

Forbes COLLECTOR

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NOVEMBER 2005 VOLUME 3 NUMBER 11

A Closer Look



It was another high-flying November in the New York auction rooms. Both Sotheby's and Christie's boasted their best multi-owner sales since 1990 in the impressionist and early modern category. At Christie's, 82% of works sold within or above their estimates. Why? Sellers were digging out the good stuff—like Picasso's 1907 watercolor *Yellow Nude*, a study for his masterpiece *Les Femmes d'Alger*. It made \$13.7 million, more than triple its high estimate.

In postwar and contemporary, Christie's posted a record total of \$157.4 million, highest ever in that category. Among the season's record-breakers were three blue-chip standouts: Mark Rothko's iconic *Homage to Matisse* (\$22.4 million), Roy Lichtenstein's *In the Car* (\$16.2 million) and, over at Sotheby's, David Smith's rare-to-market *Cubi XXXVIII* sculpture, which made \$23.8 million, more than double its high estimate and an auction record for a postwar artwork. Interesting to note: recent market darlings like Murakami, Dumas and Gursky didn't make the evening sales. Fashion winds will blow. —M.S.

BUYING SMART

The Wiener Werkstätte: Vienna's Visual Feast



Gustave Klimt's design for a sumptuous wall mosaic for the dining room of the Palais Stoclet, the Wiener Werkstätte's tour de force commission. The mosaic featured gold, jewels and rare marble.

One of the great legends of the Wiener Werkstätte (WW) emerged shortly after this progressive alliance of designers and artisans completed its most lavish private commission, the Palais Stoclet in Brussels, in 1911. The Palais, a 40-odd-room private residence, embodied all that the Wiener Werkstätte stood for. The aesthetic scheme was based on simple geometric elements like the circle and the square. Its interior decoration had been exquisitely handcrafted with the finest materials, from rare marble to kid suede. And every aspect of its design—from the marquetry floors to wall mosaics to the silver bath accessories—was visually integrated, reflecting a unified design (a concept known as *gesamtkunstwerk*). According to Jane Kallir, principal of New York's Galerie St. Etienne and author of *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte*, “there was not a detail that could be removed or changed without altering the whole.”

As the story goes, when the commission was complete, Madame Stoclet invited the WW crew over to admire the spread. Apparently, they were so dismayed to find her decked out in Paris couture that they rushed back to Vienna to design special frocks, shoes, hats and gloves that would allow her to better visually integrate with her home. Talk about total design!

Who were these ardent artisans? And what exactly was this entity called the Wiener Werkstätte? Literally interpreted as “Vienna Workshops,” it was a cooperative of architects, artists and craftspeople, dedicated to the ideal of integrating the fine and applied arts. Launched in 1903 with backing from Viennese industrialist Fritz

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COLLECTOR'S EYE

Abstract Expressionist Prints

Conventional wisdom says that abstract expressionist artists worked almost exclusively in New York, in the 1940s and '50s. Early histories of the movement contend that the artists were almost all men, who painted massive, macho “action” paintings (think Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline) and huge, hovering fields of color (Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman). Mythology has many of them living hard and dying young. And now, of course, their work sells at auction up into the tens of millions of dollars.

Charles Dean has created a collection of abstract expressionist prints that has turned conventional wisdom on its head.



Louise Nevelson's *The Magic Garden*, c. 1953. This richly textured print is particularly desirable as she also drew and painted on it by hand.

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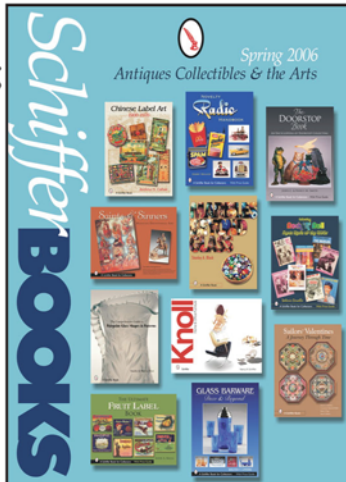
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O.E. Berninghaus (1874-1952) "Albert Looking Elk and Friend." Oil on board, 16x20 inches, signed lower right.

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BUYING SMART**The Wiener Werkstätte***continued from page 1*

Wärndorfer, the venture was spearheaded artistically by the visionary designers Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, prominent figures in the Vienna Secession movement. With hundreds of artists and artisans in its Vienna-based workshops, the WW expanded to include retail outlets and international branches, including one in New York.

From the beginning, Wiener Werkstätte material was a luxury proposition, catering to the wealthy classes with sumptuous handcrafted goods ranging from furniture, metalwork, ceramics and glass to graphic design, jewelry and textiles. A 1920 brochure advertises a beautiful silver repoussé dressing table mirror by a now-obscure architect named Oskar Strnad for \$1,000. That's as much as it cost many people back then to buy a house. But this venture was always more about art than business. Plagued by chronic financial difficulties, the Werkstätte plowed through the personal fortunes of several backers, finally closing its doors in 1932.

Collectors began to perk up their ears for this material in the mid 1980s, after a series of museum exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic raised awareness of the artistic hotbed that was Vienna at the turn of the last century. At the same time, influential architects like Charles Gwathmey and Richard Meier incorporated WW furniture and decorative objects into their architectural projects. Hollywood interior designer Naomi Leff liberally sprinkled Hoffmann furniture in homes of left-coast luminaries like Steven Spielberg and Barry Diller. The most important collection of Wiener Werkstätte material in this country almost certainly belongs to Estée Lauder chairman Ronald Lauder, who has included it in the Neue Galerie, his New York museum of German and Austrian art.

According to Christie's Carina Villinger, the market has flattened out in the past five years, in part because the winds of design fashion have shifted so strongly toward midcentury modern. Still, rare, important pieces in excellent condition continue to appreciate. Five years ago, the New York gallery Historical Design sold a pair of Hoffmann candelabra for \$150,000. Today, says principal Denis Gallion, they'd be worth closer to \$350,000. But as Jeremy Morrison of Sotheby's contends, this market is still relatively undervalued compared to

A brooch from the Café Fledermaus, a Viennese cabaret in which all design elements—even the servers' jewelry—were visually integrated. It fetched \$86,040 in 2003.



Art Deco and Art Nouveau, which have experienced massive run-ups in the last decade.

What do knowledgeable collectors look for? Foremost is the designer name. At the top of the heap are co-founders Hoffmann and Moser, followed by later leaders like Dagobert Peche, Carl Otto Czeschka and Berthold Löffler. In general, material from the earliest days of the venture, from 1904-14, is most desirable. That's when they designed and executed their most important commissions—and when there was greatest stylistic unity between the various departments.

The wildly prolific Hoffmann was an architect who designed anything and everything under the sun, from furniture and teapots to flatware and jewelry. His building commissions were the engine driving the workshop; among the most important were the Purkersdorf Sanatorium, near Vienna (1904-05) and the Palais Stoclet in Brussels (1904-11). According to Kallir, Hoffmann was so enamored of using square and cubic forms that he earned the nickname *Quadrat* ("Little Square").

Koloman Moser was a painter, designer and graphic artist. His furniture designs are known for their geometric contours and beautiful wood inlays. His designs are most rare, since he left the Wiener Werkstätte in early 1907. According to Christa Zetter of Galerie bei der Albertina in Vienna, his desks and chairs are particularly sought after. One of his painted beech and cane armchairs from the Purkersdorf Sanatorium sold for \$554,000 in 2000.

Dagobert Peche came later to the party, serving as co-artistic director after 1915. A master of form and color, he eschewed earlier geometries, preferring organic forms, which he treated with a flamboyant, baroque flourish. According to Villinger, he's especially known for whimsical silver animal centerpieces, scarce today on the market, along with striking floor lamps and gilded mirrors. Sotheby's sold a giltwood Peche mirror in 2003 for \$71,260.

Rarest and most coveted in the Wiener Werkstätte universe are furniture, lighting and metalwork from important architectural commissions. Nothing has emerged on the market from the extraordinary Palais Stoclet, now in the process of becoming an historical landmark. But other early commissions included private residences for backer Fritz Wärndorfer, industrialist Otto Primavesi and critic and salon hostess Berta Zuckermandl, among others. A original complete chandelier that hung in the Wiener Werkstätte's own Vienna salesroom fetched \$250,000 at an Austrian auction this year. Provenance is crucial. Best is a piece that has descended in the family from the original client, complete with a bill of sale or period photographs showing the piece in its original context.

Connoisseurs also look for designs created for important exhibitions, like the *Kunstschau Wien* of 1908, and for projects like *Café Fledermaus*, a Viennese cabaret created very much in the spirit of *gesamtkunstwerk*, with everything visually interrelated, from the furniture to the wall-paper to the flatware. A small silver-and-enamel



Hoffmann's iconic *Sitzmaschine* ("machine for sitting") included his signature geometric elements: the cutout squares and the attached spheres.

RECENT NOTABLE SALES

The most highly valued Wiener Werkstätte material? Furniture, jewelry and metalwork designed by its visionary co-founders, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser.

\$554,004

Koloman Moser, Painted beech and cane armchair for Purkersdorf Sanatorium
Christie's London, 2000

\$483,360

Koloman Moser, Parquetry bedroom cabinet, 1904
Sotheby's London, 1994

\$292,000

Josef Hoffmann, Diamond and gem-set silver and gold brooch, 1904
Christie's New York, 2000

\$128,041

Koloman Moser, Painted beech and cane armchair for Purkersdorf Sanatorium
Sotheby's New York, 1993

\$118,000

Josef Hoffmann, Silver and malachite centerpiece, c. 1904-05
Christie's New York, 1999

\$112,471

Koloman Moser, Silver, ivory and lapis lazuli centerpiece/tureen, 1904
Christie's Amsterdam, 2002

\$104,727

Josef Hoffmann, Silver teapot, 1903-04
Sotheby's London, 2005



Clean modern lines: this rare silver tureen, designed by Koloman Moser, fetched \$112,471 at auction. It's the only known example of six originally made.

Fledermaus hostess brooch (*page 3*) sold for \$86,040 in 2003, on an estimate of \$2,500-\$3,500.

But not everything was handcrafted. For larger projects, like Purkersdorf and Fledermaus, Hoffmann and Moser designed furniture that was manufactured outside the workshop, by Viennese firms like Thonet and Jacob and Josef Kohn. These items appear on the market more regularly. Early versions of the Fledermaus café chairs, with the arcing back and balls underneath the arms and legs, sell from \$5,000 to \$15,000. Ten years ago, Hoffmann's bentwood Purkerdorf dining room chairs, which feature a backslat with two vertical rows of cutout circles, sold for \$12,000; five years ago, one sold for \$40,000.

Arguably Hoffmann's most archetypal design was a wooden recliner he called the *Sitzmaschine* (*see page 3*), originally designed for Purkersdorf. Boldly sculptural, it features a reclining back panel with Hoffmann's signature square cutouts. Today, the chairs range from \$20,000 to \$50,000, depending on finish, originality and condition.

Metalwork also remains a popular collecting area—from cutlery and tea sets to tureens and lamps. Again, you'll pay a premium for custom pieces. Hoffmann and Moser-designed lamps can bring \$100,000 or more. Historical Design gallery sold a silver-and-ivory Hoffmann tea set five years ago for \$150,000—which, they project, would probably bring upward of \$250,000 today. But there are entry points in this area. One of the signature design motifs of the WW was called *gitterwerk*, a checkerboard pattern with the center of the squares cut out, used in everything from flower baskets to centerpieces. *Gitterwerk* ranges from \$2,000 for painted iron examples up to \$40,000 for more valuable silver ones. Also more affordable: 1920s brass bowls and trays, which run from \$2,500 to \$10,000.

Jewelry is also highly desirable. But don't expect the dazzle of diamonds and precious gems. WW artisans preferred silver, copper and semiprecious stones. A 1904 Hoffmann-designed

brooch for Fritz Wärndorfer's wife fetched \$292,000 in 2000 while a similar design executed seven years later sold for \$107,700 in 2004.

In their day, the fashion and textile divisions, run by renowned designer Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill, were the Werkstätte's most financially successful. So lush and original were their fabrics that haute couture designer Paul Poiret used them liberally in his Parisian fashions. Today, they are sought after by collectors—even fabric swatches, which can be framed—but few of the delicate fabrics have survived. If you can find them, they run to four figures.

Ceramics range from \$500 to \$20,000, depending on significance, rarity and condition. Early stylized, geometric designs can be found by Hoffmann and Jutta Sika, who produced a very Deco-looking tea service for a firm called Josef Böck. A pair of cups sold in March for \$918. A founder of Wiener Keramik, Michael Powolny, made putti figures inspired by German medieval sculpture and the paintings of fellow WW artist Gustave Klimt. Look also for works by Susi Singer and Vally Wieselthier, known for hand-modeled female busts ranging from a few thousand dollars up to about \$15,000.

In the area of glass, the top names are Hoffmann and Otto Prutscher. Prutscher's wine glasses with shallow bowls atop long cubist stems (*see below*) vary in color and shape. The yellow ones may be rarest, while the blue are most popular. A set of six amber ones fetched \$13,000 in April, while a single blue one sold for \$8,728.

Graphic design was a specialty of the Werkstätte. Posters are extremely rare, as they were made as advertisements, not for mass consumption. A good one can run \$50,000 to \$100,000. But postcards are plentiful, ranging from \$50 up to \$15,000 for an extraordinary, rare Egon Schiele design.

Fakes do exist in this material, mostly in metalwork, where forgers sometimes take less-valuable pieces of silver and fake the stamps. So it's important to know which marks were used when; "Made in Austria," for example, was used only after 1918. You also need a good sense of the thickness of the metal—the silver was not cast, but hammered by hand, so it was quite light—and be able to recognize the patina of metal as it ages. It helps to know which elements were used as border decorations, and when. In addition to forgeries, collectors can be confused by later re-editions of furniture, metal and glass. Pieces should be clearly marked as such. And provenance always helps as an authenticating tool.

Finally, a word about condition. Buyers range from collectors who want items in untouched original condition to those who want their pieces completely refinished and made to look brand new. I side with the purists who feel that stripping a piece of its original finish will diminish its value. If you want a perfect finish and don't care about originality, there are repros out there for far less money. ¶

These wineglasses, designed by Otto Prutscher, sell well at auction. One fetched more than \$8,500 earlier this year. Beware of recent repros, though.

WHERE TO SEE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE

MAK, Vienna, Austria
www.mak.at/e/jetzt/f_jetzt.htm

Neue Galerie, New York
www.neuegalerie.org

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts
www.artsmia.org

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
www.metmuseum.org

WHERE TO BUY WIENER WERKSTÄTTE

Christie's
www.christies.com

Sotheby's
www.sothebys.com

Galerie bei der Albertina, Vienna
www.galerie-albertina.at

Historical Design, New York
www.historicaldesign.com

Galerie St. Etienne, New York
www.gseart.com

Rita Bucheit Gallery, Chicago
www.ritabucheit.com

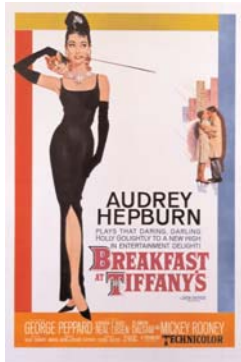
Dorotheum Auction House, Vienna
www.dorotheum.com



Moser centerpiece courtesy Christie's

Collectible Gifts Under \$10,000

With the holidays upon us, we went looking for distinctive, undervalued collectible gems that take the “same-old, same-old” out of gift-giving.



FILM POSTERS

Motion Picture Arts Gallery
East Rutherford, N.J.

www.mpagallery.com

Breakfast at Tiffany's, 30 x 40 in.

Just the sight of this poster evokes strains of “Moooooon Riiiiiver...”. This example was one of the few printed on a heavier cardboard stock and special ordered, mostly for drive-ins. Much more rare than a one-sheet. **\$8,500.**



CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Yossi Milo Gallery
New York, N.Y.

www.yossimilo.com

Girl With Marbles, 2005, Ilfochrome print, 11-3/4 x 11-3/4 in., from an edition of 20.

Enchantingly innocent, strangely vacuous—and utterly riveting. Loretta Lux’s surreal “portraits” of children, digital amalgams of figure and background, have a haunting “lost” quality that is both nostalgic and unnerving. **\$7,000.**

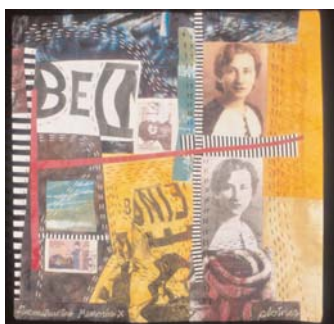
RUSSIAN ICONS

Temple Gallery
London, U.K.

www.templegallery.com

The Virgin of Vladimir, mid-18th c., 9.45 x 7.8 in.

Shortly after being brought to Russia from Byzantium in the 11th century, this image was adopted as the symbolic protector of the Russian people, delivering them from enemies and performing numerous miracles. It has been rendered over and over through the centuries. **\$4,300.**



CONTEMPORARY QUILTS

Noho Gallery
New York, N.Y.

www.nohogallery.com

Judith Plotner, *Deconstructed Memories X*, 2003

Not your grandmother’s quilt. Using hand-dyed and photocopied fabric and old family photos transferred to fabric, Plotner creates an evocative collage of memories. Contemporary quilts are among the most original and undervalued forms of art on today’s market. **\$1,000.**

GOLF MEMORABILIA

Golf’s Golden Years
Palatine, Ill.

antiqglf@comcast.net

Derby silver-plated cocktail set, 1921

What goes better than golfing and cold beverages? The 18-inch tray comes complete with six cups and a shaker cast in the shape of an old stovepipe golf bag, complete with a mesh-ball top. Fabulous ball and bag details throughout. A smaller set with only four cups reportedly sold on eBay for \$7,500 earlier this year. **\$8,500.**



BOTANICAL PRINTS

Donald Heald Gallery
New York, N.Y.

www.donaldheald.com

Robert Thornton, *The Nodding Renealmia*, 1801, 20 x 15-1/4 in.

One of the most strikingly graceful images from the greatest English color-plate flower book, ever. This hand-colored and color-printed aquatint, stipple and line engraving shows the renealmia, a tall flowering plant introduced from the Far East in the 1790s. First state of two. **\$7,000.**



NATIVE AMERICAN BASKETS

Morning Star Gallery
Santa Fe, N.M.

www.morningstargallery.com

Pomo beaded basketry gift bowl, c. 1890, H. 4-1/2 in. x D. 8-1/2 in.

An early gem from the golden age of California basketmaking. The Pomo are among the most celebrated of the California basketmakers, known especially for their supertight weaves and “gift” baskets, like this one, that incorporate beads and feathers into the design. **\$9,500.**



RENAISSANCE RINGS

Les Enluminures
Chicago, Ill.

www.lesenluminures.com

Gold and garnet ring, 15th century, fits U.S. ring size 6

What could possibly be more romantic than a ring worn by a Renaissance noblewoman? The stone is charmingly irregular, as jewelers didn’t cut or facet gemstones until the 16th century. This example is likely Italian. **\$5,000.**



ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST PRINTS

continued from page 1



California abstract expressionism? Who knew? James Kelly's 1952 lithograph, *August*, typifies the rough, brash spontaneity that Bay Area artists brought to the style.

Dean didn't set out to start a collection, per se. Having collected everything from cufflinks to Staffordshire china to American art pottery, the 56-year-old captain in the restaurant at New York's Carlyle Hotel just wanted to buy some art to put on the walls of his one-bedroom Manhattan apartment. But after Dean had 10 or 15 prints, he realized that they were taking on a life of their own. "I had no idea that it would snowball the way it did."

Dean has now amassed more than 120 abstract expressionist prints, which curators and scholars consider to be one of the premier collections of its kind in the country. After tracking down and befriending many forgotten artists, getting them to pull print boxes out of their closets and share memories of their artistic heyday, Dean is helping to re-write art history. His collection broadens the scope of the movement considerably in terms of artistic media, geography, dating, artist gender and price point. Selections of it have been exhibited at the International Print Center in New York and the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens in Jacksonville, Fla., in 2003. More will be on view next May at the Pollock-Krasner House on Long Island. I talked to the ebullient Georgia native about how the collection developed.

Why abstract expressionism? What's the appeal?

To me, it's the culmination of modernism, a gradual process through which artists were releasing art from the need to illustrate visual "re-

ality," and calling ever more attention to its essential component parts: forms, gestures, colors. The abstract expressionists wanted to use artistic form to picture inner realities of the heart and soul and unconscious mind, which is why I find it to be such a profound and interesting art movement. I can't afford the paintings, but I was lucky to stumble across the prints, which few people even knew existed.

What was your first acquisition? What moved you to buy this work?

It was in 1987, at the Hirschl & Adler Gallery, which is a few blocks from the Carlyle Hotel, where I work. I was struck by a Jacob Kainen print called *Marine Apparition*, which is a very abstracted marine scene. I bought it as a memento of my father, who had died within the last year. He loved the water: beaches, lakes, boating, fishing. It made me think of him.

What are the important groupings in your collection?

One is the work done by the Atelier 17 group in New York. The Atelier was started by English printmaker Stanley William Hayter in Paris, then transplanted to New York during World War II. He became a galvanizing force for American artists, showing that printmaking—he taught intaglio—could be more than a medium for reproducing images; it could be a medium for fine art, and for experimentation. When American artists saw the surrealists André Masson, Roberto Matta, Joan Miró and other major European émigré artists making prints there, it was an eye opener.

They were particularly intrigued by Hayter's interest in automatism, a technique of spontaneous drawing, without conscious self-control, which the surrealists used in an effort to mine their innermost creative impulses. While famed artists like Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell were known to work at the Atelier, the studio also attracted a number of young Americans who are less well-known to history, like Minna Citron, Fred Becker, Sue Fuller and Peter Grippe.

I have 12 works from the Atelier group, from its heyday of the 1940s and '50s, including one by Hayter. Some show the cross-pollination between the Americans and the Europeans, like Gabor Peterdi's 1948 print *The Dreamy Lobster*, an all-over composition that looks very influenced by Miró. One of my favorite prints is a 1945 Grippe engraving called *Improvisation*, which is inspired by jazz. Its all-over composition, without a single focal point, shows the way things were moving, aesthetically, for abstract expressionism. (Think Pollock's famed all-over drip paintings.)

I have later Atelier works, too, from the 1950s,

like a piece called *The Magic Garden* by Louise Nevelson (see page 1) and a photo-engraving by Franz Kline that incorporates poetry by Frank O'Hara, the influential New York poet, art critic and curator who sometimes collaborated with the abstract expressionists to make "poem-paintings"—and, in this case, a "poem-print."

And there was a California outpost of this movement as well?

Yes, mostly in the Bay area. I think they've been unjustly ignored by the general East Coast bias of art history. But that's changing quickly. Hayter was again a catalyst, teaching experimental printmaking briefly at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco in 1940, and again in 1948.

James Budd Dixon, who studied with him, carried the torch and taught the class afterward. Some of the Californians whose work I have include Edward Dugmore, Walter Kuhlman, Roy De Forest, Frank Lobdell, George Miyasaki, Byron McClintock, Sam Tchakalian, George Stillman, Robert McChesney, James Kelly and Sonia Gechtoff. There are a few intaglios, but most are lithographs. Kelly's *Deep Blue I* of 1952 is a masterpiece, really stunning. I bought it from him before he died and he said it was his favorite. It's one of four Kellys that I have. Of all the Californians, he was the most focused on lithography.

Any other groupings?

While this movement is famous for being quite macho, I have found some extraordinary women artists working in the style. Sue Fuller and Minna Citron were important in Atelier 17. Sonia Gechtoff was the most prominent woman working in California in the '50s. I also have a Sylvia Wald work in silkscreen, a Lee Krasner lithograph (see page 7) and several of Grace Hartigan's extraordinary screenprints.

WHERE TO SEE ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST PRINTS

Worcester Art Museum
Worcester, Mass.
www.worcesterart.org

Whitney Museum of American Art
New York, N.Y.
www.whitney.org

Selections from Charles Dean's collection can be seen May 4 through July 30, 2006, at the **Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center**, The Springs, N.Y.

While the works are abstract, there do seem to be “themes.” You mentioned jazz. Any others?

Jazz is a definite undercurrent. Most of the artists of this period were great jazz fans. And the improvisational quality of their abstract gestures is very much the visual equivalent of musical improvisation. Just recently, I bought an intaglio from 1943 by a little-known artist, Phillip Platt. The piece is so musical—a sunny, swoopy, jazzy image. I have at least five or six jazz-themed works, including Peter Grippe’s *Jazz Musicians* (see page 8).

Then there’s landscape; the Californians, in particular, seemed to really respond to it, from Sonia Gechtoff to George Miyasaki to John Allen Ryan. I have a Robert McChesney silkscreen from 1951, inspired by exotic islands in the Pacific that he saw when he was in the Merchant Marines. And a Walter Kuhlman intaglio from 1949, a beautiful abstraction that gives me the feeling of a Chinese landscape.

And as it turns out, there’s also a lot of water imagery from this period. In addition to the first piece I bought, I have works with titles like *The Dreamy Lobster* (Gabor Peterdi), *Wash Shapes* (Phillip Guston), *Squid Under the Pier* (Minna Citron) and *Eight Leggers* (Bernard Childs), to name a few. Others don’t have water in the name, but they have watery, splashy imagery. It’s interesting; it wasn’t until I exhibited the collection for the first time a few years ago, that it came over me that many of the works had this strong water theme—and that much of that affinity had been inspired by my dad, who so loved the water. It was an extremely emotional realization. It made me understand that there is often something subconscious pushing collectors, something deeply meaningful fueling the collecting impulse.



Hans Hofmann’s color screenprint *Composition in Blue* sold for \$10 when it was made in 1945. Fewer than a dozen impressions are now known, and most have condition problems. In 2000, one sold for \$17,250.

With so much of this work printed singly or in tiny editions, do you feel like there’s much out there that hasn’t been mined at this point?

Things do still turn up. That jazzy Phillip Platt I mentioned. He isn’t known now, but his work was in all the Hayter exhibition catalogs of the period. At the recent print fair, Doris Seidler, who worked at Atelier 17 in the early ’50s, appeared with three beautiful abstract woodcuts she’d made that were too large to mail. They were enormous, three feet tall.

I went to visit Walter Kuhlman in Sausalito. He had studied with James Budd Dixon at the California School of Fine Arts. He gave me this print of Dixon’s that he had, saying “it’s not doing any good sitting here in this box.” I think there are probably a few such boxes still out there.

How do you decide what to buy and what not to buy?

I try to buy the most extraordinary example of an artist’s work I can find and afford. It’s a brash, dramatic period of art, so I look for dramatic images. And I do like color.

I won’t buy a print just for a name. There are some artists any museum curator would feel compelled to include because of their importance in the movement. But if their work doesn’t speak to me, as a private collector, I can pass. Another issue is affordability. The beautiful Adolph Gottlieb pictographs from Atelier 17 are very rare and beautiful, but they’re out of my price range, selling now for \$25,000–\$35,000. If I can’t afford a really good example, then I’d rather not represent the artist with a mediocre print. I want to show every artist at a period when their work was strong and fresh.

Printmaking can be complex, process-wise. Are there media that you think are better suited than others to the movement’s spontaneous, straight-from-the-gut aesthetic?

It’s interesting to see how widely artists experimented in different print media, from intaglio and woodcuts to silkscreens and lithographs. I wanted to include a full range of media. The early Atelier 17 works were intaglios, because that was what Hayter taught. But by 1960, the major work was being made in lithography, which artists discovered was a wonderful technique for this style because it was like painting on a stone. Californians were way ahead of the New York school in making lithographs, starting as early as the late ’40s and early ’50s. The New Yorkers, like Willem de Kooning, didn’t start making lithos until around 1960.



Lee Krasner blossomed artistically in the late ’60s and early ’70s, after her husband Jackson Pollock died. This 1970 lithograph shows her strong, confident forms and fluid, lyrical style.

You’d think that monotypes, in which the artist essentially paints directly on the plate and pulls one image, would be an ideal medium, but you don’t see many. George Stillman made some in the 1940s. I recently found a group of 50 that Harry Jackson made. He was working in a Pollock style, dripping paint on canvases on the floor and blotting them up on the paper. They’re quite interesting. I went out to his studio in Cody, Wyo., and bought one from him. It’s the only monotype I have in the collection.

There are also some woodcuts, but it’s a medium not easily compatible with the abstract expressionist style. The wood is hard to cut in a fluid way. And the whole process of registering the different blocks is arduous. It takes some of the spontaneous quality out of the images. Worden Day created beautiful woodcuts. I have one—very fluid, with lush, sensitive colors, very influenced by

**WHERE TO BUY
ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST PRINTS**

Swann Galleries, New York
www.swanngalleries.com

Susan Teller Gallery, New York
<http://homepage.mac.com/stg568/PhotoAlbum5.html>

Hirsch & Adler Galleries, New York
www.hirschlandadler.com

Annex Galleries, Santa Rosa, Calif.
www.annexgalleries.com

Charles M. Young Fine Prints & Drawings
Portland, Conn.
860-342-2403

Ellen Sragow Gallery, New York
www.sragowgallery.com

G. W. Einstein Company, Inc., New York
212-874-2172



Louis Schanker's 1939 woodcut, *Non-Objective*, shows the strong influence of Vasily Kandinsky, who was concerned with the expressive power of color and line, and with the congruences between color and music.

Asian art. It's long and vertical, like a Chinese scroll. Eve Clendenin, who was a student of Hans Hofmann's in Provincetown, did them as well, in deep colors: bright red, ochre, blue, black. It's like a modernist interpretation of one of the Provincetown woodcuts done earlier in the century.

While it's hard to get much subtlety or depth with silkscreening—and both qualities are hallmarks of the abstract expressionist style—a few artists did make them. It's a difficult medium to use unless you want blocky colors. I have a rare Hans Hofmann silkscreen (see page 7) that is so fluid, it looks like a gouache. The Hartigan silkscreens are very beautiful, as well.

Are any of the works printed with master printers? How does that effect the expressive immediacy they sought?

In the 1940s and '50s, there really weren't any master printer workshops. With the exception of some late de Koonings, Krasners and Gustons, which were printed in master lithography studios after they cropped up in the 1960s, most of the prints I own are made by the artists themselves. I like their hands-on quality. There's not as much emphasis on pristine, perfect printing. It's experimental, fresh, even a little sloppy sometimes. You can sense the artists' immediacy to get the visual message across. If it's smudgy around the edges or the registration isn't perfect, it's not important. It didn't bother them, and it doesn't bother me.

Did you have a mentor who taught you about quality and value?

Janet Flint, a curator, author, scholar and educator who had started the print department at Hirschl & Adler. In the beginning she got me grounded, got me reading the right books. She encouraged me to look at certain artists, and gave me the courage to really look at artists I didn't know. She helped me develop to the point

where I could make my own decisions.

What effect does condition has on value?

If there's a great image that has a condition problem, and only one or two exist, yes I'll buy it. My Hofmann print is light-stained by the sun. But it's a very rare print—fewer than a dozen known—and the fact is, they're all in bad condition. Made in 1945, they were sold for probably \$10 at the time, and treated casually, like posters. Because of the rarity you have to overlook the flaws of age.

How has the market for this material changed since you began?

There was very little market for abstract expressionist prints at the time they were being created. There was no impetus for artists to make sizeable editions, so they made a few impressions for themselves—as few as two or three. Many were just kept, and only came on the market in the last ten years. I was lucky enough to meet many of the artists and acquire some pieces directly. I have a James Kelly lithograph called *Red Wednesday*. One is in the Fogg, one in the Whitney and I have one and another collector has another. That's it.

When I first started there was almost no competition. I could buy most prints for under \$2,000. But in 2003 there was an exhibition of abstract expressionist prints at the Worcester Art Museum and a show of some of my California prints at the International Print Center in New York. Now there are at least six or seven serious collectors. So add increasing demand to the extremely limited supply, and the works have become more difficult to acquire. In 2003, Annex Gallery received five silkscreens, all unique artist proofs made by Bay Area artist Roy De Forest. They put them on the Internet and those five prints sold in a single day. And values have slowly started to rise, especially for some of the more peripheral members of the group, who got very strong prices at a sale of a private collection this May.

You actually met with some of the artists. Tell me about that.

It's the most exciting part of the collecting process. And such an important part of learning about the period, by gathering these oral histories, hearing their memories of the Atelier or the California School of Fine Art, learning which fellow artists they most respected and why.

Sometimes they would pull out works they had forgotten. I have even been able to buy prints directly from some of the artists. It's been an unexpected benefit.

I visited many of the artists, like Kuhlman, in Sausalito, and Peter Grippe, who lived not far from my house in Orient, N.Y. I also became friends with Sonia Gechtoff and her late husband, James Kelly, who lived in Westbeth in Greenwich Village.

Sonia encouraged me to find Byron McClintock, Budd Dixon's studio assistant at the California School of Fine Arts, saying what a wonderful lithographer he was. I tried for years, to no avail. Finally, I got a lead by posting a query on printcollecting.com, a community of collectors and dealers. A dealer in San Rafael said that he had come into her shop that year for an appraisal and she gave me his address. So I wrote him a letter and told him about my collection. After five excruciating weeks, I finally heard from him.

He hadn't been making art for some time. But as a result of my interest, he started back in his studio, making extraordinarily lush and beautiful mezzotints and drypoints. Annex Galleries now represents him. I've visited him twice. He did sell me three lithos from the early '50s, one of which I gave to the Whitney. His wife said, "Until you found Byron, he hadn't been working for ten years and now he's in the studio every day." That, to me, is my most important accomplishment as a collector. When he came to New York, we went to the Whitney and saw his print. The first Christmas after I found him he sent me a beautiful little mezzotint with a note that said "Thank you, Charles, for finding me. I didn't know how lost I was."

What a great story. Thanks. ffc



Like many midcentury artists, Peter Grippe was a huge jazz fan. He told Dean that he printed this engraving, *Jazz Musicians #1*, on blue paper to evoke the mood of a smoky jazz club.

Upcoming Sales | What to Buy...and Why

THE ELLA CAIN COLLECTION OF MONO LAKE BASKETS (Bonham's and Butterfield's, December 5)

LOT 1104: Tina Charlie, Paiute polychrome degikup basket, 1929

DESCRIPTION: Sedge, redbud and bracken fern on a willow foundation, H 10-1/4 inches, D 20-1/2 inches • ESTIMATE: \$100,000–\$150,000



TOP LOT Big, Bold. Technically dazzling. Artistically dramatic. Historically significant. Basket aficionados have anxiously awaited this collection for months, hailing as it does from California's "golden age" of basketry. Tina Charlie was one of the few makers known by name; this piece was a coveted prize winner from the 1929 Indian Field Day, documented with numerous photos, including one of Tina herself holding it, standing next to the Governor of California. One of probably only 10 large baskets of this size ever produced in the Yosemite-Mono Lake region, look for it to break the world basket record at auction.

LOT 1247: Beaded Paiute basket, c. 1910

DESCRIPTION: Willow, glass trade beads, H 2 inches, D 4-3/4 inches • ESTIMATE: \$1,000–\$1,500

Ella Cain, an important early collector and supporter of Northern California basket makers, often documented their work with personal notes and photos. And while this little gem remains anonymous in its attribution (as most native baskets were), Mrs. Cain had made a notation that this was the first beaded Paiute basket ever made. The Paiute were not as well known for beaded baskets as, say, the Pomo tribes. Whether or not it's the first, it boasts a radical design—much more like the woven baskets—with diamonds, 8-pointed stars and concentric circles.



A PRIVATE COLLECTION OF FRENCH MID-CENTURY DESIGN (Christie's, December 7)

LOT 184: Serge Roche chandelier, c. 1937

TOP LOT DESCRIPTION: Mirrored glass, painted metal and glass, H 38 inches • ESTIMATE: \$40,000–\$60,000



Mid-20th century design has been enjoying a market moment for the past few years, with French work leading the charge. Serge Roche is best known for lighting and mirror designs from the 1930s and '40s, using glass, mirrors, marble, plaster and painted metal in a whimsically historicizing way. Provenance doesn't get much better than this: Roche designed this sprightly confection of a chandelier—likely a one-off example—for his own Paris apartment. The mirrored glass inside the curvy shell shows some signs of age, but the outer elements are pristine. His sconces and floor lamps have sold recently in the low to mid five figures; an important mirror sold this April for \$114,700.

LOT 71: Line Vautrin mirror, c. 1960

DESCRIPTION: Talosel resin and glass, H 14 inches, W 13-1/2 inches • ESTIMATE: \$15,000–\$20,000

It may not be the most practical mirror if you're looking to adjust your hat, but that's not the point. Jewelry maker and mirror designer Line Vautrin was all about the sunburst frames on her **HIDDEN GEM** unique, handmade mirrors, and in this chic, exuberant example, the frame has taken on a life of its own, becoming more important than the looking glass itself. Of late, her mirrors have been selling for between \$25,000 and \$75,000, depending on size and complexity of design.



SPORTS MEMORABILIA AND CARDS (Sotheby's, December 10)

LOT 233: Joe DiMaggio's 1936 New York Yankees rookie home uniform

DESCRIPTION: Spalding-manufactured pinstripe flannel • ESTIMATE: \$600,000+



TOP LOT Rare, historic artifact from a baseball legend. As a 21-year-old rookie, DiMaggio hit .323, leading the Yanks to four straight World Series, nine championships in all. Collectors covet rookie items for their rarity; Joltin' Joe's estate still holds most of his stuff, and this is the only year he wore no. 9. At the end of each season, team uniforms were doled out to minor leaguers. This one went to pitcher Charles "Smoky" Mason, who's had it since. DiMaggio's name and number are stitched inside the collar and waistband, and authenticators have made at least a dozen forensic photo matches. The sleeves were later cut, and the N.Y. logo removed, but its outline is visible. Closest comps: two historic Ruth jerseys, which sold for \$771,000 and \$1 million earlier this year.

LOT 303: Hank Aaron's cap worn while hitting home run #715

DESCRIPTION: Wilson-manufactured cap size 7-3/8 • ESTIMATE: \$20,000–\$30,000

Hank Aaron wore this cap under his batting helmet when he broke Babe Ruth's record, swatting his 715th home run on April 8, 1974. The cap had been removed in the celebration and held by the starting pitcher Ron Reed, who later gave it to Braves minor-league prospect Buck Riddle. (Documentation includes letters from Reed and Riddle.) On the underside of the band is a manufacturing code verifying the year it was made. And Aaron's #44 appears under the brim in faded black marker. The cap is well worn, with noticeable sweat stains and soiling.



MARKETWATCH: RECENT NOTABLE SALES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT



Item **Where Sold** **Sale Date** **Price Estimate/Price Fetched**

FILM POSTERS

Rare *Metropolis* poster, 1926 **Reel Poster Gallery, London** **11/05** **private sale/\$690,000**

BUZZ: When it comes to the vintage film poster market, classic horror dominates the top price records—with one exception: Fritz Lang's super-rare sci-fi masterpiece *Metropolis*, arguably the most important film poster ever. The art deco image has long held two of the top five records, and now it will hold three, including the highest price ever paid. Edged out of the number one spot was a poster for the 1932 film *The Mummy*, which had sold for \$453,500 in 1997. This was one of only four known copies in existence, and two of them are in museums. Flick fans were busy this month; down in Dallas, Heritage Auctions sold \$1.5 million worth of the stuff, an all-time high for a movie poster auction.

ANTIQUE JEWELRY

18th-century Russian imperial diamond necklace **Sotheby's Geneva** **11/05** **\$1,135,000-\$1,890,000/\$1.5 million**

BUZZ: Did she or didn't she? Apparently at least two buyers thought she did. The she in question? Russian empress Catherine the Great. The mystery? Whether an historic necklace, dazzlingly bedecked with 27 large diamonds, had been worn by her royal highness. Provenance is often impossible to document in a country ravaged by war, revolution and decades of decidedly bling-challenged Communism. But this imperial piece, housed in the Russian state diamond fund until 1917, is a lucky survivor of history. Much old jewelry was broken up to produce newer, more stylish jewelry with the stones. This sale saw ten pieces top the million-dollar mark.



VINTAGE CARS

1935 Type 59/50B Bugatti **Bonham's Goodwood** **9/05** **\$1.3 million-\$1.8 million/\$1.47 million**

BUZZ: A sexy Frankenstein on wheels, built from hoarded Bugatti parts. This meticulous—and some 90% original—restoration, featured reproduced body panels and an engine culled from a 1935 Grand Prix de l'ACF at Montlhéry car. But the sexy single-seater had raceworthy power and all those juicy little Bugatti details, like piano wire wheels. There is no comparable car.



EARLY AMERICANA

Jonathan Edes, Painted fireboard and overmantel, late 18th c **Thomaston Place** **8/05** **\$250,000-\$325,000/\$605,000**

BUZZ: George Washington slept here. Okay, okay, he slept in the general vicinity. But the first president's 1789 visit to Boston inspired these large, rare and historic panel paintings by Massachusetts artist and Revolutionary war patriot Jonathan Edes. On them are scenes of Boston harbor (including the Boston lighthouse and fort on Castle Island), a profile of Washington and a detailed scene of a Colonial militia in formation. This price nearly triples Edes' previous record of \$220,800 for an overmantel panel.



Editor: Missy Sullivan
Designer: Gail Stoicheff

Forbes COLLECTOR

is published monthly by Forbes Inc., 60 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011
Copyright 2005 by Forbes Inc.

Price per issue: \$20

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