

ANTIQUES TRADE gazette

THE ART MARKET WEEKLY

CAR SPARK

Spotlight on a market where 'younger classics' are motoring ahead

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Fellows moves top of regional sale rankings

Jewellery and watch specialists post hammer sales of £17m across 2017

by Roland Arkell

Fellows is now the leading UK regional auctioneer by hammer total after recording overall sales of £17m in 2017.

The change to the established hierarchy in ATG's annual regional auctioneer survey – Woolley & Wallis has fallen from the top spot it has held for a decade – came in a year of largely solid trading for Britain and Ireland's top regional fine art auctioneers.

Fellows operates mainly in the jewellery and watches field – an area of continued market strength. It has shown considerable growth since the turn of the decade, turning over £13.5m in 2015 and £17.6m in 2016.

The firm's January to December 2017 total was aided by the £1.1m* from a single lot – the 'Fancy Intense' yellow diamond Graff ring sold in December and the year's top

price achieved by a regional auctioneer – and growth in prices for vintage branded wristwatches.

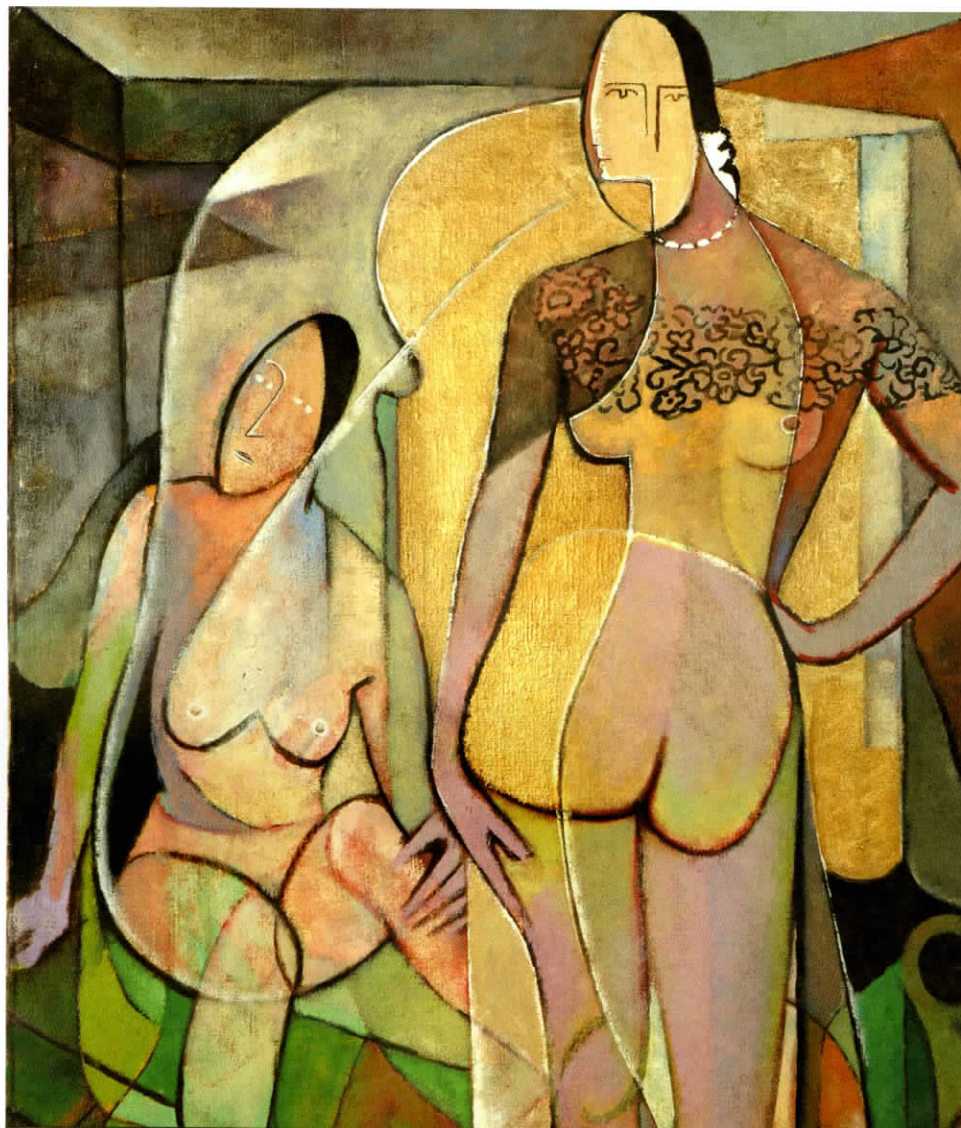
"Overall we sold 74% [of lots] by volume and 81% by value. Watch sales, however, are more like 90% and 90%," says managing director Stephen Whittaker (see interview, page 16). The headline figure included £10.8m sales of jewellery and £4.4m from watches.

Woolley & Wallis' hammer turnover for 2017 was £15.7m. Although the top lot for the Salisbury firm's year was – in the context of previous years – a relatively modest £130,000* (a Yongzheng archaic vase), the firm told ATG six departments achieved sales of over £1m.

Hammer sales at Tennants in Leyburn reached £12.3m, an increase of around £400,000 on 2016, putting it in third place among the seven regional auctioneers that provided ATG with 2017 hammer totals.

*plus buyer's premium

See full report on p14-17



Fine body of work

Once neglected Czech Expressionist is now in demand with Somerset studio auction proving a sell-out success – page 24

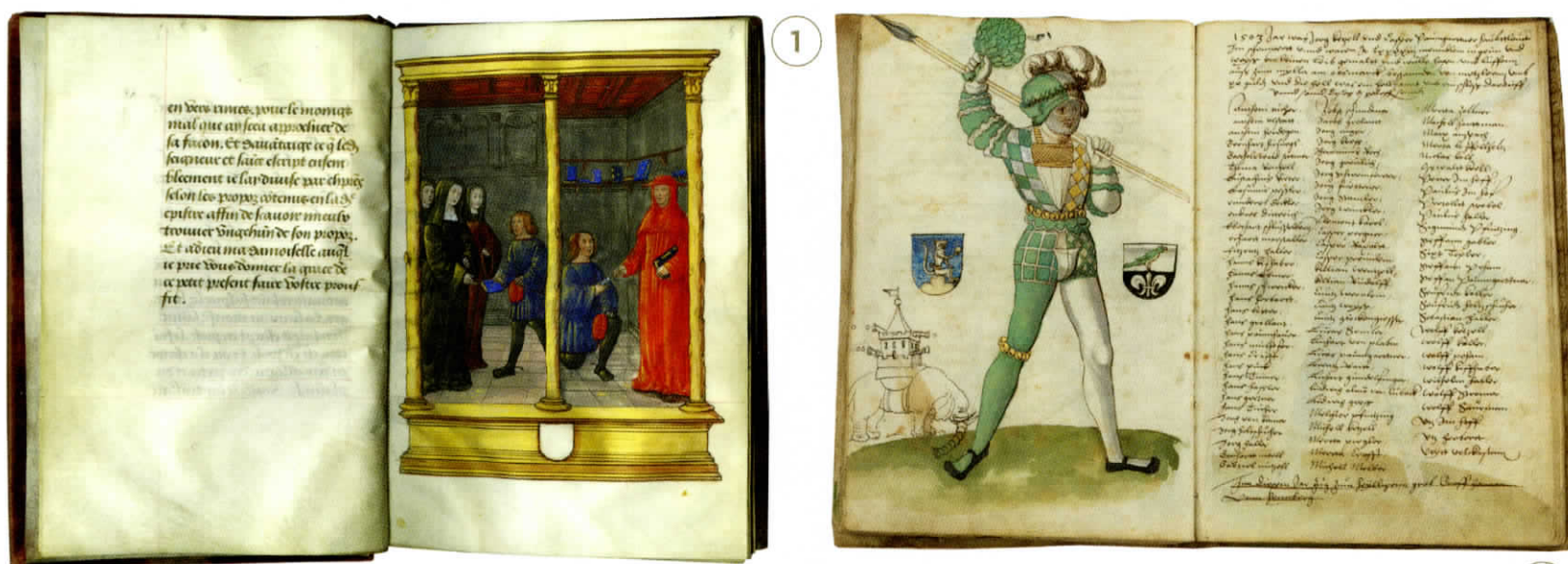
Auction Calendar the original and most authoritative listing of UK and international sales – page 50-63

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Text education lessons in the US

Vernacular manuscripts at New York show are a window into Middle Ages everyday life

by Frances Allitt

Vernacular texts from the Middle Ages might be rarer than their Latin equivalents but their accounts of medieval society and history can offer modern readers a clearer window to the past.

A taste of the colourful accounts and varied material these works gave their medieval audience is available in a group of 36 vernacular manuscripts in the exhibition *Talking at the court, on the street, in the bedroom: Vernacular manuscripts of the Middle Ages*. The show, which runs from February 23-March 16, takes place in the New York branch of medieval manuscript and jewellery specialist **Les Enluminures**.

The manuscripts included cover subjects from history and religion to medicine. They were produced for the use of people at many different levels of society – aristocrats and clergy as well as townspeople and private women.

Masses not educated classes

Crucially, they were written in everyday languages such as French, German and Italian rather than the Latin reserved for the educated classes and Church.

"These texts bring us closer to the people who wrote and used these languages every day," gallery founder Sandra Hindman says, and compares delving into them to "the experience of reading a good book today".

The show has been a long time in the making. Hindman, who has



1. The widow Anne of Polignac receiving St Jerome's letter from a messenger and Jerome writing. From *Jerome's Letter LIV to Furia (To Furia, On the Duty of Remaining a Widow)*, translated by Charles Bonin. In French, illuminated manuscript on parchment, France (likely Bourges), c.1500-10, one full-page miniature by the Master of Spencer 6. It is offered for **\$160,000**.

2. From the *Schembart* ('hiding beard') *Carnival Book*, a carnival reveller holding a firework with an elephant in the margin. Written in German, illuminated manuscript on paper, Nuremberg, c.1540-50. Sixty-four pen and ink with watercolour drawings and 22 extra pen and ink drawings. It is available for **\$350,000**.

3. From Philippe De Vigneulles, *La Chanson de Geste de Garin Le Loherain*, in French, illuminated manuscript on paper with three full-page miniatures and three historiated initials, Metz, c.1515-27. Offered for **\$175,000**.

branches of her business in Paris and Chicago as well as New York, likes big projects and the accumulation of stock usually takes place well before the development of an idea for an exhibition. However, a continued interest in vernacular texts adds to her confidence that the show will be a success.

"We have been noticing that these texts have been really sought-after in the past five or 10 years," Hindman says. "In part this is simply because they are more readable – if you can master the scripts – and the subjects are more accessible."

Universities are particularly keen buyers, she adds. With their lively subjects and more familiar languages, these texts are more likely to appeal to students of history.

Among the works is a translation into French of St Jerome's letter to the widow Furia. The epistolary work provides advice on the preservation

of her widowhood, laying down rules of conduct for her guidance in the dangerous world of ancient Rome. The volume was owned by Anne de Polignac, a twice-widowed French aristocrat who is pictured in the text. Most of the 36 manuscripts in her library were in the vernacular.

There is also a 15th century Italian translation of the famous Roman history by Valerius Maximus *De fatti e detti... or Deeds and Sayings*.

The text is a collection of historical anecdotes relating how the earliest Romans lived and the translation has been attributed to Italian humanist Giovanni Boccaccio, author of the *Decameron*.

Though the attribution is not certain, this is the first copy out of 32 manuscripts persevering the text to appear on the market in at least a century and offers the chance to reopen the debate.

Then there is the German *Schembart Carnival Book* (1550-1600), which is a complete witness to the famous *Schembartlauf* carnival parade held in Nuremberg from 1449-1539.

It includes more than 60 full-page illustrations of carnival costumes from each year the carnival was held together with 22 drawings of floats that accompanied the pageants from 1479.

Laura Light, director and senior specialist at Les Enluminures also worked to organise the show and is the author for the catalogue *Shared Language: Vernacular Manuscripts in the Middle Ages*, published to accompany the exhibition. ■

► lesenluminures.com