

11 Paintings by Canadian Folk Artist Maud Lewis Bring A Combined \$559,510 in Miller & Miller Auction

News-Press Release

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Summary

The 344-lot auction, held October 8th, grossed \$871,695 (Canadian) and featured a fresh offering of Canadiana and folk art, from some of the oldest collections in the country.

Message

New Hamburg, ON, Canada, October 14, 2022 -- Eleven original paintings by the acclaimed Canadian folk artist Maud Lewis (1903-1980) sold for a combined \$559,510 in an online-only Canadiana & Folk Art auction held October 8th by Miller & Miller Auctions, Ltd., based in New Hamburg, Ontario. Overall, 344 lots came up for bid in the auction, which grossed a robust \$871,695. All figures quoted in this report are in Canadian dollars. Of the eleven Maud Lewis paintings in the auction, Winter Sleigh Ride was an expected top earner, with a pre-sale estimate of \$20,000-\$25,000. It ended up selling for \$100,300. The signed, circa 1955, 9 inch by 11 inch mixed media on beaverboard was a delightful and early Christmas season scene, similar to a later image used for a series of Canadian postage stamps. Maud Lewis was one of Canada's most renowned artists, the subject of numerous monographs, novels, plays, documentaries, and even a feature film. She was born into relative comfort and obscurity, and died in poverty, though enjoying national fame. She overcame severe physical challenges to create a unique artistic style, and sparked a boom in folk art in her home province. Though she rarely left her tiny house, Lewis's works have travelled around the world, and in the decades since her death she has become an iconic figure, a symbol of Nova Scotia, and a beloved character in the popular imagination. She painted many different vehicles that were part of her life and were the inspirations for many of her subjects. Black was her color of choice. Fellow Canadian artist John H. Kinnear corresponded with Ms. Lewis from the time she became famous, in the 1960s, until her death, acting as her de facto agent. Kinnear would send her Masonite boards, brushes and requested paints. Maud would send the finished paintings for Kinnear to sell; he would send the proceeds to her home in Marshalltown. "The simplicity and honesty of Canadian folk art by Maud Lewis, Joe Sleep and Joe Norris crushed high expectations," said Ethan Miller of Miller & Miller Auctions, Ltd. "Formal British underperformed, but the bright and optimistic works by the above mentioned surprised us. This sale was a compilation of three great collections and the highlights in each performed well. What it proved to us is that collectors are willing to pay for documented pieces with firm provenance." The early, circa 1975 oil on panel harbor scene by the late master folk artist Joe Norris (1924-1996), titled Lower Prospect (the town in Nova Scotia where Norris spent most of his life), signed and titled lower left, left the room for \$7,080. Also, an oil on board rendering of flowers by another Nova Scotia master, Joe Sleep (1914-1978), 28 1/2 inches square and artist signed and dated (lower right), brought \$6,490. Mr. Sleep learned to draw while hospitalized in Halifax. The rest of the auction was a market fresh offering of Canadiana and folk art, from some of the oldest collections in the country. The backbone of the sale was built on the collection of world-class walking sticks and folk art carvings of Jim Fleming. Also up for bid was Canadiana and folk art from Marty Osler and items from the Susan Murray collection. An exquisite mixed media diorama by Adelard Brousseau of Quebec titled Maple Sugar Time (circa 1930), finished at \$10,620. It was a wonderful rendition of a traditional Quebec rural scene, measuring 36 1/2 inches long by 21 inches tall by 24 1/2 inches wide. Brousseau achieved the diorama by meticulously carving, one by one, the figures, the tools and animals in the scene. An acrylic on paper by Canadian Woodland artist Norval Morrisseau (1932-2007) titled Ancestral Visitor, (1998) brought together many elements, such as spirits, a continuance of life in the body of one animal while showing a connection to other life and spirit forms. The signed work, measuring 22 inches by 30 inches (sight, less frame), brought \$11,800. Walking sticks from the Jim Fleming collection included these rare and fine examples: - A painted black hardwood Iroquois/Christian Resurrection cane made in Quebec in the second half of the 19th century, with a stylized carving of a beaver for a handle (one of only two known), carved with a bird, rooster Christ on the cross, snake, etc. (\$7,080). - A mid-19th century Eastern Canadian Maritimes carved walking stick made of marine ivory, baleen and narwhal tusk, with the handle carved in the form of a forearm with a closed hand, and the shaft carved with spiraled fluting, 39 1/2 inches in length (\$5,015). - A documented circa 1920 ladies' carrying ribbed ball walking stick attributed to Willard MacKenzie (Cape Breton, Nova Scotia), made from hardwood, with gray and green paint and having a top with a compressed ball; below are bathers carrying a basket (\$3,835). A figured tiger maple secretary desk made circa 1840 and attributed to Grobb (Lincoln County, Ontario), made with pine secondary wood and with pressed glass and brass pulls to the interior, changed hands for \$4,720. Also, a patent model (or salesman's sample) of a Massey Harris #7B single furrow plow, stamped "No. 7B Massey-Harris" in the casting, fetched

\$3,835. The Canadian Patent office granted thousands of patents for agricultural devices starting in the 19th century. A Quebec carved, stained and painted pine gum box, a lovely book form box with a drawer, boldly carved with bold colors and leaf fronds, and a back with varied geometric carvings and crosses, changed hands for \$9,440; while a carved pine Life carved gum box, thew spine carved "Frank Martel, St. Jerome, 1910", one side carved with the Tree of Life and the other side with a chalice within an oval field, decorated with gold paint, hit \$4,248. A seven-foot totem pole, carved around 1940, having a great, untouched surface and patina with vibrant colors, made by an unknown artist, went to a determined bidder for \$7,670. Also, a mixed media on collage on black arches paper by Anne Meredith Barry (Canadian, 1932-2003), titled Travelling Vest #12, The Avalon in January (1987), incorporating bold colors, whimsical patterns and handwritten text, rose to \$4,720. Internet bidding was via the Miller & Miller website (www.MillerandMillerAuctions.com), plus LiveAuctioneers.com. Telephone and absentee bids were also accepted. A total of 455 people registered to bid online, placing just under 8,000 cumulative bids. 99 percent of lots were sold, and 68 percent of the top 50 lots exceeded estimate. All prices include an 18% buyer's premium. Miller & Miller Auctions, Ltd., has three major auctions planned for the rest of this year and early 2023, all online-only affairs and all slated for Saturday. They include a Luxury Watch auction on November 19th; an Automobiles, Advertising & Toys auction (The Gary Archer Collection) on December 3rd; and a Canadiana & Folk Art auction on February 11th, 2023. To learn more about Miller & Miller Auctions, Ltd. and the firm's slate of upcoming auction events, please visit www.millerandmillerauctions.com. Updates are posted frequently.



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