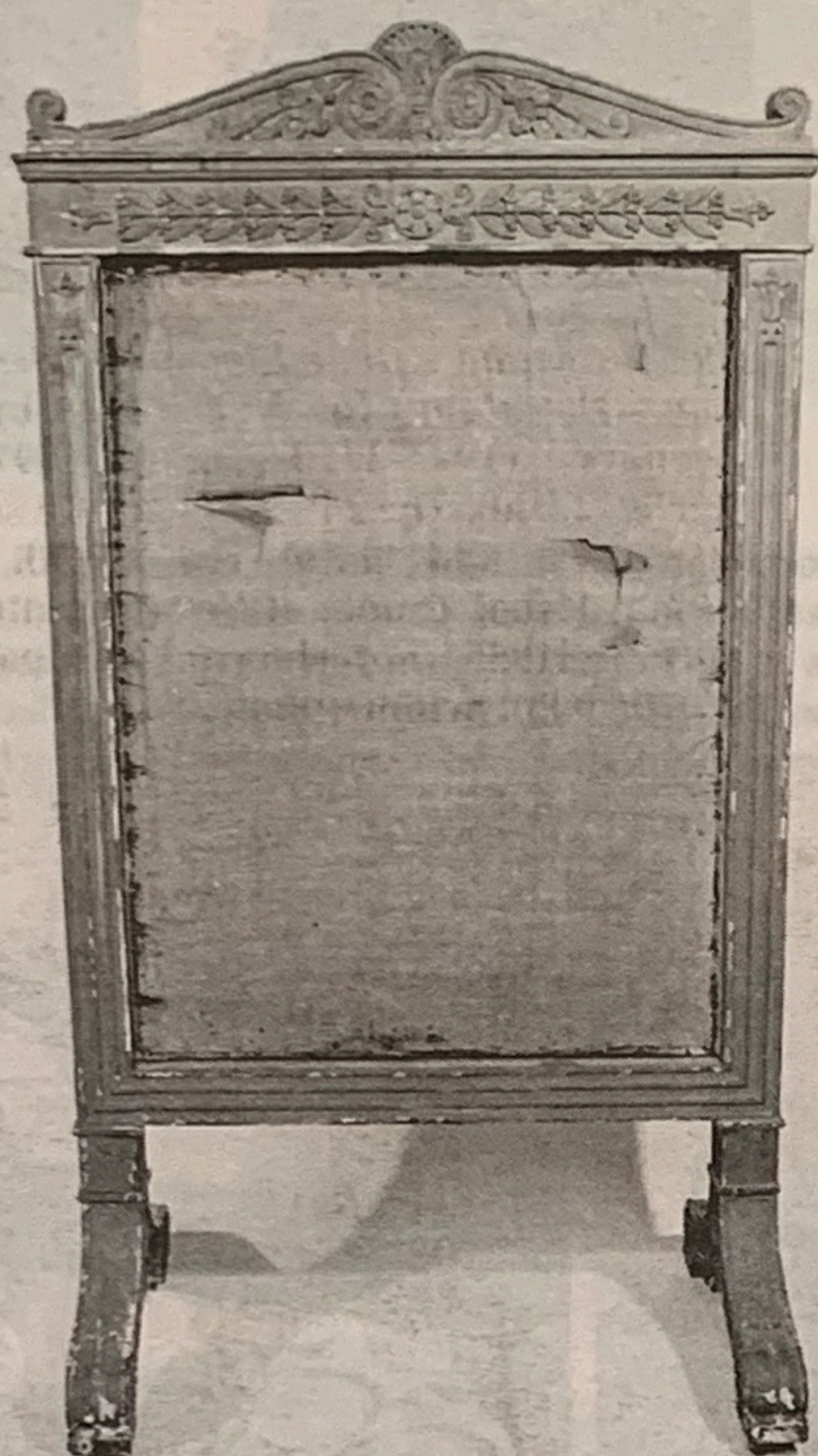
An early 19th-century carved giltwood fire screen, cataloged as "possibly" designed for the White House by Parisian ébéniste Pierre-Antoine Bellangé, sold for \$22,420 (including buyer's premium) to one of three competing phone bidders at Grogan & Company's sale in Dedham, Massachusetts, on May 20. Apparently, at least those three competitors thought the "possibly" was "probably" or even "certainly."

"We're so lucky that the family tipped us off that there was a White House provenance, because otherwise it would have been just an eight-hundred-dollar fire screen."

Michael B. Grogan, the auction house's president and chief auctioneer, who usually will tell the press whether a buyer is a collector or dealer, said this time he wasn't allowed to reveal anything about the identity of the screen's new owner. "They'll want to make the announcement themselves," he said.

In 1817, during the first administration of James Monroe, Bellangé designed two fire screens as part of a 53-piece suite for the White House's Blue Room. Three years prior, British troops had set fire to the presidential residence during the War of 1812. It was almost completely destroyed and was then reconstructed as the building we know today. In 1860, during the James Buchanan presidency, another renovation took place at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, and both screens were sold at auction in Washington, along with the rest of the Bellangé sofas, chairs, stools, footstools, et cetera. Since 1961, five armchairs, two side chairs, and one sofa have been returned to the White House. We'll have to wait and see if this screen joins them.

The screen came to the sale along with about 175 other items from the estate of Lawrence Maguire (1946-2012) of Wellesley, Massachusetts, and Rye, New Hampshire. A retired librarian, with 41 years of service at the Wellesley Free Library (including work as a part-timer in high school), Maguire collected European antiques and fine art. "We're so lucky that the family tipped us off that there was a White House provenance, because otherwise it would have been just an eight-hundred-dollar fire screen," said Grogan, who estimated it at \$2000/4000. "I don't think anyone would have ever figured that out."



The 47½" x 27" carved giltwood fire screen, possibly by French cabinetmaker Pierre-Antoine Bellangé (circa 1760-1844), sold to an unidentified phone bidder for \$22,420 (est. \$2000/4000).

The screen was unmarked and is in need of restoration.

Some of Maguire's works by old masters also brought good prices. A sepia ink drawing of Christ holding an angle, cataloged as "Manner of Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Guercino)," sold on the phone for \$29,500 (est. \$500/700). Two old master oil-on-panel portraits offered as one lot went to an Italian dealer in the room for the same price on the same estimate. One was a Madonna cataloged as "possibly 17th century"; the other was an image of a scholar dated 19th century. Grogan's guess was that the scholar drove the price.

"It's really terrifically well painted," he said of the painting, whose reverse bore several collector's wax seals, including one that incorporated the initials APM. "I'm sure the buyer will be attributing it when it's all cleaned up."

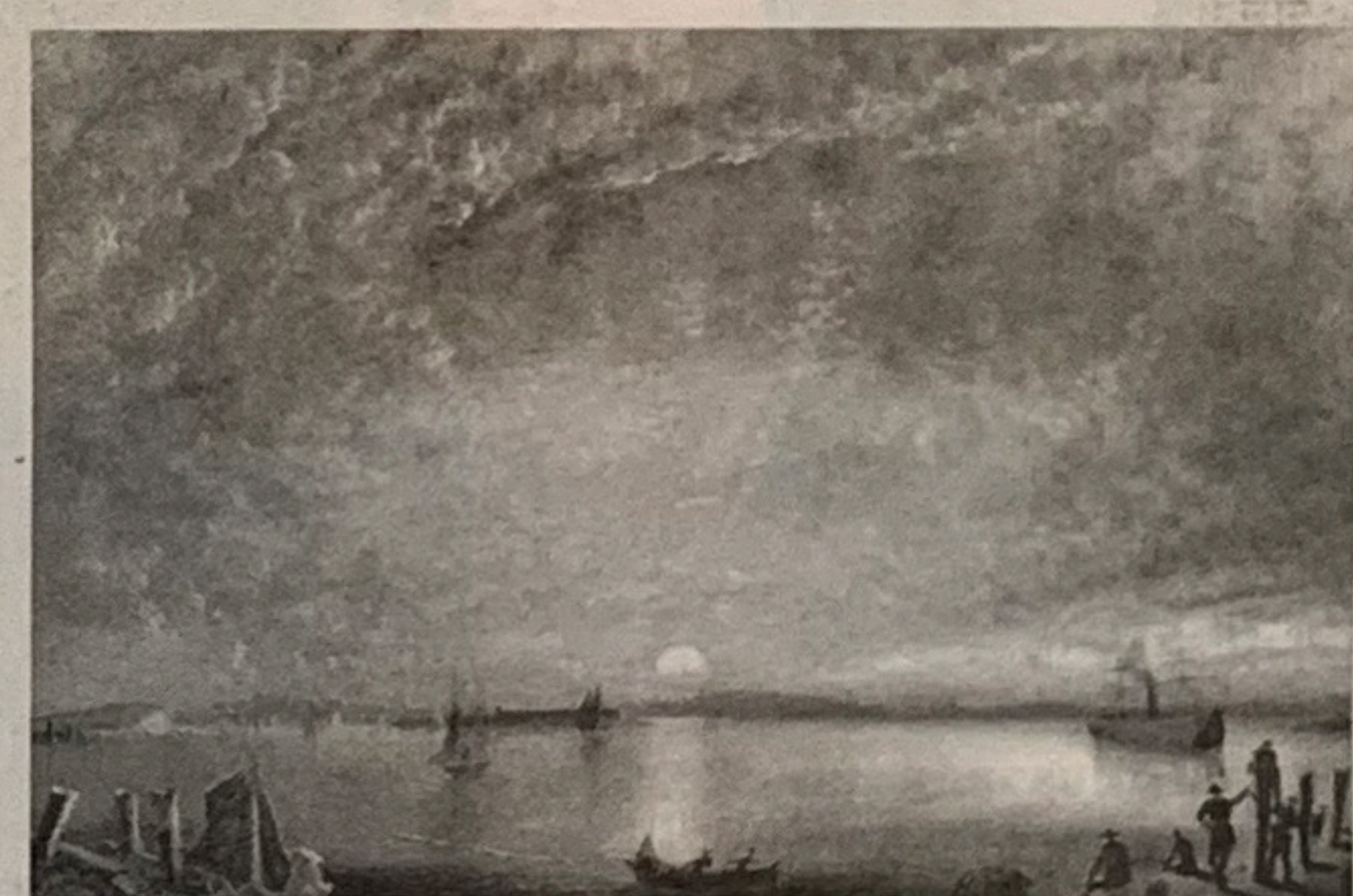
The top lot of the day was from the 20th century. It was Josef Albers's circa 1964 *Homage to the Square: Late Sound*. The 40" x 40" oil on masonite, which will be included in the artist's catalogue raisonné, sold for \$236,000 (est. \$200,000/400,000) to a private collector over the phone with little competition. Grogan said it was consigned by



Still Life by Anton Faistauer (1887-1930), an important Austrian Modernist, sold for \$112,100 (est. \$30,000/40,000). The 26" x 35" oil on canvas makes evident that French painters, especially Cézanne, influenced Faistauer. Schinto photo.



Vermont Snowy Mantle by Aldro Thompson Hibbard (1886-1972), oil on canvas, 24" x 36", went to an Internet bidder at \$11,495 (est. \$10,000/15,000).



Sunset over Baltimore Harbor by Nicolino Calyo (1799-1884) brought \$10,520 (est. \$10,000/15,000) from a phone bidder. The 26" x 36" oil on canvas in a carved and gilt gesso frame (not shown) dates from 1834-35.

a resident of Maine who was one of Grogan's childhood friends. The friend inherited it from his parents, who lived in Grosse Pointe, Michigan.

The Albers work has a connection to the current White House. There are two other works from the "Homage to the Square" series on loan there. They are *Elected II* and *Midday*, both courtesy of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and somewhat controversial, because they are abstract and therefore purportedly "elitist."

The catalog's cover lot, a modern still life of fruit by Austrian Anton Faistauer, went to an Austrian on the phone at \$112,100, more than three times its high estimate. Faistauer was a student-colleague of Egon Schiele at Akademie der Bilden-



This 11-piece black kesi (cut silk) imperial dragon suit of parade armor, possibly Qing Dynasty, sold for \$112,100 (est. \$8000/10,000).



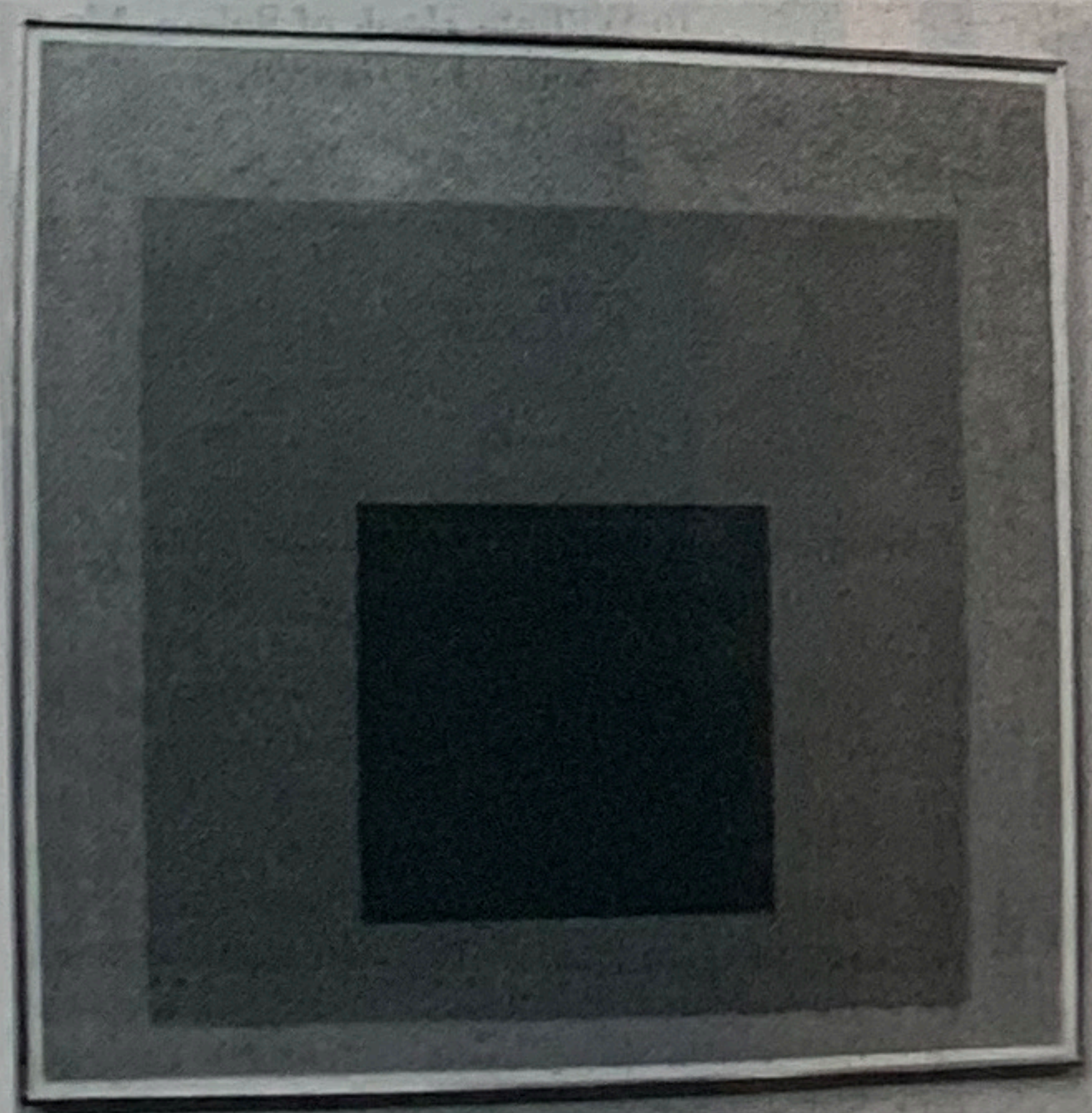
Woman Playing Harp by Frederick Hendrik Kaemmerer (1839-1902) went to a phone bidder at \$16,520 (est. \$6000/8000). The 43" x 25" oil on canvas was signed by the Dutch artist.

den Künste in Vienna in 1906-09. There he helped found the *Neukunstgruppe* ("New Art Group") with Schiele and others in protest over their conservative academy training. The oil on canvas came from "an older man with European roots," who consigned about 15 other items to the sale, said Grogan.

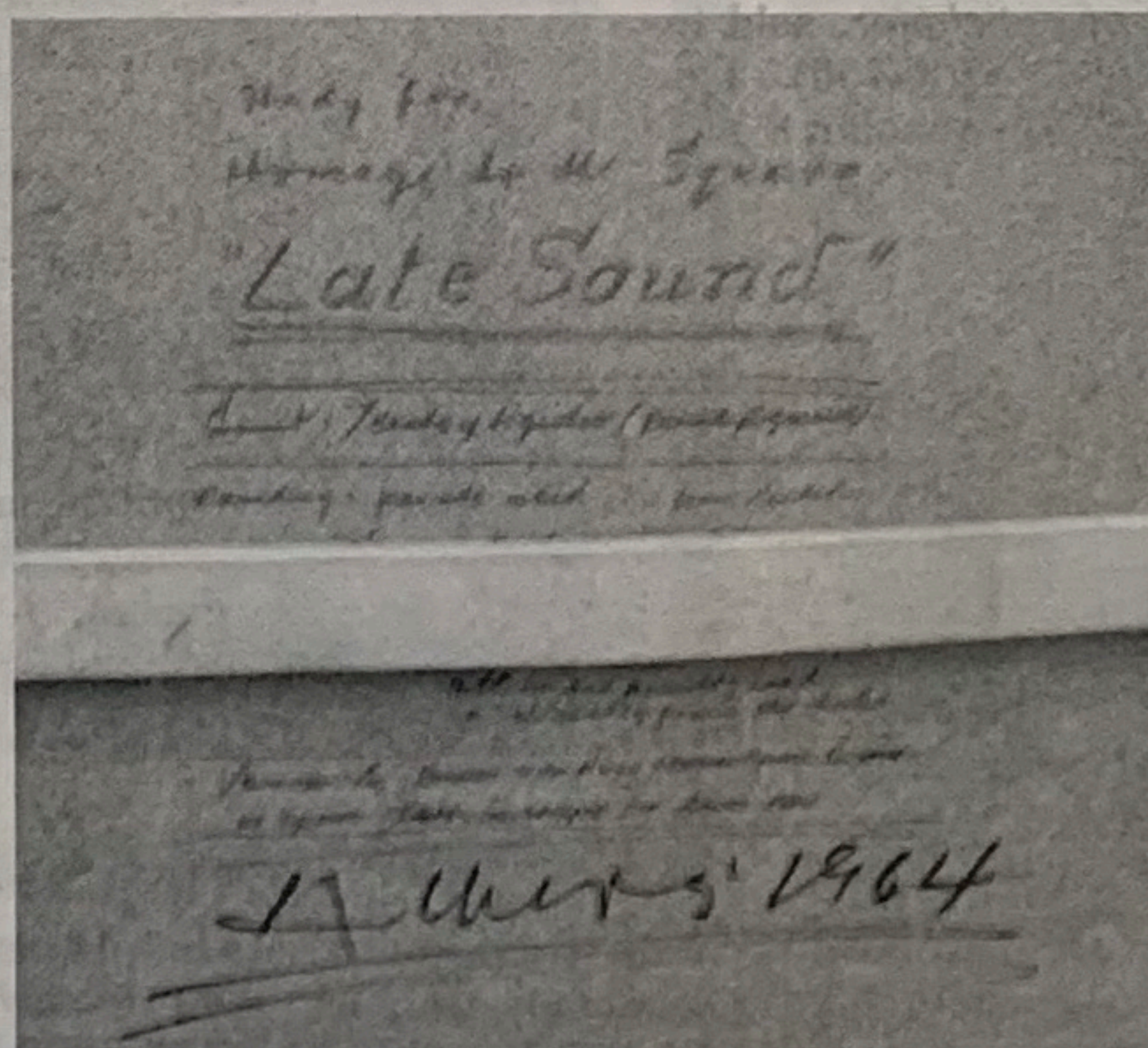
A Canadian phone bidder paid \$112,100, well over the \$8000/10,000 estimate, for an unusual Asian item consigned by a local Chinese family living in Boston. It was an 11-piece black kesi (cut silk) imperial dragon suit of parade armor cataloged as "possibly" from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) or later.

The approximately 600-lot auction, which grossed a little under \$2 million, concluded with over 100 rugs and carpets from various sources, several of which brought five figures from "major players" (Grogan's words) on phones from Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, London, and New York. "We were very fortunate to have seven or eight collector's rugs that were really dirty, 'as-is,' right out of local New England houses," said Grogan.

Asked for a definition of "collector's rug," Grogan said, "Good ones that are



This 40" x 40" oil on masonite by Josef Albers (1888-1976) fetched \$236,000 (est. \$200,000/400,000). Signed, dated, and titled on reverse, "Study for/ Homage to the Square/ 'Late Sound'/ ...Albers 1964," it consists of a black square within a gray square within a blue one. Schinto photos.



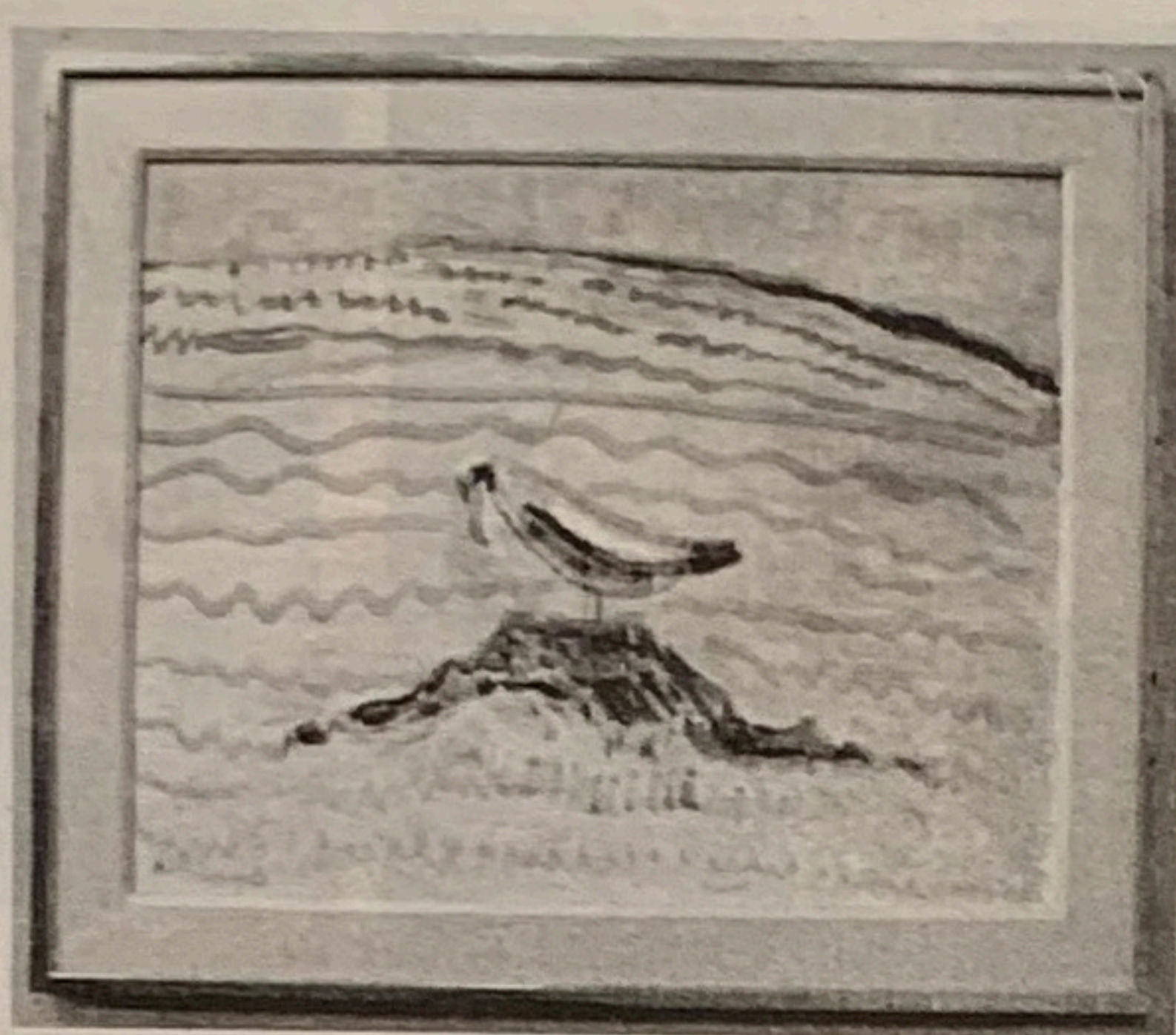


At the Café by Robert Koehler (1850-1917), circa 1887, bore a stamp from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The 19 5/8" x 15" oil on panel, signed and inscribed "Robt. Koehler Munchen" by the German-American artist, sold to a phone bidder for \$17,700 (est. \$10,000/20,000). Schinto photo.

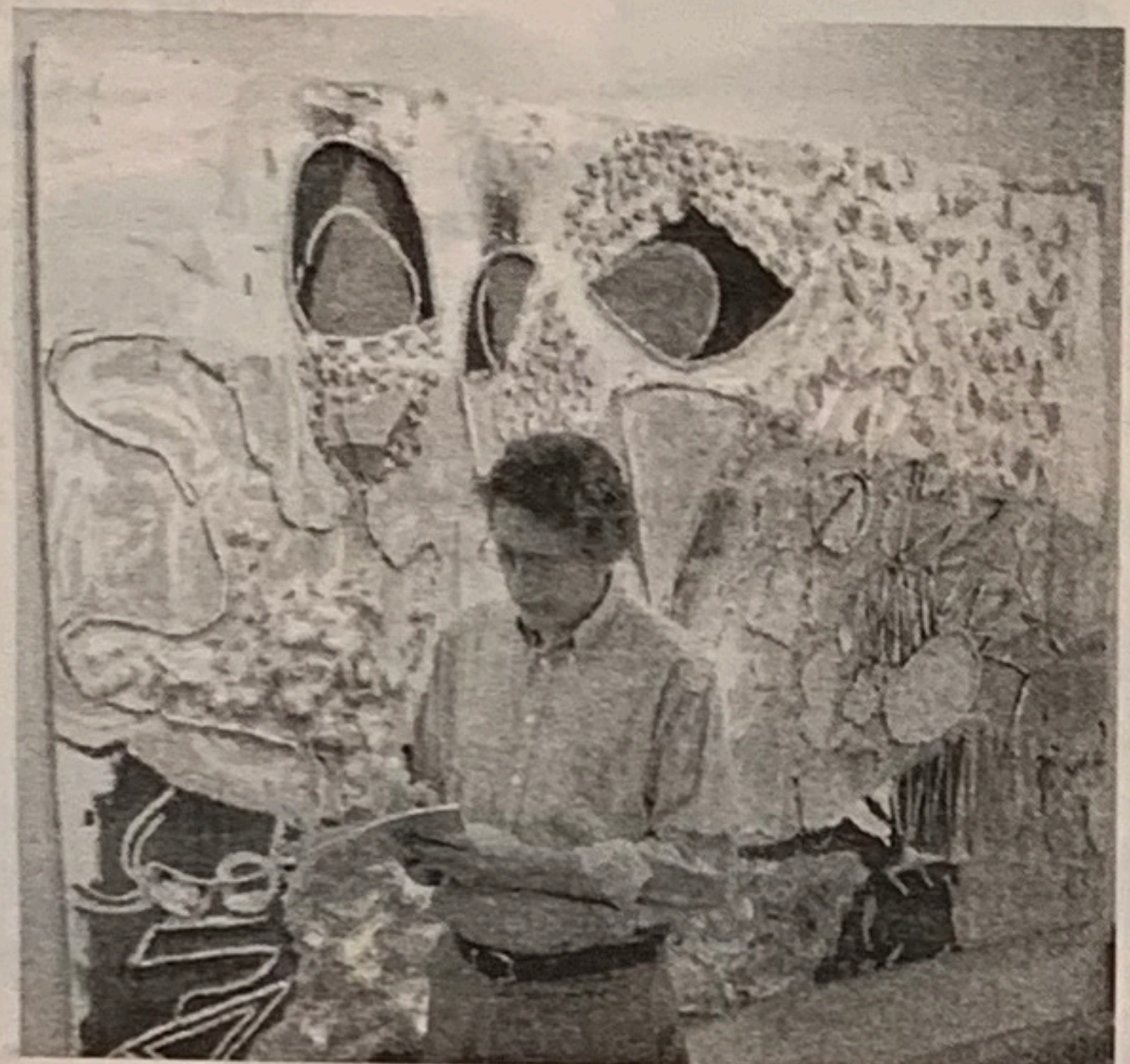
old enough and rare enough that they create interest. That's the thing. The rug market is as selective now as any market, if not more so. Nobody's looking for inventory. They're looking for great things that they can turn around and sell."

As for whether collector's rugs ever get put on the floor, he said, "They do if you're really rich, but they're generally destined for the wall."

Grogan & Company's next sale is scheduled for September 30. For more information, contact the auction house at (781) 461-9500 or see the Web site (www.groganco.com).



Birds in Bay by Milton Avery (1885-1965) was passed at \$30,000 (est. \$50,000/100,000). The 22" x 28" oil on canvas board was signed and dated 1962. It came from the same source as the Josef Albers painting. Schinto photo.



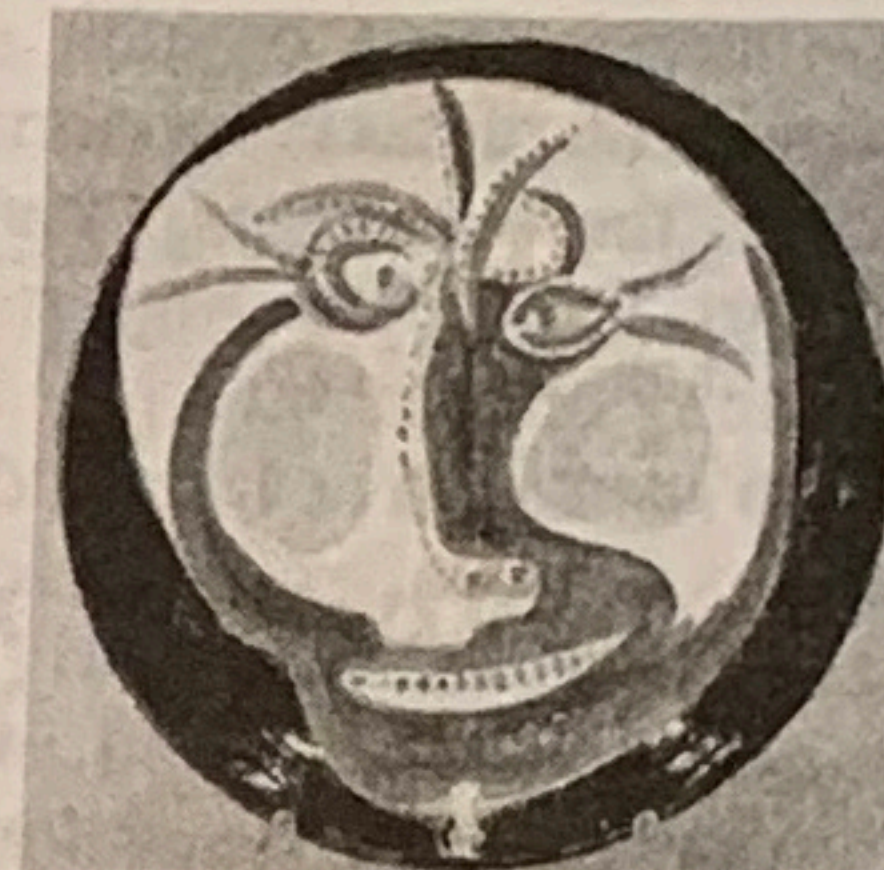
Shortly before the sale began, a previewer made notes in front of *Cat's Eye*, 97B-5 by Larry Poons (b. 1937). Our guess is that he was noting another piece in the sale. The approximately 89" x 131" mixed media and acrylic on canvas from 1997 did not have bidders (est. \$15,000/20,000). Neither did Poons's *Secret Sun*, 90A-3 (not shown), an earlier (1990), smaller (60" x 54 1/2") work in the same medium (est. \$10,000/15,000). Schinto photo.



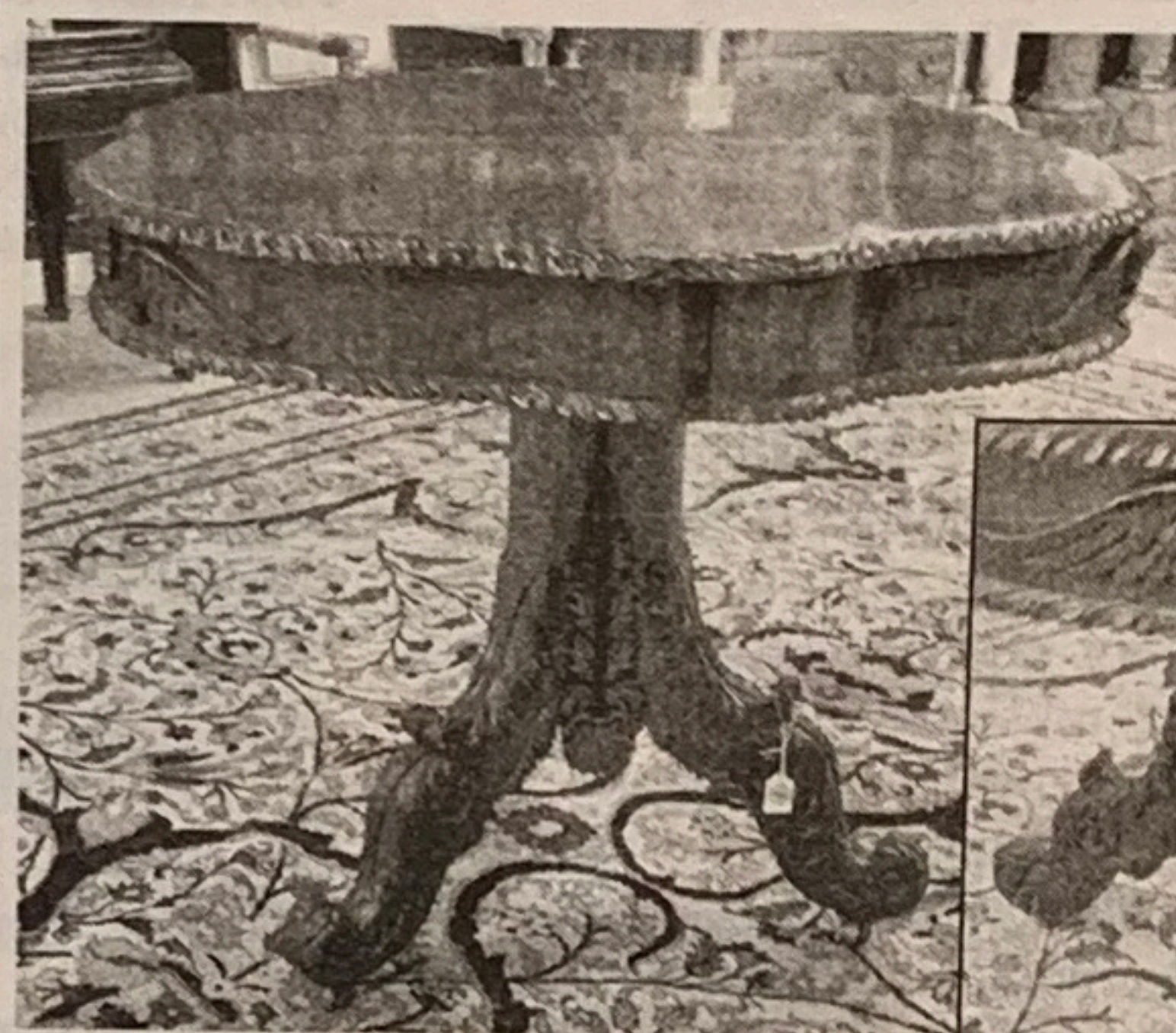
Ella Fitzgerald - Duke Ellington - Benny Goodman - Downbeat Club NYC - 1949 by Herman Leonard (1923-2010) made \$9735 (est. \$8000/12,000). The 24" x 30" gelatin silver print is signed and numbered 22/50. Another Leonard photograph, of Frank Sinatra in New York in 1955 (not shown), was passed (est. \$3000/5000). Schinto photo.



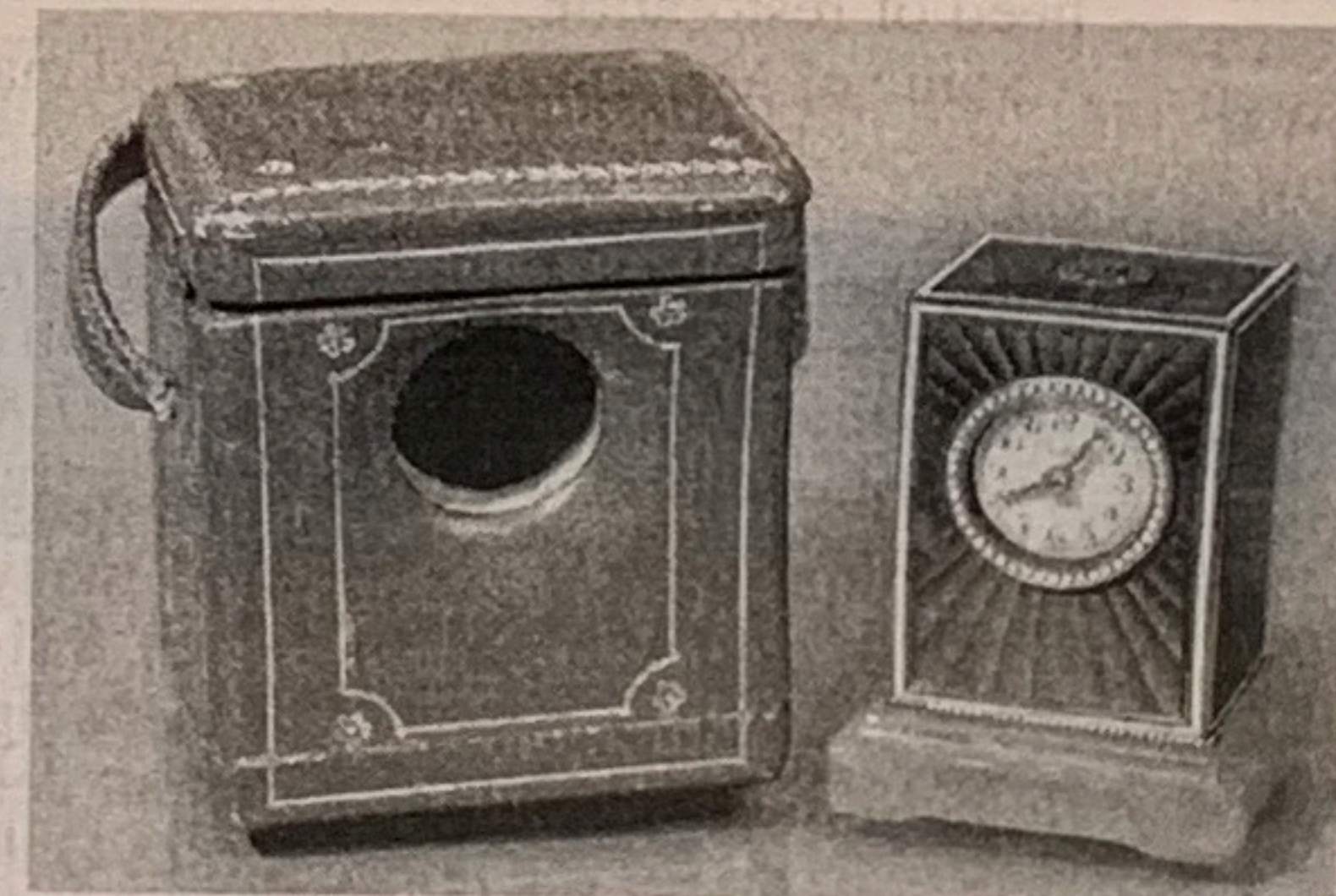
The Wolf Hunt, cataloged as "after" Russian artist Nikolai Ivanovich Lieberich (1828-1883), went to a phone bidder at \$17,700 (est. \$5000/7000). The 24" x 36" bronze is signed in Cyrillic on its base.



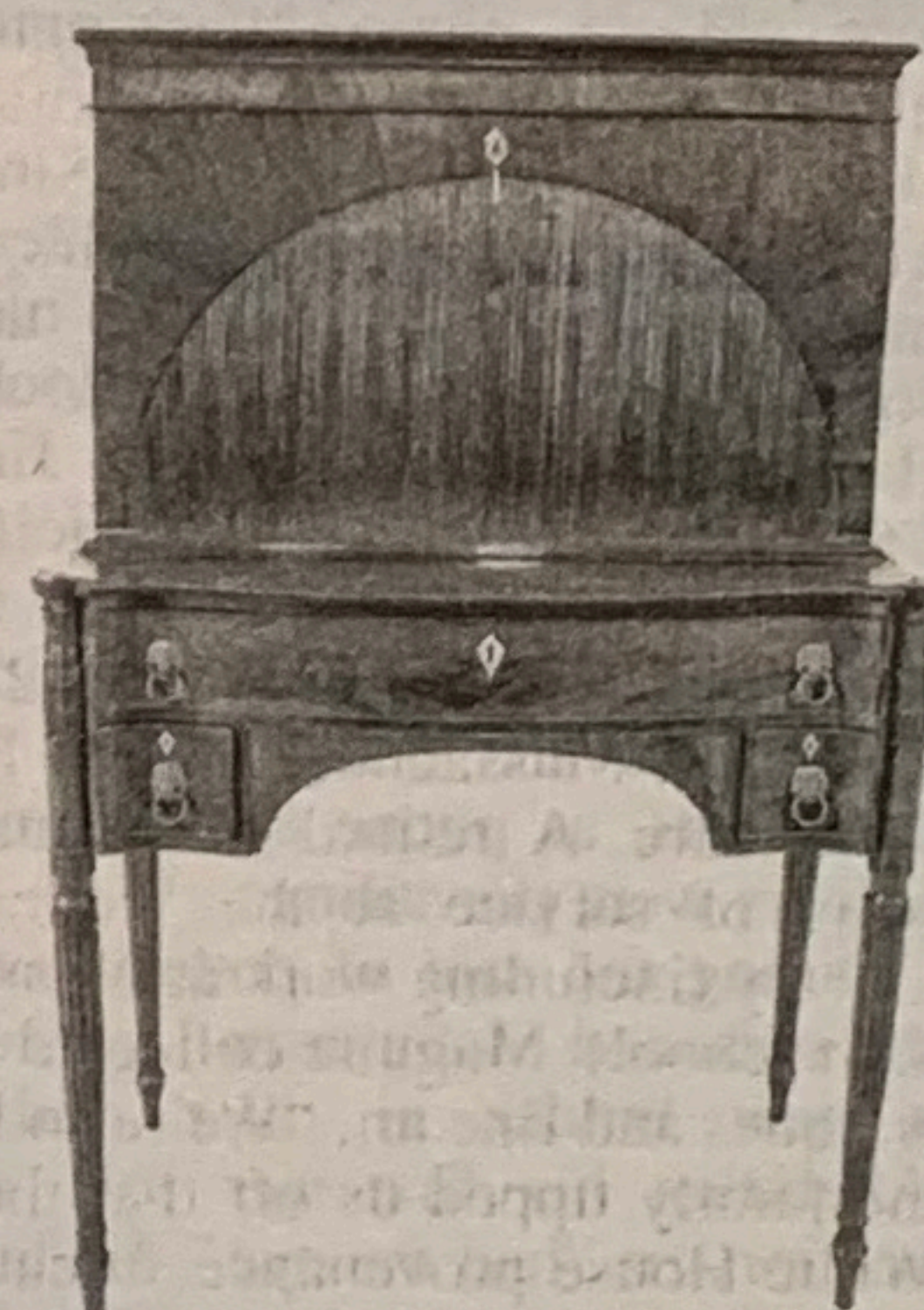
Two 16 3/4" diameter glazed earthenware chargers by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) sold separately for \$15,930 and \$23,600, respectively (est. \$15,000/20,000 each). The buyers of the circa 1960 *Visage, Bull's Head* and the circa 1956 *Jacqueline at the Easel* were both on the Internet.



This 30" x 37" circa 1840 carved and figured mahogany center table with patriotic eagles sold to a resident of Texas for \$10,620 (est. \$10,000/20,000). The rug beneath it is a 10'7" x 15'4" circa 1910 Persian Tabriz that sold for \$11,495 (est. \$5000/10,000). Schinto photos.



The Cartier name has cachet, which one may as well pronounce as "cash." This circa 1910 travel clock, a 2" tall "pendulette de voyage miniature" made by the Parisian horologist in green guilloché enamel, achieved \$26,550 (est. \$3000/5000). Whether all things were relatively equal or not, an unsigned 1 5/8" tall Swiss example of the same style clock (not shown) was passed (est. \$2000/4000).



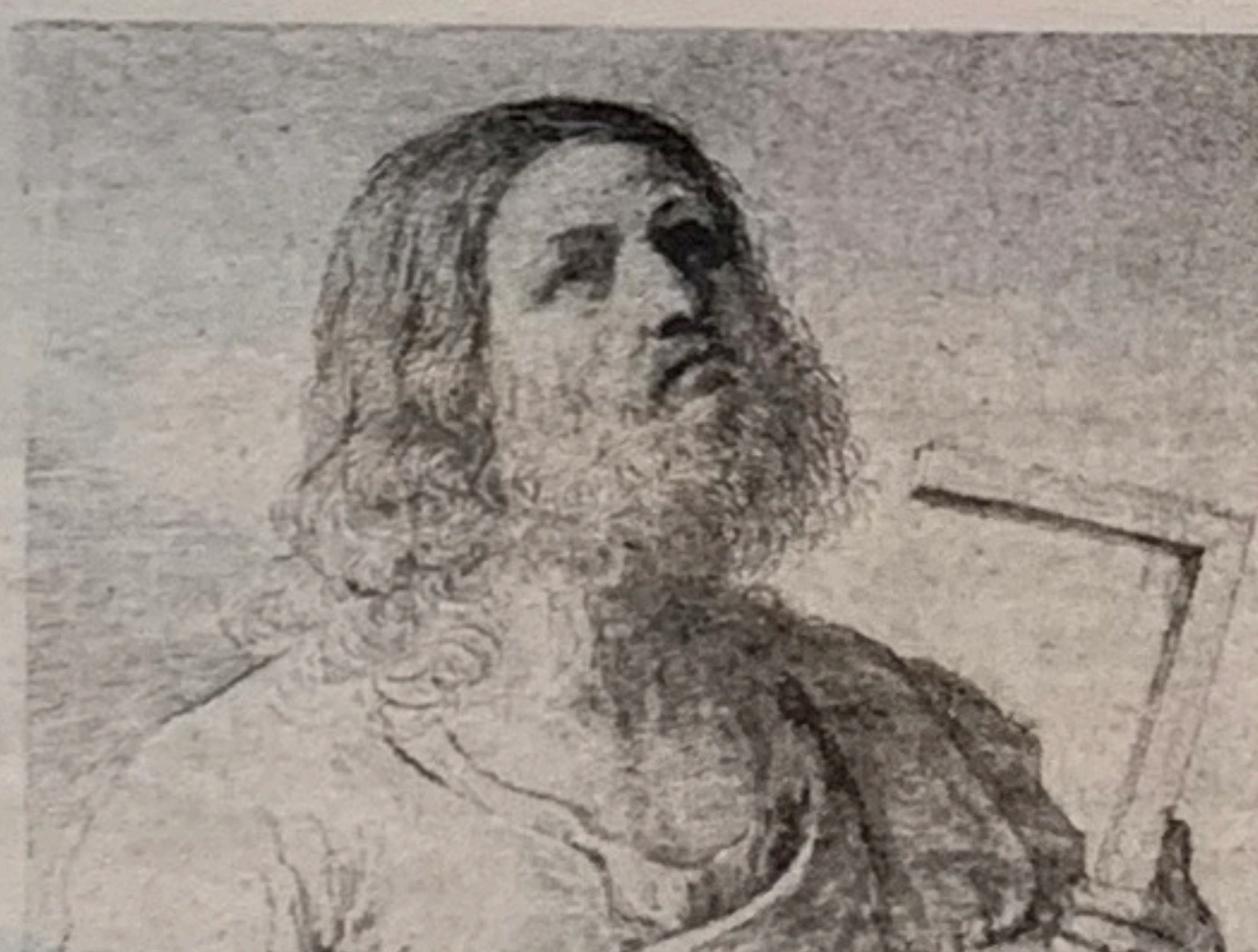
A circa 1820 Federal carved mahogany fall-front secretary sold for \$18,880 (est. \$5000/10,000). It was attributed to William Hook of Salem, Massachusetts (1777-1869).



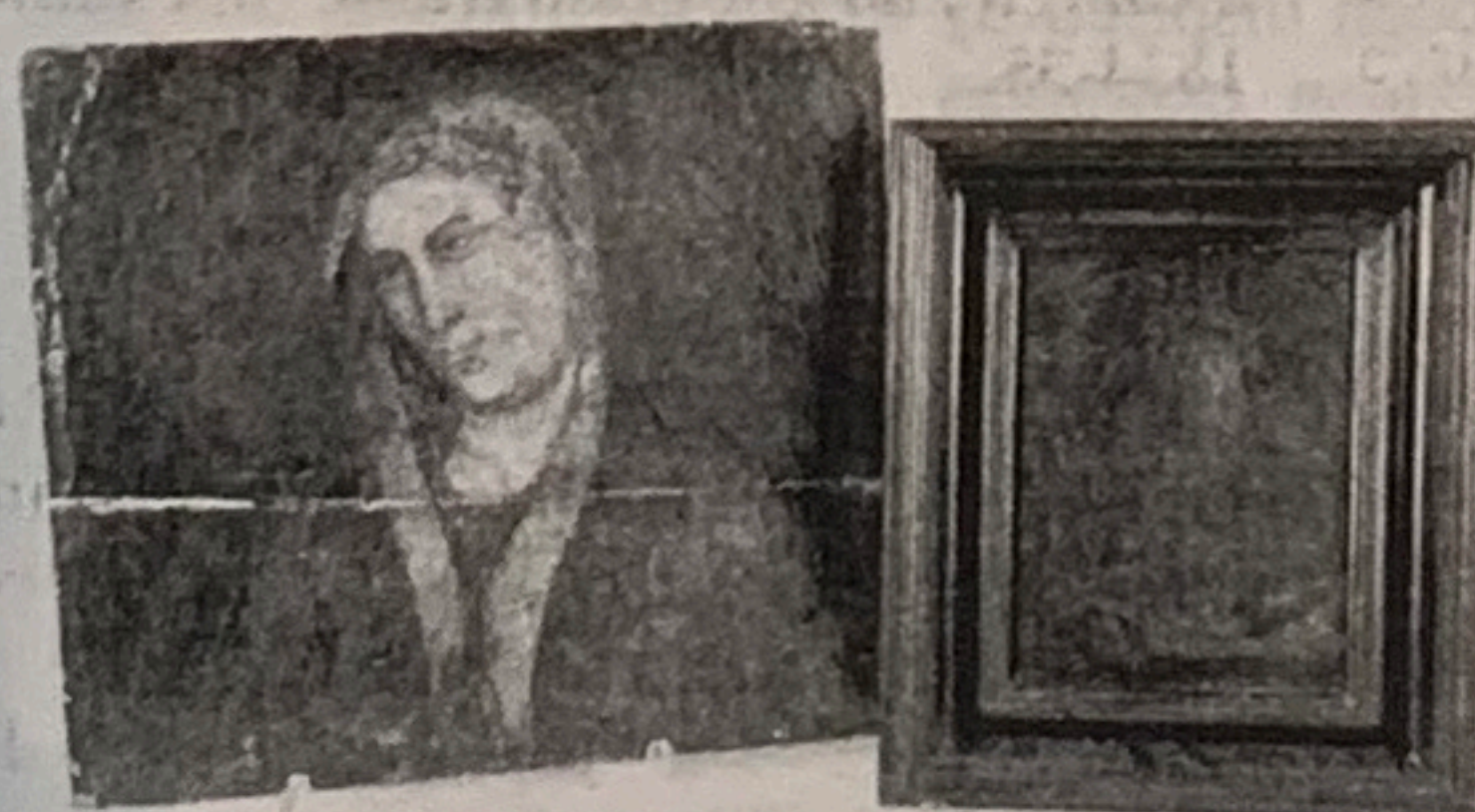
A 5'9" x 4'10" circa 1825 Chinese dragon rug with an apricot-colored ground came from a house in Andover, Massachusetts, and sold for \$32,450 (est. \$2000/4000).



A pair of 40 1/2" tall 19th-century Louis XVI-style patinated and gilt bronze figural six-light candelabra fetched \$21,240 (est. \$5000/8000). Maguire estate.



This 8" x 10 1/4" sepia ink drawing in the manner of Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Il Guercino (1591-1666), sold for \$29,500 (est. \$500/700). Maguire estate.



Two old master oils on panel, *Portrait of the Madonna* and *Portrait of a Scholar*, sold in one lot for \$29,500 (est. \$500/700). The Madonna is 14 1/2" x 16 1/4"; the scholar, 8 1/2" x 6 1/2". Maguire estate.



A West Anatolian village rug from the late 17th or early 18th century with a Transylvanian design, 6'9" x 5', sold for \$41,300 (est. \$10,000/20,000).

This 75" tall circa 1920 Wurlitzer Military Band organ fetched \$11,495 (est. \$1000/2000). Schinto photo.

The highlight of the rug portion of the sale was this 19th-century Kuba long rug, 9' x 4'2", with a yellow ground; it sold on the phone for \$44,250 (est. \$8000/12,000).



A collection of Japanese and Chinese cloisonné realized \$17,700 (est. \$700/900). The most coveted piece in the lot was believed to be the Japanese enamel box. Maguire estate.

