

COMMENTS ON THE ART MARKET

VOLUME 230

Rehs Galleries, Inc.
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Gallery Exhibitions & Fairs

180+ works are on the road traveling to Los Angeles, Palm Beach, Naples, and Charleston ... hopefully, many of them will find new homes in each city. Meanwhile, at the gallery, we have two solo exhibitions, one dedicated to Mark Laguë and the other to Antoine Blanchard.

Mark Laguë's [A Big Apple Adventure](#) features 10 New York City street scenes, while Antoine Blanchard's [A Trip Down Memory Lane](#) explores the sights of Paris. Both exhibitions run through the end of February. Feel free to stop by the gallery, Monday-Friday, and take a relaxing (visual) stroll through New York and Paris.

If you will not be in New York during February, you can always catch us in Los Angeles from February 5th-9th; then in Palm Beach from the 13th-18th, or Naples (Florida), between the 21st-25th. Please visit our Exhibitions page for more information and links to complimentary tickets.

After that, we will be back in New York for the opening of our next exhibit featuring the work of Todd M. Casey ... that exhibit opens on the evening of February 28th in celebration of Todd's new book – The Art of Still Life.

In The News

[See What He 'Feels': Painterly Light Redirects The Gaze In Mark Laguë's New York Cityscapes](#) Natasha Gural-Maiello discusses the work of Mark Laguë and our current exhibit – A Big Apple Adventure.

Stocks & Crypto

By: Howard

With all the noise and news over the past month, I do have to admit that I paid a little more attention to my investments. Towards the end of the month, I must have checked my portfolios 4 or 5 times and the gyrations had me reaching for my Dramamine.

On the morning of February 1, I opened my computer and saw the Dow was sitting at 28,256.03, down 282.41 for the month – not as bad as it could have been. What was interesting to see, is that the cryptocurrencies were up: Bitcoin closed at \$9,320.34 (up \$2,137.72); Litecoin was at \$69.79 (up \$28.53); Ripple jumped to \$0.24 (up \$0.05); and Ethereum closed at \$180.35 (up \$50.91). So, are you telling me that cryptocurrencies are now considered a “safe haven”? Regardless, Amy was happy!

As for the mighty Dollar, it strengthened just a bit with the Euro at \$1.11 and the British Pound at \$1.32. Crude Oil got hit hard, down \$9.59 to close at \$51.63, and Gold added another \$73.20 (closing at \$1,593.40). As for some of my favorite stocks:

JP Morgan (\$132.36 – down \$7.04), AT&T (\$37.62 – down \$1.46), Verizon (\$59.44 – down \$1.96), Wal-Mart (\$114.49 – down \$4.35), Disney (\$138.31 – down \$6.32), Intel (\$63.93 – up \$4.08), Apple (\$309.51 – up

\$15.86), Microsoft (\$170.23 – up \$12.53), United Technologies (\$150.20– up \$0.44), Bristol-Myers (\$62.95 – down \$1.24), Emerson (\$71.63 – down \$4.63), Pepsi (\$142.02 – up \$5.35), and Dow (\$46.07 – down \$8.66). Of the 13 stocks listed, 5 were up, and 8 were down ... not the best results, but we all know that this could have been a lot worse. Oh, since some people fear the number 13, I will add another stock from my vast portfolio (ok, it isn't that vast) – Eaton Corp. I bought that stock a number of years ago at \$57.37 and it now sits at \$97.23 ... so moving forward, I will report on 14 stocks – a nice, even number. In case you are wondering, Eaton lost about \$1.50 in January.

Tales From the Dark Side

By: Alyssa

Doesn't The MTA Have Better Things To Do? - Here is an interesting legal matter regarding copyright. An artist, by the name of Jake Berman, decided to create his own map of the New York Subway System. Well, the MTA discovered that the artist was selling copies of it on Etsy and they were not happy. According to the article in Vice, *the Metropolitan Transportation Authority lawyers filed a takedown request under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, [claiming his map] was a violation of the MTA's copyright for its own subway map. Berman, they contended, could not sell his version.* Here is my question - doesn't the MTA have much better things to do with their time? How about getting their trains to run on time!

Dentist's Get Rich Scheme Backfires! - Back in 2017, an unnamed dentist from Neuss, Germany, presented 20 works by Picasso to a number of auction rooms. The only issue, they were all fakes (with falsified certificates of authenticity), and he was caught. On January 28, 2020, he will stand trial, but since he did not attempt to sell the works before being caught, it appears he will be charged *with the "unauthorized exploitation of copyrighted works" and the use of fake certifications...* This dentist would have been much better off sticking with what he probably knows best -- how to fix teeth! We will update you once the trial is over.

Spike in Fake Prints - It was recently reported that authorities in Basil, Switzerland, *are prosecuting a local art expert who they say sold hundreds of fake prints that he passed off online as the work of Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso and others over 10 years.*

Art experts are now blaming the internet for the large number of fake prints on the market. Timothy Carpenter, who is part of the FBI's art crime team, explains that before the internet, forgers needed to find ways to get forged works into the marketplace (through unsuspecting galleries, auction rooms, etc.); now all it takes is the click of a button. Adrienne R. Fields, of the Artists Rights Society, says she spends many hours each week sending out "take down" notices to websites featuring works that are not authentic.

As technology grows, it becomes easier and easier to reproduce a work of art that can even fool a so-called expert. However, true experts, with years of experience, can often sniff out the forgeries. John Szoke, a New York based art dealer in prints, explains that determining if a work is real or not is not always very easy. One needs to study *the color of the paper, the quality of the printing, the condition of the print, all of which you compare with the original ... [a]nd then you need years and years of experience.*

Last year, we wrote an article on authenticity [Read our "How to Safely Navigate the Art Market: Authenticity"](#).

Really!

By: Amy

Childhood Passion Pays Off - A childhood passion turns into a big score for Simon Hope, founder of H & H Classics, a British auction house that specializes in classic cars and motorcycles. His love of cars began at an early age when he would receive Matchbox cars as birthday and Christmas gifts. According to Simon, he

kept his cars in perfect condition and always returned them to their boxes after playing with them; not to protect the cars, but to protect his grandmother's mahogany dining table.

As he grew older, Simon realized that there was a community of collectors hunting for the rare toy cars, but he continued to only buy what he loved. After amassing a collection of almost 3000 cars, and with a heavy heart, he decided to sell. Three auctions were held over several months, and in the end the total take for all the cars was £300,000 (\$392,785). The most expensive car sold was a lime green ERF Dropside truck that sold for £7,000 (\$9,139). Not a bad haul for a childhood hobby.



Royal Family Drama - Recently, we have been bombarded with news of the British Royal Family and a little matter called Megxit; well 84 years ago, Harry's great-uncle "Eddie" had to make some big choices too about his family and the throne. In January 1936, Edward ascended the British throne after his father King George V died, but his reign was short-lived. In December of that year (326 days later), he abdicated the throne so that he could marry Wallis Simpson, an American divorcee. As King and head of the Church of England, marrying a divorcee was not acceptable, but Edward felt he could not carry out his obligations as King without the woman he loved by his side -- so he gave the crown to his younger brother, King George VI.

The Royal Mint of the United Kingdom produced a 'trial set' of just six coins featuring King Edward VIII upon his ascension and planned to release the coins in 1937, but because his reign came to a quick ending, the coins were never minted or circulated. The coins are known as the Edward VIII Sovereign, four of them are in museum collections, and two are in private collections. The rarity of the coin makes it one of the most sought after by really serious collectors. Therefore, when a collector in the United States decided to sell his Edward III Sovereign, the Royal Mint brokered the deal. The previous owner had paid £516K (\$674K) in 2014; the proud new owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, paid a record price of £1M (\$1.3M), making this the most expensive British coinage.

How To Safely Navigate The Art Market – Lighting

By: Howard

So, you may be wondering, what is the best way to light a work of art?

Natural light (sunlight) that filters into a room is, of course, the easiest. It is important to keep in mind that you do not want to put a work of art (especially those on paper) in direct sunlight – it can cause the colors to fade and paper to yellow (we have all seen what can happen to furniture, carpet, etc. that is consistently in direct sunlight). So, if you cannot light a work in any other way, then make sure they are out of the sun's rays. Also, while sunlight is an inexpensive way to light your artwork, when there is no sunlight, your artwork is going to be very dark. If you decide to go this route, you may want to keep a few flashlights around so that in the evening or on a rainy day, you can still enjoy your prized possessions!!

General room lighting is also a pretty easy way to go. While this method will not highlight any specific work, it will give the room even lighting and is a little safer than the natural lighting choice – though you may still need a flashlight or two!

If natural or general room lighting just will not do it, then you have a few additional options:

Picture lights – a fixture that is usually attached to the back of the frame (or sometimes the wall) and hangs over the front of the painting. While these fixtures are available with incandescent, halogen, and LED bulbs, you will achieve the best results from the LED versions. If you decide to use one of these fixtures, be sure they are securely fastened to the frame or wall; should they become loose, they can fall forward and cause damage to the frame and painting. There are also picture lights that can be placed below a work of art and shine up --- a great alternative for areas where you can hide the fixture – either behind a piece of furniture or on a mantle. If you decide on the 'picture light' option, please keep in mind that the fixtures will need to be plugged into an outlet and if one has not been installed specifically for these fixtures (behind the work) you

may see the electrical cords – not the prettiest of sights; though there are always creative ways to camouflage them.

Track lighting – often found in more contemporary homes and in many art galleries since it provides great flexibility. Here, the fixtures are placed on a track that has been mounted to, or inset into, the ceiling. If you decide to use halogen bulbs, the fixtures should be far enough from the works of art so that the heat generated by the bulbs will have little effect on them. However, to achieve the best results, LED bulbs should be used; but make sure you check with your lighting specialist to determine the maximum wattage that can be placed in each fixture. The only drawback with track lighting is that you will see the entire fixture ... but today they do make some very small and attractive ones. This is the option we use in our gallery.

Recessed lighting – in my opinion, this is the best option for home use. Here the fixtures and, for the most part, bulbs are hidden in the ceiling, creating a very clean look. The only drawback is that you do not have the flexibility of moving the actual fixtures around – which you do with track lighting. So, before you start drilling holes in the ceiling, plan out where each work is going to hang and then arrange the location of the fixtures so the works will be properly lit.

Keep in mind that the one nice thing about these last two options is that all the fixtures/tracks are powered through wiring that is hidden in the ceilings and walls – no power cords hanging down from the bottom of your artwork.

After you have determined the type of lighting you are going to use you now have to decide how much lighting is needed and where the fixtures will be placed. If you decide to use options 1, 2, or 3 then there really isn't much you need to be concerned with. If you are going to use options 4 or 5, you will need to know the approximate size of the works you plan on hanging in each space and where each work will be viewed from.

Once you have all the basics information, I suggest you enlist the help of a lighting specialist who will be able to configure the optimal lighting solution. Always remember that it is better to err on the side of a little too much light, or should I say too many fixtures – especially when using the recessed option. You can always reduce the wattage of each bulb if you feel there is too much light; it is much more difficult, and messy, to add another fixture once they are installed and evenly spaced.

I also recommend, for those of you who are currently involved in new construction, to plan ahead. It is much easier and cheaper to add a few specialty lights into a room while the ceilings and walls are still open --- not to mention a lot neater. You may also want to do some research into all the lighting systems that are currently available. These systems not only give you the ability to adjust each fixture or track but also will increase the life of the bulbs – sometimes as much as ten-fold. When we designed the gallery, our architect convinced us to use a Lutron system and while it was an expensive addition, we are very happy we did it.

Another thing to keep in mind is that it is nice, when possible, to have the picture lights on a separate dimmer switch for additional flexibility. Sometimes it is nice to be able to sit in a room with only the artwork illuminated – if you have the ability and have never tried it, please do. I believe you will find that sitting in a room with a nice glass of wine (or a soda), listening to your favorite music and enjoying your artwork – is a very relaxing and pleasurable experience. Let's face it, hopefully, that is the main reason why you bought it ... to enjoy it!

In the end, like most things, lighting is really a personal preference and you need to determine what is right for you, your room, and your lifestyle.

The Art Market

By: Howard

As you can see, January was a rather quiet one for the New York auction market, but they were able to squeeze one sale in before the month ended!

19th Century European At Sotheby's, New York



At the end of January, Sotheby's presented a rather lackluster sale of 19th-century European paintings; a sale illustrating the continued difficulty auction rooms are having sourcing good quality works. What I will say is that I was surprised that some of the really poor conditioned works found buyers, a few even had competitive bidding!

Taking the top lot was a classic Alfred Munnings' racing scene - *Mahmoud Being Saddled for the Derby, 1936* - which carried an Estimate Upon Request (the whisper number was in excess of \$3.5M) and hammered for \$2.6M (\$3.14M with premium - w/p). Coming in at a very distant second was Bouguereau's *Ora Pro Nobis* at \$550K (\$680K

w/p - est. \$500-700k), and in third was Courbet's *La mer Orageuse* at \$430K (\$536K w/p - est. \$500-700K) ... the seller purchased the work in 1998 for \$431.5K w/p, so no profit there.

Rounding out the top five were Bouguereau and Studio's *L'Aurore* at \$420K (\$524K w/p - est. \$300-500K) - this work sold in 2004 for \$243K, and in 2012 for \$387K; and Grimshaw's *A Yorkshire Home* at \$350K (\$437.5K w/p - est. \$350-500K) - seller paid \$611K in 2014, so that was a big loss.

There were a few very surprising results (at least they were to me). One of Antoinetta Brandeis's largest paintings - *Campo San Giacomo dall'Orio* - found a buyer at \$75K (94K w/p - est. \$50-70K); however, the painting was a wreck with large areas of the sky being either repainted or over-cleaned - in great condition this work had the potential to achieve a record price. Gustave Courbet's *Portrait presume de Tony Marlet* hammered at \$44K (\$55K w/p - est. \$30-50K) - the work had extensive areas of pigment separation (images below). And Corot's *La gue au gros arbre* found a buyer at \$55K (\$69K w/p - est. \$70-90K) - the painting was so thin (most likely due to over-cleaning) that the canvas and ground were visible throughout the work. Here is an interesting side story. While Amy was viewing the work, another couple walked over and the wife commented on the painting's poor condition, the husband replied *that was the way Corot painted* ... Amy then had to correct him, and the wife then replied - *I told you!*



Courbet (detail)
Catalog image



Courbet (detail)
Image showing pigment separation

Then there were a number of big ones that failed to find buyers - Jean Beraud's *Jeune femme traversant le boulevard* (est. \$150-250K); Julius Stewart's *Twilight on the Terrace, Paris* (est. \$150-200K); Courbet's *Château de Chillon* (est. \$300-500K); Hammershoi's *Dunkebakke, Frederiksvaerk* (est. \$300-500K); and Strindberg's *Flood on the Danube* (est. \$600-800K).

Of the 95 works in the sale, 67 found buyers (70.5% -- a pretty strong sell-through rate based on the works offered ... I would have bet that more works went unsold), the total take was \$7.94M (\$9.46M w/p), and the low end of their estimate range was \$11.32M, so they fell way short. Going a little deeper, we find that the

Munnings accounted for 33% and the top five for 50% of the sale's total. Of the 67 sold works, 38 were below, 19 within, and 10 above their presale estimates. This left them with an accuracy rate of 20%. Oh well, better luck next time!

The Rehs Family

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