

Case Studies

ART DIRECTIVES Client Case Study A

The Proof is in The Provenance A portrait of James Buchanan by William Merritt Chase is appraised for \$160,000

By William D'Anjolell and Rochelle Eisenberg

Several months ago, our firm completed a large replacement value appraisal of fine art, antique furniture and period antiques for a private school in Pennsylvania. Included in this appraisal was a portrait oil painting by American Impressionist William Merritt Chase (1849-1916), a master of impressionistic landscape, still-life and the portrait.

After studying five years at the Royal Academy in Munich, Chase settled in New York, where he became the most important American teacher of his generation and dominated the universe of American art during the late 19th century. He taught at the Art Students' League of New York and in 1896 founded the Chase School of Art (now known as the Parsons School of Design). His students were encouraged to paint in the open air and included such luminaries as Georgia O'Keefe, Charles Sheeler and George Bellows.

When Chase died in 1916, his work was described by Ronald Pisano who worked on the Chase catalogue raisonne and stated "he mastered the ability to create a casual image of life suspended in time which, while looking effortless and unpremeditated, was actually carefully composed to reflect the movement of real people in real life situations."

In our appraisal, the painting by Chase was a portrait of James Buchanan, our 15th president and the only one from Pennsylvania. Born in 1791, Buchanan graduated from Dickinson College, learned law, served as secretary of state under President Polk, was named minister to Great Britain under President Pierce and was elected president in 1857. He tried to close the widening rift over slavery but left his successor, Abraham Lincoln, to resolve the pending Civil War facing the nation. In 1868, Buchanan died at his Pennsylvania home. These historical factors enhance the painting's significance and value.

This oil on canvas had a large image size of 51" x 38" depicting a standing Buchanan in a dark suit from his head down to his knees with a dark, almost black background all around him. We used our usual array that gave us a range of value for comparable paintings by Chase.

We discussed the piece with some noted art gallery dealers who sell original works by Chase. Two of the dealers questioned its authenticity due to the precision of the painting and dark background. We had seen other Chase portraits and most had light and more colorful backgrounds. We needed more proof and asked our contact at the school to see if they had any notes or letters about the painting since they had already turned up a few interesting letters to add provenance for other items in their appraisal.

As some time passed, we heard from other art dealers who felt that the piece might even be an "After" which is a copy of the work of the artist. However, that same week, we received a parcel of mail from our contact at the school. In the package were copies of two letters written by William Merritt Chase to a school administrator, dated May 15, 1901, and May 22, 1901, both of which discuss the portrait of James Buchanan, confirming the authenticity of the painting. We had also found from our research another Chase portrait painted in the similar precise manner with a dark background. It was advertised for sale in an antiques magazine. With this additional provenance and research, the value of the oil painting escalated to a total of \$160,000 at replacement value for insurance. The proof lies in the provenance!

The artwork of William Merritt Chase can be found in many museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Columbia Museum of Art in South Carolina, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Albrecht-

Kemper Museum of Art in Missouri, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Parrish Art Museum in New York and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

ART DIRECTIVES CLIENT CASE STUDY B

A Bronze Sculpture is the Center of a Divorce Dispute

The value of a bronze sculpture was being contested by a husband and wife in a divorce case. While the wife claimed the sculpture was extremely valuable, the husband contended that it was practically worthless.

A call was received by Art Directives Inc from the wife about the disputed sculpture. She was asked to bring it into the offices for appraisal. The sculpture depicted a seated female nude. It had a brown patina and was signed with the letter "G" on the bottom and marked Calif. Art Bronze Fnr, L.A.

In our research we determined that the sculpture was made by Gibbons. Because of his prominence and his contributions to the movie industry, the bronze sculpture by Gibbons would have great appeal to the collector of movie memorabilia. Therefore the piece was made more valuable by Gibbon's celebrity status.

In evaluating the Gibbons bronze sculpture, Art Directives took into consideration that, though there are no recorded sales for his art, his contributions to the motion picture industry enhanced the value of his personal artwork. By using comparables from other artists with celebrity status, Art Directives Inc. concluded that the fair market value of the bronze sculpture was \$7,500.00.

ART DIRECTIVES Client Case Study C

Appraisal Reveals Surprising Value of Lalique Mask

By Claire Goldenberg and Rochelle Eisenberg

The piece that our client thought had low value actually was authentic and had considerable value.

As appraisers we often hear, "That, oh, that's nothing." The truth is, there is often great value in items we least expect. Here is such an item. The Lalique frosted glass in relief is titled "Masque de Femme." This 13 x 13-inch square-shaped piece has hair on the perimeter in a fish design, a popular motif during the Art Nouveau period. It is unusual to Lalique in that the entire plaque is the mask. It was designed in 1935 by Rene Lalique, who began his career as a designer and maker of fine jewelry. He later became known for his wonderful perfume bottles and opened his own glassworks in 1909. By the 1930s, when this piece was first made, Rene Lalique was world renowned as the most important designer of his time, and the most successful glassmaker of the 20th century.

Rene Lalique was born in 1860 and died in 1945. Pieces made before his death were marked "R. Lalique." Marc Lalique, Rene's son, re-started his father's company in 1946 and the "R" was deleted, despite the fact that original molds were still being used. A few pre-war designs continued in production and some retained their original trademark forms. According to Christopher Vane Percy in "The Glass of Lalique a Collector's Guide," "Prewar designs produced during 1946 tend to be white and crisp in appearance and to lack some of the warmth and subtlety associated with Lalique production in the 30s. None have been produced in opalescent or colored glass, enameling is rare, and hand-staining has ceased altogether."

Except for commissions, every item manufactured by the Lalique factories bore a Lalique trademark. There are at least 11 variations of the Lalique trademark. All are either etched or molded. Sometimes an item would have a script added and therefore bears two styles of trademark. The Glass of Lalique states that "very rarely did Rene Lalique sign his pieces, and only then by scratching his name into the wax

immediately before casting.” A rare piece was signed by Marc Lalique or Marie-Claude, the granddaughter of Rene Lalique.

For nearly 40 years, much of Lalique’s glass was produced in great quantities; therefore, modern collectors keep finding different forms, designs and colors.

There were imitators of Lalique, including Sabino, Eteling, Genet et Michon and Andre Hunebell. Their glass pieces all have a more or less similar style and quality. Also fraudulent pieces are beginning to surface. Fraudulent pieces show seams or bubbles and lack the quality of the satin or clear finish of a true Lalique piece.

There is a very strong secondary market for Lalique designs. Lalique glass recently sold at auction for up to 80 percent of retail value, a very high percentage for resale.

While doing research for this article we learned that Masque de Femme was valued at \$10,000 until Sept. 1, 1999, when the retail price became \$8,080. The replacement value for insurance of Lalique glass may therefore fluctuate depending on the price in France, where the Lalique home office is located.

The piece that our client thought was “nothing” turned out to be really something—a worldwide collectible of significant value!

ART DIRECTIVES CLIENT CASE STUDY D

Insurance Appraisals Can Make You Rich A Chippendale chest is appraised at \$150,000
By Walter Ritchie and Rochelle Eisenberg

Included in an entire collection of furniture, paintings, porcelain and carpets, was this wonderful Chippendale mahogany chest-on-chest made in Salem, Mass., circa 1770-1790. Our firm, Art Directives, was asked to appraise the collection for replacement value for insurance. We were immediately struck by the beauty of the wood, the quality of the carving, the proportion of the entire piece and the distinctive Salem features.

The piece consists of two chests of drawers, one placed on top of the other. The upper case has a bonnet top with three corkscrew finials and is fitted with three short drawers over four long graduated drawers. The central drawer in the upper tier is carved with a fan. The lower case is fitted with four graduated long drawers above a molded base with a simplified fan-carved pendant, and stands on claw and ball feet. Details such as the fan and corkscrew finials were inspired by Philadelphia and other cabinet-making cities who rendered these motifs more curvaceously and naturalistically. The fan is a stylized version of a scallop shell, while the corkscrew is a simply rendered flame.

The fan and corkscrew are features found on Chippendale furniture made throughout New England; however, motifs such as the two small “pinwheels” protruding into the opening of the bonnet top and the fan-carved pendant suspended from the center of the base of the lower case are distinctive Salem features.

While researching this chest-on-chest we learned that the block-front form is the form found on many chest-on-chests made in Salem. As you can see in the photograph, this piece has a straight foot. Auction records show that the typical block-front chest is more in demand, and therefore commands even more than this valuable piece.

In the 1750’s, the English Rococo, or Chippendale, style began to exert a strong influence on the furniture of American colonial cabinetmakers. The fashionable style reached the colonies through imports from London, immigrant English cabinetmakers, and pattern books containing engraved designs for furniture in the Rococo taste. One of these pattern books “The Gentleman and Cabinetmaker’s Director,” was published in 1754 by England’s most famous cabinetmaker of the 18th century, Thomas Chippendale.

Chippendale's name was adopted as a stylistic label by furniture historians in the 19th century who rediscovered his highly influential pattern book. His name is still used today to describe furniture made in America during the middle of the 18th century.

The Chippendale style flourished in the colonies from about 1755 until the end of the Revolutionary War. Furniture in the Chippendale style is characterized by S-curved legs, claw-and-ball feet, carved decoration of shells and leaves, and curved surfaces. While these characteristics are found in American Chippendale furniture made in all the major colonial cabinetmaking centers from Newport, R.I. to Charleston, S.C., each city developed its own distinctive regional variation of the style. For this reason, it is possible to distinguish a piece of Chippendale furniture made in New England from one produced in Philadelphia.

Together with auction records, we researched this piece using "American Furniture" by Helen Comstock and found comparable examples in "American Furniture Queen Anne and Chippendale Periods" by Joseph Downs. We also consulted with Leigh Keno, an expert in American furniture. He agreed with our insurance appraisal of \$150,000 for this exquisite piece and our attribution of the piece to Salem, Mass.

Our clients, who had this piece in their family for a few generations, currently had this chest-on-chest insured for \$5,500. You can imagine their delight when they learned their piece was now worth the handsome sum of \$150,000 insured replacement value. The market for American Furniture has grown tremendously and values have been steadily increasing.

This is a perfect example of the importance and value of having updated appraisals for insurance purposes at least every five years!

ART DIRECTIVES CLIENT CASE STUDY E

[How a Family's Passion Turned into Gold](#)

Stacy Westland* fondly recalls a family vacation one summer in the 1950's. She was twelve years old, and enjoying the leisurely drive through the mild New England region, with a little antiques along the way. In a shop in Hartford, Connecticut, she fell in love with a large (38" x 58") painting depicting an English hunt club, with riders in red hunting outfits astride their steeds, and a large pack of hunting dogs milling in the foreground. Stacy and her family were all equestrians, with riding lessons for the kids, and family rides on Saturday mornings. Stacy's parents purchased the work, and it hung in the prominent position over their sofa, where it stayed for the next 50 years.

By the time Stacy called our firm to help with settling her father's estate, the painting was more a fond memory of time spent with her family than a valued work of art. Only when we started examining it and extolling its fine quality and nature did she recall that her parents had paid quite a bit for it, "Several thousand dollars at the time", she said. The scene showed that the artist was quite skilled in a variety of ways, as he shows human figures, animal figures and the landscape they are set in, all with an equally accomplished hand. A plaque affixed to the frame suggested it was the original framing, reading, "Presented to James H. Rutherford Esq. M.F.H. / The Members of the Linlithgow & Stirlingshire Hunt and other friends, in appreciation of his services for many years as Hon. Secretary and Master. 28th February, 1923." Upon removing the canvas from the wall, we found inscriptions on the back that were thoroughly charming. Not only did we find the artist's name, "Painted by H.F. Lucas-Lucas", we found written behind each figure on the front of the canvas, their names on the verso, from the riders, to the horses, to each hunting dog in the club.

Research on the value of this work turned out to be surprisingly simple. Henry Frederick Lucas-Lucas was a prolific British artist who lived from 1848-1943. It appears he was a specialist on horse and dog portraits, and a favorite among hunt clubs. The Linlithgow & Stirlingshire Hunt Club was located in Scotland, not the artist's native Britain, which speaks to his wide-spread reputation and popularity.

Because this appraisal was for estate purposes, we were looking for the Fair Market Value of the painting, using auction results as comparables. The majority of auction records were images of single horse portraits, or horse and rider portraits. These were not significantly comparable to the subject work, which showed a large group of horses, riders and hounds. Four works stood out as larger groupings, ranging from \$10,000.00 - \$44,000.00. All of these works were smaller than our subject work. The most recent, a group of hunting dogs belonging to the Percy Hunt Club had sold for \$44,000.00, and measured 28" x 40". With these comparables in hand, we felt confident in valuing the painting of the Linlithgow and Stirling Hunt Club at \$50,000.00 for Fair Market Value.

ART DIRECTIVES Client Case Study F

Meissen A porcelain set from Eastern Germany is appraised for \$18,000

Meissen, a small town in Eastern Germany, is world renowned thanks to the beautiful and elegant porcelain products that have been made there since the early 1700s. Meissen porcelain dinner services, figurines or plaques with the original mark of the crossed swords are owned by collectors all around the world, which is a testament to their workmanship. Finely painted and decorated pieces of high quality made of Meissen hard paste porcelain last the test of time; pieces made in and since the eighteenth century are still collected and used today.

Meissen porcelain was the first European porcelain to be made outside of China and the Far East at a time when Chinese and Japanese porcelain wares were highly coveted and exported to the West. The technique of firing and making the hard white porcelain objects out of clay was discovered during experiments conducted by alchemists in the Saxony region of Germany. This led to the construction of the first manufacturer of porcelain in Europe, "Royal Porcelain Manufactory in Meissen," which was under the command of King Augustus II. Dresden, a nearby town also prospered in porcelain ware production.

Meissen designs with their brilliant colors, floral sprays, and applied decorations started an era of high quality production and sales of porcelain in Europe. Meissen factory created objects such as palace sized urns, highly detailed and decorated figurines of people and animals, beautiful vases, and candlesticks. They also made magnificent frames, plaques and mirrors. Objects were often marked with the initials of their makers such as KPM, MPM and AR for Augustus Rex.

Sculptors and design directors of the Royal factory helped make desirable creations that led to the factories around Meissen copying and imitating their style. The original crossed swords trademark was also imitated, which makes identifying the authentic Meissen from copies challenging. Consequently, a proper valuation and appraisal of antique Meissen is highly recommended. It takes a trained eye to make the distinction between the authentic Meissen marks and the fraudulent marks. Many products aim to replicate the style and design of Meissen but the quality and value of an original is unmatched.

Meissen patterns for dinner services such as the *Blue Onion* feature a white background adorned with cobalt blue floral design similar to the ones found on oriental wares. The *Blue Onion pattern has been in production since the eighteenth century. It is so desirable that it has been copied by numerous manufacturers. Our research for a client from Princeton, NJ with a 100 piece dinner service including the serving pieces for the Blue Onion pattern dating from the nineteenth century found the replacement value of the set to be \$18,000. The set had an estimated value of \$9,500 at auction.*

Meissen floral patterns are highlighted with the addition of gilt borders or applied decorated figures to serving pieces. A client in Haverford, PA with a 122 piece dinner set with large tureens and a coffee and tea service had questions about the value of her pieces. The large covered pieces such as the soup tureen had a beautifully applied figural finial to the cover. The set even with minor condition issues to the pieces was valued for auction at an estimated \$6,000.

