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Rising Market for Post-War Abstraction Seen in Swann Galleries’ April African-American Fine Art Auction

New York—Swann Galleries’ **April 7** auction of **African-American Fine Art** brought over \$1.8 million and set records for multiple artists at auction.

Nigel Freeman, Swann Galleries’ Director of African-American Fine Art, said, “This sale continued to build on many of our department’s strengths. Burgeoning interest in post-war abstraction continues to rise, with record prices for Frank Bowling and Felrath Hines, as well as high prices for works by Norman Lewis and Sam Gilliam.”

The top lot of the sale was Faith Ringgold’s masterful story quilt, *Double Dutch on the Golden Gate Bridge*, acrylic on canvas with painted, dyed and pieced fabric, 1988, which sold for \$209,000. *Double Dutch*, from Ringgold’s well-known *Woman on a Bridge* series, is only the second of her signature story quilts to come to auction; the first, *Maya’s Quilt of Life*, sold at Swann last September for \$461,000 as part of the Art Collection of Maya Angelou.

Following on the heels of the artist record set by a large painting in Swann’s December auction, works by Norman Lewis also fared well in this April sale. Lewis’s *Untitled*, oil on board, 1947 (the cover lot of the catalogue), brought \$149,000; while *Untitled (Processional Figure Composition)*, oil, pen and ink on paper, 1956, realized \$87,500, setting an auction record for a work on paper by the artist. Overall, buyers were found for 100% of the works by Norman Lewis offered in the auction.

Auction records were set for several artists in addition to Bowling, Hines and Lewis. Allan Freelon’s *Baiting Trawls*, 1930-35, oil on canvas, sold for \$37,500; while Palmer Hayden’s evocative 1964 watercolor and gouache painting *The Blue Nile* brought \$42,500. Wadsworth Jarrell’s bright and dynamic acrylic on canvas *The Messengers*, 1979, achieved \$27,500, setting a record for the artist at auction. Robert Neal’s *Untitled (Fisherman’s House at River’s Edge)*, oil on canvas, circa 1939, was the first work by the artist to appear at auction, and also sold for \$27,500.

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Works by American women were particularly well represented among the top lots. Beyond Ringgold's quilt, contemporary multi-genre artist Carrie Mae Weems's triptych, *Blue Black Boy*, three toned gelatin silver prints with Prestype and frame, 1987-88, brought \$50,000. Lois Mailou Jones's emotional *Homage to Martin Luther King*, watercolor on board, 1968, realized \$40,000; while Elizabeth Catlett's *Untitled (Head of a Woman)*, oil and oil monotype, 1958, brought \$37,500, and her two-part cast bronze sculpture *Mother and Child*, 1985, sold for \$15,600.

Paintings spanning multiple periods of Hughie Lee-Smith's career sold well in the auction. The artist's *Portrait of a Boy*, oil on canvas, 1938, one of Lee-Smith's earliest works to come to auction, sold for \$42,500. *Untitled (Young Man in a Slum)*, oil on canvas, circa 1960, a large mid-career canvas by Lee-Smith, brought \$106,250, while *Encore*, oil on canvas, 1991, a late series work by the artist, realized \$20,000.

Abstract works by Sam Gilliam were popular with collectors in this sale. Gilliam's *Rondo IX*, acrylic and canvas collage on canvas, 1983, part of the artist's *Rondo* series hung at the Corcoran Gallery in 1983, brought \$93,750. Two smaller Gilliam multi-media pieces, *Untitled*, 1991, and *Untitled*, 1989, sold for \$18,750 and \$20,000, respectively.

The African-American Fine Art department's next auction will occur in October 2016. For further information, or to consign items to upcoming African-American Fine Art auctions, please contact Director Nigel Freeman: nfreeman@swanngalleries.com, or via phone at 212-254-4710, ex.33.

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

*Prices include buyer's premium.

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