

Auction Action In Scottsdale, Ariz.

Scottsdale's Spring Auction Ropes In More Than \$16 Million

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ. — With 97 percent of 462 lots sold, Scottsdale Art Auction's Spring 2026 sale was a sure success, realizing an excess of \$16.2 million. Bringing in nearly 400 in-person bidders and an additional 951 online, the April 10-11 auction resulted in several new world records and saw top lots head to places in Europe, New York, Texas and Montana. Forty-five percent of all lots sold over estimate.

Scottsdale Art Auction co-owner Brad Richardson reported, "We

were extremely pleased with the sale, selling over 95 percent and \$16.2 million. What's interesting about that number is that if you added up all the high estimates in our catalog it amounted to \$13,400,000. We sold \$16.2 million, so obviously, across the board, things sold over estimate, and it shows that the Western market is really strong right now."

The auction's overall leading lot, "Carmencita," an oil on canvas portrait by Russian-American artist Nicolai Fechin, was sold during the sale's second session. Estimated \$600/900,000, the expressive image of a young girl and her doll rose to \$1,020,000. The work had provenance to Nedra Matteucci Gallery (Santa Fe, N.M.), the Indiana collection of Richard Freeland (one of the largest individual Pizza Hut franchisees) and a private collection in Texas. On the 29-by-25-inch

framed work's reverse were several labels for Fort Wayne (Ind.) Museum of Art, Fenn Galleries (Santa Fe), the Western Center for the Conservation of Fine Arts (Wheat Ridge, Colo.) and the Eiteljorg Museum (Indianapolis).

Of Fechin, Richardson noted, "He's been a strong artist for many, many years. When good paintings come up, there's a lot of competitive bidding to acquire them, and that's what happened. We were confident that these would do well, and the five we offered all did do very well; almost all of them sold over or within their estimates."

Fechin's portrait of a young boy named Consuelo went out at \$252,000, just shy of its \$275,000 high estimate. "Consuelo" had recorded provenance dating back to 1989, when it was with Dan May & Associates (Santa Fe). Additional provenance included Altermann & Morris (Santa Fe, 1999) and the Regina Giesecke collection (Ballinger, Texas), then sold by descent in family partnership (Scottsdale, Ariz.). The portrait was exhibited at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum (Oklahoma City) in 1991.

A floral still life by Fechin, from a Texas collection, also landed within its estimated range, realizing \$396,000. As described in the auction catalog, "Fechin believed in the power and beauty within objects, which is evident in his floral paintings. Like his portraits, Fechin painted objects with loose, evocative brushstrokes that danced freely on the surface of the painting." The subject of this image, a colorful vase of various flowers, rested on a table behind a small canine figure.

Seventeen works by Will James were offered in this auction from the collection of A.P. "Abe" Hays (1930-2025), a collector and dealer who "developed a reputation for a great eye when it came to Old West artifacts and paintings,"



"Line Shack Cowhands" by G. Harvey (American, 1933-2017), oil on canvas, 37 by 49 inches, cleaned up for \$204,000 (\$80/120,000).



Martin Grelle's (American, b 1954) 2005 oil on canvas "Last of the Pemmican" depicted "cold, weary hunters who have been unsuccessful in finding fresh food and have gotten down to the last of the food they brought with them — the last of the pemmican," as he wrote. The 66-by-89-inch framed work realized \$270,000 (\$250/350,000).



Howard Terpning's (American, b 1927) "Scout from Fort Bowie," 1985, oil on canvas, 39 by 51 inches framed, earned \$240,000 (\$250/350,000).



Taos, N.M., artist Jerry Jordan's (b 1944) "The Music We See With Our Eyes," oil on canvas, 48 by 60 inches framed, brought \$84,000, an auction record for the artist (\$40/60,000).



Review by
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Photos Courtesy Scottsdale Art Auction



Setting an artist record for Kyle Polzin (American, b 1974), "America Endures - 250 years of Valor and Virtue," 2026, oil on canvas, 72 by 41 inches framed, was taken more than two and a half times its high estimate to achieve \$336,000 (\$75/125,000).

Lifetime cast number 56 of Frederic Remington's (American, 1861-1909) bronze "The Broncho Buster," 23¼ inches tall by 22½ inches wide by 11¾ inches deep, was won at \$690,000 (\$250/350,000).



"Consuelo" by Nicolai Fechin (Russian-American, 1881-1955), oil on canvas, 22 by 21 inches, was taken to \$252,000 (\$175/275,000).



"Carmencita" by Nicolai Fechin (Russian-American, 1881-1955), oil on canvas, 29 by 25 inches framed, achieved the sale-high price of \$1,020,000 (\$600/900,000).



Increasing the “Pop Western” artist’s auction record by nearly 230 percent, “Blood on the Horizon” by Billy Schenck (American, b 1947), 2014, 51 by 61 inches framed, soared to \$216,000 (\$45/65,000).



“Golden Canopy” by Eric Bowman (American, b 1960), oil on canvas, 49 by 59 inches, set a new artist record at \$96,000 (\$40/60,000).

as described in the firm’s introduction to the collection. In total, the selection earned \$1,747,800. Richardson shared, “We sold 17 pieces by Will James that came from the Abe Hays collection and they exceeded the high estimate. One point seven million is phenomenal for 17 pieces! We were not necessarily surprised that they did well, but really quite pleased.” In fact, all but one of the James lots exceeded its own high estimate, and many multiplied that figure.

Leading the collection at \$990,000 — far exceeding its \$75,000 high estimate — was the oil on canvas “Smoky and Clint,” which Richard identified as one of James’ most recognizable works. The image was used as the cover of James’ book, *Smoky the Cowhorse*. “Although Will James had already seen success in his writing career, it was *Smoky the Cowhorse* from 1926 that saw the artist’s work soar to new heights. James, who wrote and illustrated the book, saw the story as a work for adults, but it was discovered by children, which propelled it to win the 1927 Newbery Medal,” explained catalog notes. The painting of “Smoky and Clint” appeared on the first edition of the Illustrated Classics Edition, published by Scribner’s. Additionally, the work was featured on the August 2001 cover of *Noticias*, the quarterly magazine of the Santa Barbara Historical Society. The \$990,000 realized for this painting set a world auction

record for the artist, beating the previous figure of \$150,000. James’ “A Heeler in the Slack,” sold just five lots earlier, broke the record first when it achieved \$156,000.

Records continued to be set in this sale, including those for “a lot of contemporary artists,” shared Richardson. Such artists included Kyle Polzin, whose “America Endures - 250 years of Valor and Virtue” (2026) rose to \$336,000. In a note for the auction catalog, the artist explained, “I created this painting to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States. Not only to celebrate, but to reflect on what it takes for a nation to endure. Endurance isn’t guaranteed. It depends on virtue, integrity and the willingness of people to carry those values forward.” Polzin included many references to great American moments and symbols, such as Emanuel Leutze’s “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” the segmented snake “Unite or Die” poster, a tattered American flag and a patriotic drum, which, “worn and weathered, is the heartbeat of the people,” Polzin wrote.

Billy Schenck, who achieved a price-per-square-inch record on the first day with the 30-by-24-inch “Sam’s Rifle” making \$60,000, only to be broken in the second session by “Blood on the Horizon,” which also set the overall auction record for Schenck at \$216,000. Not coincidentally, the firm has history with this piece.

Richardson said, “We actually set Schenck’s record with ‘Blood on the Horizon’ twice. We sold it in 2021 for \$64,350 and just brought it back for \$216,000, which was very, very nice.”

“Also, we broke the record again for Ed Mell,” he continued. In 2025, Scottsdale Art Auction sold Mell’s “Western Bronc” for the high mark of \$122,850. This time around, it was “Guardo Expanse” that set the record: \$132,000. The serene landscape painting, which was signed, titled and dated “2004,” came from a private collection in Arizona.

Additional contemporary records were set when Eric Bowman’s (b 1960) “Golden Canopy,” featuring a Native man with his white horse at rest beneath vibrant golden trees, achieved \$96,000 and Jerry Jordan’s impressionistic “The Music We See With Our Eyes” brought \$84,000.

“I think that we were fortunate to have very good representations of these artists. They were high quality paintings,” which attributed to the sale’s overall success, said Richardson, “And the Western art market is having a strong moment, too.”

Scottsdale Art Auction will conduct its second sale of two annual sales, an online-only auction, in the late summer.

Prices quoted include the buyer’s premium as reported by the auction house. For information, www.scottsdaleartauktion.com or 480-945-0225.



At \$132,000, rising well past its \$55/85,000 estimate, “Guardo Expanse,” a 35-by-65-inch framed oil on canvas from 2005, set an auction record for Ed Mell (American, 1941-2024).



“The Métis Brigade” by John Ford Clymer (American, 1907-1989), 1972, oil on canvas, 30 by 50 inches framed, came from the Eddie Basha Collection (Chandler, Ariz.) and marched to \$300,000 (\$200/300,000).



“We did have some wildlife art, and they all seemed to perform very well. The highlight was the Kuhnert, which wasn’t a record but sold well over estimate,” shared Richardson. That work, Wilhelm Kuhnert’s (German, 1865-1926) oil on canvas “Steppenbrand,” meaning “Wildfire,” depicted an elephant fleeing to safety. The 31-by-43-inch framed work was bid to \$120,000 (\$50/70,000).



This floral still life by Nicolai Fechin (Russian-American, 1881-1955), oil on canvas, 32 by 28 inches framed, blossomed at \$396,000 (\$300/400,000).



Leading the A.P. Hays collection of Will James (Canadian-American, 1892-1942) works was “Smoky and Clint.” The 35-by-30-inch framed oil on canvas was finally roped in and set a new artist record at \$990,000 (\$50/75,000).



“The Master Potter” by Eanger Irving Couse (American, 1866-1936), oil on canvas, 33 by 39 inches framed, had lengthy recorded provenance traced back to the artist and then traveling from coast to coast, brought \$192,000 (\$150/250,000).