

Antiques & Art

Despite all the world's depressing turmoil in 2022, some of the rich have got richer. There was a time when having a Rolls-Royce or Bentley indicated your wealth, but no longer! Art is now the wealth trophy. Anthony J. Lester reveals some impressive sale totals and guides us around selected art events.

As anticipated last year witnessed a fall in the number of billionaires; however, 40% of those who remained got richer – that is more than 1,000. The result, a zealous demand for fine art. Founded in 1766, Christie's, reported that their 2022 sales totalled \$8.4billion, and was the highest in art market history. Their rivals, Sotheby's, had an impressive sales totalling \$6.4bn. The question I am being asked repeatedly is, what will happen to the art market this year? Well, my simple answer is 'I am not a clairvoyant'. However, on a positive note it's worth remembering, science says viewing art helps alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression, and increases the 'happy hormone', dopamine.

As I have mentioned auctions, it is worth noting that, although **Bellmans'** saleroom is in Wisborough Green, West Sussex, they have an office at 4 Cromwell Place, South Kensington, SW7 2JE (tel. 020 4548 4738). In early March they will be previewing pictures from their next picture sale (28th March) at Cromwell Place. Among items on view will be an impressive Alpine scene by the Russian Ivan Fedorovich Choultsé (1874-1939), who was called a 'magician of light'. Carrying an estimate of £6,000-£10,000, it is a painting likely to increase your 'happy hormone' too!

Recent years have witnessed a dramatic demand for entertainment, cinema and sporting memorabilia, resulting in some remarkable prices – the most spectacular being last year when one of Diego Maradona's (1960-2020) football shirts sold at Sotheby's for £7,142,500. It was, of course, unique because this was the shirt he was wearing when he scored the controversial 'hands of God' goal, which knocked England out of the 1986 World Cup.

Outside of London, the auction firm, **Ewbank's**, Burnt Common Auction Rooms, London Road, Send, Woking, GU23 7LN, have established a reputation as market leaders in this genre. Their Entertainment and Memorabilia auction on 24th February brings together some remarkable items, ranging from a rare Charlie Chaplin photograph album to the handwritten song lyrics to *Live Forever* by Oasis, which was released on 8 August 1994. For football devotees there is something very special indeed. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the Munich air crash (6th February 1958), in which seven Manchester United players died at the scene. Among the survivors was manager Matt Busby (1909-1994) and right winger Johnny Berry (1926-1994), who

played for the team from 1951-58. However, Berry sustained many injuries, including a fractured skull and a broken leg. At 31 his football career was over. Now his family have consigned Berry's championship medals to Ewbank's. They include his 1951-52 gold and silver gilt League Division One Championship medals, each estimated at £15,000-£25,000. Live online bidding is available via Ewbank's website at www.ewbankauctions.co.uk

Now for a touch of nostalgia! Back in 1963 I opened a shop in Oxfordshire, where I sold bric-a-brac, with a strong emphasis on pictures. One of my early clients was a very charming and enthusiastic young man by the name of David Messum. He had opened a shop in Bourne End in Buckinghamshire where he tendered antiques and paintings. I soon discovered David has an instinctive, entrepreneurial approach to dealing in fine art and has a consummate eye for rediscovering underappreciated artists, predominantly of the Newlyn School artists, such as Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947), Walter

as *Dau al Set*, Tàpies's, late works reveal the artist's return to the essential language of crosses, triangles, open books and wall-like canvases that forged his career in the mid-1950s. Curated by Natasha Hébert, the artist's daughter-in-law, the works are on view until 4th March.

Well-known as a dealer in Master drawings, watercolours and oil sketches from the 17th century through to the 20th century, **Stephen Ongpin Fine Art**, 82 Park Street, Mayfair, W1K 6NH, diversifies with recent photographs by Alexander Lindsay. On view until 26th February, *Scotland : The Light I Saw*, displays the monumental landscapes

4 programme called *Grayson Perry's: Full English*, an exhibition at The National Museum, Oslo, until 26th March and from 22nd July until 12th November the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, will mount the largest ever retrospective of his work. Furthermore, until 25th March, Londoners can view a selection of Perry's textiles completed during the past eight years. Taking place at **Victoria Miro**, 16 Wharf Road, N1 7RW, the show includes the 2019 *Large Expensive Abstract Painting*, a tapestry that, bearing some of the hallmarks of 20th century abstraction, is also a map of London.

Founded in 1823 and granted the Royal



John Berry's Division One Winner's medals, to be sold by Ewbank's on 24 February

"Viewing art increases dopamine"

Langley (1852-1922) and Harold Harvey (1874-1941). In 1974 he mounted a groundbreaking exhibition showcasing British Impressionism and Newlyn School paintings. Sixty years on and with numerous exhibitions and many impressive, scholarly catalogues and books under his belt, David remains at the helm of **David Messum Fine Art**, 12 Bury Street, St. James's, SW1Y 6AB, a respected dealership focused on British art from around 1880 to contemporary. Opening on 8th February and running through to 3rd March the gallery showcases the highly popular, stylised bird sculptures carved out of discarded pieces of wood, by the charismatic Guy Taplin (b. 1939). Priced between £2,450 to £19,500 the 78 new works are accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. Then, from 13th February to 3rd March, Simon Carter (b. 1961) hangs his semi-abstract, animated landscapes inspired by the Essex coastline (prices from £685-£1,250 for watercolours and £4,800-£16,800 for oil paintings).

Nearby, a very different style of art can be inspected until 31st March at **Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert**, 38 Bury Street, SW1Y 6BB. Entitled *Shaped Canvases 1966-1972* the creations are by Richard Smith (1931-2016), one of the fathers of Pop art. The event is organised in conjunction with the launch of the monograph, *Richard Smith Artworks 1954-2013*.

If he had lived, Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012), would have been celebrating his 100th birthday this year and **Timothy Taylor**, 15 Bolton Street, W1J 8BG is taking this as a good opportunity to mount an exhibition of the Spanish painter's creations generated between 1989 and 2008. A co-founder of the avant-garde group known

captured by Lindsay in the Outer Hebrides and St. Kilda in Spring, 2022 – they are remarkable for their extraordinary detail, clarity and beauty.

Although already highly successful, it looks as if 2023 is going to prove a very exceptional year for Grayson Perry (b. 1960), also known, when flamboyantly dressed as a woman, as 'Claire'. Knighted in the King's New Year Honours, a three-part Channel

prefix in 1887 by Queen Victoria, the Royal Society of British Artists will stage their annual exhibition at the **Mall Galleries**, The Mall, SW1 between 2nd - 11th March. As this is their 200th Anniversary Exhibition I will be selecting one work for *The Anthony J. Lester Art Critic Award*. Make a visit and see if you agree with my choice!

Anthony J. Lester, FRSA



Lapwing, carved and painted driftwood by Guy Taplin, £7,850. David Messum Fine Art



Alpine Scene, oil painting by Ivan Choultsé (1874-1939), Bellmans Picture Auction, 28 March