

The Potomack Company, Alexandria, Virginia

# Rare Chairs and Coney Island Bathers Lead at Potomack

by Walter C. Newman  
Photos courtesy The Potomack Company

The Potomack Company held its live fall catalog auction on September 23. As has been the case for some time, The Potomack Company's owner, Elizabeth Wainstein, scheduled the live auction for Saturday with an online-only sale for the following Tuesday, September 26. This sale stretched that format a bit further with a second online-only sale on Wednesday, September 27. When asked if this three-day sequence was a one-off decision or a preview of the company's future, Wainstein was noncommittal. She did allow that with over 1000 lots consigned, two sales would have stretched the size of each sale beyond what Wainstein feels is Potomack's "sweet spot" of between 350 and 400 lots. In addition, the lots for these sales seemed to break neatly into three groups.

## "Diversify your design portfolio."

The Potomack Company makes good use of e-mail and social media to advertise its upcoming sales. One of the broadcast e-mails for this sale teased the reader with a suggestion that was appropriate. It was an invitation to "diversify your design portfolio." Patrons were presented with a diverse selection of antiques, fine art, silver, and Asian treasures to incorporate into their portfolios.

The high lot of the sale was no surprise. It came from among the Asian lots and easily outdistanced the next-highest sale. A pair of Chinese armchairs from the early years of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) sold for \$237,500 (including buyer's premium) against a conservative estimate of

\$40,000/60,000. While there was no specific history provided for this pair of chairs, it can be assumed that much of their value was derived from several factors. The chairs are constructed from huanghuali, a type of rosewood that is extremely dense, pleasingly figured, and difficult to carve without specialized expertise. More important, the wood is considered among the rarest in the world. The species is nearing extinction and is therefore protected, with limited legal harvesting. Older pieces of furniture are rapidly disappearing from the market, thereby driving the prices high. Finally, this pair featured relatively high backs. Chairs with low backs are more common.

By way of comparison, a second pair of Chinese armchairs, also constructed of huanghuali, crossed the block during the sale. Probably not as old, perhaps later in the Qing Dynasty, this second pair with accompanying footstools were *meiguiyi* or so-called "rose chairs," the smallest form among standard Chinese chair designs. The rose chairs soared to \$56,250 (est. \$4000/6000).

While the huanghuali chairs were the Asian stars, the day's single strongest category was fine art. In addition to the lots shown in the accompanying photos, other standouts included an oil on canvas ship portrait of the schooner *Alicia B. Crosby* by William Pierce Stubbs that sold for \$5000; an unsigned graphite on paper rendering of the White House, circa 1830, that made \$3437.50; and a 19th-century Hudson River school painting of a regatta on the river that brought \$2812.50.

For additional information, contact The Potomack Company at (703) 684-4550 or visit its website ([www.potomackcompany.com](http://www.potomackcompany.com)).



This painting, *Bridge over Hunting Creek, Alexandria, Virginia* by William MacLeod (1811-1892), is signed by the artist and dated 1860. The scene depicts a south-facing view from the Alexandria side of Hunting Creek with a wooden bridge and its earthwork approaches crossing into rural Virginia, toward the large white house, "Mount Eagle." One of the artist's stylistic traits is demonstrated in this work; he shows himself in the foreground sketching the scene. Unfortunately, the pastoral setting soon changed forever. Within a year, that hilltop had been transformed into Fort Lyon, part of the Union Army's defensive positions south of Alexandria. Today, that area is populated by condominiums and a Metro station. The 26½" x 36¼" oil on canvas sold to a telephone bidder for \$87,500 (est. \$20,000/40,000). This is believed to be an auction record for the artist.



The high lot of the sale was this pair of early Qing Dynasty armchairs. The chairs are constructed from huanghuali, a species of rosewood, which is among the rarest of woods. Each chair features a shaped crest rail and an S-shaped back splat. The back and front posts are rounded and continue through the caned seat frame to form the chair legs. The rounded arms are slightly S-shaped. The shaped front foot rest and the side and back stretchers are set very low. The four voids formed by the stretchers, legs, and seat frame are strengthened with mitered frame-like treatments. The chairs were offered along with a pair of matching, although later, footrests. After intense bidding, the chairs were won by a telephone bidder for \$237,500 (est. \$40,000/60,000).



Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait (British/American, 1819-1905) is known for his paintings of wildlife. This 14" x 21" oil on canvas depicts a retriever doing its job, having retrieved what appears to be a snipe. The painting sold to an Internet buyer for \$9375 (est. \$10,000/15,000).



This large (30" x 50") scene is by William Charles Anthony Frerichs (Dutch/American, 1829-1905). The oil on canvas depicts two hunters taking aim at a buck swimming across a river within a dramatic landscape and is titled *Hunting in North Carolina—Break in the Storm*. It was likely painted between 1854 and 1863 while Frerichs lived and taught art in Greensboro, North Carolina. It was won by an absentee bidder for \$31,250 (est. \$15,000/25,000).



This oil on canvas is attributed to a member of the circle of the 19th-century American landscape artist Ralph Albert Blakelock. Blakelock was a Tonalist, known for his soft moonlit or hazy scenes. Whoever of his followers created this painting certainly had the orange sunset in his or her own repertoire. Photos cannot do justice to this *Sunset on the River*. The 18" x 30" painting sold for \$437.50 (est. \$700/900).



This charming oil on canvas is by Julien Dupré (French, 1851-1910), who is known for his scenes of peasant farm life. The painting depicts a pasture scene, with a milkmaid carrying a full pail and moving away from a small herd of cows. The 24" x 36" painting is signed but not dated. It sold to a telephone bidder for \$12,500 (est. \$7000/9000).



This 12" x 16" oil on board is by Impressionist Edward Henry Potthast (1857-1927). The scene is identified on the back with a Salmagundi Club label, "The Incoming Tide, Coney Island, N.Y." with an exhibition date of February 1919. Potthast is noted for his late 19th- and early 20th-century scenes of New Yorkers in relaxed settings. This example of his work was passed during the auction but sold after the sale for \$156,250 (est. \$150,000/300,000).





This portrait of a young black man generated active bidding. The catalog lists the piece as being in the style of Eastman Johnson, a noted painter and cofounder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. This 17½" x 14¼" oil on canvas may date from the late 19th or early 20th century. It sold to a telephone bidder for \$11,875 (est. \$600/900).



This brown ink and wash on paper appears to be a study of Angel Gabriel blowing his horn. The 9¼" x 7½" drawing is from a member of the circle of Francesco Zuccarelli (Italian, 1702-1788) and exhibits several collectors' marks and notations. No date was assigned to it, and it sold to a telephone bidder for \$3125 (est. \$600/900).



James Seymour (British, 1702-1752) is best known for his equestrian art. This circa 1729 example of his work is a 6½" x 7¼" watercolor portrait of Crab, a very successful British racehorse and stud during the second quarter of the 18th century. This scene depicts the horse with Newmarket Heath in the background. Newmarket Heath is considered by some to be the birthplace of modern day horseracing. A telephone bidder won this Seymour watercolor for \$11,250 (est. \$3000/5000).



This 69" x 67" Neoclassical-style giltwood and gesso mirror dates circa 1900. The central oval beveled glass is surrounded by eight small, irregularly shaped mirrors. The arched frame is decorated with a central medallion flanked by putti with swags below. The upper corners display flaming urn-form finials. The mirror was won by an absentee bidder for \$1875 (est. \$300/600).



Generally when we think of Chinese export items, we are considering porcelain items. This example of Chinese export is quite different—a gouache on pith paper, a leaf from an album from the Qing Dynasty, circa 1830. The sheet displays fanciful, brightly colored images of various butterflies, small crawling insects, and a lone frog. The 6¼" x 11¼" image sold matted and framed for \$687.50 (est. \$300/500).



Here is a nice Sheraton-style cherry worktable with three drawers with tiger maple fronts, raised on stiles that are ring turned and reeded and finished with small ball feet. The table brought \$468.75 (est. \$400/600).



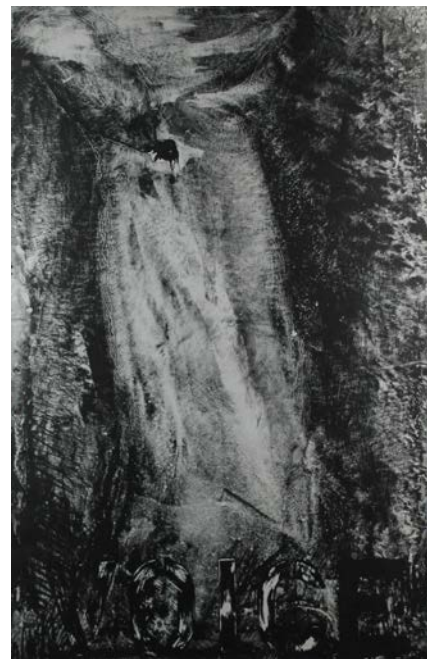
This marble torso was executed as a Westmacott type. The nude male figure on which this example is based began life as a bronze, thought to be by the 5th-century B.C.E. Greek master sculptor Polykleitos. First-century Romans copied the figure in marble. That piece was owned by British sculptor Sir Richard Westmacott (1775-1856) and is now in the British Museum. This example is most likely a late 19th-century Italian version of the figure. The current 21" tall marble piece, offered without a base, was well received, opening at \$3500 and moving ahead quickly. It sold to a telephone bidder for \$8125 (est. \$800/1200).



This pair of Chinese Chippendale-style mirrored wall sconces dates from the 19th century. The elaborate giltwood scrollwork frames are surmounted with ho-ho bird figures. Each sconce is fitted with four single-socket candle arms. The sconces sold to an Internet buyer for \$5937.50 (est. \$3000/6000).



Here is a Baltimore sterling tea caddy, 1892-1904, with a tapered ovoid shape. It stands 6" in overall height. The lid and body display floral repoussé decoration. The caddy is monogrammed and inscribed with a presentation date of 1910. The tea caddy brought \$531.25 (est. \$500/700).



This lithograph by Jasper Johns (b. 1930) is titled *VOICE*, printed in large block letters as part of the image at the center bottom on the print. This is number 18 of a 30-print edition. The full-sheet print measures 48¼" x 32". An absentee bidder voiced the final bid, purchasing it for \$8750 (est. \$2000/3000).



This lot consists of two 19th-century wooden boxes. On the left is a Regency sarcophagus-form rosewood tea caddy, the lid of which opens to reveal two foil-lined removable caddies with hinged lids and a Chinese export mixing bowl. The box is raised on small brass paw feet. On the right is a two-compartment dovetailed cutlery box with a shaped handle. The tea caddy measures 7½" x 13" x 6½"; the cutlery box, 8" x 15½" x 9½". The lot sold for \$312.50 (est. \$400/600).



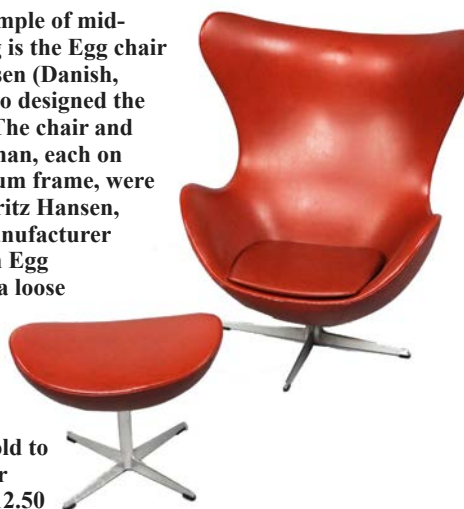
This rosewood teapoy is French, circa 1830. The figured top pulls upward to reveal a fitted interior. The apron displays elongated keyhole-style cutout decoration. The top is raised on a turned pedestal attached to a flat trefoil plinth with flattened ball feet. The teapoy stands 28½" in height, and its top is 20" in diameter. The teapoy sold for \$1187.50 (est. \$1500/3000).



This Qing Dynasty Chinese sang-du-boeuf glaze vase displays the seal mark of Daoguang (r. 1821-50). The vase exhibits a deep ox-blood color over porcelain and measures 12" in height. It sold to the buyer of the tea-dust-glazed vase for \$25,000 (est. \$800/1500).



One iconic example of mid-century seating is the Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen (Danish, 1902-1971), who designed the chair in 1964. The chair and matching ottoman, each on its cast aluminum frame, were produced by Fritz Hansen, the original manufacturer of the Jacobsen Egg chair. There is a loose seat cushion in the chair. The back height of the chair is 44½". The Egg and ottoman sold to an ecstatic floor bidder for \$5312.50 (est. \$1500/2500).



This gilt-metal Mongolian Buddha from the early 20th century stands 24" high on a lotus base and is shown wearing a long geometrically figured robe. He is posed with his hands in the *abhaya* mudra, representing fearlessness. The Buddha was won by an Internet buyer for \$18,750 (est. \$1500/2500).



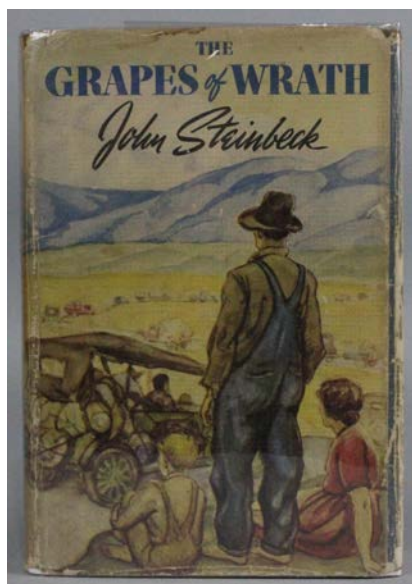
This Chinese baluster-form vase from the Qing Dynasty is incised Guangxu (r. 1885-1908) in a six-character mark in a yellow ochre glazed rectangle at the bottom inside the foot of the 13¼" tall vase in a glaze described as tea dust. The vase sold to one of several active bidders in the room for \$17,500 (est. \$1200/2250).



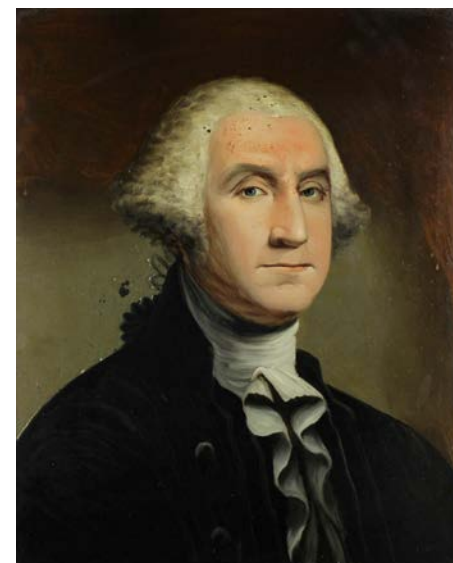
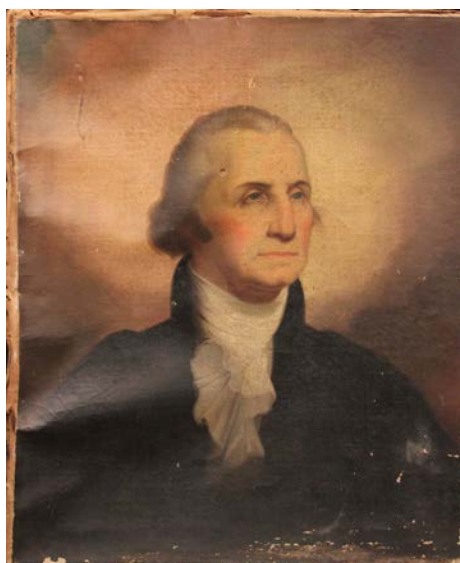
This lot offered 24 hand-painted papier-mâché fans from the late 19th century. The fans are decorated with scenes depicting flowers, birds, and various chinoiserie motifs. Some of the scenes are enhanced with mother-of-pearl accents. Each fan is fitted to an intricately turned handle. The lot fanned excitement from an Internet buyer who grabbed it for \$1625 (est. \$800/1200).



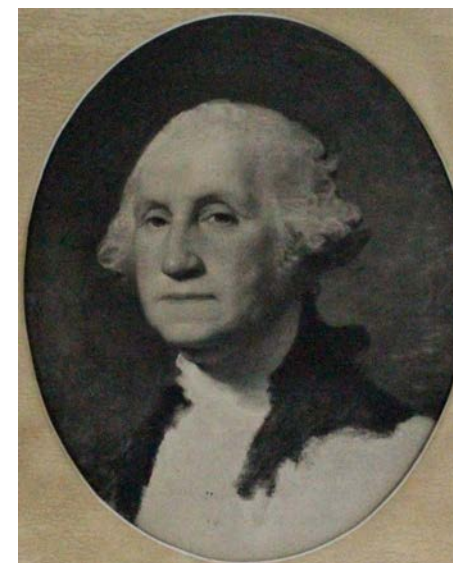
Émile Dupuis (French, 1866-1942/4) was an illustrator and World War I-era postcard artist. This poster by him appears to be an advertisement for Fabrique Nationale, the weapons manufacturer in Herstal, Belgium. In addition to "weapons of war" noted here, the firm was an early manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles. In fact, FN, as it is known to cyclists, continued to manufacture motorcycles until the mid-1960s and today remains active in the arms industry. This poster may have been advertising Fabrique Nationale's participation in the 1900 Paris Exposition, where the firm's arms, automobiles, and *motocyclottes* would have been on display. The poster sold for \$875 (est. \$700/900).



This first edition, first printing of John Steinbeck's classic *The Grapes of Wrath* sold for \$2812.50 (est. \$200/400). Steinbeck's masterwork was published in 1939 and was awarded the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for its portrayal of the fictional Joad family as they left Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl and traveled to California in search of a new life. This copy was offered in a later dust jacket.



This three-piece American coffee service is by George W. Sheibler & Co. of Brooklyn, New York (operating 1876-1900). The set consists of a coffeepot, covered sugar, and a creamer. The pieces feature lobed melon-form bodies with long necks that feature wide Japanese-style chrysanthemum repoussé bands. The finials are in the form of chrysanthemum buds. An absentee bidder won the set for \$1250 (est. \$2000/3000).



These four images of our first president represent a range of portraiture. First (top left) is a 19th-century original oil on canvas after Rembrandt Peale's *George Washington—Patriae Pater*, 32" x 26", by an unknown artist. Next (top right), Washington reverse-painted on glass, 22" x 18", also by an unknown artist. At the bottom left is *George Washington, Esquier*, a mezzotint after one of the fictitious "Campbell" engravings, on laid paper, 9" x 6½", probably from London. And finally an example of an engraving after the famous Gilbert Stuart portrait, among a group of 11 Washington-related engravings, lithographs, and ephemeral pieces offered in the sale. The oil on canvas brought \$4062.50 (est. \$500/700); the reverse-painted on glass image sold for \$250 (est. \$300/500); the mezzotint made \$4062.50 (est. \$800/1200); and the lot with the Gilbert Stuart-inspired engraving brought \$1000 (est. \$400/600). George Washington, however presented, is doing quite well, thank you.



This 7½" x 12" oil on panel by Alberto Ludovici Jr. (British, 1852-1932) depicts a Victorian-era woman in a flowing dress, wearing a nautical cap and looking through a telescope. The painting is signed by the artist and is inscribed on the back *On the Lookout*. There is a London retailer/gallery label also on the back. The painting sold to an Internet buyer for \$4375 (est. \$600/900).

