## October 13th, 2013 Paintings by Calder among Top Lots

## of \$2.1 Million Sale by Jeanne Schinto

Grogan & Company, Dedham, Massachusetts

Photos courtesy Grogan & Company

Grogan & Company is a welloiled machine, currently in its 25th year of business. Commendable for taking on the highly unusual sale of Elli Buk's science and technology collection earlier in 2013 (see

"Auction of the Contents of the World," M.A.D., August, pp. 23-27-C), the firm was back in character on Columbus Day weekend, October 13 and 14, 2013. The October offerings were 600-plus lots of fine arts, furniture, decorative arts, rugs, and a sizable chunk of estate jewelry. Indeed, more than a quarter of the sale was devoted to bling in gold, silver, and platinum, and it contributed a hefty chunk to the sale's gross of \$2.1 million (including buyers' premiums).

Since last spring, Michael and Nancy Grogan's daughter Lucy has been on staff. A Trinity College graduate, Lucy spent several previous years working in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, first as a fine art consultant for Trailside Galleries, then as

auction coordinator for Jackson Hole Art Auction. She now heads both the fine art and the jewelry departments of her parents' company. To judge by this sale's results, it's an auspicious beginning back in Massachusetts. To start the sale, Michael B. Grogan, the company's president and chief auctioneer, thanked his audience of about 100 for doing something as "old-fashioned" as coming to an

auction in person. "The old-

someone from the audience

one of those old-fashioned

called out.

fashioned people—here we are,"

Within the first couple of hours,

types, a young woman sitting in the front row, bought one of the top lots, paying \$87,000 for an untitled gouache by Alexander Calder. The painting, estimated at \$20,000/30,000, was abstract in a palette of primary colors—a quintessential Calder—signed and dated 1949. The buyer, a gallery owner based in New York City, arrived just before the Calder went up and cashed out directly afterward. She had also tried for another Calder gouache that had sold immediately before the untitled one. A rendering of a Cape Cod scene in the mobile master's unmistakable style, it did almost as well, going at \$72,000 on the same estimate. Signed, titled, and dated "Sandy Calder Eastham 1949" and inscribed "To Vicky Chess," Eastham went to a phone bidder after a prolonged battle with another phone bidder. Each of those Calder paintings had come to the sale by descent

from the collection of Mr. and

Mrs. William Chess of

Connecticut. According to

Internet sources, "Vicky" was

friend of the Calders' daughter

Mary. Vicky went on to become

the Chesses' daughter and a

a children's book illustrator.

Mary was instrumental in

establishing the Calder Foundation. An oil on panel, signed and dated "V Goyen 1627," was the top lot of the two-day sale, going to an overseas phone bidder for \$96,000. The painting was attributed to 16thcentury Dutch landscapist Jan van Goyen. Its subject was Cunerakerk, a church in Rhenen, the Netherlands. "John Newington Hughes, Esq., No. 63" was stenciled on the panel's back. Hughes was a British attorney and member of

the British Archaeological

Association. He collected Dutch old masters during the first half of the 19th century, and the chances of his having picked up a genuine van Goyen in his travels around European art Switzerland, willing to pay far more than the \$3000/5000 estimate. One of the most unusual pieces in the sale was a set of five oil on canvas depictions of Christ and his four Evangelists. The gilt-highlighted ecclesiastical panels sold at just above the high estimate to a room bidder for \$10,800. Made in 1898 by the Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company, the quintet was a commission for the Mount Vernon Church of Boston. Beacon Hill.)

collector, the auction house said.

did very well.

Regional artworks from the Cape Ann school (e.g., W. Lester Stevens, Aldro T. Hibbard), a still life by mid-century European Modernist Bernard Buffet, and a cache of several late 20th-century works by Chinese-American John Way also did well. Reflecting current tastes, bidders were most excited about 20th-century works in general. If you consider tall clocks to be furniture, as many people do, two by Nantucket family and came with a written narrative. It sold within estimate for \$19,200. The other, a 19th-century example, without a comparable provenance, did slightly better than expected, going at \$18,000.

The second day's bigger success, however, was in Chinese export

ceramics, with most lots going past their estimates, sometimes well past.

Several other Asian items including an 18th-century Japanese silk scroll

This auction house isn't known for selling historical documents, but this

time the firm offered a shipping document signed "George Washington"

old Gloucester family," and sold for \$6765 (est. \$2000/3000). The buyer

and dated 1794. It came from what was described in the catalog as "an

were removed from the building in 1970, when the church moved out

and affiliated itself with Boston's Old South Church. (Eight years later,

the structure was destroyed by fire. It is now condominiums, known as

England, where he now lives, Charles Boston wrote that he had "always

wondered" what had become of the panels. (See the photo caption for

Church Court, designed by Graham Gund.) Reached by e-mail, in

more information from Charles Boston.) Consigned by a private

collector in Cambridge, Massachusetts, they went to another local

Through childhood and beyond, Lucy and her older sister and younger brother all worked on auction days, first (in the days before screen projections) as runners, then as phone-bid takers. There were times when Lucy was given the opportunity to sell a few lots at the end of a sale.

Asked if she has plans to get her auctioneer's license, she said, "Yes,

on the podium in the near future.

absolutely, and sooner rather than later." So we anticipate seeing her up

At her previous jobs in Jackson Hole Lucy learned a great deal, she said,

but was dealing exclusively with the art and sculpture of the American

the kind of art we're selling." Because it's the family business, she also

enjoys "a closer correlation" between her work and life.

finds she's naturally more invested in the outcome. Most of all, she now

For more information, contact the auction house at (781) 461-9500 or

West. "So in coming to work for my parents, I am much more invested in

Five oil on canvas gilthighlighted panels, made in 1898 by the Tiffany Glass & Decorating Company, sold to a local collector in the room for \$10,800 (est. \$5000/10,000). They depict Christ and the Evangelists, i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The height of the tallest panel is 102". We have been in an e-mail correspondence with Charles Boston, who has much more to say about these panels. He writes: "In addition to the panels, Tiffany did several memorial windows for the church, many of which are still missing since the 1970 closure. I really cannot say how many

perished in the fire of 1978. I do know that two sets by John La Farge

"It appears that other items were sold off over time in the 1970's

and the church kept very little when they moved to Old South after

the merger. They kept the baptismal font, a grand piano, and some

other small furnishings. I have been in touch with a developer, who

viewed the church's interior in early 1978. He said that prior to the

fire, the sanctuary was just a stripped, empty space. Sometime in the

early to mid 1970's, all the ornamental items seemed to have been

sold or salvaged. The panels were one of the many unaccounted for

were sold in the mid-1970's. One set is in a small chapel of a

retirement home.

items on my list and now that bit of mystery has been solved for me." Looking at this photo, Charles Boston remarked, "It looks like the panels may have been removed in haste. The sides seem to have bits missing. Again, more mystery." Charles Boston also provided "a bit of trivia" that he hoped M.A.D. readers would enjoy: "The panels were very much in vogue in the late 1800's but by the 1920's, they were considered by some church members to be a bit too 'high church.' The church had a renovation in 1927 that toned down

back up again soon after. that way until the church closed in 1970. The panels were a

over them with the idea that they could be removed later if the

displayed for a Sunday service in 1940 and the day's sermon, by

Reverend Carl Heath Kopf, was based upon them. But the covers went

church changed its mind on the decor issue. The panels were

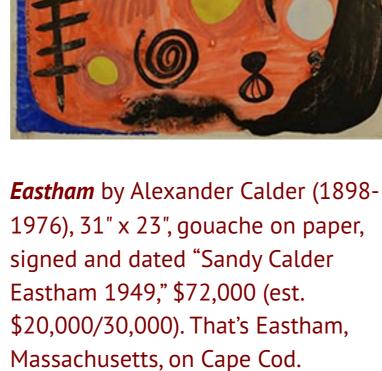
"The panels were finally displayed again in the 1950's and were kept centerpiece and very much a huge part of the 'look' of the Mount Vernon Church." Schinto photo. This platinum, emerald, onyx, and diamond ring, cataloged as "probably Cartier," sold for \$43,200 (est. \$2000/3000). The emerald is a carved cabochon. The ring was sold with "original red-leather Cartier box." Lucy Grogan

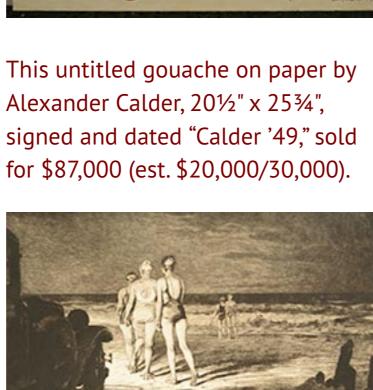
filled in some details. She said the real interest was in the emerald, which was carved much earlier than its 1930's or 1940's setting. A New England family had

\$800/1200).

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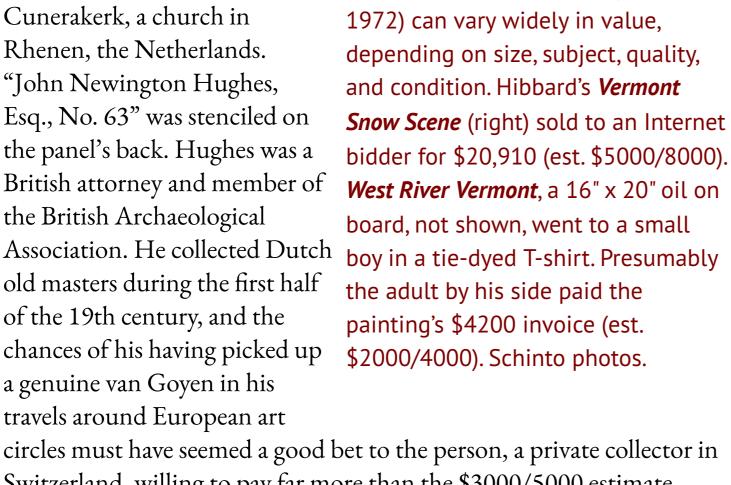
Attributed to Jan van Goyen (1596-1656), *The Cunera Tower, Rhenen* sold for \$96,000 (est. \$3000/5000). The 17" x 27" oil on panel was the top lot of the sale.





City brought \$14,400 (est. \$7000/10,000), and *Morning on the River*, \$11,400 (est. \$3000/5000).





At the time, the church's location was in Boston's Back Bay, in a structure that the congregation of Congregationalists had built a few years earlier. (The church's previous location, from 1844 to 1892, was on The panels are pictured in situ in a 1955 black-and-white photograph on a blog by Charles Boston that is devoted to the church's history (www.historicmountvernon churchofboston.blogspot.com). The panels

Aaron Willard were the top furniture lots on the sale's second day. One of the clocks, dating from 1790, had a history of having descended in a

was a New England institution, Lucy Grogan said. Usually we talk to Michael Grogan after these sales. This time Lucy Grogan provided the extra details we needed. Asked how she fit into the timeline of the business, she said she's one year older than Grogan & Company. "The day I was born, my father kissed my mother and then went to a meeting about starting the company." It was February 17, 1987. The house's first auction took place a little over a year later.

see the Web site (www.groganco.com).

the colorful late Victorian decor, bringing in a simpler look overall. As part of this renovation, the panels were covered. The coverings fit

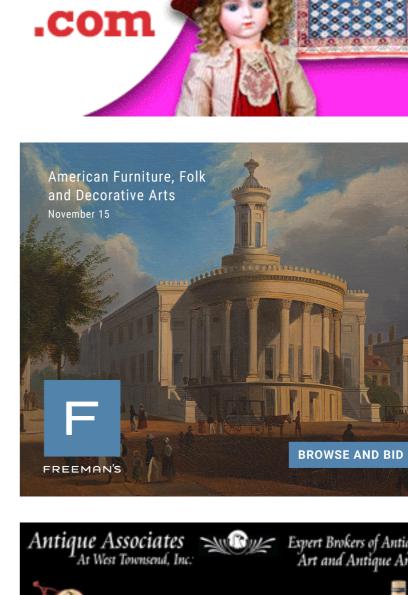
> This gilt and polychrome bronze figure of a seated deity, 8½" tall, fetched \$13,530 (est.

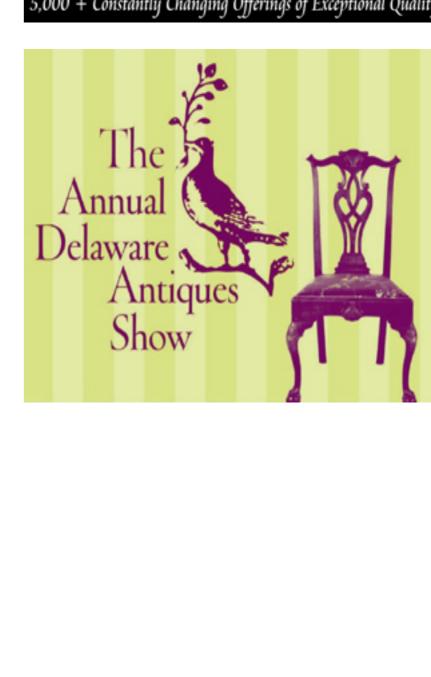




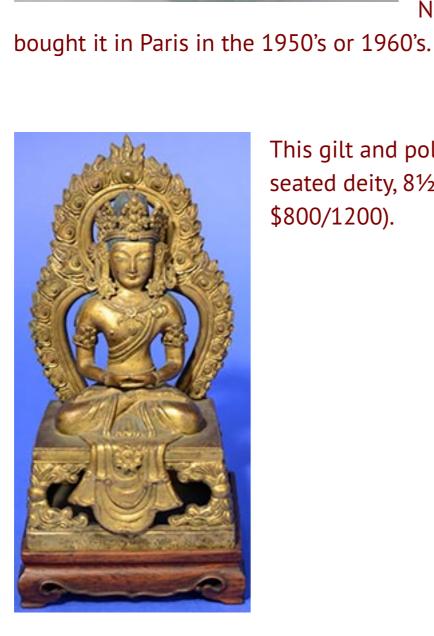












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