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XII. Auktionsberichte

Da die grossen Auktionshäuser in Paris, London und New-York erst Ende Oktober ihre Saison eröffneten, können wir unsern Lesern in dieser Nummer des Mitteilungsblattes keine neuen Preise bekannt geben. Wir geben hier aber einen Ueberblick über die Auktionen des letzten Jahres in London, ein Bericht, der am 30. September dieses Jahres in der «Financial Times» erschien.

The Market in Antique Porcelain. By Victor Sandelson.

A Lady in Ayrshire who possesses a somewhat crude porcelain cauliflower of brilliant colour with a Longton Hall mark writes that she bought it for only £ 15 last month and that she has clearly purchased the piece on most favourable terms.

The latter assertion is, in fact, more in the nature of a query, and a query it must remain, for there are many circumstances in which crude Longton Hall cauliflowers at the price mentioned might be deemed expensive. One of the leaves of the cauliflower might have been broken and skilfully replaced in the two hundred years of its existence; or again, it might have been made in Kilmarnock the week before it was purchased.

More to the point is the possibility that there is nothing wrong at all with the object in question, but that, put up for auction in a London saleroom, it would still fetch only £ 5. This could happen because it was a rainy day or because the dealers who might have bought it were all overstocked already, or because the cauliflower was so aesthetically noxious as to be virtually unsaleable in any circumstances.

Advancing Prices

This is a simple illustration of the pitfalls which litter the path of the porcelain collector, whether the objects of his affection are of English, Continental or Chinese origin. Prices as a whole, however, have risen appreciably since 1945 and, on the showing of the past year, continue to advance. The most spectacular appreciations of the year were in Chinese ceramics, as was shown at the sale in May of the Bruce collection.

Then the famous Lavenderground vase, with a poem by the director of the Imperial Factory in the 18th century, was sold for £ 1 700 against £ 560 in 1946. A Sung dynasty bottle (£ 550 in 1943) fetched £ 2 400, and a Ming dynasty wine-jar (£ 180 in 1950) was sold to the Bristol Art Gallery for £ 800.

The position of Chinese wares, however, is one of rising prices in a diminishing market. Collection after collection is being bequeathed to public institutions; the «runners» – dealers without shops who scour the U. K. for goods which they sell on commission to West End dealers – are finding increasingly fewer good pieces; most of the best 18th century porcelain has already left China, and even if trade with that country were completely opened up only tomb wares would, for the most part, emerge.

Asking the Impossible

When would-be collectors ask for approximate prices of Chinese pottery they are, since so much depends on quality, period, rarity and condition, asking the impossible. You can buy a good T'ang horse for £ 250 but you can also purchase an inferior little T'ang horse with only three and a-half legs for £ 10 or less.

Looking back over the past year it is most instructive to see a few representative prices for Chinese objects, classified by periods, raised in London auction rooms.

T'ang Dynasty (618-907): Horse £ 200, Figure of Princess £ 240.

Sung Dynasty (960-1280): 3 Dishes £ 120, £ 150, and £ 160, Octagonal Bottle £ 2 400.

Ming-Dynasty (1368-1643): Wine-Jar £ 800.

K'ang Hsi (1662-1772): 2 Famille verte figures. Gns. 480.

Yung Chen (1723-1736): 7 Plates £ 847, 2 Famille rose vases and two beakers Gns. 1 000, 2 Figures of Cranes Gns. 1 400.

Ch'ien Lung (1736-1795): Famille rose vase £ 750, 2 Mandarin jars and covers Gns. 370, Vase £ 1 700, Famille rose dinner service (107 pieces) £ 1 400.

The smallest price rise has occurred in the works of the T'ang dynasty. These wares are more accurately called pottery, although there is much protoporcelain and some pure porcelain T'ang in existence. Apart from the pleasure in buying a perfectly good piece of pottery over 1 000 years old for the price of a new top hat, many T'ang pieces are unglazed and are, therefore, more likely to accord with the decor of modern interiors.

The golden age of English porcelain dates from the foundation of the factory at Bow in 1744, to about 1820, during which period 17 factories were set up and produced prolifically. Unlike their Chinese and French counterparts they were fortunately not subsidised by the State; most of them, therefore, died long before they had the chance of making their fortunes but ruining their reputations via Victoriana.

The greatest demand exists for the products of the Chelsea, Bow, Worcester and Derby factories. The highest prices for Chelsea porcelain are being obtained by works produced in the Red Anchor period (1755-1758), a few selected at random from auctions this year being as follows: Figure of Girl Gns. 880, Figure of Bagpiper £ 680, Figure of Peasant £ 580, Tureen £ 650.

Worcester Factory

The early works of the factory at Worcester (which still flourishes) are also securing prices considerably higher than a few years ago; this category consists of those pieces made in the lifetime of Dr. Wall, who started the factory. Examples of current price levels for Wall period Worcester are shown by the £ 270 paid for a plate, £ 210 for an oblong dish, 250 guineas for an oval centre dish and 2 432 guineas for a dessert service – all in the salerooms this year.

Among the products of the Bow factory sold this year were a pair of tawny owls for £ 1 800, a peacock and peahen for £ 240, and a single owl for £ 460. The paste used at Bow was coarser than that of Chelsea, the painting was generally inferior and the fitting of limbs was often faulty, and yet the factory's best early products command extremely impressive prices. Knowledge of porcelain and its values only comes, if at all, after years of observation.

To divert for a moment into the field of English pottery, Wedgwood designs and products appear, partly because of their relative cheapness, to be increasingly sought: even to the extent of encasing, this year, Ronson table cigarette lighters. The popular conception of antique Wedgwood coincides with Wedgwood jasper ware alone – cameos, medallions and vases – on which the ornament is in relief in white. Two good jasper vases now cost upwards of £ 50, but much antique Wedgwood cream and basalt ware of extremely high quality can still be purchased for much less.

A Warning

Among Continental factories, the best Meissen (1735-50) and Sèvres (1756-69) porcelain have deservedly joined in the upward price trend of good porcelain everywhere. Some Meissen saleroom prices this year include: Louis XV Ormolu Meissen clock (Kaendler) £ 1 250, Figure of a Peasant (Kaendler) £ 160, 2 pairs of Swans (Kaendler) £ 320, 2 figures of Toads £ 360, Figure of a Parrot £ 480.

To end this article, as it began, on a note of warning to the collector, not all Sèvres porcelain is valuable – the highest prices only go to that made from *pâte tendre* and many of the products of the Vincennes factory in its last three years (before it moved to Sèvres) are equally highly prized. The collector should approach all important specimens of Sèvres china with an air of guarded scepticism: much of it was made in Tournay and decorated in Paris – between the two world wars.

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Porzellane di Sassonia

Quotazioni recenti. Conclusasi la stagione delle vendite 1952 e 1953, è possibile una «panoramica» sulle quotazioni fatte registrare da uno degli articoli più richiesti sui mercati antiquari esteri, specialmente di Parigi. Una scorsa ai bollettini delle varie vendite attesta un continuo crescendo negli acquisti di porcellane «Saxe», e – del pari – un aumento dei prezzi che non mancherà di influenzare almeno le prime vendite nel prossimo autunno.

Negli elenchi che daremo, salvo ulteriori indicazioni trattasi di pezzi settecenteschi con dimensioni in centimetri; per indicare le case di vendita adottiamo le seguenti abbreviazioni: G. Ch. – Galerie Charpentier, H. Dr. – Hôtel Drouot (con la data dell'asta che, se limitata al solo mese, è da considerarsi avvenuta nel 1953), v. E. – vendita Esder 1941 (che citiamo saltuariamente come termine di utile confronto); distinguiamo con K. i pezzi modellati da J. J. Kaendler; le quotazioni seguite da (t. c.) sono da considerarsi maggiorate dei diritti d'asta.

Abbiamo riunito gli oggetti secondo il tema rappresentato: raggruppamento che, se è ben lungi dall'essere scientifico, agevola la consultazione e in effetti riveste una sua importanza nella determinazione dei prezzi.

Uccelli: I gruppi «Saxe» con uccelli, specie se dalle piume variopinte, sono stati i più richiesti nel corso di quest'ultima stagione. Lo attestano le seguenti «voci»:

2 Uccelli dalle piume color azzurro e verde, K., altezza 38, fr. 1 300 000 (t. c.) (G. Ch. dic. 1952); Colombo selvatico, lunghezza 18, fr. 92 000 (G. Ch. marzo); id. a tinte naturali, fr. 90 000 (c. s.); 2 Uccelli, fine '700, alt. 9, fr. 92 000 (c. s.); Aquila su un tronco, antica porcellana bianca, alt. 56, fr. 200 000 (c. s.); 8 Galine faraone, alt. 17, fr. 590 000 (G. Ch. dic. 1952); Cigno e due piccoli su piedistallo con piante acquatiche, alt. 13, fr. 130 000 (G. Ch. marzo); 4 Cigni, fine '700, alt. 10, fr. 160 000 (c. s.).

Animali diversi: 2 gruppi pendants di Leone e Leonessa con cucciolo su zoccolo di bronzo dorato, alt. 15, fr. 675 000 (t. c.) (G. Ch. dic. 1952); 2 gruppi c. s. con Mastino e Mastina che allatta un cucciolo, senza zoccolo, colori al naturale, alt. 24, fr. 340 000 (t. c.) (c. s.); id., con collare a sonagli, zoccolo di porcellana a fiori, alt. 15, fr. 194 000 (t. c.) (c. s.); 2 Scoiattoli fr. 400 000 (c. s.); id., colori al naturale, fr. 320 000 (H. Dr. nov. 1952); coppia di Capre, alt. 14, fr. 41 000 (G. Ch. marzo); Cavallo, lungh. 21, fr. 40 000 (c. s.); Lupa con cucciolo, antica porcellana

bianca, alt. 66, fr. 230 000 (c. s.); Pantera, marca «KHC», fr. 45 000 (c. s.); Coccodrillo che divora un bimbo, lungh. 28, fr. 66 000 (c. s.); Orso, lunghezza 13, fr. 80 000 (c. s.); Elefante, lungh. 14, fr. 48 000 (c. s.); (se l'esemplare in questione non avesse avuto la proboscide levata, la quotazione sarebbe stata di gran lunga inferiore, ammesso di trovare l'acquirente); Camoscio accucciato, lungh. 11, fr. 45 000 (c. s.); Bisonte assalito da tre cani su piedistallo a fiori, lungh. 16, sec. XVII, fr. 23 000 (c. s.); Cervo, lungh. 20, fr. 78 000 (c. s.); id. su piedistallo a fiori, lungh. 13, fr. 52 000 (c. s.); Cervo morto, c. s., lungh. 27, fr. 32 000 (c. s.).

Gruppi in Crinolina: molto richiesti, specie quelli modellati dal Kaendler:

Madre con due bimbi, gruppo policromo, alt. 17, fr. 121 mila (t. c.) (G. Ch. dic. 1952); Giovane donna, fr. 550 000 (t. c.) (c. s.); id., fr. 640 000 (t. c.) (c. s.); Lettera d'amore, K., fr. 140 000 (H. Dr. marzo; v. E. fr. 11 700); Galante e pastorella, K., fr. 350 000 (c. s.) (v. E. fr. 26 900); Valzer, K., fr. 215 mila (c. s.) (v. E. fr. 16 250); Donna con bimbo, alt. 42, fr. 310 000 (c. s.) (v. E. fr. 10 000); Conversazione galante, fr. 465 mila (G. Ch. dic. 1952); Donna che conversa, K., alt. 16, fr. 530 000 (c. s.); Coppia galante, fr. 425 000 (c. s.); Moscacieca, fr. 110 000 (Hôtel de ventes di Versailles ott. 1952).

Maschere Italiane: Anche questi soggetti sono molto ricercati per la loro gaiezza:

Maschera, alt. 15, fr. 43 000 (G. Ch. marzo); id., alt. 14, fr. 60 000 (c. s.); 27 Amorini travestiti da maschere italiane, K., alt. 9 ciascuno, fr. 351 000 (t. c.) (G. Ch. dic. 1952); Due arlecchini che si azzuffano, K., color bianco eccetto le facce le scarpe (nere) e un cappello (biancone), alt. 16, gruppo assai raro, numerato (34), 1740 circa, lire 1 400 000 circa (Sotheby, Londra); Il paralitico, gruppo con 4 maschere, nero e oro, alt. 19, fr. 1 milione (H. Dr. marzo; l'offerta è stata fatta da un antiquario parigino) (v. E. fr. 42 100).

Soggetti diversi: Apollo sul carro tirato da otto cavalli, gruppo di 9 pezzi, fr. 900 000 (G. Ch. dic. 1952); Palafreniere negro, fr. 400 000 (c. s.); Drago affiancato da negri e indiani, alt. 18-20, fr. 540 000 (c. s.); serie policroma raffigurante la Pesca cinese, alt. 14, fr. 100 000 (H. Dr. nov. 1952); pendola di «Saxe» ornata con figurine, fr. 395 000 (H. Dr. luglio); servizio di piatti, 145 pezzi, fr. 281 000 (H. Dr. dic. 1952); Coppia di teiere a forma di Chiocchia con sei pulcini, lungh. 18, fr. 225 000 (G. Ch. marzo).

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Il Sole, Milano, 7. Okt. 1953)

XIII. Feuilleton

Die Stadt Picassos

Wenige Kilometer hinter Cannes, an der Côte d'Azur, liegt am Fuss der Berge Vallauris, die Stadt der französischen Keramik. Vor wenigen Jahren noch völlig unbekannt, hat Vallauris heute eine Bedeutung erlangt, die jeden Touristen verpflichtet, von hier aus eine Ansichtskarte an seine Freunde zu schicken. Diese einzigartige Karriere einer Stadt ist das Verdienst des Malers Pablo Picasso, der in Vallauris lebt und arbeitet. –