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## The Aurora Collection

The Aurora Collection of Roman Gold  
Coins realises \$1,700,000 at New York Auction

**70 extremely rare Roman gold coins sold alongside ancient and world coins in New York for a total of \$2,661,141 on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January at The New York Auction XXXII held by Baldwin's, in association with Dmitry Markov Coins and Medals and M & M Numismatics .**

**Paul Hill, Baldwin's Ancient coin specialist said;** 'The incredible results of the Aurora collection demonstrate the increasing strength of the market for high quality and rare Roman gold coins. The evening witnessed lively bidding from a full auction room of international dealers and collectors. Baldwin's are proud to have started the New Year with the auction highlight of the New York International Numismatic Convention'.

A gallery of emperors and empresses adorned the coins in this collection, and presented a magnificent portrayal of Roman culture, politics and society, rife with propaganda and controversy.



With an exceptional double portrait of brothers Carinus and Numerian, a gold Aureus (left) provoked fierce bidding, selling for \$152,100 against a \$30,000 estimate [Lot 48]. The coin was struck by Carinus at Lugdunum in A.D. 284, when

he and his brother became co-emperors following the death of their father Carus in A.D.283.

Their joint rule was short-lived, for in November A.D.284 Numerian was murdered by his soldiers who sought Diocletian for emperor. Following the death of his brother, Carinus battled with Diocletian and was killed in A.D. 285. This coin is of the highest quality and offers an insight into the brother's short rule which is otherwise documented with bias by ancient sources.

The selection of coins in the collection conveyed an enthusiasm for the history they represented and many had exceptional provenance, previously belonging to some of the most prestigious numismatic collections. Formerly owned by Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso (1873-1921), a gold Aureus of Geta, struck in A.D. 210-211, sold for \$117,000.



Caruso's 1904 recording of 'Vesti La giubba' from Leoncavallo's opera *Pagliacci* was the first sound recording to sell a million copies. A collector of rare coins, stamps, watches and antique snuff boxes, he was also known for

his generous character and extensive charity work.

The reverse of this coin from his collection, fittingly depicts the imperial congiarium, an event where generous distributions were handed-out to citizens. It was likely to have been that which took place when

brothers Caracalla and Geta returned to Rome, following the death of their Father Septimus Severus in A.D. 211. Although a number of other officials would have been involved in the congiarium, this coin provides an extremely interesting depiction of how emperors would have interacted with Roman citizens [Lot 34].

After the death of their father, Geta and Caracalla fought to become sole ruler of the Roman Empire and a fractious relationship developed, resulting in Caracalla killing his brother at a reconciliation meeting arranged by their mother, Julia Domna. A second gold Aureus, that sold for \$93,600, was a vital propaganda tool in rebuilding Caracalla's reputation in the wake of his brother's assassination. The reverse of this coin details a religious scene at the Temple of Vesta, designed to emphasise Caracalla's piety.

A third gold Aureus showing the two brothers united on one coin, prior to their father's death, also sold for \$93,600. Struck A.D. 200-202, the coin was described by Baldwin's Ancient coin specialist, Paul Hill, as "one of the most beautiful gold issues of the Severan period".

A delicate portrayal of Constantine the Great led the gold solidus coins from the collection, selling for \$40,950 against an estimate of \$15,000. Constantine was a revolutionary leader who converted the Roman Empire to Christianity.

**Seth Freeman, Auction Director of Baldwin's said:** "Despite the adverse weather conditions experienced this week in New York, the sun shone in the auction room of the Waldorf Astoria when the Aurora collection went under the hammer. Bidders battled each other in a packed room to try and secure the rare Roman gold coins being offered, with a number of the coins realising several times their pre-sale estimate. The results achieved proved that high quality Roman gold coins are very much in demand."

The collection was offered as part of The New York Sale XXXII of Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine coins and World Coins, held alongside an auction of Russian and World coins at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel during the 42<sup>nd</sup> New York International Numismatic Convention.