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Roy Rogers' guns lead the sale at Brian Lebel's 21st annual Old West Show & Auction

This year's Old West Auction proved that the public still loves Roy and Dale; the Western art and collectibles market continues to improve; and great items will always do well.

The 381 lot auction, which included items from the Roy Rogers-Dale Evans Museum, did \$1.5 million in total sales, more than the previous year's auction of over 500 lots. The top lot was Roy Rogers' first gun rig, a Gilmore with Colt single actions, which brought \$103,500, well-above the \$30-40,000 estimate. The matching spurs sold for \$20,700. Roy's ornate Nudie's rig and matching spurs sold for \$97,750 and \$18,400 respectively. The famous Clark Gable Model 12 Winchester brought \$71,300. Museum pieces "with a personal direct connection to Roy" did the best, says Brian Lebel. "The sale showed the important role that Roy and Dale played in the lives of many people."

The auction's sales rate was an amazing 95%. Though the Roy Rogers Museum pieces were sold unreserved, they accounted for only 35% of the total lots. A small pen and ink by Charlie Russell sold for more than twice the estimate at \$9,775, and a contemporary oil by Eric Michaels brought \$17,250. Native American artifacts also did well, including a Sioux beaded cradle cover for \$9,775 and a Woodlands pipe and stem at \$4,025, both firmly exceeding estimates.

Cowgirls were present as always, with the proceeds of three lots totaling over \$6,400 being donated to the acquisition fund of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. "Queen of the West," Dale Evans' gun rig and pearl-handled Colt brought a respectable \$17,250.

Bidding was spirited on the crowded floor, six phones and two internet platforms, and remained that way until the very end of the evening, when the final lot created an exciting bidding war. Lot 381, a framed print (a likeness of Roy tipping his hat) that for years hung at the exit to the Museum, went up for bid with no estimate. When the dust settled, it sold for \$14,950.

Lebel feels that the market is strong overall. "There is an excitement in the collecting field right now; collectors feel it is a good time to buy." The accompanying three-day Old West Show supported his theory. "Dealers that brought rare, fresh and unusual items did very well, and total sales of six figures were not uncommon." Contemporary spurs, bits and saddles did well at both the Show and Auction, indicating the buying public's continued appreciation for high quality, contemporary artisans. Some things, according to Lebel, "are just too important to pass up."

This was the Old West Show & Auction's second year in Denver after 19 years in Cody. The new city seems happy to welcome Lebel's event. An invitation-only party was held atop Lookout Mountain at the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave in Golden, CO, where guests enjoyed a

barbecue dinner and drinks at sunset. (People are still talking about the buffalo ribs!) The public was welcome to a Friday night art-walk and cocktail party hosted by local galleries on Wazee Street in Denver's LoDo arts district. Lebel says, "Even in today's volatile economy, people from all over the world participated and were glad they did." Details, more information and complete auction results are available at www.denveroldwest.com.