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Hernán Cortés Letter to Top Swann Galleries' Americana Auction

New York— On **Thursday, April 27**, Swann Galleries will offer **Printed & Manuscript Americana**, offering historical material from North and South America from the past five centuries.

The top lot is a rare 1538 letter by the conquistador Hernán Cortés to the Majordomo Diego de Guinea, instructing him to provide hospitality to a visiting bishop, valued at \$50,000 to \$75,000. Only one other letter by Cortés has appeared at auction since 1984.

The sale features a fantastic array of early Latin Americana, including the first edition of the lavishly illustrated early nineteenth-century Brazilian travel book *Malerische Reise in Brasilien* by Johann Moritz Rugendas, and a signed manuscript profession of faith by Jesuit missionary Eusebio Kino in 1684 (\$15,000 to \$25,000 and \$20,000 to \$30,000, respectively). One of the first Mexican novels, *La portentosa Vida de la Muerte*, 1792, by Joaquín Bolaños, contains the earliest known use of skeletons in Mexican literature—these engravings would prove fundamental to Mexican Día de los Muertos iconography. It is valued at \$1,500 to \$2,500.

A hallmark of these biannual sales at Swann is outstanding material related to early New York history. Featured in this sale is the 1848-49 diary of Edith H. Brevoort, a wealthy Manhattan orphan who describes, among other things, visiting the wilderness of Northern Manhattan (currently around 70th Street) in vibrant detail (\$1,000 to \$1,500). Also available is an unrecorded election circular for the New York Constitutional Convention that reads “We hourly expect a British army in this colony to enslave us.” The printed handbill, with contemporary manuscript notes, is dated June 15, 1776, and is expected to sell between \$15,000 and \$25,000.

Further Revolutionary highlights include an engraving of the Declaration of Independence by William J. Stone, circa 1833, valued between \$12,000 and \$18,000, and the first report in *The London Chronicle* of the Boston Tea Party, 1774, estimated at \$1,500 to \$2,500.

A special offering is the second Latin edition of Theodore de Bry's *Admiranda Narratio Fida Tamen*, the first volume of his famous *Great Voyages*, circa 1608. The text includes a translation of a promotional text published to lure settlers to the Colony of Roanoke, before their disappearance was discovered, as well as important early maps of the colony and surrounding areas (\$25,000 to \$35,000).

Rarities include the complete run of the *Cherokee Messenger*, Oklahoma's first periodical, from 1845-46, which includes important Cherokee translations of the Bible. Only one other complete set has appeared at auction since 1913 (\$5,000 to \$7,500). For the first time in nearly 30 years, the complete set of hand-colored engravings by Amos Doolittle depicting the parable of *The Prodigal Son*, 1814, will be offered at auction, expected to sell for \$4,000 to \$6,000.

Also available is the 1851-56 diary of Edward W. Syle, an American missionary in Shanghai, who upon his return to the States was asked to work in San Francisco's burgeoning Chinatown. Syle

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discusses Chinese culture and dress on both continents, and offers observations of Chinese settlements outside of San Francisco. This rare contemporary ethnographical log is valued at \$3,000 to \$4,000.

The sale will feature a premier selection of nineteenth-century Hawaiian publications, including the first directory of Honolulu, 1853, and the first complete set of the newsletter for the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, *The Maile Quarterly*, 1865-68, to come to auction in more than a century (\$7,000 to \$10,000 and \$1,500 to \$2,500, respectively).

Americana auctions at Swann Galleries often include a robust selection of material relating to the formation of the Mormon faith. In the April sale, these will be led by a first edition of the Book of Mormon, 1830 (\$40,000 to \$60,000). A selection of legal documents signed by Joseph Smith sheds light on the LDS Church founder's more earthly activities.

Swann Galleries is the world's largest auctioneer of Works on Paper, and has been dealing in Americana since its inception. This year, the house celebrated the diamond anniversary of its first sale, an auction of books and literary properties, held March 27, 1942.

The auction will be held Thursday, April 27, beginning at 1:30 p.m. The auction preview will be open to the public Saturday, April 22 from noon to 5 p.m.; Monday, April 24 through Wednesday, April 26 from noon to 5 p.m.; and Thursday, April 27 from 10 a.m. to noon.

An illustrated auction catalogue will be available for \$35 at www.swannalleries.com.

For further information and to make advance arrangements to bid by telephone during the auction, please contact Rick Stattler at 212-254-4710, extension 27, or via e-mail at rstattler@swannalleries.com.

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