

# FIFTH AVE. VIETNAM PEACE PARADE COMMITTEE

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May, 1968

**Founding Chairman:**

A. J. Muste  
(1885-1967)

**Coordinators:**

Norma Becker  
Dave Dellinger

Dear Friend,

As one of the sponsors of the LITERARY AND ART AUCTIONS FOR PEACE, we thought you would like to have a brief report on the projects.

Enough literary material -- autograph letters, manuscripts, first editions, inscribed and limited editions -- was received to publish a catalogue of 225 lots and offer them to collectors and dealers. This auction grossed somewhat over \$7,500.

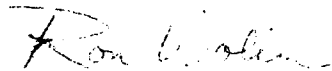
About 125 leading artists and sculptors contributed 150 works to the art auction. We held a two-day exhibit, followed by a public auction. Notwithstanding the fact that many fine pieces were not sold, we grossed nearly \$10,000 from this event. All of the unsold pieces were returned to the artists.

Including the dollar contributions received directly from artists and writers in lieu of material, the total amount both auctions brought in was approximately \$19,000.

We consider this a great success. In fact, the auctions were the most productive fund-raising events the committee has ever conducted. They helped us finance the huge April 27th antiwar march and rally in New York and went a long way towards bringing us out of our traditional deficit condition.

On behalf of the entire committee I want to thank you for sponsoring and participating in this event. If we have to repeat this effort to finance peace activities later in the year, I hope we can call on you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Ron Wolin  
Director of Special Events

RW:darn

### P.S. Peace & Art

Peace is not only desirable, it can be a cultural boon as well. Witness the two-part auction to raise money for the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, an amalgam of two-dozen or more New York peace groups who sponsored the giant parade and peace-in at Sheep Meadow in Central Park this spring. First, a literary auction was held at the Ethical Culture Society auditorium, and \$7,500 was raised for some 250 items of manuscripts, letters, first editions, and autographed memorabilia from—or relating to—dozens of noted authors. An additional \$1,500 was contributed by writers, editors, and the public. Two nights later, an art auction at the Universalist Church of New York City, Central Park West and 76th Street, resulted in an added windfall of close to \$10,000.

The lit'ry sale drew 200 people, but most of the bidding came from professionals: Gotham Book Mart, Phoenix Books, House of Books, Literary Horizons, and individuals in the field like William Targ and Ted Wilentz. The auction was conducted by Stanley Waldman, a short young man with crisp delivery who confessed, after some mispronunciation of authors' names in his calls, that "literary items are not my usual thing." What was usual for Waldman—judging from his metronomic style and quick eye for bids—was an ability to squeeze the last possible buck out of his audience. Mostly the bids were modest, with Waldman intoning, "I have two-fifty more, are you all done..."

The average sale was about \$20, but some items came pretty close to skyrocketing. An example was a John F. Kennedy letter praising a new publishing venture. Waldman had escalated his calls on the Kennedy letter to \$25 per round, and the buyers didn't seem to be hurting when the letter was finally knocked down for \$400. It was the evening's highest bid. A Hemingway letter went for \$160, and a Leon Trotsky letter sold for \$180. Some Einstein items went for \$180 the lot. As for contemporary interest: a Norman Mailer ink caricature of Senator Everett Dirksen drew \$32.50; some material relating to Allen Ginsberg's *Kaddish and Other Poems* sold for \$22.50; and a banned issue of Ralph Ginzburg's *Eros* magazine garnered \$25.

Up for grabs at the second auction were 150 pieces of art—oils, watercolors, sculpture, posters, and drawings. The money came coolly, but a couple of incidents turned out to be sticky. First a cherry bomb was exploded inside the church's entrance; later a bomb-scare call was made to the police. They arrived and found nothing. "Crank call," said one. "Peace-parade auction—it figures," said his partner sagely. The auction itself went smoothly, with 500 or so in attendance, and with many more individual

buyers than were at the literary auction. Auctioneer was O. Rundel Gilbert, a fast-paced man with color in his cheeks, color almost the match of the red carnation he wore in his lapel. Rundel's high bid for the night was for a Calder gouache, which sold for \$800. Other items that caused spirited bidding were a David Levine ink caricature of Tennessee Williams, \$200; a set of three Roy Lichtenstein color poster prints, \$225; a Robert Motherwell print, \$100; and a Leonard Baskin woodcut on Japanese paper called "Man of Peace" which checked out at \$400.

The two auctions raised close to twenty thousand dollars. Most went to the Parade Committee, which incurred a deficit of \$30,000 in bringing out the Sheep Meadow gathering. (Over 100,000 people squeezed into the Meadow listening to speakers under leaden skies and the annoying obligato of Mayor Lindsay's whirlybirds.) Prime mover of the auctions was Ron Wolin, a bearded, thirtyish fund-raiser, who came up with the idea last September and had to stay with it almost around the clock ever since. Wolin got the expert help of Arthur Cohen, Editor in Chief at Dutton, for the literary auction and of Dore Ashton for the art auction. Wolin praised their voluntary labors. And he was quick to add praise for the hundreds of authors, poets, artists, and collectors who contributed their works and material. And finally, to the staff of young people who helped in the arrangements and who rode shotgun on each and every sale at the auctions.

Peace, literature, art, money. The mesh was a good deal more popular than, say, domino theories. More fun too.

—SIDNEY BERNARD