

Masterpiece 2013

The Royal Hospital, Chelsea

Photograph ©Robert Young Antiques



The finest objects ever assembled in a tent or a paean to the überriich on the prow for the most expensive things on the

planet? Some of the prices quoted for paintings, sculpture, silver, rare books and manuscripts, tribal art, antiquities, jewellery, icons, furniture and tapestries

were both jaw-dropping and eye-watering at the same time. Many pieces had a discrete POA on the caption, but even when you asked, some stall-holders were reluctant to disclose the price, one assumes because they did not want visitors having an embolism on their stand, with all the concomitant fuss that would cause. Take that pearl, the third largest ever found; this Mary Tudor asymmetrical drop-shaped pearl surfaced in 2004, having been lost since the late 16th century, and can be dated back to 1526. It measures 69.8 carats with its diamond cap. The sellers, Symbolic & Chase, are so coy about how much they want for it, they asked enquirers to name a price. This was, in effect, an auction. If you offered, say £11million, then it would likely be yours.

Staying with the Tudors, a miniature watercolour on vellum of a jewelled lady by Nicholas Hilliard painted around 1590 was priced at £200,000 by Philip Mould. There were fine bronzes by Frink, Degas and Moore, and an exquisite boy on a horse by Marino Marini on Robilant + Voena's stand, one of an edition of six, for a cool \$3.5. Amongst the paintings, there was an absolute corker, a sumptuous study of a young shepherd or cow-herder asleep in the golden evening light on a hillside overlooking Lake Garda by John Singer Sargent entitled *Cyprus and Pines*, priced at \$12m. from Trinity House Paintings. Nic Fiddian-Green's breathtaking *Horse*

at Water sat comfortably alongside Rembrandt Bugatti's *Walking Leopard* and Sophie Dickens's extraordinary stainless steel *Minotaur*, on sale for a quarter of a million pounds on the Sladmore Galleries stand. Another arresting bronze was *Ancient Man* from 1921 by the Milanese artist Adolf Wildt from the Milanese Galleria Carlo Orsi.

There were, of course, 'lifestyle' exhibitors, like Maserati, Eagle E-Type Jaguars, Riva Yachts and The Macallan, who were introducing a new range of whiskies, with some ludicrously pretentious names, such as *Gold*, *Amber*, *Sienna* and *Ruby*. Vacheron Constantin promised to display a watch, whose face featured a faithful reproduction of the entire Chagall ceiling of L'Opéra de Paris, but it was not apparent on their stand. First prize for the most appealing and stylish stand must go to Robert Young Antiques, whose eye for detail and eccentric objects is paramount, and included a beautiful, and rare, nineteenth century French lay figure on horseback.

The prize for the most achingly *überbling* object must go to Mont Blanc, who do not, apparently make pens, but prefer to call them 'bespoke writing instruments'; they have come up with the most expensive, and certainly most vulgar, pen ever - a solid gold skeleton model, set with a total of 144 diamonds and a mother-of-pearl emblem. So, for the man who has everything, except taste. DG

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