

Auction Action In Great Falls, Mont.

March In Montana Was A \$2.9 Million Western Art Roundup



Olaf C. Seltzer's (1877-1957) "Blackfoot Braves," oil on canvas, 20 by 30 inches, led the auction, realizing \$78,000 (\$50/70,000).



"Canyon Couple" by Gerard Curtis Delano (1890-1972), watercolor on paper, 18 by 24 inches, was bid to \$66,000 (\$25/35,000).



Oleg Stavrowsky's (1927-2020) "Leaders Know the Way," oil on canvas, 24 by 40 inches, was led to \$36,000 (\$15/25,000).



"Staying Close" by Oleg Stavrowsky (1927-2020), oil on canvas, 36 by 48 inches, went for four and a half times its high estimate, achieving \$27,000 (\$4/6,000).

GREAT FALLS, MONT. — Conducted annually in conjunction with the March in Montana Dealer Show, The Coeur d'Alene Art Auction produced the 38th March in Montana Fine Art & Collectibles Auction on March 21-22. Featuring 754 lots of Western, cowboy and Native American art, sculpture, artifacts and collectibles, the auction realized \$2.9 million, and Ron Nicklas, managing partner, noted that

"Enthusiastic collectors, dealers and galleries turned out in force, exceeding expectations with record-breaking sales across the board. From historic masters to contemporary artists, demand was high, and the excitement was palpable throughout the event." Additionally, Katie Brinkman, a representative for the firm, shared that the sale boasted a 97 percent sell-through rate and saw a total of 470 registered

bidders with about 75 percent hailing from nine states: Montana, Texas, California, Idaho, Wyoming, Washington, Arizona, Colorado and Utah.

The sale's most dominant results were achieved on the second day, led by an oil on canvas by Montana native Olaf C. Seltzer, titled "Blackfoot Braves." The auction catalog stated: "Through his art, Seltzer sought to document the lives of the Blackfeet and their connection to the vast Montana landscapes. Seltzer's relationship with the Blackfeet Indians was characterized by respect and a genuine interest in their heritage." This painting was from the collection of James Johnson, Spokane, Wash., by descent, acquired in the 1970s, and sold for \$78,000.

Selling together to one buyer, a pair of portraits by Charles M. Russell, another Montana native, achieved more than \$100,000 in total. Making \$60,000 was "Portrait of Chief Joseph," a signed watercolor that came from a private collection in California and bore a 1996 C.M. Russell Auction sticker on its reverse. Russell's untitled watercolor Portrait of a Native American Woman, done circa 1896, was also signed and came from a California collection, but this one had a May 1994 letter of authenticity from Ginger K. Renner, Paradise Valley, Ariz. A label from Paul Masa Gallery was on the reverse, and this one was bid to \$48,000. An ink wash "Scene on the Judith Roundup, Bucking Broncho" by Russell also performed well, finishing just under its high estimate at \$48,000. Signed and titled, the work was owned by William H. Heuer of St. Louis, circa 1950s, and then descended through the family.

Historic Western art was in high demand, and two pieces by



The oil on board "Hands" by Joe Kronenberg (b 1968), 36 by 48 inches, more than doubled its high estimate, going out for \$51,000 (\$15/25,000).



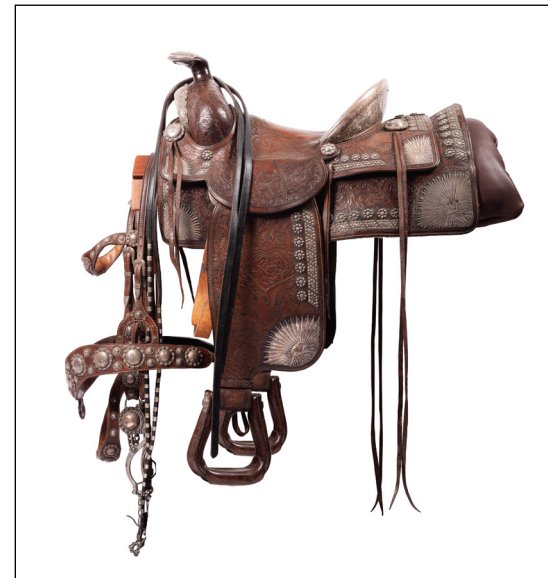
Done in mixed media on board, Gerald Curtis Delano's (1890-1972) "Back to Back," 12 by 16 inches, was shot down for \$27,000, three times its high estimate (\$6/9,000).



Review by
Carly Timpson, Associate Editor
Photos Courtesy
March in Montana



Leading the Native American articles was this Blackfoot beaded man's shirt, 25 inches long with an additional 12 inches of fringe and 55 inches cuff to cuff. From the late 1800s, the shirt was taken to \$20,910 (\$20/30,000).



This Visalia Stock Saddle, Co., saddle was mounted with silver mountain and sun motifs and marked "Silver Dollar Brady" on the back of its seat; it garnered \$36,900 (\$15/25,000).

Gerald Curtis Delano soared past their estimates, earning applause from the audience, according to Nicklas. "Canyon Couple," a watercolor depicting a man and woman, each on horseback, stopping for water in the canyon, achieved the second-highest price overall. Surpassing its \$35,000 high estimate, the painting, which had provenance to a 1999 sale at Coeur d'Alene Art Auction and a California collection, brought \$66,000. "Back to Back," a vibrantly-colored Native battle scene in mixed media sold for \$27,000. The work had provenance to Fred Thomason of Denver and was signed with the artist's cipher to the lower right.

Oleg Stavrowsky's "Leaders Know The Way" was in excellent condition and had provenance to a private collection in Golden, Colo. The oil on canvas depicted a team of horses leading a packed stagecoach over a rocky river. Signed to the lower right, the work was pulled to \$36,000. Also by Stavrowsky was "Staying Close," an oil on canvas of a grazing mare and her young foal. The titled and signed family portrait was bid to \$27,000 — four and a half times its high estimate.

Alaskan art was led by Sydney Laurence's oil on canvas depiction of "Mt McKinley." The scene, which was bid well beyond its \$35,000 high estimate to achieve \$58,425, was signed to the lower left and housed in a frame with title plaque. Nicklas shared that "enthusiasm from Alaskan collectors contributed to the dynamic energy of the auction."

Contemporary Western artist Don Oelze's "From the Bluff They Watch" was taken to \$39,000, besting its \$25,000 high estimate and "proving the growing demand for modern interpretations of the Western experience," per Nicklas. "Hands" by Joe Kronenberg was another contemporary work to find success. The artist was quoted in the catalog describing his work: "As an artist, my goal was to introduce multiple stories within a single canvas, each distinct yet united by the common theme of hands. Set against the backdrop of a fog-laden, muddy street in a late Nineteenth Century Old West town, four men on horseback find themselves in a standoff, their expressions a complex blend of resolve, uncertainty and palpable tension as they demand the opposing side to



Charles M. Russell's (1864-1926) ink wash "Scene on the Judith Roundup, Bucking Broncho," 17¾ by 24 inches, kicked up \$48,000 (\$30/50,000).



"Mt McKinley" by Sydney Laurence (1865-1940), oil on canvas, 16 by 20 inches, crested at \$58,425 (\$25/35,000).

show their 'hands' and lay down their weapons." He continues, explaining that other interpretations of "hands" can be seen in the windows as "men are engaged in 'hands' of cards" and "a man nervously seeks a woman's 'hand' in marriage." This multilayered scene more than doubled its \$25,000 high estimate to achieve \$51,000.

While fine art was dominant throughout the sale, antiques and related items also found success. Most notably, a Visalia Stock Saddle Company saddle shattered expectations, selling for \$36,000. This silver-mounted example was emblazoned with mountain and sun motifs, conchos and tooled floral designs,

and it sold with a matching headstall, reins, bit and martingale. According to the catalog, "Visalia saddles were celebrated for their innovative designs, such as the 'center fire rigging,' which provided better balance & reduced strain on horses. Over time, the company's products became synonymous with fine craftsmanship & Western heritage, attracting customers from across the country."

Native American objects were led by a Blackfoot man's shirt, finely detailed with blue, pink and white beaded designs. The shirt, which originated from the late 1800s, had provenance to the Cameron collection of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Mon-



The same buyer won these two watercolor portraits by Charles M. Russell (1864-1926). Left: "Portrait of Chief Joseph," 9 by 8 inches, earned \$60,000 (\$50/70,000). Right: the circa 1896 Untitled (Portrait of a Native American Woman), 11 by 9 inches, went out at \$48,000 (\$50/70,000).



Going out at \$39,000 was "From the Bluff They Watch" by Don Oelze (b 1965), oil on canvas, 36 by 40 inches (\$15/25,000).

tana and Wyoming. It was hung up for \$20,910.

In addition to the sale-high prices, Brinkman reported two "biggies," noting that the auction set records for works by two contemporary artists: Rachel Brownlee with \$19,680 for "Vigil," and Jessica Bryant with a \$9,000 total for "Last Light/Reynolds Creek Valley in Glacier National Park." Brownlee's (b 1993) "Vigil," a 36-by-24-inch charcoal on panel illustration of a saddle, gun and boots bore an artist's label that read, "This saddle belonged to George Shadbolt, owner of the Churn Ranch south of Merriman, NE" (\$12/15,000). "Last Light/Reynolds Creek Valley in Glacier National Park," a

watercolor landscape, was estimated \$6/8,000, measured 16¾ by 29¼ inches and was signed to the lower right.

In the post-sale release, Nicklas wrote: "With the overwhelming success of this year's event, plans are already underway for the 39th annual March in Montana sale, scheduled for March 19 through March 21, 2026, in Great Falls. Collectors and enthusiasts are encouraged to mark their calendars for what promises to be another milestone in Western art history."

Prices quoted include the buyer's premium as reported by the auction house. For information, www.marchinmontana.com or 208-664-2091.

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