

# Comments on the Art Market

B Y R E H S G A L L E R I E S

## Volume 265

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(212) 355-5710

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Volume 265 marks the beginning of Comments on the Art Market's 23rd year. Our first edition was released on January 1, 2001, and featured one short article, maybe half a page, titled Buying Art at a Gallery. It was the first in a long series of articles I (Howard) wrote about what to look for and consider when buying works of art. I will admit that there were many spelling and grammatical errors. So, in 2008 we started going over the earlier articles and cleaning them up. Originally, the newsletter was printed and mailed out. Yes, we printed them ourselves and had a folding and stuffing machine. We then individually sealed them, placed a stamp, and took them to the post office. When the machine broke, and we decided to go digital, Amy was so happy.

Over the years, the content has expanded to include important information about our gallery (exhibitions, articles, relocation, etc.), thoughts on the Stock Market, stories from the Dark Side of the art world, the Collectibles Market, unbiased coverage of recent Auction Sales, Deeper Thoughts on art world news (a special series by Nathan Scheer – a family member), and most recently, Architecture in Art (a series Lance is spearheading).

In 2013 we started our blog posts. Initially, they were short, with links to the relevant story published by one of the leading news organizations. Now, the posts are more in-depth, giving our thoughts on the matter at hand, and they are also the main content for the monthly newsletter.

Our goal is to help educate people about the many layers of the art world. We hope that all our readers have benefited in some way from them. It is important to remember that the art world is a jungle. Find the right guide before becoming someone's next meal.

We look forward to bringing you more important and interesting information for years to come. Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year!

The Rehs Family.

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## A New Year's Sale

In celebration of the New Year, we are offering all our readers a **15% discount** this week. Please use this code at checkout:

**NEWYEAR2023**



Since opening our shop, Alyssa have been hard at work adding more images, by both contemporary and historical artists, and products. There are now over 325 items including **candles**, **coasters**, **floor mats**, **mugs**, **mouse pads**, **totes**, etc.

**This sale will run through January 7th**

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## Gallery News

### Getting Closer

Another month, and more progress on the new space. These photos were taken on December 15th, and we are looking forward to visiting the space this coming week to see how it is progressing. Stay tuned for more updates.



## Upcoming Shows

It's a new year, and the shows/fairs have started again. This month we will be participating in a new show - Art Palm Beach. If you would like to attend, please send us an email and will be forward you tickets.

## PALM BEACH 2023 – TIMES 2!



As many of you know, we have been exhibiting at The Palm Beach Show for almost 20 years. During the summer of 2022, one of the owners contacted me with some interesting news; they had just acquired the Art Palm Beach show (which takes place in January) and wanted us to exhibit. We gave them a resounding YES! They also noted that the show's producer/director would be Cassandra Voyagis, who runs the LA Art Show. I have known Cassandra for many years, and she is one of the best in the business.

Art Palm Beach will be very different from the February show, where they offer an array of exhibitors, from art to jewelry to furniture to silver. The focus of Art Palm Beach, which runs from January 25th – 29th, will be on Modern and Contemporary works of art (no jewelry, antiques, etc.). Their goal is to

feature 70-80 of the world's best dealers; from what I have heard, they are close to hitting that mark.

The promoters also announced that St. Jude Children's Research Hospital would be their exclusive charity partner for this year's show, and 15% of ticket sales would be donated. In addition, anyone who purchases Opening Night tickets during December will receive a special gift from St. Jude at the event.

So, we will participate in both the January and February shows this year. In January, Rehs Contemporary Galleries will feature a wide array of contemporary works by Tony South, Stuart Dunkel, Ben Bauer, Todd Casey, Nigel Cox, Mark Lague, Gail Descoeurs, Anne-Marie Zanetti, and many others. Then in February, our booth will exhibit a blend of historical and contemporary works of art. While we still have a bit of time before making the final decision on what to bring, we will have a great selection of historical works by Daniel Ridgway Knight, Julien Dupré, Edouard Cortès, Antoine Blanchard, Montague Dawson, and a few amazing surprises.

We should have our limited number of complimentary tickets for the January show just after the New Year.

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### Stocks & Crypto

By: Lance & Howard

#### Lance's Thoughts

Well, 2022 was certainly one for the books - you know, the kind of book you tuck away on the bottom of your bookshelf and doesn't get found until the kids clean out your house after you're dead. Perhaps a bit morbid, but tell me I'm wrong. I'll be here waiting.

Maybe you got into crypto, dabbled in NFTs, or played the meme stock game; regardless of which, it probably didn't have a happy ending. Sure, there were crazy headlines about kids making millions while day trading, but that was far from the norm. Seriously, the party is over... you don't have to go home, but you can't stay here... "probably can't even afford a home at this point," he says to himself with tears in his eyes.

All the major indexes closed out 2022 deep in the red. The Dow fared the best of the bunch. After bottoming out in October, down more than 20% for the year, it's bounced back to just a 9% loss - not good, but not too terrible. The same cannot be said for the others. At one point in October, the S&P 500 was down 25% for the year! Its recovery in the past two months has been far more muted than the Dow, resulting in a 20% loss for the year – pretty bad. Worst of all was the NASDAQ... the past couple of months have been so volatile that it is back to its lowest point of the year – a loss of 33%!

It was a mixed bag when it came to currencies and commodities. The Pound and Euro saw significant and unusual fluctuations in the past 12 months. At the worst point, in late September, the Pound was down more than 20% relative to the dollar, and the Euro was down more 15%. Now, those figures are closer to 11% and 6%, so not as bad as it could've been but certainly not good... unless you're an American on vacation. As for gold, while it's seen some larger-than-normal fluctuations this year, it continues to define itself as one of the most stable assets – for the year, gold has dropped just .75%. The same cannot be said for oil, which has been

on a wild ride... in June, oil was up more than 50%, and in December, it was about even for the year! As of the year's end, it is up more than 17%.

I don't even know if I have it in me to check my crypto numbers... I hope your company didn't start accepting Bitcoin this year. The infamous digital asset has plummeted from the \$50K ballpark to about \$16K, a loss on the year of more than 65% - I almost just threw up. To my surprise, Ethereum was even worse... at one point, it was down 75% and closed the year down 68%. Litecoin stayed out of the spotlight and gave up just 55% this year.

Look, bubbles are fun... they often coincide with bull markets, so they make you feel smart and like you know what you're doing. But if it were that easy, people wouldn't hire financial advisors. Now that we're on the brink of a recession (if we're not in the midst of one already), people are giving up day trading for day jobs... if they can find one. The stock market is in the toilet, crypto is a straight dumpster fire, mortgage rates are the highest they've been in a decade while home buyer sentiment hit a new low, and this is all in front of a backdrop of the Fed continuing to fight inflation. I'll offset all of that slightly by mentioning that the stock market itself was a bit bloated... there was a lot of money being thrown around, and as a result, stock prices became detached from reality. Companies like Peloton, Amazon, and Tesla should have never hit the levels they did, so perhaps reality is just setting in. Either way, it doesn't feel great.

As the year has ended, my father decided to chime in on his boring old stocks (several of which went bye-bye).

#### Howard's Update

Hello, it has been a full year since I covered some of my classic/old/boring stocks, and I cannot say it has been a good one. I was going to start by mentioning the currency and crypto markets, but Lance took care of that, so let's get to the stocks.

In May, I bought back Coke at \$64.67 (if you remember, in 2021, I sold it at \$56.69). It is now \$63.61 – a little loss. As for my other holdings (prices show the change from December 31, 2021, to December 30, 2022). JP Morgan (\$158.35 - \$134.10 - DOWN), Verizon (SOLD), Wal-Mart (\$144.69 - \$141.79 - DOWN), Disney (\$175.77 - \$86.88 – OUCH), Apple (\$177.57 - \$129.93 - YUK), Microsoft (\$336.32 - \$239.82 – YUK), Bristol-Myers (SOLD), Pepsi (SOLD), Eaton Corp. (\$172.82 - \$156.95 - DOWN), Comcast (SOLD), American Express (\$163.60 - \$147.75 - DOWN), Bank of American (SOLD it last week - made a few bucks), Twitter (SOLD), Palantir Technologies (SOLD), SailPoint Technologies (SOLD) and Pfizer (SOLD). I did add Raytheon (Bought at \$84 – now at \$100.92 – YES!), Merck (bought at \$87.12 – now at \$110.95 – Double YES!), Eli Lilly (bought at \$294.22 – now at \$365.84 - triple YES!), and then there is Alphabet/Google. I purchased a few shares in February when it was at \$2,863.97. Then in July, there was a 20 :1 split, which brought the price down to about \$143 per share. Now it is at \$88.73 – triple YUK! Of the 11 stocks listed, 3 of them were up. I guess I should be happy, right?

Today many people are worried that another big correction is imminent. The Dow opened the year at 36,321; by mid-October, we were down to 28,755 and are now at 33,147. Will 2023 see more of a correction? Guess we shall see.

In case you are interested, here is a brief history of our BIG stock market corrections. In 1929 the Dow peaked at 381 and then tumbled, hitting 41.22 about three years later. It took another 56 years for us to experience another CRASH! In 1987, the Dow opened the year at 1,927, hit a high of 2,791, and on October 19, we had Black Monday, a 508-point decline, leaving the market at 1,738, but it closed out the year at 1,938 (a tiny increase) -- Not too bad. Then there was the Dotcom bubble crash of 2000-2002. The Dow peaked in 2000 at 11,722; two years later, it was sitting at 7,286. It took only six years for another big decline. Between 2008-2009 we experienced the Global financial crisis. The Dow hit a high of 14,164 in 2007 and a low of 6,547 in 2009, but it closed out that year at 10,428. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. The Dow opened the year at 28,868, dropped to 18,591 by March 23 (we all thought the world had come to an end), and then rallied to close out the year at 30,409 – a very quick and positive recovery.

As many have experienced in the past, all financial messes come to an end, some quicker than others. Things will improve, and life in the financial world will return to normal -- whatever normal is!

Stay safe and have a Happy New Year!

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## The Dark Side

By: Nathan

### Auction House Standoff In Poland



The 1908 painting *Rzeczywistość* (or *Reality* in English) by the Polish symbolist Jacek Malczewski has not been exhibited for nearly a century. But now, DESA Unicum in Warsaw will auction it off on December 8th, with specialists predicting it to sell for anywhere between 14 and 22 million Polish złoty (or about \$3.1 to \$4.9 million). It would be the most valuable work of art ever sold in Poland. But that might not happen since the painting has been the subject of several literal standoffs over the past several weeks.

Starting in March 2022, the Polish government has been questioning the work's provenance, with claims that the painting was stolen and moved from Poland to Germany during the Second World War. DESA Unicum, however, claims that the work belonged to a Polish-German family who moved to Germany in the 1950s and took the painting with them. On November 21st, police went to the auction house to try and seize the *Reality* but left empty-handed. Last week, police returned accompanied by staff from the Zachęta National Gallery of Art and again left without the painting. It wasn't because they couldn't find the painting but rather because of trivial objections raised by the auction house. The first time authorities attempted to seize the work, auction house staff prevented police from removing *Reality* from the premises because DESA Unicum employees claimed that they had brought inadequate packaging for the work and could not allow them to leave with the painting lest it be damaged in transit. This was why the most recent attempt to seize the painting included museum employees. And yet still, auction house employees raised more objections, specifically that authorities are permitted to take only the canvas and that the frame is property of DESA Unicum and would have to be removed first.

Malczewski's *Rzeczywistość* is still set to appear at DESA Unicum's upcoming Old Masters, 19th Century, and Modern Art evening sale on December 8th. It is unknown whether prosecutors will attempt to seize the painting again before then.

### Pillow Talk: Recovering A Stolen Masterwork Over The Internet

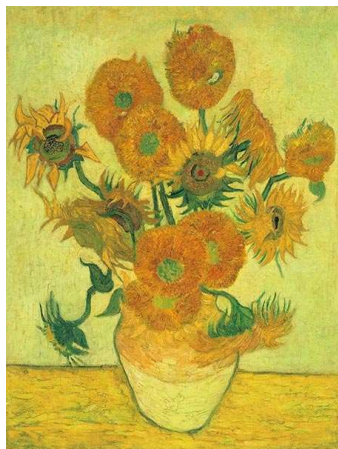
In 1978 in Worcester, Massachusetts, the home of Helen and Robert Stoddard was burgled. The robbers took twelve artworks valued at \$10 million, many of which the Stoddards had promised to donate to the Worcester Art Museum, of which Robert was a trustee. Forty-four years later, only three of the stolen pieces have been recovered, including a 1902 painting by Camille Pissarro. One of the works stolen that night was a painting by the Dutch old master Hendrick Avercamp entitled *Winter Landscape with Skater and Other Figures*. The painting would have been considered lost forever had it not been for one incredibly eagle-eyed art connoisseur.



Clifford Schorer is the Worcester Art Museum's former board president who some may remember as being involved with discovering a lost Albrecht Dürer print back in February of this year. In 2021, Schorer stumbled across a website selling various forms of merchandise, including an \$18 throw pillow decorated with a print of the stolen landscape. He also saw phone cases, tote bags, and other merchandise featuring the painting's image. While that itself isn't entirely unusual, Schorer noticed that the image used to make these pillows was of too high a quality to have been taken in the 1970s before it was stolen. So Schorer looked a little deeper, downloading the image used for the merchandise and looking at some of the metadata. This led him to a string of libraries, galleries, and dealers until he found the records of a now-closed gallery that had sold the painting around 1995 at an art fair in Europe. He also learned that whoever had stolen the work had altered it slightly so that the signature reads "B. Avercamp" instead of "H. Avercamp". This was most likely why many records, including the merchandise website, attribute the painting to Barent Avercamp, Hendrick Avercamp's lesser-known nephew and student. Had the signature gone unaltered, the painting would have likely sold far higher than the \$200K a Dutch couple paid for the work. Sadly, the Dutch couple have since passed away. The Worcester Art Museum sent notice to their heirs, but they have not responded.

While all this took place last year, it was only this past month that Schorer sent a warning to the current owners that the museum would open a criminal case against them in the Netherlands within 40 days. Hopefully, the painting may be returning to Massachusetts sooner rather than later.

### Give Us Back Our Van Gogh!



Mendelsohn & Co. was one of the most prestigious banks in Germany throughout the nineteenth century. At the height of its power, it was one of the major banks in Europe and served as the royal bankers for the Emperors of Russia. Though the bank managed to survive the Great Depression, the Mendelssohn family, one of Germany's most prominent Jewish families, could not survive the new Aryanization policies imposed by the Nazi government in the 1930s. Due to policies meant to bankrupt Jewish businesses, Mendelssohn & Co. was eventually taken over and liquidated by Deutsche Bank. These policies also pressured the family into selling their art collection before escaping to Britain or the United States. But now the family is fighting back to have their art returned to them. And most recently, they've set their sights on what was at one point the most valuable painting in the world.

Starting in 2008, surviving family members have petitioned to have their art collection returned to them. So far, they've had a good deal of success. The family has since reached agreements with several museums, among them the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art, allowing these works to remain in the museums in exchange for an undisclosed sum. Others, like the National Gallery of Art in Washington, have agreed to full restitution. But a little over a week ago, the family filed a suit in an Illinois district court pertaining to one of Vincent van Gogh's most famous paintings that once belonged to their family: *Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers*. On March 30, 1987 at Christie's London, *Fifteen Sunflowers* sold for £24.75 million (or about £65.7M / \$79.5M adjusted for inflation), making it the world's most expensive painting at the time. The Mendelssohn family claims that the buyer, Japanese insurance executive Yasuo Goto, was fully aware of the painting's problematic provenance yet went ahead with the purchase anyway. *Fifteen Sunflowers* has since been permanently displayed in Tokyo at a museum operated by Goto's company, Sompo (not to be confused with another Van Gogh Sunflower painting that environmental demonstrators attacked at London's National Gallery).

Since the Mendelssohn family only recently filed the suit, it may be years until there's an outcome. As has been the case in the past, the Mendelssohns are capable of compromise, so the lawsuit is not a for-sure guarantee that *Fifteen Sunflowers* will be leaving Japan anytime soon.

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### Really?

By: Amy

#### Hollywood Memorabilia Lowers The Curtain For 2022



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

As the curtain lowers on the 2022 auction year, there was one more sale featuring some of Hollywood memorabilia's golden goodies that I am sure will bring back fond memories. Collectors vied for many of the most treasured costumes and props from all-time favorites. Highlighted memorabilia came from epic films, including *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.

The top lot went to the hourglass belonging to the Wicked Witch of the West (played by Margaret Hamilton) in the 1939 production of *The Wizard of Oz*. But that was not the only film in which the hourglass appeared; it also found roles in *Babes on Broadway* (1941), *Diane* (1956), and *7 Faces of Dr. Lao* (1964). The hourglass, almost two feet in height, was made of wood, paper-mâché, and handblown glass; it was decorated with gargoyles and filled with red glitter that matched the ruby-red shoes the witch was so desperate to have.

One of the most famous lines from the movie is when the Wicked Witch holds the hourglass up to Dorothy (played by Judy Garland) and says "Do you see that [the hourglass]?" "That's how much longer you've got to be alive! And it isn't long, my pretty! It isn't long! I can't wait forever to get those shoes!" Well, bidding on the

hourglass ran out of time as there was only one bid. It was estimated to sell for \$600-900k, but bidding started and ended at \$400K (\$495K w/p).

Taking the second spot in the Hollywood memorabilia sale was the robe worn by Moses (played by Charlton Heston) in *The Ten Commandments* (1956). The red, white, and black robe represents the iconic image of Moses bringing down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai and parting the Red Sea. Bidding started at \$60K on the \$100-150K estimate. As collectors competed, bidding climbed to \$360k (\$447K w/p).

And do you remember Ferris Bueller's (played by Matthew Broderick) famous line in the movie? "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." Well, zooming in at the number three spot was a 1961 Ferrari GT Spyder prop, and while life moves pretty fast, this car could not move at all.

In the movie, the Ferrari crashes through a glass wall of the garage as it rolls backward and falls to the ground below. According to the auction house, the car was rebuilt as a display piece after the movie was produced. It was constructed from fiberglass and had all the finishes to resemble the real Ferrari, although there is no engine or drivetrain. It barely drove by the estimate of \$160K – \$240K when it sold for \$270K (\$337K w/p).

A few Hollywood memorabilia items deserve an honorable mention: Ursula Andress's bikini from *Dr. No* swam into the fourth spot selling for \$240K (\$300K w/p). Mel Gibson's sword from *Braveheart* made \$220K (\$275K w/p). And a modified version of Herbie from the movie *Herbie Goes Bananas* parked itself at \$170 (\$212.5K w/p).

As the New Year celebrations begin, maybe it's time to watch an old classic and enjoy a quiet movie night with friends and family. Wishing everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year!

### **Aaron Judge's Home Run Baseball Strikes Out**

The recording-breaking home run ball hit by Aaron Judge on October 4, 2022, was expected to break another record when it crossed the auction block. Judge hit his 62nd home run during the 2022 season when the Yankees played the Rangers in Arlington, Texas. Judge broke the American League record set by Roger Maris 61 years ago.

Cory Youmans, a vice president at an investment firm, was in the right seat to catch the home run ball. Shortly after the *star catcher* had the ball in his glove, he reportedly received several offers for it, one as much as \$3M by an anonymous buyer; Youmans turned down the offer.

Youman's next move was to figure out what he wanted to do with the most sought-after sports memorabilia item of 2022. He waited until the baseball season was over and contemplated his options. Several private collectors made offers, many major auction houses wanted a shot at selling the baseball, and in the end, Youman decided to give it to Goldin Auctions.

Goldin estimated the ball to sell for more than \$3M, hopefully breaking the record price set for a ball hit by Mark McGwire. In January 1999, his 70th Home Run Ball sold for \$3M; since then, McGwire admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs, so his ball is now said to be worth in the \$250 – 400K range - not the best investment.

Unfortunately, Judge's baseball missed expectations; it only received six bids and sold for \$1.25M (\$1.5M w/p); I guess you could say it kind of struck out. As they often say -- sometimes your first offer (reportedly \$3M) is your best offer.

Aaron Judge, the new Yankee captain, did manage to score another record; his new contract with the Yankees will pay him \$360M over the next nine years.





## Architecture In Art

By: Lance

### Architecture in Art: Mark Daly's Radio City Music Hall, First Snow



With the holidays just around the corner, I figured this week we'd talk about one of the more festive places in the city – Radio City Music Hall, which is featured in Mark Daly's *Radio City Music Hall, First Snow*. Every winter it is completely decked out with lights and a Christmas tree, not to mention it hosts the Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes... we'll get back to that later.

The iconic Radio City Music Hall was part of an urban renewal project of the 1920s – Rockefeller Center. Initially, the plot of land where the hall sits (50<sup>th</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue) was intended for the Metropolitan Opera, but the stock market crash of 1929 put an end to that. Instead, Rockefeller teamed up with RCA Electronics to create a “mass-media” complex for shows and performances.

It was the world's largest music hall when it first opened in 1932, and originally hosted stage performances. Unfortunately, it was not very successful and the following year it converted to showing feature films - several prominent films made their debut there... King Kong (1933), Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961), and Mary Poppins (1964) along with more than 600 others.

By the 1970s, film distribution made it difficult to secure exclusive viewings and the end of the decade saw its all-time lowest annual attendance. In 1978 following bankruptcy, it was announced the hall would close... but a committee of performers, the media, and politicians teamed up and successfully had it designated as a city landmark by the end of the year.

Radio City was then renovated to its original condition and reopened in 1980 with a diverse mix of performances including concerts, TV shows, and live televised events. Concerts over the years ranged from the Grateful Dead to Lady Gaga; it's been the set for Hollywood Squares, Wheel of Fortune, and Jeopardy; and has hosted The Grammy Awards, The Tony Awards, the MTV VMAs, as well as the NFL draft from 2006-2014.



As mentioned earlier, it's also the home of the world-famous Rockettes... the dance team has been around for nearly a century! And while I try not to get into anything too controversial in these posts, as with lots of things in American history, when you start reading about it there's usually some racist stuff that comes up. For more than 60 years, the dance team was white-only... yep, even 20 years after the Civil Rights Movement, the group included no women of color. The director maintained that “blacks would ‘distract’ from the ‘look of precision’” – I don't even know what to do with that statement. Through the 80s, increasing social pressure led to the first black Rockette in 1987, but something still wasn't right... she would only be called up if there was a vacancy in the line; essentially, she was a backup.

### Architecture In Art - New York Stock Exchange By Johann Berthelsen



For this week's Architecture in Art, we're down on Wall Street taking a look at one of the most iconic buildings in the city through the work of Johann Berthelsen – the New York Stock Exchange.

Broker-to-broker securities trading in New York dates back to 1792 with what is known as the Buttonwood Agreement. But it wasn't until 1817 that the Stockbrokers of New York would adopt formal policies on rules of governance. Reforming as the New York Stock and Exchange Board, the organization began renting space exclusively for securities trading.

In the early 1800s, there were several regional exchanges, but the invention of the electric telegraph led to a consolidation of the market. New York eventually rose to prominence over Philadelphia with the highest volume of trading, meaning greater liquidity. Through the end of the century, there was rapid growth in securities trading, especially speculative trading.



The NYSE used several locations between 1817 and 1865... following that period, the exchange moved to 10 Broad Street. Soon after, 12 Broad Street was acquired and combined with the original building; there would be two more expansions before the NYSE acquired 16 & 18 Broad Street in 1898. Following the newly acquired property, the NYSE planned to demolish and rebuild a brand new building... the cornerstone was laid in 1901 and construction took two years.

While the NYSE had a shiny new building, it faced many difficulties at the turn of the century. High levels of speculative trading created a great deal of volatility, which made securities prone to panics and crashes. The first major event, known as The Panic of 1907 resulted in a 50% loss of value. Shortly after, there were two federal investigations in 1909 and 1912, which resulted in the Federal Reserve Act. Then came the start of World War I. Even still, the NYSE persisted... in fact, it grew significantly, forcing another expansion by the 1920s. That all changed in 1929 with the 'Great Crash', cited as one of the causes of the Great Depression. It would be decades before the NYSE recovered to the levels seen in the 1920s.



Eventually, the NYSE would go on to expand again in 1954, 1967, 1985, and 1998 before electronic trading began to limit the need for more space; today, its total footprint accounts for more than 31,000 square feet. It is the world's largest exchange, with a market capitalization of \$22.1 trillion (as of Oct 2022), and sees trading volume range from 2-6 billion shares per day. Currently, the exchange sits in a pedestrian-only zone (post-9/11); it is designated a National Historic Landmark, a New York City Landmark, and is included in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Wall Street Historic District.

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## The Art Market

By: Nathan & Howard

### The Art Market 2022: A Year In Review



2022 has been an incredible year for the art market. Many of the major auction houses achieved record highs in sales. Christie's came out on top this year with \$8.4 billion in sales, the highest any auction house has performed in the market's history. Looking at the data, it's not surprising since four of the top five highest-grossing sales of the year took place at Christie's New York. Additionally, four of the year's top five lots were also sold there.

These four lots, *Les Poseuses* by Georges Seurat (\$130M), *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* by Paul Cézanne (\$120M), *Verger avec cyprès* by Vincent van Gogh (\$102M), and *Maternité II* by Paul Gauguin (\$92M) were all part of the same sale: the Paul Allen collection evening sale on November 9th. Not only was this the most expensive sale of the year, but the most expensive sale of all

time. It was the first time a single auction or a single collection brought in over \$1 billion, with sixty lots bringing in a total of \$1.29B. While these paintings brought incredible prices, none of them made it to the top of the list. That designation goes to Andy Warhol's *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*, which sold at Christie's New York on May 9th. This large screenprint achieved a hammer price of \$170M (\$195M w/p), constituting over 60% of the sale's \$273M total.

The Thomas & Doris Ammann Collection, in which the Warhol was featured, came in fifth place in the year's top sales. In fact, three of the year's highest-earning sales took place at Christie's New York within a single week. The Ammann Collection on Monday, May 9th started things off, while three days later, it was beaten by the Anne H. Bass Collection. This was a relatively short sale consisting mainly of impressionist works by Monet and Degas but also featuring two of Mark Rothko's color field paintings. These twelve lots brought in a total of \$313.5M. This is not surprising since the Bass Collection was also one of the year's top sales in terms of lots exceeding their estimates, with eight of the twelve lots selling for more than the specialists had predicted. Normally, that would be a pretty decent day for Christie's. But it seems it was not enough because immediately after the Bass sale closed, they went into their much longer 20th Century Evening Sale, which took this year's second-place spot at \$401.5M. This sale was also one of the year's most successful in specialist accuracy, with 20 of the sale's 42 lots (or 48%) falling within their estimates. The only one of the top five sales that did not occur at Christie's was the May 17th Modern Evening Sale at Sotheby's New York. The combination of impressionist and twentieth-century abstract works, including those by Picasso, Cézanne, and Monet, put this sale in the third-place spot with a total hammer of \$345.65M.

2022 was also a year full of surprises for the art market. Many will probably remember *The Sugar Shack* by the American painter Ernie Barnes selling at the 20th Century Evening Sale on May 12th at Christie's New York for \$13M (\$15.3M w/p), or 65 times its \$200K high estimate. However, one lot was an even greater surprise in terms of exceeding the specialist estimates. It may have gone under the radar because it wasn't a multi-million dollar hammer price. Picasso's two-sided drawing *Nu and Dates '8 septembre'* sold at the October 19th Modern Discoveries sale at Sotheby's London for £32K (or \$39.9K) when it was only meant to sell for no more than £200. While the Sugar Shack hit 65 times its high estimate, the Picasso drawing achieved a hammer price 160 times the experts' predictions. Some of this year's other surprises included Antoni Clavé's *Portrait d'un marin fumant*, featured at the July 20th Modern Discoveries at Sotheby's New York, selling for \$38K, or 47.5 times the \$800 high estimate. And lastly, of course, not forgetting the Old Masters, an oil-on-panel painting called *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* by an anonymous Flemish or Netherlandish artist only known as the Master of the Embroidered Foliage. It was featured at the Old Masters sale held at Bonhams New Bond Street on July 6th. With an estimate of £25K to £30K, it was nowhere on the specialists' radar, yet it came to surpass its high estimate by a factor of 21. With an Edward Collier trompe l'oeil and a Bartolomeo Passarotti portrait failing to meet their reserves, both highly valued in this sale, *Adam & Eve* became the auction's top lot, with a hammer of £640K (or \$761.3K).



But of course, with the surprises and the successes, there had to be a few let-downs. Unfortunately, several sales ended with high percentages of unsold lots. Often, this had more to do with the condition and estimates of the works being offered. The first one happened in January when Sotheby's offered a group of 19th-century European paintings. Many of the lots had condition issues, some more serious than others, and the presale estimates seemed out of touch with the current market. That sale saw 31% of the works go unsold, which, to be honest, is better than we expected. Then we saw similar results in Sotheby's May sale *Belle Époque Splendor: The Discerning Eye of a Collector* – a totally misleading title. It should have been called *Belle Époque Splendor: The Blurry-Eyed Collector*. This sale was filled

with mediocre-quality works, several of which had serious condition issues. Some of the lots were actually unfinished works. These were not pieces a truly “discerning collector” would want to own. It resulted in an unsold rate of about 42%, which was still better than what we would have expected given the offerings. And who can forget Sotheby's October 20th sale of 19th Century Works of Art? It really should have been called *The Get Rid of the Stuff* sale. This one ended up with about 41% of the works being bought-in. The top lot was Franz von Stuck's *Danae and the Golden Shower*. It was not in the best condition, carrying a \$10K to \$15K estimate. Yet it sold for \$130K (or \$164K w/p), more than eight times what was expected – go figure. Towards the end of the year, Bonhams New York's December 6th Impressionist & Modern sale was among the worst, generating a 45% unsold rate and grossing a measly \$925.2K, when they were expecting at least \$4.9M. Maybe December is just too late in the season to have a very successful sale?

However, some of the biggest disappointments were in this year's 20th century and contemporary sales. One of this year's greatest let-downs was at the November 17th 20th Century Evening Sale at Christie's New York, where Willem de Kooning's *Untitled III*, estimated to sell for more than \$35M, unfortunately went unsold. Similarly, Paul Gauguin's *Pêcheur et baigneurs sur l'Aven*, with an estimate range of \$6M to \$8M, went unsold in that same sale. *A Sunflower from Maggie* by Georgia O'Keeffe, also with a \$6M to \$8M estimate range, failed to sell at the May 12th 20th Century Evening Sale at Christie's New York. These are just a few of the biggies that failed to find a new home. You might be wondering why? Well, your guess is as good as ours.



Overall, the art market did well through 2022, and it is our hope that interest in acquiring high-quality, good-condition works will continue for years to come.

## Bonhams NY Impressionist & Modern Sale



On Tuesday, December 6th, Bonhams New York hosted an Impressionist and Modern Art sale featuring several highly-valued works expected to ensure a successful auction. Unfortunately, those expectations couldn't have been more wrong. It was an absolutely dismal affair and probably one of the worst sales I've ever watched. Even at the beginning, it was clear that Bonhams had stirred up very little interest in the sale. That said, there were at least a few interesting highlights (w/p = with buyer's premium).

That day's top lot went to Henri Le Sidaner's *La Porte dans la verdure*, from the collection of Richard and Maxine Markell. The Markells were the owners of a Yonkers-based shoe distributor and prominent collectors of Chinese porcelain, whose estate also included Tiffany lamps and Impressionist paintings. This is the first time that the Sidaner has come up at auction, having been owned previously by Findlay Galleries in New York, as well as both Knoedler & Co. and Galerie Georges Petit in Paris. Bonhams specialists estimated the painting to sell for between \$120K and \$180K, with the hammer coming down at \$140K (or \$176.8K w/p).

Coming up right behind was Jean Dufy's 1950 Paris cityscape *Place de la Concorde*. Like the Sidaner, this is the first time this work has come up at auction, having been kept in the same private collection in California since 1958. The painting captures an elevated view of the square from across the River Seine, with the Madeleine Church hiding just behind the central obelisk. Meanwhile, the Basilica of Sacré Coeur sits on top of Montmartre Hill in the distance. To get this view, Dufy would have had to climb onto the roof of the Palais Bourbon, where the National Assembly of France meets. The painting was expected to sell for no more than \$50K, but with such a beautiful subject, I wasn't surprised when the work sold slightly above, at \$80K (or \$101.2K w/p).

Two works tied for third place... one was Le Pho's oil-on-canvas work entitled *Composition*, which was sold by Findlay Galleries Palm Beach in 1968 to the current consigner. The work is very typical of the artist, with a woman and child surrounded by lush vegetation; valued by Bonhams at \$70K to \$100K, it sold for \$75K (or \$94.9K w/p). The other was by Françoise Gilot - she is perhaps best known for her ten-year relationship with Pablo Picasso, but was a great artist in her own right. At Bonhams, her 1978 abstract painting *Magic Games* was valued at \$80K to \$100. While it failed to meet its estimate, selling for \$75K, it was a great improvement from when it last sold at Christie's New York in 2010 for a mere \$16K (or \$20K w/p).

The only surprise in terms of a higher-than-expected hammer price came a little late in the sale with an oil painting by the Italian-American surrealist Enrico Donati. The Message of the Sphinx is dark and mysterious, with patches of bright teal or gold. While only expected to sell for \$12K at most, the hammer eventually came down at \$55K (or \$69.7K w/p). Even still, this surprise wasn't enough to salvage the entire sale. From the beginning, the auction was so underwhelming. Thirty-eight of the total eighty-four lots (45%) went unsold that day. While that number alone doesn't always indicate failure, it's important to highlight which lots were bought in. It seems Bonhams did not do enough to drum up enough interest in the sale's highly-valued lots. Of the fifteen lots with a high estimate of \$100K or higher, eleven went unsold, including Maurice de Vlaminck's *Voiliers à Chatou* (estimated to sell for \$400K to \$600K), Marc Chagall's *Paysanne au visage vert* (\$350K to \$550K), and Max Pechstein's *Sonnenflecken* (\$1M to \$1.5M). Had there been more interest or these lots' reserves not been set so high, Bonhams might have been more successful. With a sell-through rate of just 55% and a specialist accuracy rate of 24%, the Impressionist & Modern sale that was expected to bring in no less than \$4.9M ended up with a measly \$925.2K.

## London Old Masters Week: Sotheby's Evening Sale

Last week was an exciting time for the Old Masters market, since both Christie's and Sotheby's hosted their end-of-the-year sales at their London locations. However, the December 7th Sotheby's evening sale arguably received a little more attention. While works by Pieter Brueghel the Younger and John Constable were featured, much of the attention was drawn towards the sale's expected top lot (w/p = with buyer's premium).



The much-anticipated Titian work *Venus & Adonis* is one of a series of mythological scenes created for King Phillip II of Spain (which I mentioned in [an article](#) from last year). Versions of *Venus & Adonis* hang in Madrid's Prado Museum, Washington's National Gallery of Art, and Los Angeles's J. Paul Getty Museum. The version offered at Sotheby's is known as the "Lausanne version", named in reference to its previous owner Patrick de Charmant, who housed his art collection in Lausanne, Switzerland. Charmant acquired the work in 1984, and tried to sell it at Christie's London in 1998. It was assigned a pre-sale estimate of £1M to £1.5M, and went unsold. Twenty-four years later, Sotheby's specialists estimated it would sell for between £8M and £12M. The Lausanne Titian, lot 5 in the sale, finally sold for £9.5M / \$11.6M (or £11.1M / \$13.6M w/p).



Sotheby's success on Wednesday can be attributed mainly to the success of the Titian. But it's important not to forget that exactly half of the available lots came from the same distinguished collection. Seventeen of the thirty-four lots, including two of the three top lots, came from the collection of the late Old Masters connoisseur Juan Manuel Grasset. Among the works featured at Sotheby's were paintings by [Osias Beert the Elder](#), [Barent Avercamp](#), and [Floris Claesz. van Dijck](#) (which Sotheby's used as the banner for the sale's webpage). The Grasset collection's highlights, and indeed those of the sale, were a still-life of flowers in a glass vase by Jan Davidsz. de Heem and an early Canaletto cityscape. Both were expected to do well, earning estimates of £1M to £1.5M and £3M to £5M, respectively. The Canaletto hit its low estimate of £3M / \$3.7M (or £3.7M / \$4.5M w/p), while the De Heem exceeded expectations with a hammer price of £2.2M / \$2.7M (or £2.7M / \$3.3M w/p).

Overall, Sotheby's achieved a sell-through rate of 85%, and with nine of the thirty-four available lots selling within estimate, the specialists received an accuracy rate of 26%. Eleven lots (32%) sold above estimate, while an additional nine lots (26%) sold below. Sotheby's ended up bringing in £26.9M / \$32.9M against a total low estimate of £22M. It's considered the best Old Masters sale that Sotheby's has hosted in six seasons. However, it's important to keep in mind that the sale had a bit of help from several late nineteenth and early twentieth-century works tacked on at the end, including Orientalist works by Frederic, Lord Leighton and John William Godward. But Sotheby's had to wait a whole day to see how their results compared with the Christie's Old Masters evening sale taking place on December 8th.

### London Old Masters Week: Christie's Evening Sale



On December 8th, Christie's London featured twenty-seven lots as part of its Old Masters evening sale. This came the day after Sotheby's held its own rather successful Old Masters sale. While both auctions did relatively well overall, some writers couldn't help but express some pessimism for the market's future (w/p = with buyer's premium).

The stars of the sale were more or less what the specialists had predicted, with Jean-François de Troy's *Reading Party* coming out on top. This beautiful 1735 work is one of de Troy's famous *tableaux de mode* scenes showing contemporary fashions and pastimes, or what we might call "slice of life" today. Even though de Troy is often categorized as a Rococo painter, his *tableaux de mode* are often not as sensual or whimsical as the works of his contemporaries like Watteau and Fragonard. But that does not mean that his works are less valuable or admired, as many of his *tableaux* are considered museum-quality pieces, including *The Reading Party*. Estimated to sell for between £2M and £3M, the painting hit its mark when the hammer came down at £2.4M / \$2.9M (or £2.9M / \$3.6M w/p).

While the de Troy gave the end of the sale a bit of excitement, the other two top lots opened everything up with a bang. Sir Anthony van Dyck's *Portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria* came in second place at Christie's that evening. The portrait has an incredibly interesting history: the painting offered at Christie's is often called the Warwick version since it was owned by seven generations of the Greville family, the Earls of Warwick. The Warwick version is the second, slightly more detailed rendering of a portrait originally commissioned by Queen Henrietta Maria, the wife of King Charles I of England, as a gift to Cardinal Francesco Barberini. The [Barberini version](#) is now owned by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Warwick version, offered at Christie's on Thursday, had been up at auction as recently as 2015 when it went unsold at Sotheby's London with an estimate of £1.5M to £2.5M. But if you look up the pictures of the portrait offered at Sotheby's, it looks very different from the one featured in last Thursday's sale. That's because the Warwick version used to be a [full-length portrait](#). It was altered and extended on behalf of the Earls of Warwick by one of their favorite portraitists,



Sir Joshua Reynolds. This was done so that the painting would fit better when hanging in the principal state rooms at Warwick Castle. The portrait has since been restored to its original format, hence the difference in appearance. With such a storied past, it's a pity that *Henrietta Maria* wasn't valued at more than its £2M to £3M estimate. But it seems the house specialists made the right judgment call, as the painting hit its low end at £2M / \$2.4M (or £2.4M / \$2.9M w/p).

The evening's third-place lot was another portrait by an equally renowned portraitist. Like Van Dyck, Hans Holbein the Younger is often associated with the English court, with some of his best-known works being portraits of King Henry VIII, Jane Seymour, Thomas Cromwell, Thomas More, and Anne of Cleves. However, he first established his reputation as an artist with his portraits of the Dutch philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam. The half-length portrait featured at Christie's on Thursday was a bit of a surprise since the attribution was to "Hans Holbein the Younger and Workshop". This was notable since art historians are only aware of three existing Erasmus portraits created solely by Holbein, with the others labeled as products of just his workshop or as copies by later artists. There are about thirty-eight portraits identical to the one sold at Christie's on Thursday, all copies of an original work that has not been found. Arguably, the best example hangs at the Kunstmuseum in Basel, Switzerland. Attributing the work to Holbein and Workshop implies that the artist had more of a hand in the work's creation than others. Dr. Bodo Brinkmann, the Kunstmuseum's Old Masters curator, was the one who assigned this attribution, so I suppose that's reassuring. Against a low estimate of £1M, the Holbein eventually brought in £900K / \$1.1M (or £1.1M / \$1.4M w/p).

Overall, Christie's achieved a sell-through rate of 89%. With seven of the twenty-seven works selling within their estimates, the specialists reached an accuracy rate of 26%. An additional seven works sold above estimate, while ten lots (37%) sold below... only three went unsold. Christie's eventually brought in £10.6M / \$12.9M, just above the £9.6M low estimate. But despite the numbers from both Christie's and the Sotheby's sale the previous evening, some commentators were still pessimistic. Scott Reyburn, writing for [The Art Newspaper](#), lamented how both sales featured so few works, blaming post-Brexit tariffs and import delays. He also bemoaned the fact that museum-quality pieces were selling for what amounted to peanuts in the Old Masters markets of years past; that a work by Titian could sell for the same hammer price as (gasp!) a Warhol. Whichever way you look at it, both sales did very well, especially when compared to Old Masters sales in years past.

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## Deeper Thoughts

By: Nathan

### Cultural Defiance: Ukrainian Art On Display in Spain

On Tuesday, November 15th, Russia unleashed its most brutal shelling of Kyiv to date, with over a hundred missiles raining down on the Ukrainian capital and knocking out power to much of the region. However, two trucks departed the city only hours earlier carrying crates of some of the country's great examples of twentieth-century art. Their destination? Over 2,000 miles away in Madrid. The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, one of the three great museums of Madrid after the Prado and the Reina Sofia, just opened a new exhibition of Ukrainian modernist art this past Tuesday, of which these recently-evacuated works were the final additions. The [Associated Press](#) is calling the show "a feat of cultural defiance."



According to the museum, the early twentieth century was such a turbulent time for Ukraine, with the collapse of the Russian Empire, the First World War, the Russian Revolutions of 1917, a war of independence, and the Stalinist purges. But this produced one of Europe's greatest and most influential circles of modernist artists. Around seventy works are now on loan from Kyiv's National Art Museum and the Museum of Theater, Music, and Cinema, as well as from private donors. The artists represented include many great Ukrainian masters like [Sonia Delaunay](#) and [Vladimir Baranov-Rossine](#). Also featured are artists that have gone relatively unnoticed in the West, like Oleksandr Bohomazov (seen above), Viktor Palmov, and [Kazymyr Malevych](#). Further, the exhibition highlights works by members of the Kultur Lige, a secular Jewish organization formed in Kyiv to promote Yiddish-language theater and literature. Many of these works were actually kept from public display by Soviet authorities for decades, having claimed they had no value or significance. The Thyssen-Bornemisza claims that this is "the most comprehensive survey of Ukrainian modern art to date"... at least, outside of Ukraine.

The exhibition is the brainchild of Konstantin Akinsha, a Ukrainian writer and curator who has been trying to get an exhibition of Ukrainian art staged in the West for six years. Akinsha teamed up with Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, whose father sold the family art collection to the Spanish government in 1993 to found the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum. It was only after Russia's invasion at the end of February 2022 that the pair began contacting artists and museum administrators, talking about the threat to Ukraine's tangible cultural heritage and how staging an exhibition at a Western museum could help. It was nothing short of a miracle that the last works from the national art museum left Kyiv before the Russian attack. According to the director of the art transport company hired for the job, the drivers saw the Russian missiles passing overhead as they left the city. Even after a ten-hour delay at the Polish border, the trucks and their contents reached Spain after five days. The exhibition, *In the Eye of the Storm*, is set to run until April 2023.

### Animosity Over Madrid's Maninas



Since 2018, Madrid has hosted an extensive public art display during the last few months of the year. Right now, the streets of the Spanish capital are a public gallery with dozens of sculptures appearing on the sidewalks and in the city's squares. While they are identical in shape, each sculpture is unique regarding its paint job and decoration. They all take the form of a figure in a large farthingale skirt, modeled after one of the figures in *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez, arguably Spain's most famous painting. They populate Madrid's streets between October and December. You would think that many Spaniards would embrace these sculptures as a fun, colorful way of celebrating their country's history and culture, but for many, that is not the case.

Several Spanish writers and art critics seem to loathe the Meninas sculptures, with Elena Vozmediano of *El Español* calling them "hollow and banal," having nothing to do with Velázquez. Another critic, Carlos Delgado, hoped that "someone with discretion manages to stop such embarrassment." Much of the criticism these sculptures receive is that they symbolize the increasing commercialization of the city and its streets. This is especially true for this new batch of Meninas since private corporations, like Lego, Volvo, and Avon, rather than individual celebrities and public figures, are sponsoring and designing the sculptures this year. So, if you're in Madrid and are going out to look at the architecture or visit a museum, don't be surprised if you see an odd-looking, bulbous sculpture with the Visa logo stamped all over it. On this point, one of the project's most outspoken critics has been Andrea Levy, head of Madrid's Department of Culture, Tourism, and Sport. Levy has also touched on the project's new commercial nature, lamenting, "We are no longer talking about a cultural initiative." Even one of the foremost experts on Velázquez, the art historian Fernando Marías, has been critical of the Meninas, saying that they are fun as an installation but do not educate the public about Velázquez and Spanish art in general.

After the sculptures are taken down in December, many are auctioned off for charity. But regardless, art industry professionals have continued in their criticism of the Meninas. Members of the public have also expressed their dislike since many of the sculptures have been targets of vandalism. No announcement has been made on whether the Meninas will reappear next October. So, I guess we'll see.

### A Hidden Look At Cézanne In Cincinnati

Great paintings hiding in plain sight are nothing new in museums. Artists have used old canvases to create new paintings for centuries, whether to cut costs and save canvas or to hide unsatisfactory work. Many masters like Van Gogh, Picasso, and Botticelli, among many others, created some of their works on used canvases. The Cincinnati Museum of Art (CMA) recently became the site of another one of these discoveries after conservators noticed something strange about one of the Cézanne paintings in their collection.

*Still Life with Bread and Eggs* was created around 1865 when Cézanne was in his mid-20s. It's a simple still-life, similar to the tabletops of food, tableware, and trinkets seen in Golden Age Dutch paintings. Recently, one of the conservators at the CMA noticed a series of cracks in the pigment. Rather than exposing a small sliver of the canvas, they noticed white paint, made easier by the still-life's dark background. X-ray technology is becoming increasingly commonplace in the field of art conservation. The CMA did not have an on-site x-ray machine to examine the Cézanne, instead they



had to call a local medical company to bring the right equipment. After scanning the work, they saw something incredibly surprising. It was a portrait of a young man, but something was off about the subject's pose. While most portraits by Cézanne have the subject fully facing the viewer, the subject of the newly-revealed hidden painting is facing the viewer with his body turned away, making it most likely a self-portrait. If this is a self-portrait, it is an incredible find since painted self-portraits from Cézanne's early career are incredibly rare. There is even a possibility that this may be the artist's first self-portrait. Serena Urry, the CMA's chief conservator, responded to the news stating, "We went from having two Cezannes to three with this discovery". The CMA is reaching out to the world's experts on Paul Cézanne since there are still many unanswered questions about the portrait.

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