Documents help Bird Bureau to fly

Backing information from the consignor supported a 'masterpiece' furniture item by Swedish designer

by Sheila Gibson Stoodley

Very little has been written in English about the Swedish architect and designer Ragnar Östman (1878-1930) and most of his work remains in his native country.

Among the handful of pieces that have appeared on the international secondary market are a few from a suite of furniture displayed at a 1909 exhibition in Stockholm. The white lacquered furnishings married the Jugendstil and Gustavian styles.

A side cabinet offered at Detroit auction house **DuMouchelles (24% buyer's premium)** on September 17 came from that suite.

Measuring a generous 5ft 5in (1.65m) wide, the *Bird Bureau* (named after the carved wooden bird-shaped handles) prompted an onslaught of enquiries the instant it appeared online and a fierce fight when the lot formally opened. Guided at $4000-6000, the bureau hammered for $32,500 (£24,300) to a bidder on the phone.



Above: a c.1909 Art Nouveau Ragnar Östman *Bird Bureau*, **$32,500 (£24,300)** at DuMouchelles.

"It's a masterpiece. It's like nothing I've ever seen before, and I've been in the business for 20 years," said Renee Fessel, specialist at DuMouchelles. "I believe this is the pinnacle of this artist's work."

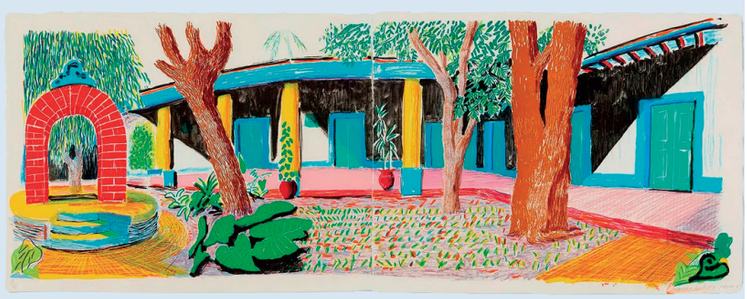
DuMouchelles catalogue assistant Cameron Derian concurred: "What makes it so interesting is it combines the delicacy and ornamentation of Art Nouveau with the simplicity and restraint of the Gustavian tradition."

Fessel stated that backing information provided by the bureau's consignor, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan resident Rose Ryan, powered it to a strong five-figure price. "Most people don't have the documents that Rose had," she said. "They helped it achieve what it did."

Two such documents were included in the lot photos: a black-and-white image of the Östman suite on display in 1909 showing the *Bird Bureau* at centre left, and a June 2010 appraisal letter from Art Nouveau expert Jason Jacques that gave it an insurance valuation of a cool $150,000. It is believed that the family for whom the suite was made divided and dispersed it at some point after 1909.

The collection Rose Ryan built with her husband of 67 years included many Art Nouveau furnishings, more of which will appear in a November sale. "She was a true collector of the genre," Fessel said. "There wasn't much in her collection that wasn't museum quality." ■





Above (l to r): David Hockney print *Hotel Acatlán: Two Weeks Later*, **$150,000 (£111,175)** at LAMA, and Hockney print *Hotel Acatlán: Second Day*, **$150,000 (£111,175)**.

Unplanned Hockney hotel stop inspired prints

Prints from David Hockney's (1937-2026) *Moving Focus* series are among the artist's most sought-after work from the 1980s. The vibrantly coloured images picturing Hotel Acatlán are especially prized.

After his car broke down while driving to Mexico City, Hockney had waited out the repairs at the Hotel Romano Angeles in Acatlán.

He stopped there again on his drive back and made more sketches that became the basis for two prints offered in the September 10 Prints & Multiples sale at **Los Angeles Modern Auctions (28% buyer's premium)**.

Hotel Acatlán Second Day and *Hotel Acatlán Two Weeks* each hammered for $150,000 (£111,175).

Later, Clo Pazera, senior fine art specialist at LAMA, explained that though both were from relatively large editions of 98, they come to auction infrequently; only one or the other might appear in any given year.

Offering both in the same auction is rare, although Pazera said that was a coincidence: "That's the funny thing. They're not from the same consignor. We did have a Hockney section, and it was a coincidence that both came in for this sale."

The lithographs went to two different winners as well, but not before a busy pre-sale period. "I received the interest I had hoped for," Pazera said. "I had an outsize number of requests for condition reports, and a lot of people came to see them in person."

Forbidden bears fruit

During the pre-sale exhibition LAMA displayed them on the same wall, flanking a 1982 Hockney colour lithograph titled *Red Square and the Forbidden City*, which ultimately hammered for $3800 (£2835) against a $2500-3500 guide.

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