

## **SOTHEBY'S TO OFFER THE CONEY ISLAND COLLECTION OF LENNY GOODSTEIN**

### ***--Featuring Memorabilia From America's First Land of Amusement--***

New York, New York-Before Disneyland and Six Flags, Coney Island was America's great playground. Sotheby's revisits the magic of this historic land of amusement when it will offer 50 lots of Coney Island Memorabilia as part of the Collectors' Carrousel auction on June 12th.

This once isolated sandbar's distinction as a bustling waterfront resort began to grow during the second half of the 19th century. The establishment of regular steamboat and railway service from Manhattan started a massive wave of development in the 1870's and Coney Island's famed Golden Age began. A land of grand hotels and racetracks, Coney Island quickly became a playground for New York's most affluent pleasure seekers. Known to many as "Sodom by the Sea" during the decadent years of the 1880's, Coney Island was notorious for the corruption, prostitution and gambling that flourished there.

In 1910, New York State had outlawed horse racing and the rich began to look elsewhere for recreation and amusement. By 1920, however, the advent of the subway system opened Coney Island to the working class and another wave of renewal and development ensued. From the decks of ships headed into Ellis Island, immigrants gazed in wonder at night skies illuminated by the lights of Coney Island's three main amusement havens - Steeplechase Park, Luna Park and Dreamland. The children of those immigrants reveled in this land of beaches, boardwalks, roller coasters and carousels. Coney Island became known as the "Nickel Empire".

A Brooklyn native, Lenny Goodstein was drawn to Coney Island as a small child. By age ten, he was taking the subway alone to the end of the line to roam the Bowery, the street cutting behind Nathan's famous hot dog emporium. After travelling with the circus as a young adult, Lenny returned to Brooklyn to begin reclaiming his childhood. Scanning antiques stores and second-hand dealers, Goodstein was successful in salvaging costumes, props and the games of chance that captivated him in his youth. Mr. Goodstein's most noteworthy acquisitions came from the famed Fun House when it shut down in the early 1970's. He purchased the contents of the building as well as the items in the warehouse behind it. Goodstein's Coney Island trophies have since been stored in assorted lofts, shops and his girlfriend's apartment. "I was fascinated by the peculiar brand of carnie and folk art," he explains. "You see, I'm dyslexic. Everything is visual for me."

It is said that as one approached Coney Island, you could hear three different and distinct sounds; the screaming of the children on the roller coaster, the music radiating from the carousel and the cackling laughter of Minnie Ha Ha (lot 192; est. \$7/8,000). The official hostess of the Fun House, this mechanical Fat Lady sat at the entrance as a simultaneously jovial and frightening harbinger of what lay in wait inside. The Goodstein Collection includes the FUN HOUSE sign, (lot 182; est. \$3/4,000) which is comprised of eight colorfully painted letters and adorned the front of the famous attraction. The Fun House Entrance and Exit doors (lot 187-8; est. \$1,5/2,000 and \$3/4,000 respectively) will also be offered. From within the building, the collection includes a Fun House clown face painting (lot 183; est. \$4/6,000). The gaping mouth of this huge clown face was originally clamped down on top of a Fun House Mirror (lot 184; est. \$1/1,500). In the resulting effect, the clown face appeared to swallow the observers who were observing themselves.

Additional highlights include the Extraordinary bubble blowing clown (lot 224; est. \$10/15,000) which was once an integral part of the Coney Island landscape. This huge, colorful clown head is fitted with a bubble blowing apparatus that forces the bubbles out of his gapped tooth grin as his eyes dart from side to side. The Kicking Mule Ball Toss game (lot 207; est. \$3/4,000) was made by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company in the 1930's. The object of the game was to hit the red and yellow targets on the donkey's rear which caused the animal's legs to kick feverishly, the eyes to irradiate and the animal to emit a prolonged honking sound. A Coney Island Photo Booth (lot 203; est. \$2/2,500) advertising Post Card Photos made while U Wait will also be offered.