Joan Didion
Through the eyes of the curator and writer Hilton Als
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Auction Guide

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"This has been a sale several years in the making and a personal goal of mine since I started at Potter & Potter," said Chris Brink. "I wanted to put together a sale solely dedicated to exploration that would help expand our knowledge on the subject with items that have never come to market."

Collector Chet Ross has published the early bibliography on the Japanese Antarctic Expedition found in the reference library of any serious polar collector. The Potter & Potter catalogue will act as a revised bibliography of the expedition with new entries and insights. "Ross has solely created a market with various demands for these rarities by searching the farthest depths of the Japanese book trade, employing his own agents to help bring these items to North America," said Brink. Highlights include Shirase’s personal military textbooks, which “helped him become the fearless leader of the small crew on the undersized Aisaka Maru who became the first non-Europeans to reach Antarctica.” In addition to the Ross collection, the sale will include a second session of polar rarities, including over 2,000 titles. Some highlights include a presentation Alice from Lewis Carroll to the English illustrator Richard Doyle (whom Carroll almost chose to illustrate Alice), a presentation Alice from Tenniel with an original sketch of the Mad Hatter, and a massive six-foot tall celestial globe found in the personal library of any serious polar collector. The Potter & Potter catalogue will act as a revised bibliography of the expedition with new entries and insights.

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The State of Illustration Art Collecting

Illustration Art Specialist Skye Lacerte discusses market

Swann Auction Galleries will be closing out their auction year with an Illustration Art sale set for December 14. Swann’s Illustration Art Specialist, Skye Lacerte, discussed her background with us, some of her favorite illustrators, and what trends she is seeing in the Illustration Art market.

What illustrators are you thinking about lately? Who’s catching your eye?

Lately, I’ve been interested in illustrators who were innovative in their approach to composition, efficiency, and artistry. A perfect example is Clarence Coles Phillips, better known as Coles Phillips, and the creator of “the fadeaway girl.”

What’s distinctive about Phillips? What about his style speaks to the contemporary collector, even though he was working 100 years ago?

Phillips is one of the most recognizable illustrators of the first half of the twentieth century. His first cover for Life appeared in 1908, the same year he debuted his signature design, which came to be known as “the fadeaway girl.” The fadeaway style refers to Phillips’ masterful use of shapes and edges to suggest a silhouette. In essence, a woman’s figure is rendered with a detailed face, arms, and legs, but the clothing is a solid flat color that blends into the background. The defined elements are placed within the negative space in such a way as to suggest volume and form. The style was not only innovative in design but also seductive “It” girl, following in the footsteps of Charles Dana Gibson and Howard Chandler Christy. Faded-away or not, Phillips’s illustrations have been known to go for 30-150% over the estimate at auction.

How did you get into this line of business? What draws you to illustration?

During my childhood in Southern California, I was exposed to classic Hollywood movies and the visual culture that they spawned. I later discovered and grew to appreciate contemporary art, specifically artists who were inspired by popular culture and the combination of image and text, such as Barbara Kruger, Carrie Mae Weems, and Cindy Sherman. This admiration of art and pop culture, as well as my education in library and information science, led me to the role of curator of the Dowd Illustration Research Archive at Washington University in St. Louis. For fifteen years, I expanded my knowledge and appreciation of illustration art, building the collection and revealing its significance to students, faculty, and the public.

What’s an exciting thing coming up this season?

We are offering two original illustrations by Arthur Rackham that are new to the market. In addition to being pristine examples of Rackham’s work, one of the pieces has an exceptionally unique story. After publication, Rackham altered the work, arguably evidence that he preferred the new composition to the one seen on the printed page.

Russell Patterson, The Old Town Looks Just the Same, preliminary study for Life magazine cover, 1927. Sold June 2021 for $1,040.


Samuel Levi Jones, Construct of Colour Vision, deconstructed medical books on canvas, 2018. Estimate $20,000 to $30,000. At auction October 19.
**Complete Copy of Curtis's The North American Indian Heads to Auction**

Dorros Family Collection features Americana and ornithological highlights

On November 9, Hindman Auctions will offer Fine Books from the Dorros Family Collection, with significant works in the fields of Americana, ornithology, travel and exploration literature, and color plate books.

A major collection highlight is a complete copy of Edward S. Curtis's monumental ethnographic work, The North American Indian (1907-1930). One of the most ambitious—and most expensive—publication efforts ever undertaken, the complete edition contains forty volumes, including 723 photographs in sepia. The extraordinarily beautiful and haunting sepia photos have become iconic images of the American West.

“It is a privilege to handle such a monumental work,” said Gretchen Hause, Hindman’s Vice President and Director of Books & Manuscripts. “The North American Indian is among the most important literary projects of the twentieth century and complete copies in any condition are rare on the market.”

J. P. Morgan, a financial backer for Curtis’s documentary project, originally commissioned 500 sets, however only about half were ever completed. On offer at the Hindman sale is copy number eighty-eight, signed by Curtis, and originally sold to the public library in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

The estimate for the Curtis is $300,000 – $500,000.

The Dorros family auction also includes George Catlin’s North American Indian Portfolio (1873), with hand-colored plates mounted on card. The 1875 edition is sought after by collectors in part because of the six additional lithographic plates included in the edition that were not part of Catlin’s portfolio when it was first issued in 1844.

The Dorros Family Collection also contains ornithology highlights, including Audubon’s second folio edition of Birds of America (1860) and John Gould’s Monograph of the Trochilidae… (1849-1861). The estimate for the Curtis is $700,000 – $1,000,000.

The Dorros Family Collection will be offered on November 9, at 10:00 a.m., with bidding available online as well as in person at Hindman’s location in Chicago.
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