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Swann Galleries' Historic Photographs Sale Clears \$1.6M

New York— On Tuesday, February 14, Swann Galleries offered Icons & Images: Photographs & Photobooks, an auction featuring masterworks spanning the lifetime of the medium. The Valentine's Day auction was well-timed, precisely 65 years to the day after Swann held the first U.S. auction dedicated to photographs, The Marshall Sale, on February 14, 1952.

The auction house, which is also celebrating its diamond anniversary this year, has continued to honor that historical pedigree with such innovations as the first auction dedicated to vernacular photography, a field that Vice President and Director of Photographs & Photobooks Daile Kaplan has helped to bring into the main stream. Tuesday's sale offered premier examples of both vernacular and fine art photography, earning more than \$1.5M in an auction that lasted nearly five hours.

The sale featured a run of lots related to the moon landing and space exploration in the second half of the twentieth century. There was heated bidding for a group of 22 large cibachrome prints from NASA missions, 1965-84, leading to a final price of \$43,750*, above a high estimate of \$25,000. A related archive of approximately 280 photographs of various Apollo missions, 1969-72, earned \$5,460, while a set of ten contemporary assemblages depicting the moon was sold for \$6,250.

Though twentieth century works commanded most of the highest prices, the top lot of the sale was a collection of 50 plates from Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion*, 1887, which sold to a private collector for \$62,500. All five offered lots by Muybridge sold.

One highlight of the sale was a rare sixth-plate tintype of Edgar Allan Poe, taken after a daguerreotype captured just three weeks before this death, which more than doubled its high estimate of \$15,000 to sell to a collector after competitive bidding for \$37,500.

A run of nine works by Edward S. Curtis all found buyers, led by *Chief of the Desert, Navajo*, a 1904 orotone portrait in its original frame, which sold for \$23,750. Bidding moved swiftly, especially for rare scenes such as *The Rush Gatherer*, a 1910 orotone also in its original frame (\$20,000).

Both offered lots by Roy DeCarava sold above their estimates, with the 1956 silver print *Dancers* earning \$40,000, above a high estimate of \$25,000, and setting a new auction record for the image. *Empire State Building*, circa 1930, a dramatic silver print by Lewis W. Hine, sold for \$37,500, above a high estimate of \$18,000.

An album of approximately 265 photographs depicting the 1906 San Francisco earthquake was purchased by an institution for \$13,750, more than twice its high estimate of \$6,000.

The sale closed with a selection of photobooks. A maquette by Lucien Clergue for his unpublished book *Picasso en Provence*, featuring 150 candid, intimate and rarely seen photographs of Pablo Picasso, was purchased for \$15,000. An early travelogue by Scottish photographer John Thomson, titled *Illustrations of China and its People, Volumes I and II*, 1873, went to a collector for \$15,000. Several editions of *Camera Work*, the photograph magazine published by Alfred Stieglitz at the dawn of the twentieth century, were offered with a 100% sell-through rate.

Swann Galleries Vice President and Director of Photographs & Photobooks Daile Kaplan said, "Our Valentine's Day auction was a sweet success, with an impressive roster of new buyers actively bidding. The

relationship between science and art told a fascinating story, given the success of the Muybridge and NASA sets. Overall, the sale featured a selection of fine art and vernacular photographs that offered choice opportunities to better understand photography's growing role in visual culture."

The next photographs sale at Swann Galleries will be held April 20, 2017. For more information, contact Daile Kaplan at dkaplan@swannalleries.com.

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