Trail of Russells

Thirty rare works by the Western master highlight the 29th annual Coeur d'Alene Art Auction.

For collectors of Charles M. Russell, all roads lead to the Coeur d'Alene Art Auction (CDAA). Considered the market leader for Russell, the 29th annual sale features an astounding 30 works by the Western master, including some very rare sculptures. This marks a record number of Russells consigned by the auction, most of which come from private collections.

Headlining the Russell lots is Trail of the Iron Horse, an important 1924 watercolor estimated at $1.5 million to $2.5 million. “It's a poignant tale of Indians looking down a railroad track and seeing their destiny disappearing,” says art dealer Stuart Johnson, a partner in the CDAA.

Trail of the Iron Horse last came to market in 2003 when it surpassed its high estimate to realize $1.036 million at this sale. “It appeared on the catalog cover, now we get it for the second time around,” says Coeur d'Alene Art Auction co-owner Mike Overbye.

Additional Russell offerings include Dakota Chief (est. $500/700,000), Halt of a Crew Hunting Party (est. $100/500,000), The Trading Post (est. $100/500,000), and Battle Between Blackfoot & Piegans (est. $250/350,000). Rare sculpture includes casts of The Medicine Whip (est. $200/300,000), The Bluff (est. $100/200,000), Nature’s Castle (est. $100/200,000), and Buffalo Family (est. $60,000).

The sale's cover lot, William R. Leigh's Dodge (est. 1943), is one of the artist's finest works and is sure to have strong competition. Considered to be one of the most accomplished high-action painters of the West, Leigh's museum-quality piece should do a good business. "The action is a terrific example of what Leigh did best," Johnson remarks. "It's my favorite Leigh we've ever had in 29 years," Overbye adds. "It's one of the most well-executed paintings I've seen him do."

Other museum-quality works include Thomas Moran's A Water Pocket, Northern Arizona, a stunning 1907 oil estimated at $1.5 million to $2.5 million. It will be joined by other fine landscapes from Thomas Hill, Maynard Dixon, and Gunnar Widforss.

Within the historical works category is a major Frederic Remington titled The Story of Where the Sun Goes rest. $2/3 million. Measuring 27 by 36 inches, the size alone makes this a standout piece. Other notable works by Remington include a very low cast number 12 of the ironic bronze broncho buster (est. $400/600,000 and a 29-by-21-inch oil titled Water! (est. $150/250,000).

The CDAA will have six paintings by Frank...
Tenney Johnson, one of the most sought-after early Western artists today, crossing the block will be Pure No. at Night (est. $250/350,000) and Return from the Hunt (est. $200/300,000), both considered large works for the artist. Of the latter piece, which has been in a prominent private collection for many years, Overby remarks, "It's a quintessential Tenney Johnson with the cowboy, pack train and landscape."

According to Johnson biographer Harold McCracken, "The frank Tenney Johnson noire was something he developed to the point of perfection where it can be considered pretty much his own art form."

Also well represented in the auction are Taos Artists Joseph H. Sharp, longer Irving Conive, E. Martin Hennings, and Oscar Berninghaus. Highlights include a very rare Crow Reservation Montana scene by Sharp titled Crow Camp (est. $250/350,000), which comes from a private family collection where it has resided since acquired from the artist, and Conive's The Pottery Maker (est. $250/350,000). According to Oakton, this major work is the finest Conive to hit the market in more than five years and is expected to spark the market. At 30 by 36 inches, the oil is considered a large piece from the artist.

"It's a knockout piece! I think it might cause..."
Henry Farny (1847-1916), *Strange Country*, 1911, gouache on paper, 16½ x 9" Estimate: $300/500,000

Charles M. Russell (1864-1926), *Trail of the Iron Horse*, 1924, watercolor on paper, 17½ x 27½" Estimate: $1.5/2.5 million

Some fireworks," Overby says. "On a scale of 1 to 10, it's an 11. Couse painted some subjects over and over, and usually these bigger ones were commissions, so he spent extra time on it and you can really tell. It's one of the best things we've ever had."

Another maitstay of the auction is sporting art and this year will feature one of its strongest lineups yet. Top lots include one of Philip R. Goodwin's undisputed masterpieces, *A Break at Dusk* (est. $100/150,000), and possibly the most significant Bob Kuhn to come to market in many years: *The Spurning Hunk*. Estimated at $100,000 to $200,000, the piece was painted by the artist specifically for one of his best friends and patrons and has never been on the market.

"It's a really strong Kuhn, and one of my personal favorites," Overby comments. Among the contemporary lots offered are several stunning pieces by today's leading Western artists. Major works include Howard Terpning's *Too Many Snakes* (est. $400/600,000), Z.S. Liang's *The Dismount*, Bozeman Trail 1866 (est. $50/120,000), Kenneth Riley's *Mandan Buffalo Dance* (est. $50/75,000), and Mian Situ's *Chinese Flower Shop* (San Francisco) (est. $60/90,000). First-time participants include C. Michael Dudish, Bruce Laves, Charles Maurich, and South...
African sculptor Dylan Lewis.
Transcending all categories is a unique objet d'art by artist Frank Polk, which was commissioned by John Ascuaga’s Nugget Casino in Reno, Nevada, in 1958. Weighing in at 206 troy ounces of 18-karat gold, the solid-gold sculpture of a rooster served as the mascot of the Nugget’s Golden Rooster Room for more than 50 years. It is estimated to sell today for $200,000 to $300,000.

With such a diverse selection of rare blue-chip paintings and sculptures, expectations are high for the 2014 Coeur d'Alene Art Auction, which returns July 26 to the Peppermill Resort Casino in Reno, Nevada.

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Eanger Irving Couse (1866-1936), The Pottery Maker. Oil on canvas, 30 x 36;
Estimate: $250/350,000

Heward Terpning (b. 1927), Too Many Snows. Oil on canvas, 36 x 60;
Estimate: $400/600,000

Charles M. Russell (1864-1926), Dakota Chief. Oil on board, 12 x 18;
Estimate: $500/700,000

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29th annual Coeur d'Alene Art Auction
Where: July 26, 2014, noon
Where: Peppermill Resort Casino, 2700 S Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89502
Information: (702) 772-7403
www.coeursauction.com

Jay Moore (b. 1964), Moosilauke Night. Oil on linen, 40 x 30;
Estimate: $15/25,000