

Expert shudders-Look at what's passing for art!

By TOM LAMBERT
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LONDON — The art market boom continues to flourish here, with new sources of saleable paintings and memorabilia expanding. Nobody seems to know if, how, or when it all might end.

"No sign of a buyer's revolt yet," one sales specialist reported cheerfully.

"People still have money to spend, art investment trusts are in the market. Some banks are buying and more corporations, especially continental European firms, are bidding at sales," the specialist went on. "Some buyers are spending for good value —and some are buying absolute bloody rubbish," he added.

The specialist declined prudently to define "rubbish."

However, leafing through a recent auction catalog, he pointed to a photographic reproduction (in black and white) of a brown paper parcel 12 x 9 x 13½ inches in size.

"That parcel sold for 1,000 pounds (about \$2,500)," he said with distaste, "one thousand pounds!"

What was in the parcel, he was asked. "Don't know," he replied, "It wasn't opened for the sale and the buyer, a Frenchman, said he wasn't going to open it."

Sales of works by recognized master painters, of "rubbish," Orientalia, furniture, books, and some items new to the auction block are setting receipts records here.

One famed London auction house reported net receipts totaling 43 million pounds (more than \$100 million) in 1972. Its receipts so far this year total about 40 million pounds (more than \$100 million)—and its sales season is not yet over.

Old masters yield the most spectacular sales proceeds, many of them for record amounts. A small panel of "Christ's descent into limbo" by the 15th century Italian artist Andrea Mantegna sold for 490,000 pounds (about \$1.25 million) recently.

Picasso's "Le Nort" from the late Edward G. Robinson's collection brought 270,000 pounds (more than \$693,000), the highest ever paid for a Picasso.

Why such prices? Who pays them? How many more master art works are available for sale?

"Buyers purchase for various reasons," he said. "Because they have the money, because they want what they buy for investment" against depreciating or fluctuating world currencies.

"How many masters are left? Well, some will continue trickling into the market from estates, but their numbers are declining as more of them go into museums," the specialist went on.

That decline, is having several effects in the art market—it is bringing up for sale at sometimes astonishing prices some of the lesser artists' works of the Dutch, Impressionist and other schools, and opening up some new sources of art hitherto side-stepped by many auctioneers.

Thus, one of London's premier auction firms recently staged its first sale of contemporary art in this country. The receipts—to the surprise of the auctioneers and almost everyone else—totaled almost 400,000 pounds (about \$1 million dollars).

An Andy Warhol painting of a can of soup brought 7,000 pounds (nearly \$18,000) and another of Elvis Presley, bought by Australia's art museum, went for the equivalent of \$35,000. The specialist shook his head.

The continuing art market boom, he said, is causing still other effects in the marketplace: Prices for Chinese art works, which had been inching up steadily the last decade, "are going through the roof;" works by artists "nobody ever heard of" are attracting surprising prices; articles "we wouldn't touch for sale 10 to 20 years ago"—such as railway station name plates, old photographs—now are viewed by some buyers and being auctioned as art.

"More people are rooting around in their cellars or attics for pictures of items now viewed as art and saleable—it's not only the well-to-do offering articles for sale as was the case 25 years ago, it's workingmen, old ladies, housewives.

And simultaneously more people are buying what is sold as art, or antiques—not only high-priced things but ones selling for 100 pounds (about \$250)," he said. The bulk of one well-known art auction firm's sales here are in that category.

The art boom, the specialist said, is being fueled by rising values on Victorian and Modern as distinguished from contemporary American paintings, high prices for the dwindling supply of old masters, changing concepts of what constitutes art, investment buying—and higher valuations on such items as flapper-age lamps, and old cars.

"Don't laugh about cars," he admonished. "It's possible your Model T Ford may be listed as art one day, as the manifestation of a certain period in time, in history. Who knows today what is art tomorrow? Remember, Van Gogh couldn't sell his pictures while he lived."



Musicians are fading fast

By MAX WILDE
(C) 1973, The London Observer

GENEVA — Three out of every four jobs held by professional musicians in one western European country 40 years ago have disappeared. The country lost half its musicians between 1930 and 1960, when electrically-recorded gramophone records were introduced and talking pictures appeared. The number was halved again in the next 10 years. The vanishing of this nation's performing musicians was speeded by nationwide television, long-playing records and tape-recordings.

The country concerned, unnamed in an International Labor Organization survey is not unique. In many other countries actors and

disbanded. Edward Thompson, an ILO official who has compiled a report, says that only in those countries where there is massive state support for the theater, opera, ballet, and music are national cultural heritages of living music and living theater not in peril.

The ironies are, of course, that at the same time the number of people able to hear musicians' work multiplies at a colossal rate. Thompson forecasts that with the development of satellite television transmission "some time in the 1980s the potential audience of any performance will be the population of the whole world..."

ONE SHOT PERFORMANCE

Already, Eurovision and Intervision have made it possible for selected performances to be watched simultaneously in many countries.

In the past a variety or circus artist who took years to perfect his act could expect to make a reasonable livelihood from this one act throughout his working life, touring from one town to another and from one country to another.

But now, if such an act is shown on television, it will be seen at one and the same time by everyone who would once have gone to see the live performance. What once represented his whole working life will have been compressed into a few minutes in a single evening, and if the performance is recorded on videotape, the children and grandchildren of today's audience will also be able to see the performance without leaving home.

"Television," says Thompson, "insatiably devours its raw material — the creative efforts of writers, composers, producers and performers."

VICIOUS GADGETS

Further technological innovations are likely to erode still more the performer's rights. One is the video-cassette which can be played, by means of an attached appliance, through an ordinary television receiver. At the same time it will also be possible for the owner of a television set to record his own video-cassettes from the programs he receives in the normal way. There is disagreement among manufacturers about standardization of these products, so as yet they are not widely marketed.

Thompson quotes a legal expert saying: "By permitting his interpretation to be recorded (even) in exchange for remuneration, a performing artist implicitly tolerates its almost unlimited reproduction."

"Broadcasting, however, multiplies the possibilities of utilization of such a recording to a point that defies the imagination. Its appearance on the market displaces the artist from dance halls and theaters. To make a recording in these circumstances is for the artist almost tantamount to economic suicide."

An attempt to give protection to performing artists was the Rome Convention of 1961, but this was ratified by only 13 states and in any case has been overtaken by technological advances.

Attempts made in 1971 and 1972 failed to improve the Rome Convention, or replace it by a new one. A further attempt is being made under the aegis of the ILO, UNESCO, and the World Intellectual Property Organization to produce and improved new draft convention, which it is hoped, will be considered by a diplomatic conference in 1974.



New drug law unit clarifies rules

By MICHELE McLELLAN
(C) 1973, The Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The head of the newly-formed federal Drug Enforcement Administration has laid down new guidelines restricting the use of no-knock raids in drug arrests.

John Bartels Jr., acting administrator of the drug unit, told a press conference that henceforth agents must get his approval or that of his deputy administrator, Andrew Tartaglino, before staging such raids.

Bartels issued a nine-page policy statement that also included requirements for proper dress and identification of agents, plus restrictions on the use of forced entry and firearms in drug raids.

"Unhappily we are all too familiar with the incidents which made the issuance of this policy necessary," Bartels said, referring to raids earlier this year in Collinsville, Ill. On the night of April 20, federal agents raided two Collinsville homes, allegedly without warrants and without identifying themselves to the occupants. Both families are suing the government for damages.

An Illinois grand jury investigation of the raids is underway.



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