

Boston, Massachusetts

Fine Art Show Gives Boston's Art World "Critical Mass"

by Jeanne Schinto

The people who attended the 15th annual Boston International Fine Art Show November 17-20, 2011, were a "very serious" lot, said Tony Fusco, who co-produces with Robert Four two other shows in the same space, the city's extraordinary circular Cyclorama. "They spent a lot of time looking at things very closely. It was a very focused audience this year."

Even before the show began, would-be showgoers were peppering Fusco with "very specific questions" on the phone, he said. "They were asking, 'Will there be any works by [Aldro T.] Hibbard?' 'What should I expect to see in nineteenth-century works?' Things like that."

Time is money, and people who still have plenty of the latter usually don't have much of the former to spare. They want every minute to count.

"I met a charming woman who told me, 'Oh, I was here two years ago and just had to come back.' She was from Bermuda," said Fusco. "Was she in Boston on holiday, I asked her?"

If Boston didn't already have this show, some smart producers would want to step in and create it.

No," she said. She flew in specifically for the show. That's an enviable life, but an anomalous one even among the "idle rich," a phrase that should be declared archaic, if it hasn't already been. For most collectors a destination needs to offer multiple reasons for a visit. Thanks to what has happened in Boston over the last few years, the city now has exactly that. There's the Art of the Americas collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) that celebrated its first birthday in November 2011; the MFA's months-old Linde Family Wing for Contemporary Art; the recent gift to the MFA of 67 pieces of African-American and African-Brazilian art by collector John P. Axelrod (seven are currently on view); the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum that reopens January 19; and the Institute of Contemporary Art (founded in 1936) in its Diller Scofidio + Renfro building that opened on the harbor waterfront in 2006.

If Boston didn't already have this show, some smart producers would want to step in and create it.

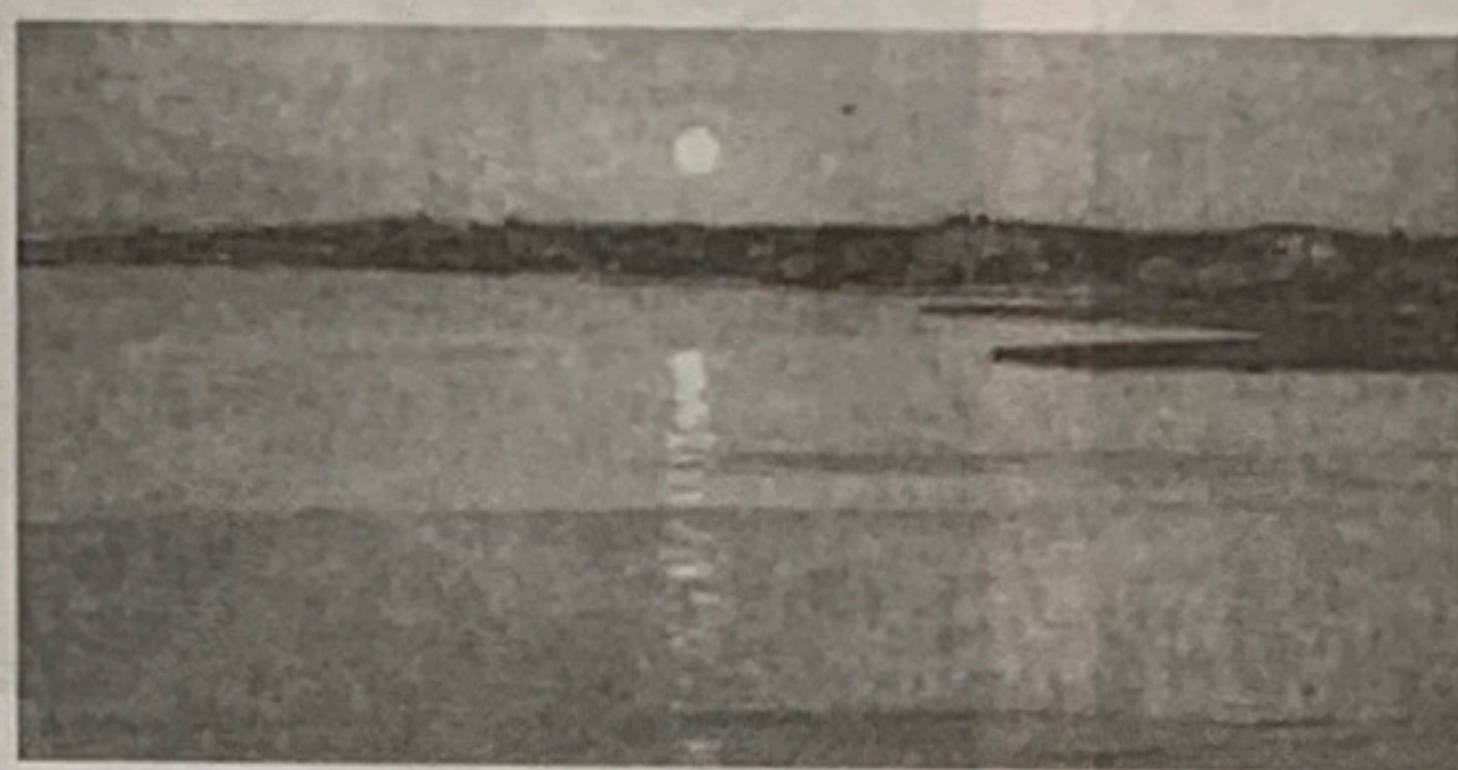
"This weekend gives the art world in Boston real critical mass," said Fusco. "We hear from the other Boston galleries that don't do the show that they see more people on this weekend. People who come here do the show; they do the other galleries; they do the museums. We're happy to hear that."

"And we do advertise heavily to the hospitality industry, and we're never disappointed. People in town who didn't come to Boston specifically to come to the show are looking to see what there is to do."

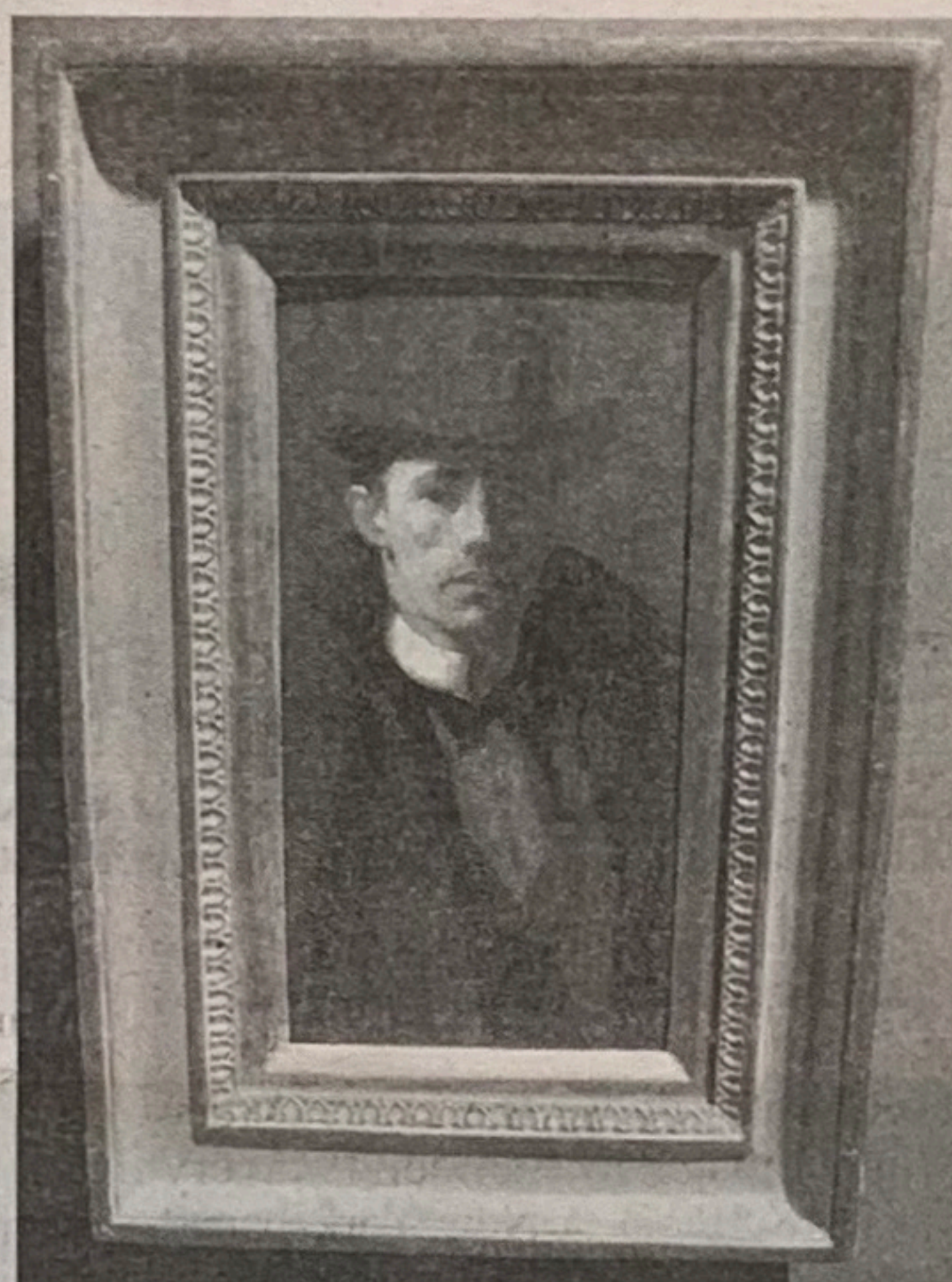
Regarding gate numbers, Fusco said paid attendance was "just a bit higher than last year's," although the overall numbers were down. "That's because last year we did a special promotion through Groupon," which yielded 250 people. "But we found that they weren't the right crowd. They were just curiosity seekers and bargain hunters."

To bring in more bona fide art buyers, Fusco said they "did much more targeted promotions this year." That attracted "better prospects, from museums, through our sponsor Flexjet, and through our media sponsors." (For those unfamiliar with Flexjet, the company is a self-described "fractional jet ownership provider.")

The jet set notwithstanding, the show still draws its audience mainly from Boston and Greater Boston, and most of what the 40 dealers brought reflects what they believe that demographic wants to see. For some, that means regional art. For others,



A few days after the show closed, Boston's Martha Richardson brought *Moonrise, Essex, Massachusetts* to a collector's house for a second look. The 14 1/4" x 27 1/2" oil on canvas sold. A fresh work, it had descended in the family of the artist, John Leslie Breck (1860-1899). "That was a huge sale," Richardson said without being specific about the price. "So I'm extremely pleased. I could not be happier. And it's going to someone who is putting together a fantastic collection." Photo courtesy Martha Richardson Fine Art.



Martha Richardson asked \$28,000 for *Self-Portrait with Hat* by William M. Paxton (1869-1941). The 8 3/4" x 5" oil on board was painted circa 1898 and has a Vose Galleries provenance.

it gets more complicated.

Howard Shapiro of Davenport & Shapiro Fine Arts, East Hampton, New York, said, "We were planning to do a very traditional display, and then there was an article in the *New York Times* that said, with the opening of the MFA's new contemporary wing, there has been a flowering of interest in more modern and contemporary art in Boston. So we



This set of six 10 3/4" x 7 3/4" oil on canvas paintings by Alexander Brook (1898-1980) was \$5500 from Martha Richardson. Each depicts Peggy Bacon (1895-1987), the wife of Brook and an artist and writer. The work, which descended in the artist's family, sold at the gala to an unnamed institution.

decided to bring an eclectic mix of traditional and classic modern."

Shapiro was rewarded within the first 30 minutes of the Thursday night preview gala—a benefit for the Greater Boston Food Bank—when a couple bought *Rainy Day*, a street scene by Anthony Thieme. The circa 1930 oil on canvas in a Newcomb-Macklin frame was marked \$25,000. The dealer also sold an oil floral still life with a Buddha by Frederick Milton Grant (1886-1959), who was a student of William Merritt Chase (1849-1916).

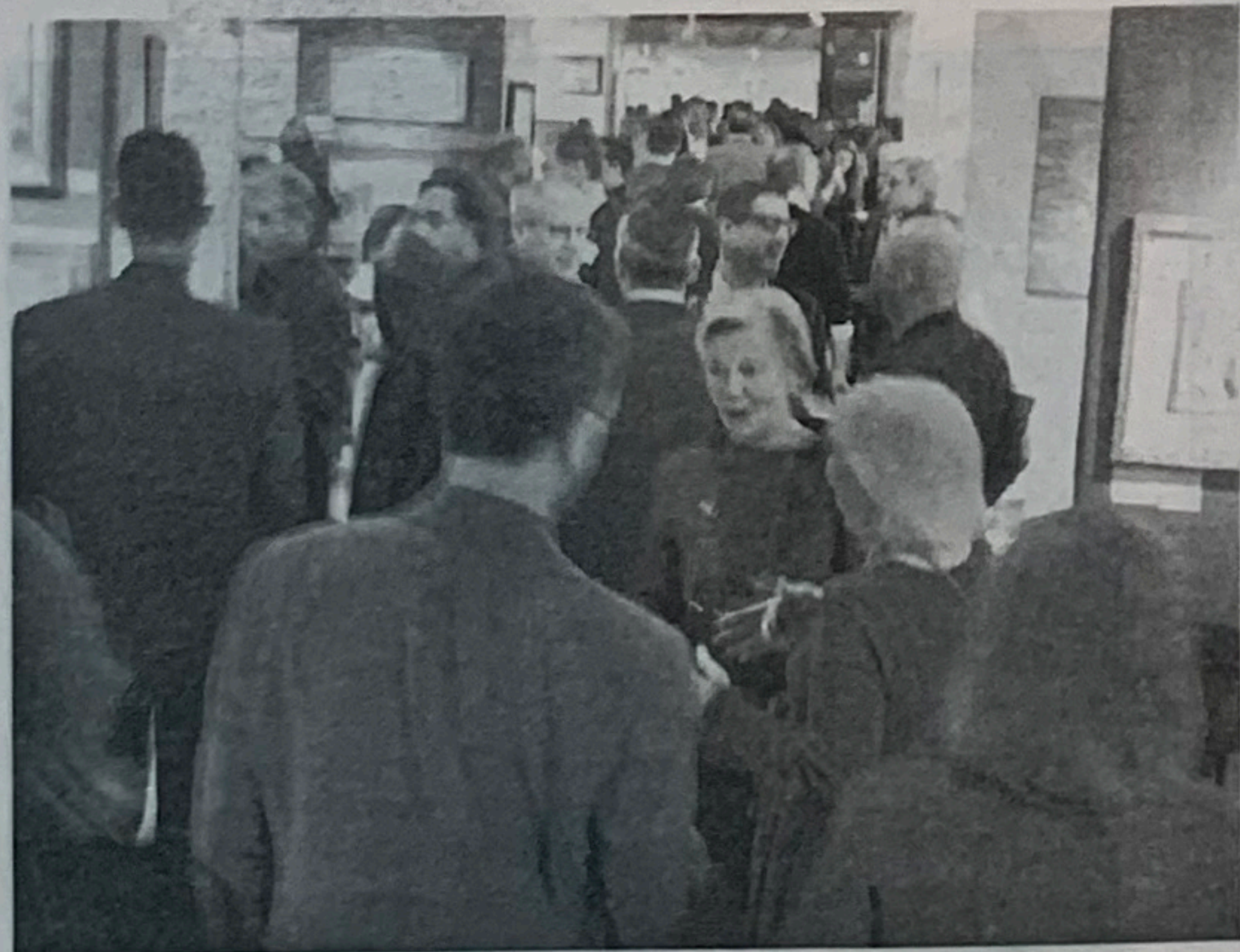
"Then just to show you how diverse the crowd was, we sold a modern work by Francis Newton Souza [1924-2002], a portrait of a surrealistic head," said Shapiro. "So it was all over the place."

Shapiro said he found that people wanted to look at "different kinds of art, not the same-old, same-old—you know, the seascape with the

rocky shore. I know there were some great seascapes there, but people definitely really do want to see a broader range."

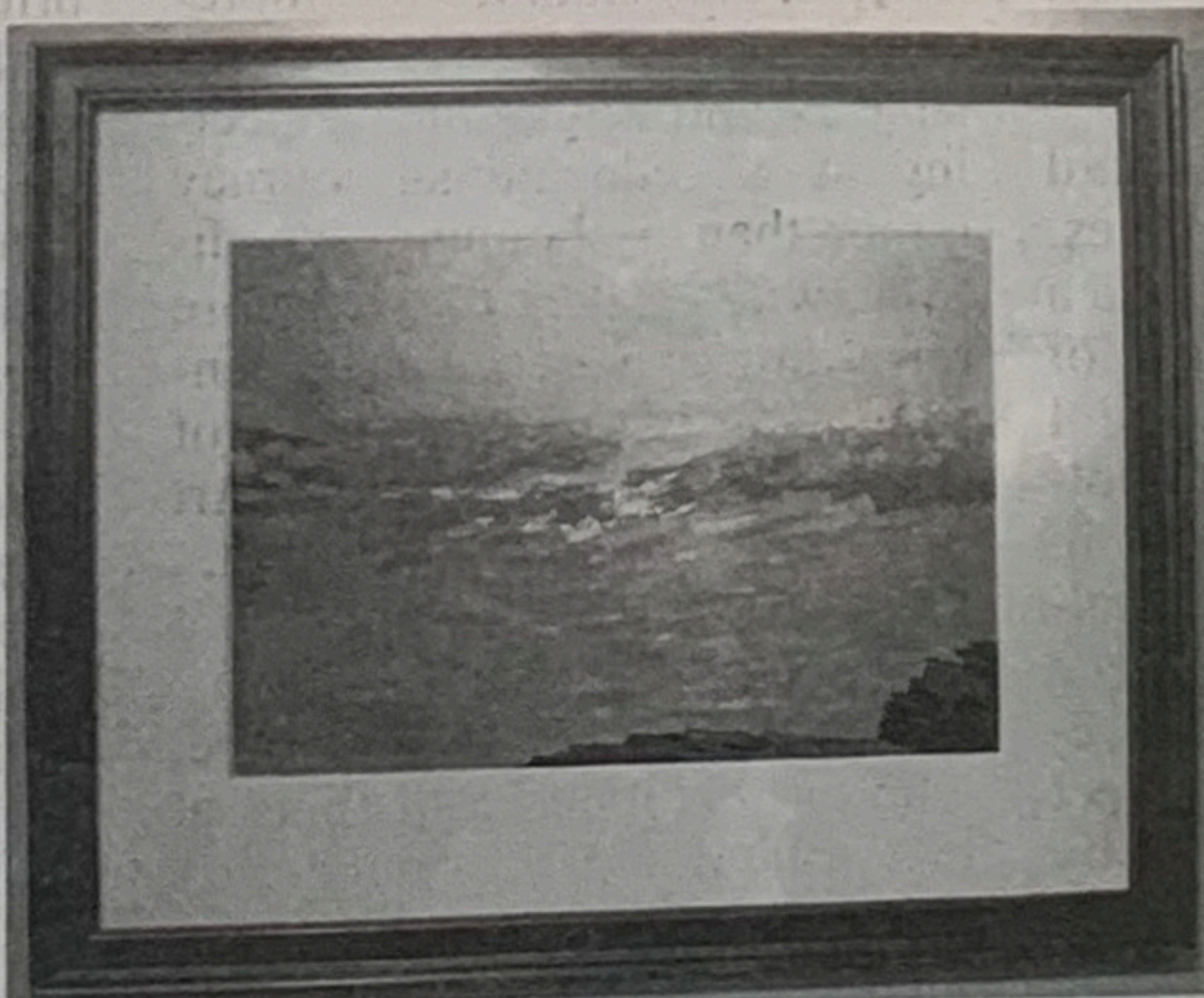
Martha Richardson of Boston showed one of those great seascapes, a 19th-century work by John Leslie Breck, *Moonrise, Essex, Massachusetts*. The Cape Ann scene in oil on canvas sold "subsequent to the show and as a direct result of the show," Richardson said. "I've sold to that person before, but [the sale] was really as a result of seeing him at this show. He came to the show and bought a few smaller items, but the Breck stuck with him, and he asked me to bring it to his house."

The Breck work was beautifully painted, featuring gradations in color from lilac and plum to soft shades of blues and grays. "Two people who came by my booth asked me if it was by Arthur Wesley Dow, so it had that kind of sophistication to it," said Richardson, who sold three more works

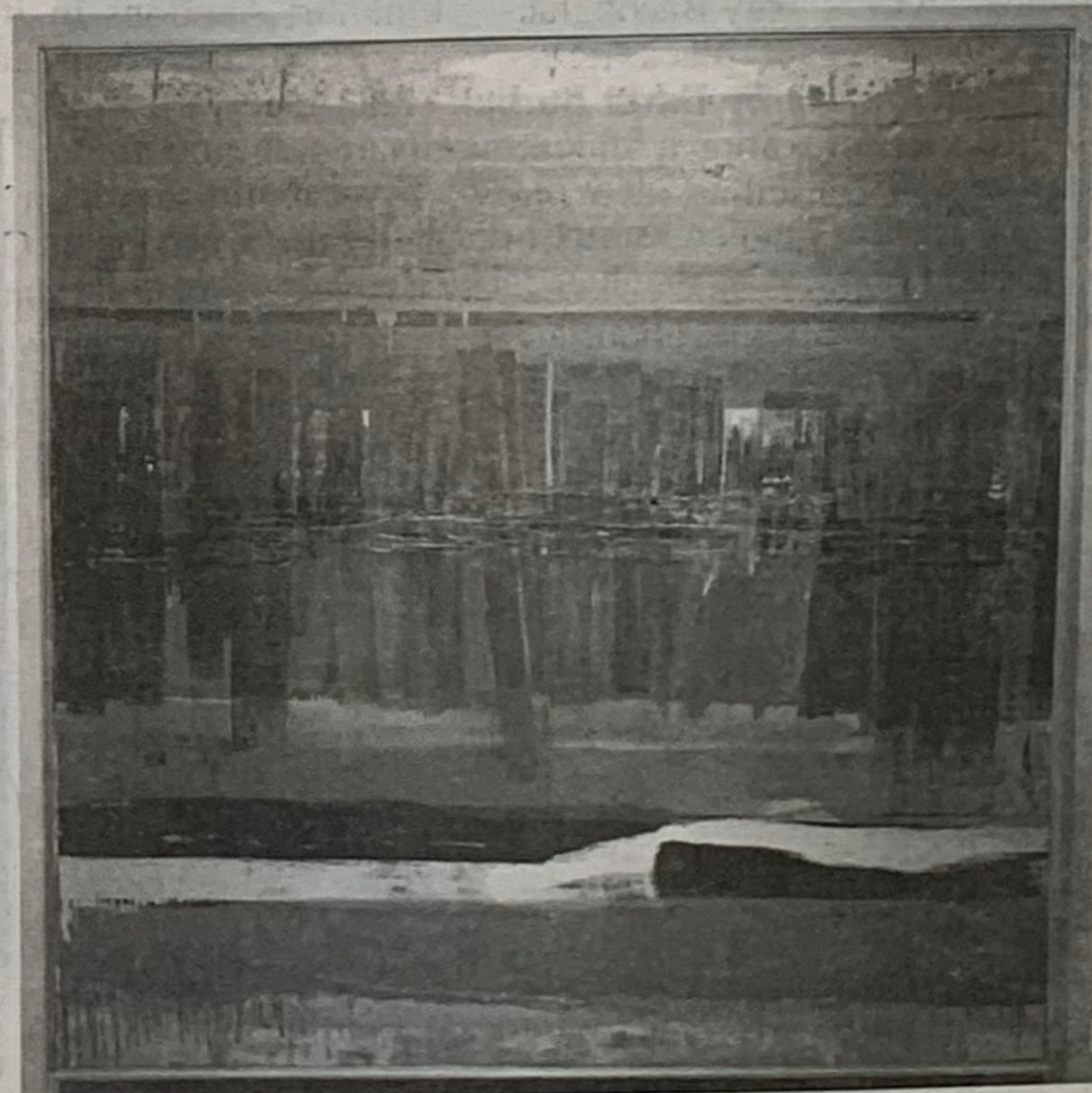


Nearly 600 people attended the gala preview, jointly sponsored by Fusco & Four/Ventures and Design New England, to benefit the Greater Boston Food Bank. The charity distributes more than 34 million pounds of food and grocery products annually to approximately 550 member hunger-relief agencies and 30 food bank direct service programs.

20-C Maine Antique Digest, February 2012



This 14" x 21" watercolor on paper by Winslow Homer (1836-1910) was \$100,000 from Sunne Savage Gallery, Winchester, Massachusetts. It was out on approval a few days after the show. Titled *Breaking Wave*, it was accompanied by a letter of authentication by Homer scholar Abigail Gerdt. "People who want a Homer with ships and people in it don't realize he painted many great works in which light is the subject," Savage said. At the show she had on display *Watercolors by Winslow Homer: The Color of Light*, a catalog from the 2008 museum exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago that includes several examples similar to this one. "You could call this painting *The Color of Light* too," she said.



Sunne Savage said *Grey Painting* by her husband, Robert S. Neuman (b. 1926), is the first work he ever sold. It was bought in 1956 by Alfred "Fred" Maurice, an artist, collector, academician, and philanthropist, who at age 90 is selling it. Proceeds will go to his foundation, which offers prizes for creativity to undergraduates at the University of Illinois in Chicago, where he spent his career, and Western Oregon University, near where he lives. The 50" x 50" oil on canvas was marked \$55,000.

- SHOW -



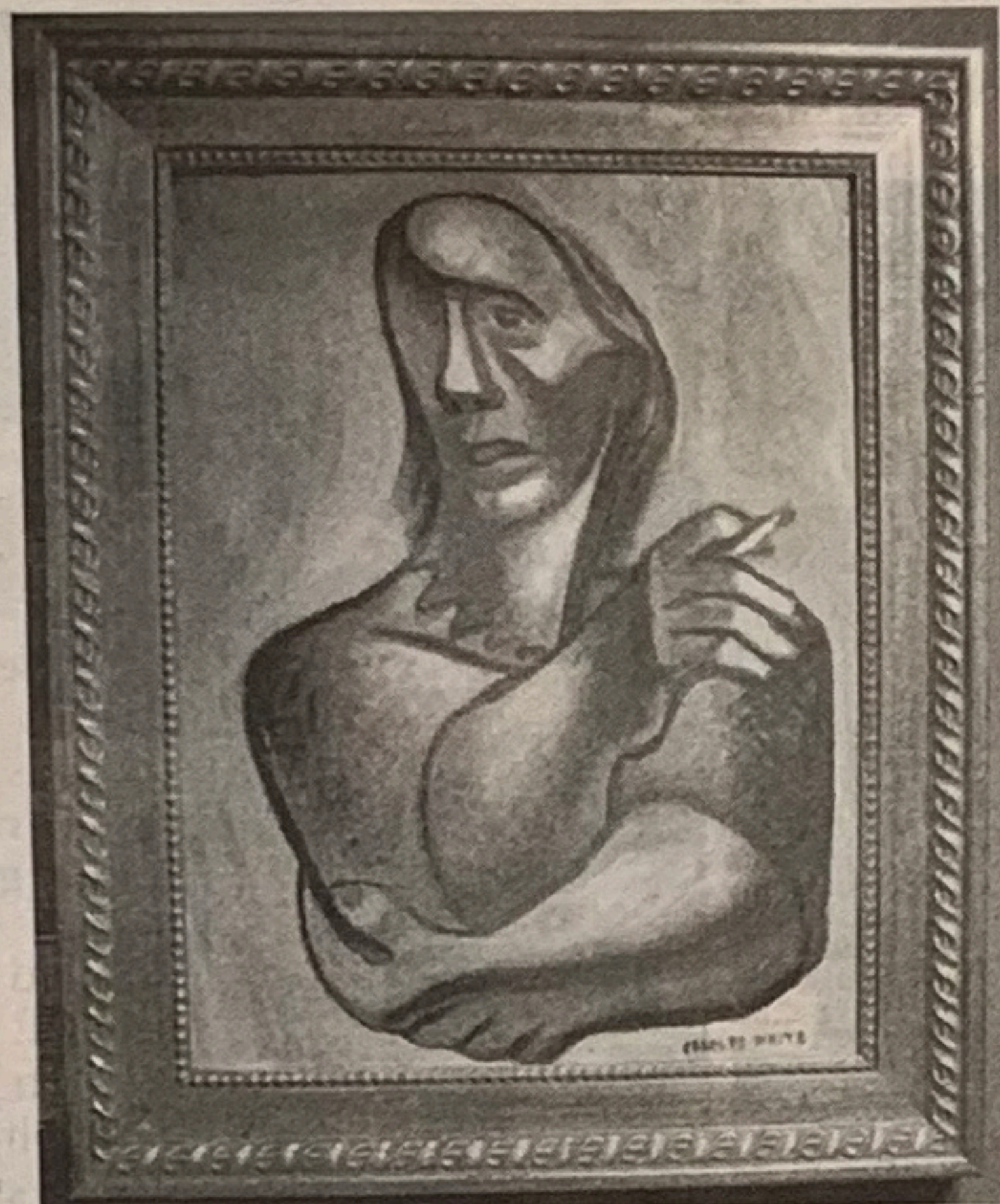
Marine Arts Gallery, Salem, Massachusetts, showed two by Antonio Jacobsen (1850-1921). The sailing ship sold at the gala. The tug *Robert E. Petty*, an 18" x 30" oil on board, was still available at \$50,000 (the show price was \$45,000).



Peter Clarke of Clarke Gallery, Newburyport, Massachusetts, asked \$55,000 for this 8½" x 12¼" oil on canvas, *Luminous Beach Scene* by Mary Blood Mellen (1817-1882). Mellen was a student of Fitz Henry Lane, as well as his Gloucester, Massachusetts, neighbor, assistant, and sometime collaborator.



Rainy Day by Anthony Thieme (1888-1954) was \$25,000 from Davenport and Shapiro Fine Art, East Hampton, New York. The circa 1930 oil on canvas in a Newcomb-Macklin frame sold at the gala. "We opened in East Hampton about a year ago," said Howard Shapiro, who left Wall Street to become an art dealer with business partners Leonard and Gail Davenport. "And I have to tell you, it was our best show ever. We couldn't be more pleased. I can't wait for next year."



Davenport and Shapiro Fine Art wanted \$10,000 for *Woman with Cigarette* by Charles W. White (1918-1979) in oil on board.



The big painting on the right is *Harvest, Segovia, Spain* by Ernest Lawson (1873-1939). The 20" x 24" circa 1916 oil on canvas was \$65,000 from Susanna Fichera. The small spring landscape by Martin Borgord (1869-1935), a 7¼" x 9" oil on canvas on board, was \$2400. The abstract is *La Salle du Manger* by Suzanne Roger (1898-1986), an 8¼" x 10¼" oil on canvas, tagged \$3250. Roger, a younger sister of artists Marcel Duchamp and Jacques Villon (born Gaston Emile Duchamp), was married to artist André Beaudin.

during the show. They were a watercolor of *Front Beach* in Gloucester by Max Kuehne (1880-1968); a gouache by Charles Hovey Pepper (1864-1950), *Windswept Tree*; and an oil series by Alexander Brook (1898-1980) that was snapped up by a museum at the gala.

Did I say "snapped up"? Apparently when museum curators see something as irresistible as the Brook, they abandon their molasses mode rather quickly. (In fairness, it was also priced modestly at \$5500.) Titled *Going, Going, Gone*, the work consists of six small (10¾" x 7¾") sequential paintings of Brook's wife, Peggy Bacon, taking off a pair of black tights. She's facing a mirror, her back to the viewer, entirely, charmingly unselfconscious, like one of Degas's bathers. "I could have sold it three times. People just kept asking me about it," said Richardson. "That's why I finally took it down."

The night of the gala I saw one other work sell swiftly. An Antonio Jacobsen portrait of a ship sailed out of the booth of Marine Arts Gallery, Salem, Massachusetts. Other works sold more slowly through the weekend. Dealers expected varying degrees of follow-up in the months to come.

Christina Godfrey of Sunne Savage Gallery, based in the Boston suburb of Winchester, said, "I feel very positive after the show. We had our normal sales, which generally consist of a smaller work or two, under ten thousand dollars. And then I work closely with my clients, sending JPEGs and bringing artwork to their home before they commit to buying. You're confident with buying more quickly

something smaller, either monetary-wise or size-wise. Hopefully, you're buying for the long term, not just for decoration but to add to a collection. I don't try to rush anything just to make it happen during the hours of the fair. So that's what we're working on now."

The "we" is the eponymous Sunne Savage, Godfrey's mother, who told me a day or so later that she had sent out on approval a Winslow Homer watercolor of *Prouts Neck, Maine*, that she had at the show. From a private collection, it had been in a different and unflattering frame when it was passed at Copley Fine Art Auctions in July 2011 in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Titled *Breaking Wave*, it was marked \$100,000.

The word was that Richard Rossello of Avery Galleries, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, had a very good show—his best of nine years as an exhibitor here. I couldn't confirm it. "It's our policy not to talk about [sales] in any specific way," said the dealer whose booth's centerpiece was *The Ice Wagon, Provincetown*, a richly detailed street scene in oil on canvas by Philadelphia Ten painter Nancy Maybin Ferguson (1872-1967). "It's just a way we have of maintaining discretion on behalf of our clients, but we were very pleased with the show. We really were." He added, "We found a good reception across a wide range in terms of interest in different price levels and different genres. We have some paintings from the 1830's and some from the 1930's that were of interest. It was nice to see that breadth of interest."

I should have asked sooner but only this time learned that

Rossello chose the name Avery in homage to Samuel P. Avery (1818-1904), a New York-based art dealer and print collector. "He was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, dealer to work with American painters," said Rossello, a lifelong collector who left the restaurant business and got into the art business in 2001. Perhaps because memories of his experience as a collector are still relatively fresh, he has pertinent things to say to new collectors.

On the new Avery Galleries Web site he readily admitted: "Buying art is intimidating. It is expensive. There are many variables, and sources of information run the gamut from comprehensive to incomprehensible...Approaching art collecting as an educational journey rather than a shopping expedition will make for a more rewarding experience...The central lesson is to look at a lot of art before you buy anything...Art collecting is a contact sport...Fall in love with paintings, not signatures."

New York City's Debra Force, who has exhibited four times at this show, said, "Usually after every fair we have follow-up. There are people who ask us to send images and remind them of certain paintings' characteristics. This time we have had some, but not as much as usual."

Force did not think the economy was the reason. "The world financial situation certainly affects some people, but the whole phenomenon of the art fair is probably something that should be up for discussion," she mused. "We were at a fair in Philadelphia in September [USArtists]. I think the attendance in Boston was better, and

some business was done. But have fairs worn out their welcome? Are there too many of them?"

Her rhetorical questions reflect the fact that she has had a good year at the gallery. "We've sold more there this year than we have the previous two years," she said. "So I would feel like if business were bad in the gallery, then it's doom and gloom everywhere, but I'm not seeing that. It really depends on what material you have, how fresh it is, and then matching it with the right person."

To this show she regularly brings at least some paintings with a Massachusetts connection—i.e., "work by artists who have lived and worked and exhibited in the area," she said. This time, she featured *After Dinner, Paris*, a modernistic portrait by Boston-born Margaret W. Sargent (1892-1978). The circa 1930 oil on canvas depicts a sophisticated man with arched eyebrows and Modigliani eyes in white tie and tails seated at a table. She also brought a Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) painting of Martha's Vineyard and an early 19th-century interior of Boston by Gilbert Stuart's daughter Jane Stuart.

Force also brought a couple of works related to Rhode Island, including a yachting scene by Walter Launt Palmer (1854-1932), along with some works that weren't region-specific, such as a Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) and a Mary Cassatt. Priced at \$650,000, the Cassatt was her most expensive piece. "We try to bring a variety of price ranges," she said. "We



Dealer Susanna J. Fichera of Arlington, Massachusetts, and Bowdoinham, Maine, with her husband, Michael W. Mahan, at the gala.

don't necessarily bring million-dollar pictures, although there are certainly collectors in the Boston area who buy in that range."

Considering M.A.D.'s readership, I don't visit most of this show's contemporary galleries, which generally account for about half of the venue. One of

the exceptions I make is Eckert Fine Art, formerly in Kent, Connecticut, now in Millerton, New York. At the 2010 show, I reported that Eckert had sold Eric Forstmann's large (44" x 36½") shelf painting in oil on board, *It's Really All about Me*, to an MFA trustee whose collection is promised to the museum. At this show Forstmann, who has been represented by Eckert for 12 years, told me, "That deal sort of evaporated." He added that a short time later, the painting almost got sold in San Francisco to a prominent writer whose name he couldn't recall. "Then somebody diverted her attention. So she didn't buy it, either, but someone else did the next week."

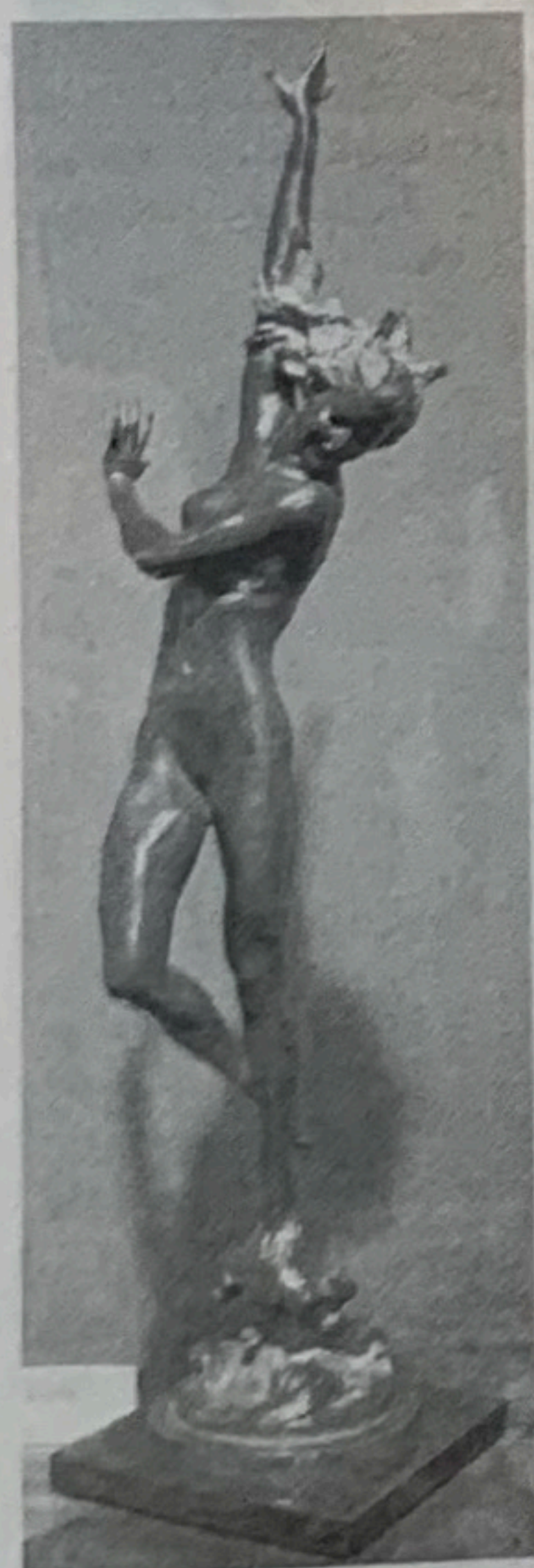
Forstmann, who regularly attends this and other shows with Eckert, said that in Boston the gallery has done "pretty well" each of the three years it has exhibited here. "We've had some good sales, then follow-up has been great." Of course, he mused, it's not like the old days, "when people came through the door and started scarfing up everything. There's a new model out there. They take their time."

That does seem to be the way of it. As Tom Veilleux of Portland, Maine, wrote in an e-mail: "We did make one sale during the show and currently do have some ongoing interest in a number of pieces. More often than not, in Boston especially, we make our largest sales after the show."

The next Boston International Fine Art Show will be November 15-18. For more information, see (www.FineArtBoston.com). Fusco & Four/Ventures also produces AD 20/21: Art & Design of the 20th & 21st Centuries, slated for March 15-18, and the Ellis Boston Antiques Show, October 18-21. For more information about all shows produced by Fusco & Four/Ventures visit the Web site (www.BostonArtFairs.com) or call (617) 363-0405.



Tom Veilleux Gallery, Portland, Maine, brought Jamie Wyeth's *Silo and Angus*. The 21" x 29" watercolor by the third-generation Wyeth (b. 1946) was on view June 11 through September 11, 2011, as part of *Farm Work* at the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, a survey of five decades of the artist's depictions of farm animals, equipment, buildings, and landscape. The painting was tagged \$140,000.



Crest of the Wave by Harriet Frishmuth (1880-1980) was \$28,000 from Debra Force. The 21" tall bronze is signed and dated 1925 and stamped "Gorham Co. Founders OFHL" on the base.



Debra Force Fine Art, New York City, brought a great example of the work of Jane Stuart (1812-1888), Gilbert Stuart's daughter. The circa 1835 *Interior Scene, Boston*, priced at \$175,000, shows the Old South Meeting House outside the window of the room where the woman and boy are posed. Stuart's studio wasn't far from there. Like her father, Jane was known for her portraiture, but this 20" x 16" oil on canvas is much more than that. "In terms of decorative arts it also has a lot to say," said Force, noting the painting within the painting and furnishings.



Some people who admire the sporting art of Aiden Lassell Ripley (1896-1969) may be surprised that his work extended well beyond that genre. During the Great Depression he switched from subjects like this one to concentrate on hunting and fishing scenes. At the same time, he evolved a more realistic style. Both measures ensured a steadier income. This 21" x 29" watercolor on paper, *The Young Nursemaid*, was \$28,000 from Vose Galleries, Boston.



At Fusco & Four's AD 20/21 show at the Cyclorama in April 2011, Tom Veilleux featured Elie Nadelman's *Seated Woman with Raised Arm*, one of the artist's nearly life-size circus figures made of galvano-plastique. It has since sold. At this show, he brought more works by Nadelman (1882-1946), including *Acrobat*, 1920, the artist's first bronze of a modern subject, said Veilleux. Shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2003, it is 14½" x 9½" x 5" and was priced on request. Nadelman's circa 1910 marble *Ideal Head* was \$325,000.



Cape Ann by Henry Gasser (1909-1981) most likely depicts the shoreline near the North Shore Arts Association building on Pirates Lane in Gloucester, Massachusetts, looking across at Rocky Neck to the left. Vose Galleries pointed out that it's a scene unfamiliar to present-day visitors, since many of the shoreline buildings no longer exist. The 25" x 30" oil on canvas winter scene by the member of the Rockport Art Association and of the North Shore Art Association was marked \$33,000.



The fabulous greens and blues of *The Rich Water* by George Bellows (1882-1925) were rich indeed, though obliterated by my Canon Powershot, I'm afraid. The 14¾" x 19 1/8" oil on board is inscribed "RYG & B/ The Rich Water/ Geo Bellows/ 146 E 19 NY/ A 180." Questroyal Fine Art, New York City, asked \$395,000 for the seascape, one of the best at the show.



Debra Force asked \$650,000 for *Young Woman in a Small Winged Hat Holding a Cat* by Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), a 25½" x 21¼" pastel on paper. Both the hat and jumper are emerald green.

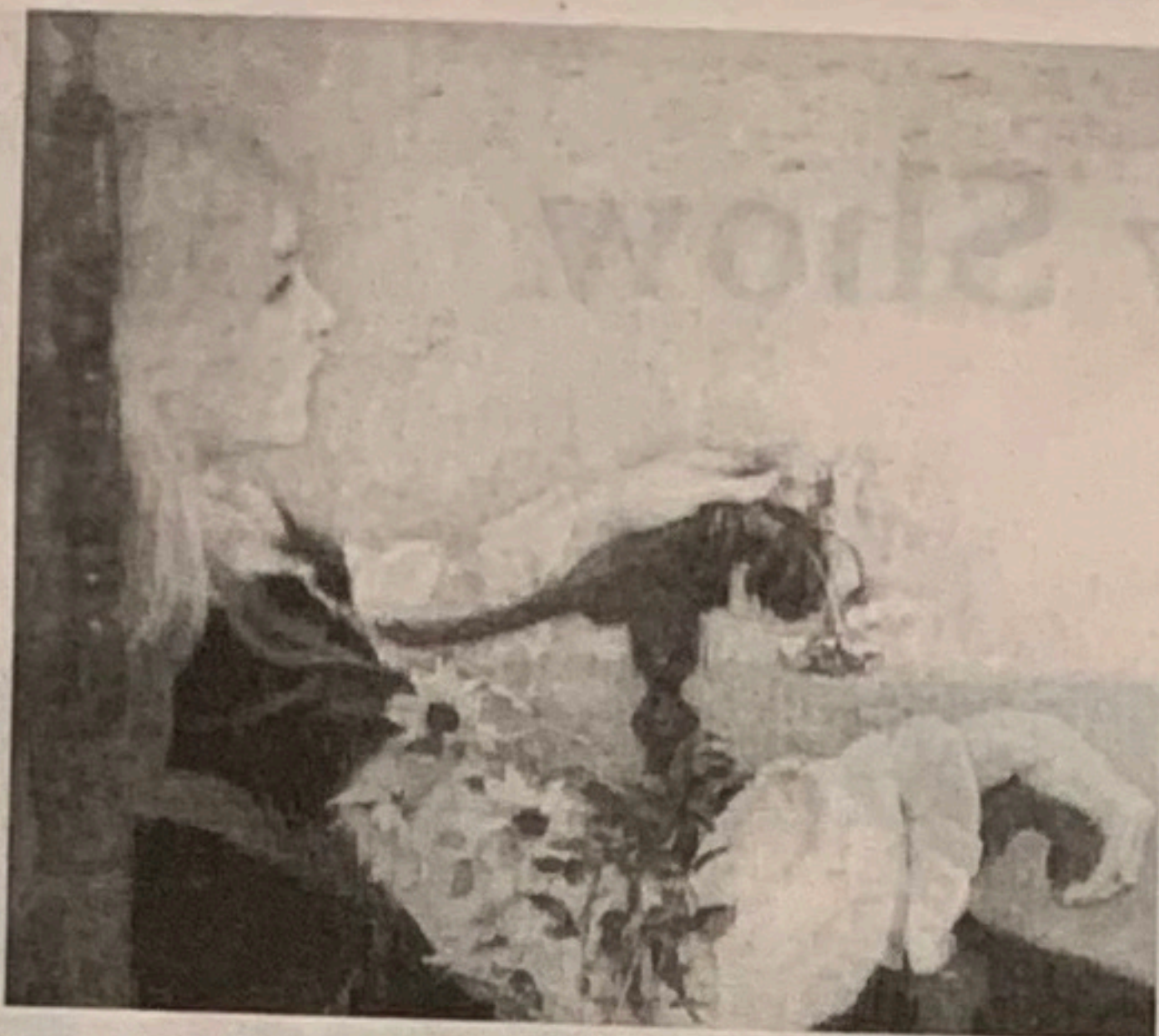


Eckert Fine Art, Millerton, New York, asked \$3500 for this untitled print from the 1982 "New York Portfolio" by Robert Motherwell (1915-1991). Numbered 103/250, the color lithograph with embossing is 30" x 22".

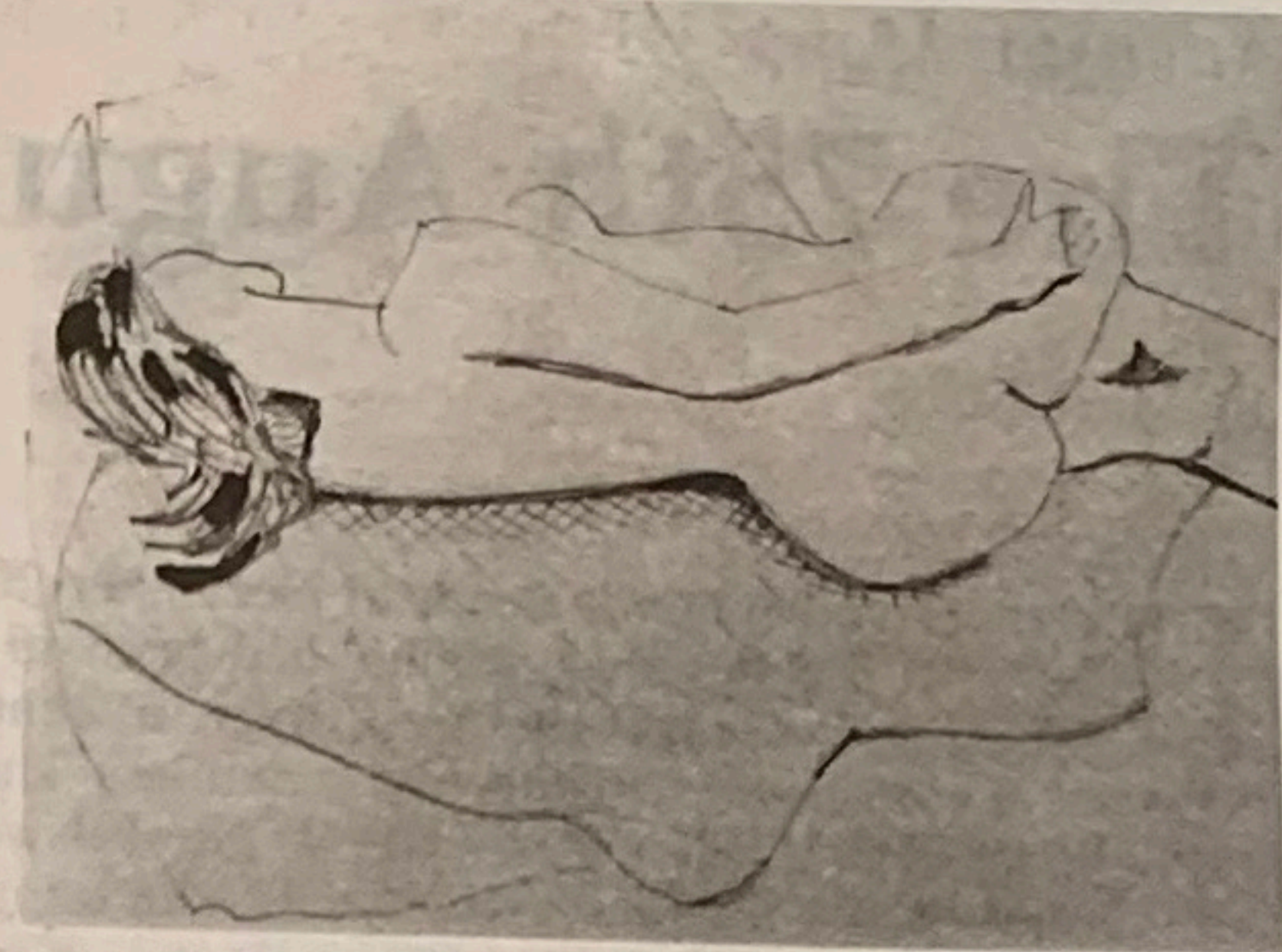
- SHOW -



Aaron's Mill by New Hope school artist Daniel Garber (1880-1958) was \$350,000 from Newman Galleries, Philadelphia. The image of a classic Bucks County structure is a 28" x 30" oil on canvas.



Dealers brought a number of works by Boston school artist Lilian Westcott Hale (1881-1963). Avery Galleries, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, offered two. *Black-Eyed Susans*, a 22½" x 25½" charcoal and colored pencil on paper showing a young woman in a chair with turnings, was \$115,000. A 24" x 18" charcoal study for *Portrait of Harriet Blake* was \$65,000. Exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Chicago in the mid-1920's, it is one of at least two known studies of the child. "There was a painting, but I do not know where it is now," said Avery's Richard Rossello. "It went to auction many years ago."



Jay Chatellier Fine Art, Basking Ridge, New Jersey, wanted \$9500 for *Sleeping Model* by Milton Avery (1885-1965). Chatellier said that, besides the title, the artist inscribed "Flatbush, 1956" on the back of the 13" x 16½" work in ink on buff paper.



The Caldwell Gallery, Manlius, New York, and North Palm Beach, Florida (seasonally), asked \$26,500 for *A Schooner—Provincetown* by Gerrit Beneker (1882-1934). The 20" x 24" oil on canvas was signed and dated June 27, 1923.



Jay Caldwell of the Caldwell Gallery is shown with *Memories of the Past* by David Burliuk (1882-1967), priced at \$125,000. The 48" x 36" oil on canvas is signed and dated 1947.



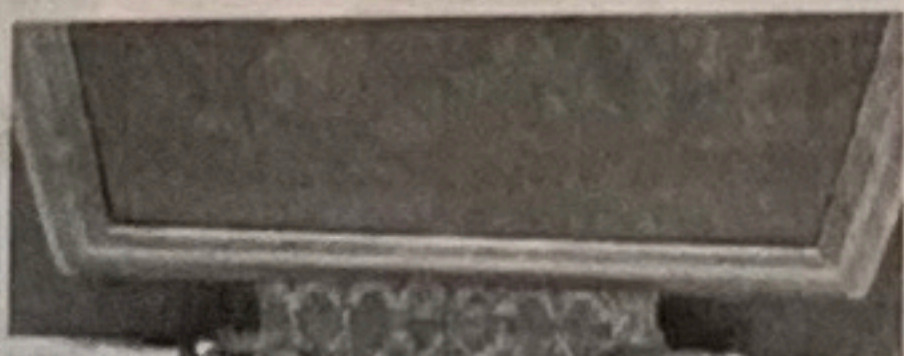
Jay Chatellier brought two untitled abstract works by Taro Yamamoto (1919-1994). Each was painted in oil and sand on canvas. The horizontal one on left, approximately 25" x 36", was \$7500. The other, 32" x 40", was \$8500. The three smaller works by Vaclav Vytalil (1892-1984) were priced at around \$2000.



William and Alison Vareika of Newport, Rhode Island, with a monumental pair of panels by John La Farge (1835-1910), *The Virgin and St. John the Evangelist at the Foot of the Cross*. Bill Vareika said he has been looking for them since 1983. He located them at the sale of the Duarte Pinto Coelho collection, sold by Christie's in London on July 20 and 21, 2011. The decorator had houses in Madrid and Trujillo, Spain. The panels were commissioned by the Reverend William Quinn of New York City in 1862-63 as part of an altar piece. They were never installed. Returned to the artist, they changed hands numerous times between then and the Christie's sale. The last time they were exhibited was 75 years ago. The last time they were seen in Boston was 133 years ago. That's Newport in the background, said Vareika. Painted on mahogany panels that weigh 150 pounds each, they were difficult to hang at the show. Vareika made platforms for them out of old bricks he found in the basement of the Cyclorama, then covered them with Oriental rug scraps. The model for the Virgin Mother was Margaret Mason Perry La Farge, the artist's wife. The model for St. John was psychologist and philosopher William James.



Jeff Cooley of Old Lyme, Connecticut, showed a wide variety of small paintings affordably priced. They included *Four Elements* by Rockwell Kent (1882-1971), a 6" x 6" watercolor on paper, \$18,000; *Blue Hills* by Luigi Lucioni (1900-1988), a 5" x 8" oil on board, \$7500; and (seen in the detail) *Yellow Rose* by Priscilla Warren Roberts (1916-2001), a 6" x 4 7/8" oil on masonite, \$7500.



This tiny (4" x 3") oil on canvas by Reginald Marsh (1898-1954) takes up a favorite theme of many artists through the ages: a young woman reading. Titled just that, it was \$3800 from Jay Chatellier.



Titled *Hot*, this 22" tall wood sculpture is by Marion Perkins (1908-1961). Largely unknown and largely self-taught, the African-American sculptor from Chicago's South Side gifted *Hot* to Mitchell Caton (1930-1998), a Chicago muralist; from there, it went to Peter Clarke of Clarke Gallery, Newburyport, who had it priced at \$85,000.



Central Intelligence, a 2011 oil on board by Eric Forstmann (b. 1962), 23½" x 29¾", was \$28,000 from Eckert Fine Art, Miller-ton, New York. Forstmann scavenged many of the pictured items from the Sharon Transfer Station in Sharon, Connecticut, where he lives.