

Western Skies

Landscape scenes and cowboy action among highlights at the Scottsdale Art Auction on April 6 in Arizona

April 6, 9:30 a.m.

Scottsdale Art Auction

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Western art takes center stage at the *Scottsdale Art Auction* April 6 in Scottsdale, Arizona. Now in its 14th year, the annual sale will bring top Western,

wildlife and sporting art to bidders during two sessions, the first of which will offer all works at no reserve.

“We’re aiming for about 340 lots in total, with 120 in the first session and about 220 in the second session. We had more last year, but I think we went a little long so we’re trying to keep this one smaller, but once again with great pieces available to bidders,” says auction partner Mike Frost, owner of J.N. Bartfield Galleries in New York. “And we really offer a wide range of artwork, for every price point. There are pieces with starting bids of \$300 and then

we’ll have pieces that could sell for more than \$3 million.”

One of the major highlights of the sale is Thomas Moran’s 1907 oil *Castle Rock, Green River, WY*. The 20-by-30-inch landscape features one of Moran’s most well-known subjects. “We think it’s beautiful. Castle Rock was one of the great subjects he painted. It’s very difficult to get one of these Green River paintings, especially one from this masterful period that he was painting in, and especially with figures in the water like he has painted,” Frost says. “There



Thomas Moran (1837-1926), *Castle Rock, Green River, WY*. Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in. Estimate: \$3.5/4.5 million



Frank Tenney Johnson (1874-1939), *Smoke of a Forty-Five*. Oil on canvas, 45 x 45 in. Estimate: \$600/900,000

are a lot of things that are desirable here.” The work is estimated to sell between \$3.5 million to \$4.5 million.

Albert Bierstadt, who was also painting the West around the same

time as Moran, will be represented by *Sunset – Salt Lake*, a postcard-sized oil painting estimated at \$150,000 to \$250,000. The work was likely painted in 1863, which makes it significant

because it comes from an early trip Bierstadt took West. “It’s small painting, but it is very tight and the detail is crisp,” Frost says of the work. *Sunset – Salt Lake* will join at least



Ogden Pleissner (1905-1983), *Duck Hunting*. Watercolor, 20 x 30 in. Estimate: \$35/55,000

three other Bierstadt works in the April sale.

One noteworthy cowboy work is Frank Tenney Johnson's *Smoke of a Forty-Five*, estimated at \$600,000 to \$900,000. Johnson, who was known for his cowboy scenes and nocturnes, added another element to the title by painting the work on a canvas measuring 45 by 45 inches. "If you need action, this has it all. This one came from later in Johnson's life, in 1937, within two years of his death. Some of his best works come from this period of his career," Frost adds. "This was after he became a full member of the National Academy of Design. It was very unusual at the time for a Western artist to be included, which speaks to the importance of his work."

Other lots include pieces by William Gollings, Wilhelm Kuhnert, Ogden Pleissner, E. Martin Hennings, Carl Rungius, Nicolai Fechin and several works by Frederic Remington, including a cast of *The Rattlesnake*. "What makes the Remington so exciting is this particular cast, which is cast No. 35. It has great color, as well as a sharpness to the features. This is one I would certainly want in my house," Frost says, adding



Frederic Remington (1861-1909), *The Rattlesnake*. Bronze, cast No. 35, 23 in. Estimate: \$200/300,000



Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), *Sunset - Salt Lake*. Oil on board, 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. Estimate: \$150/250,000



William Hollings (1878-1932), *Crow Camp*, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Estimate: \$25/45,000

that only 103 original casts were made. "Only four or five were made during Remington's lifetime, with the rest being made by the artist's wife Eva Remington. And when she died all the molds were broken."

Remington also figures prominently in a separate lot, an edition of the bronze *Elk Buffalo* by Henry Shrady. Both artists used Roman Bronze Works as the foundry for their sculpture works. Remington saw *Elk Buffalo* being cast while he was at Roman Bronze Works to check on one of his own pieces. Smitten by the work, Remington later bought an early edition of the bronze and it is now part of the artist's collection at the Frederic Remington Art Museum in Ogdensburg, New York. ■