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Steinlen's Cat Tops Vintage Posters Sale at New York's Oldest Specialty Auction House

New York— On Thursday, March 16, Swann Galleries offered Vintage Posters, featuring dynamic selections of graphic art from the end of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century. The sale represented the myriad functions of the poster as a means of communication and advertising, with sections devoted to Soviet propaganda and beachside vacations alike.

The top lot of the sale was the iconic *Tournée du Chat Noir* by Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen. The 1896 large-format poster was purchased after a neck-and-neck race by two phone bidders for \$30,000*, a record for the work. Art Nouveau pieces performed well overall, most notably a run of works by Alphonse Mucha led by the rare complete 1902 portfolio *Documents Décoratifs*, purchased by a collector for \$22,500. Further highlights by the master included a four-panel folding screen featuring women as the allegories of *Times of the Day*, 1899, and the deluxe edition of *Salon des Cent*, 1896 (\$13,750 and \$16,900, respectively). Nicholas D. Lowry, director of Vintage Posters, noted “a refreshing resurgence of interest in works by Jules Chéret,” with highlights being *Musée Grévin / Théâtre Les Fantoques de John Hewelt*, 1900, with and without text (\$3,750 and \$1,188, respectively).

The sale featured an enormous run of ski and winter posters, with nearly three quarters of the 91 offered lots finding buyers. The breathtaking *St. Moritz*, 1924, by Carl Moos, topped the section with \$11,250, followed by the action-packed *Chamonix Mt. Blanc*, 1930, by Roger Broders at \$9,100. Four of the top ten ski posters advertised American resorts with sweeping scenes showing a single skier. Dwight Clark Shepler's *Sun Valley / Ketchum, Idaho*, circa 1940, reached \$8,750, while his 1940 *Sun Valley / “Round House” on Baldy Mountain* sold for \$5,500. All but one of the posters featuring the Idaho resort town found buyers: Mr. Lowry was pleased, saying, “As usual, ski posters performed very well, and there was in particular a renewed enthusiasm for Sun Valley.”

In addition to directing the Vintage Posters department at Swann Galleries, Mr. Lowry is also house's President and Principal Auctioneer, as well as the third generation of his family to run the company since its inception 75 years ago. Swann Galleries is the oldest continually operating specialist auction house in New York, and the world's largest auctioneer of Works on Paper. This month, the house celebrates the diamond anniversary of its first sale, an auction of books and literary properties, held March 27, 1942.

The next sale of Vintage Posters at Swann Galleries will be Graphic Design on May 25, 2017. For more information, or to consign works to future auctions, contact Nicholas D. Lowry at posters@swanngalleries.com.

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