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PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED NORMAN LEWIS PAINTING SETS NEW RECORD IN SWANN GALLERIES' THRILLING FINAL SALE OF 2015

New York—Swann Galleries' **December 15** auction of **African-American Fine Art** brought over \$3.1 million, and saw continued success for major artists.

Nigel Freeman, Director of Swann Galleries' African-American Fine-Art department, said, "This sale was our department's best auction to date—with our highest level of sales and a new record price at auction for Norman Lewis with the sale of his 1958 *Untitled* oil on canvas for \$965,000. It smashed our previous record and demonstrates the rising stature and value of this important American artist." The piece, a previously unrecorded large canvas, reveals yet another dimension to Lewis's late 1950s body of abstraction. The previous record for the artist at auction was set by another large canvas, *Untitled*, oil on canvas, circa 1957, which sold for \$581,000 at Swann on October 3, 2013. Additional works by Lewis also sold well in this auction, including the vibrant *Untitled (Study in Magenta)*, oil, brush and ink on paper, 1958, which brought \$25,000, more than doubling its high estimate of \$9,000.

Another record was set by Elizabeth Catlett's painting *Friends*, tempera on paper, 1944. This was the first Catlett painting to come to auction, and achieved the highest price for a non-sculpture work by the artist when it realized \$81,250. Catlett, who worked in multiple mediums, is generally best known as a sculptor and printmaker; her black marble sculpture *Recognition*, 1970, brought \$125,000 in this sale.

Contemporary artist Barkley L. Hendrick's *Tuff Tony*, a large oil and acrylic on canvas portrait circa 1958, tied the artist's previous record at auction when it sold for \$365,000. The previous record was set at Swann earlier this year on April 2 by another large portrait, *Steve*, 1976.

Works by Romare Bearden continue to perform well in Swann auctions, with a range of works representing different periods in the artist's career, including *The Annunciation*, an early career oil on canvas painted in 1946 that sold for \$125,000. *Wine Star*, another oil on canvas piece painted in 1959-60 during Bearden's period of abstract color field painting also brought \$125,000; while *The Street*, a Photostat print from 1964 showing Bearden's collage work realized \$27,500.

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Two works by Hughie Lee-Smith were among the top lots: *Untitled (Figure at the Shore)*, oil on canvas, circa 1960, a solid example of the isolated figures and existential landscapes explored in the artist's mid-career painting, sold for \$35,000; while *Performers*, a significant later oil on canvas by Lee-Smith, painted in 1990 brought \$143,000. Another artist with a WPA history like Lee-Smith, the late Eldzier Cortor's *Drawing for "Lantern Gate" (Southern Gate)*, brush, pen and ink on paper, circa 1942-43, realized \$60,000.

Additional records were set for Haywood "Bill" Rivers, whose *Still Life*, oil on canvas, circa 1946-49, sold for \$23,750; contemporary artist Titus Kaphar, whose *Passage*, oil and asphalt tar on canvas, 2000, brought \$12,500; and Lloyd G. McNiell, with *Untitled (Family)*, oil on canvas, 1962, which realized \$18,750. This was also the first appearance at auction for work by Roland Ayers, whose *Untitled (New Orleans Scene)*, oil on masonite board, 1960-61, sold for \$5,500.

Complete results are available online via www.swannalleries.com.

Swann Galleries' first African-American Fine Art auction of the 2016 season will take place on April 7.

For further information, or to consign items to upcoming African-American Fine Art auctions, please contact Nigel Freeman at 212-254-4710, extension 33, or via email at nfreeman@swannalleries.com.

*Prices include buyer's premium.

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