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BID THREE WELL: The Potomack Company landed the Greenbrier's Dorothy Draper auction and a slew of new fans.

THIS SOLD HOUSE *Dorothy Draper chicked-up the Greenbrier, now her legacy does the same for Old Town's Potomack Company auction house*

Cell phones rang from the Czech Republic. E-mails clicked in from Japan. The September auction of the Greenbrier hotel's furnishings by the late interior design doyenne Dorothy Draper had officially turned into an international affair. The lot of more than 200 iconic pieces of furniture and accessories endowed with the brightly-colored, strikingly-detailed "Draper touch" fetched nearly half a million dollars for Old Town Alexandria's Potomack Company auction house, not to mention a new standing in a tightly-knit world run by big dogs Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillip de Pury.

How does a one-year-old business attached to an antiques shop get the contents of one of the most publicized gut-jobs on the Eastern seaboard? After all, the resort's renovation that displaced the goods comes at a time when its post-war decorator is enjoying a massive resurgence with such bold-face names as Kelly Wearstler, Miles Redd and Jamie Drake nodding to her pioneering playfulness in their own designs.

A bit of build-it-and-they-will-come, says the company's president and founder, Elizabeth Wainstein. The former Christie's specialist and director of Appraisal Studies at George Washington University has operated Old Town's Brockett's Row Antiques and Fine Art shop for the past 12 years, making her the community's unofficial antiques authority. When clients began bringing in items she couldn't sell in a retail space, Wainstein dialed up her impressive network of enthusiasts and experts to open an auction house of her own. Anne Craner, who specializes in paintings and drawings, is the former research associate at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and former assistant curator at The Philips Collection. Matthew Sturtevant, who heads up the furnishings category, is the former director of 19th century furniture at Christie's and an adjunct professor at NYU. And the former executive director of The Tudor Place Foundation, attorney Osborne Phinizy Mackie, aids in trusts and estates.

Upon opening, the venue met with an outpouring of support. First it housed the collection of artist Ron Van Sweringen, from which three paintings were sold at the highest bids the artist has brought at auction worldwide. A few months later, the team offered up Library of Congress historian Daniel Boorstin's estate, where a cast iron figure-cum-radiator cover of George Washington fetched the highest price paid at auction for a figure of its kind.

It was this track record and a soupçon of savviness that Potomack Company's press relations director Lucie Holland took with her to ask if the nascent team could sell the Draper cast-offs for the resort. She was a guest at the hotel last December when she learned of the renovation. The result landed the company in the art and business sections of international newspapers including *The New York Times* and put it on the speed dials of decorators and curators worldwide.

"We've sold to such an exotic and global market," Wainstein says. "You never know what's going to come in on the next phone call; there's always more to every piece and its history. That's what gives you the adrenaline."

From the Draper auction success, the Potomack Company learned to focus on specialty auctions that cater to its far-flung audience. On November 17, they'll open the market for a fine painting sale, set to drop on December 1. The lot features work by Gasper Netscher, Leon Kroll, Robert Wood and Frank Stella.

"We're on target with where we want to be," Wainstein says. "I never realized there would be this much enthusiasm. It's like a fever that's just spread. I couldn't have asked for anything more." ■

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