



104 East 25th Street • New York, NY 10010
Telephone: 212.254.4710 • Fax: 212.979.1017
swannalleries.com

FOR LIMITED RELEASE
March 31, 2017

Contact: Alexandra Nelson
Communications Director
212-254-4710, ext. 19
alexandra@swannalleries.com

Swann Galleries' \$1.2M Sale of Printed & Manuscript African Americana Breaks Multiple Auction Records

Previously Unrecorded Photograph of Harriet Tubman Reaches \$161,000

New York— On Thursday, March 30, Swann Galleries' annual auction of Printed & Manuscript African Americana exceeded \$1M for the first time in the department's 20+ year history. The success was largely due to interest surrounding a carte-de-visite album from the 1860s that contained a previously unknown photograph of Harriet Tubman.

The album topped the sale, selling for \$161,000, above a pre-sale high estimate of \$30,000. Specialist Wyatt Houston Day discovered the photograph of Tubman in the album, compiled by Quaker abolitionist Emily Howland in the 1860s. The album contains 48 photographs, including 44 cartes-de-visite of noted abolitionists, politicians and friends of Howland.

The sale also featured "the strongest selection of Civil Rights material we've ever offered," according to Mr. Day. An archive of documents relating to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, including checks endorsed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., realized \$18,750.

Half of the top lots were institutional purchases, including a working draft for Dr. Martin Luther King's famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, 1963 (\$40,000) and a West African cast bronze Kuduo ritual burial jar, circa eighteenth- to nineteenth century (\$10,624).

The sale broke several long-standing records, including \$7,800 for an inscribed first edition of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937, which since 1992 had stood at \$1,000. Material relating to Frederick Douglass saw new records, including an 1880 Autograph Letter Signed to George Alfred Townsend, in which Douglass writes, "You are wrong in saying I bought my liberty, a few friends in England bought me and made me a present of myself," which reached \$100,000, more than doubling the previous record for a letter by the famed abolitionist. An inscribed first edition of *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 1845, exceeded all expectations by selling for \$37,500, above a high estimate of \$4,000.

Another record price went to Benjamin Banneker's *Almanac for 1795* at \$55,000, the second highest price ever paid for an American almanac at auction.

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 celebrated the diamond anniversary of its first sale, an auction of books and literary properties, held March 27, 1942. The Printed & Manuscript African Americana department at Swann Galleries, the only one of its kind, has been holding sales since 1996.

The next sale of Printed & Manuscript African Americana at Swann Galleries will be held in Spring 2018. For more information, or to consign works to future auctions, contact Swann Book Department Administrator David Rivera at drivera@swannalleries.com or (212) 254-4710 ext. 13.

*ALL PRICES INCLUDE BUYER'S PREMIUM
ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE, DIGITAL IMAGES & COMPLETE PRICES REALIZED ON REQUEST