



Kaminski Auctions Finds Active Market for Fine Art

By Dave Schwab

A bi-coastal auction house with offices in La Jolla and Boston is offering antiques and fine art for sale at periodic weekend events held simultaneously over the Internet.

Massachusetts-based Kaminski Auctions launched a second location with its first West Coast auction held in February, and more recently on April 22, in San Diego.

Headed by Frank Kaminski, the auction house's first sale in its San Diego location was an important single-owner lifelong collection of Continental, English and American antiques. Bidding at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in San Diego was consistent both days, but it was online bidding through eBay Live Auctions and phone bidding which carried the sale.

Most of the 1,000 lots at the San Diego auction featured furniture, decorations, mirrors, fine art, oriental rugs, ceramics, garden ornaments and more. A few of the highlights included a late 18th-century English, "Portrait of a Noble Lady", which brought \$10,750, well above the \$3,000-\$5,000 estimate; a pair of 19th century fine French gilt bronze sconces which realized \$6,000; a 19th-century French gilt mantel clock with mythological motif and enamel

numbers signed "Deniere a Paris" sold for \$5,500; and an 18th century fine Belgian tapestry made of wool and silk realized \$17,000. Prices reported include either a 15 percent buyer's premium bidding with Kaminski, or a 20 percent buyer's premium bidding with eBay Live.

The auction illustrated how global the market for fine art and antiques has become. Astute collectors and dealers are using the Internet to search and review auction catalogs, increasingly participating in distant auctions by phone or by Internet.

"It's primarily antiques that we handle," said Frank Kaminski of his business. "With my fine arts background, I've always been interested in antiques. Our San Diego auctions have more than met our expectations. We've already received several inquiries about handling other estates. This area is really a treasure trove and we look forward to holding our next auction here in San Diego. "

Kaminski added fine art buyers at his auctions aren't just from California, but are from all across the country and the world. "Our auctions are totally online, you can bid anywhere in the world," he said. "It's a unique way to sell objects. It's really the best way to sell them, because not only do you have the Internet bidding with people from around the

world, but you have people sitting in the audience as well as phone bidding and absentee bidding: Four ways to bid as opposed to just one."

Consequently, an auction seller's chances of finding a buyer at the right price are much better than just selling via eBay or through a consignment shop. Kaminski added bargains are to be had, for both buyers and sellers, through events held at his auction house. He said one client, an antique shop owner in California, brought in a valuable painting that he'd been offered \$30,000 for locally. "That same painting brought \$120,000 at our auction in Boston," he said. "The client was absolutely elated that it brought so much more. "

There is just a huge demand for fine art antiques. Kaminski said knowledgeable experts can spot items which can be turned around and sold for impressive profits. "I went into a consignment shop in Solana Beach and I spotted a hand-decorated box with flowers and birds on it that I purchased for \$175," he said. "It brought \$3,800 at our auction."

Kaminski said people would be surprised at the sizeable number of wonderful art objects that found their way out to California from New England between the 1920s and 1960s. They were owned by people who moved from one coast to the other and brought their antique treasures with them. "Now they have an opportunity to sell them (antiques) in a competitive way," he added.

Kaminski said he's been in contact with the Athenaeum Music & Arts Library in downtown La Jolla to explore the possibility of holding a future fine art auction or related event there. "Fall would be the perfect time of

year to have a mini antique road show," he noted.

In California, there is a huge market for Spanish Colonial auction items, including those coming in from Mexico. Kaminski said the hottest items that are selling right now at his auctions are fine art paintings - sculptures, bronzes and watercolors.

"Buying antiques is a good way to invest, the market is so strong for fine art," Kaminski concluded.

As part of a complete, estate-service package, Kaminski provides expert appraisals, local and national advertising for all sales, competitive fees, itemized accounting of all transactions for heirs and representatives. In addition to full estate auctions, Kaminski accepts partial estate liquidations, as well as individual pieces and collections for consignment. The firm's extensive clientele includes museums, historical societies, corporations, non-profit organizations and private individuals.

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