

B H I Horological *J J* Journal



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Celebrating the 150th year of the British Horological Institute

The Moscow World Fine Art Fair

Martin Foster reflects on Fine Clocks as exclusive Objects of Art.

The Moscow World Fine Art Fair (MWWAF) opened its doors at the end of May for a week of art, furniture, clocks and fine jewellery, bringing together international gallery owners, some of the most renowned antique dealers in Russia and prestigious jewellers from France, Italy, UK and around the world.

Organised by Geneva based ArtCultureStudio, the Show is housed in Moscow's beautiful Manège exhibition hall, a stone's-throw from the Kremlin and Red Square. Around 50,000 art lovers enjoyed outstanding works from the history of art, including early Sumerian masterpieces, contemporary art, furniture, clocks and jewellery presented by 95 art, jewellery and antiques galleries from 13 countries. These include the majors from Italy, France, Japan, Russia, Switzerland, the UK and the USA who presented works by Braque, Monet, Dali, Fabergé, Chagall, Brueghel (the younger), Cézanne and Monticelli together with a rash of Russian masters.

From New Bond Street in London came Partridge Fine Arts - one of the three or four most respected antiques dealers in the world, according to analysts. Partridge has helped to build the collections of the J Paul Getty Museum in California, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

This is the first time Partridge has exhibited in Moscow and its Chairman, Mr Mark Law, said: 'I think the potential to sell into Russia is enormous - the inquiries we have taken indicate an informed interest by Russian buyers of quality fine arts'. On the question of results from the fair Law went on to say 'We will gauge the success of the fair by later sales. The

bureaucratic process here is very difficult, the political climate is nervous and buyers are shy about displaying visible consumption of luxury pieces of art. Notwithstanding this we have had a tremendous response'.

Clocks are some of the more pricey items which are generically classified as 'furniture' and there was a fair sprinkling of some outstanding examples at this fair.

From Partridge Fine Arts came a fine George II ebonised gilt-metal mounted large musical table clock by Godfrey Poy ca. 1740. It has a silvered Roman and Arabic chapter ring with elaborate pierced blue steel hands, a substantial movement with triple gut fusees, ten pillars securing the thick brass T-shaped movement plates and a knife-edge verge escapement. The music plays on thirteen bells via twenty four hammers and a 10 inch. transverse mounted pin barrel. The back plate is beautifully engraved with foliage and strap work mounted by flanking eagles. Expect to pay about £125,000 for this lovely clock.

Also from Partridge there was an ebony quarter repeating table clock by Richard Colston c 1700 with fusee movement, seven latched pillars, verge escapement, repeating quarters on three bells and striking on a fourth bell, the back plate profusely engraved with flowers and leaf scrolls. This clock employs an unusual form of quarter repeating found on a

small number of clocks made around 1700. The repeating does not have a separate train but is driven by the striking train and activated by a lever passing through the base of the case. On this example the area in the movement usually reserved for the repeating train is occupied by an alarm mechanism. Asking price is £55,000.

The current Antiques Trade Gazette shows that pricing of say, the English painted dial longcase clock, durable and beautiful as it is, has not improved in over twenty years. They were £1000 - £2000 in the 80s and are still about this price today. However the prices of the above Partridge table clocks indicate there are buyers at these elevated levels. And this should be a consideration in quoting appropriate repair/restore prices for the skilled work this involves, by experienced BHI clockmakers and restorers who do this work.

Jewellery is not the bailiwick of the Horological Journal, but it is difficult to pass over a rough diamond shown by the Jewellery House Angleje called the 'Talisman lubvy' which was found in Yakutia. This champagne diamond has a rough weight of 167 carats and is expected to yield a cut weight of 100 carats. The value of the diamond can only be correctly assessed when the final face is cut but will fall between £1.5m and £5m depending on brilliance and inclusions. Stones of such beauty and size are very rare but it is nevertheless only the 58th biggest in the world!

Yakutia (Sakha) where it was found is a north-eastern region of the Russian Federation located in eastern Siberia which stretches to the Henrietta Islands in the far north and is washed by the Laptev and Eastern Siberian Seas of the Arctic Ocean. It has large reserves of oil, gas, coal, diamonds, gold, and silver. 99% of all Russian diamonds are mined in Sakha, accounting for over 13% of the world's diamond production. Average January temperature is -28°C on the coast down to -50°C inland but reached as low as -72°C in January 1926.

The next Moscow World Fine Art Fair will be in May 2008. Be there in the warm summer air and experience the beauty of the Kremlin and this historic part of the city of Moscow - and see some really special clocks, art, jewellery and furniture. It is truly well worth the planning.

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Champagne diamond, rough weight 167 carats - cut weight estimated at 100carats - named 'Talisman lubvy'. (Mascot of Love). Displayed by the Jewellery House Angleje, Moscow.



Godfrey Poy Table clock plays 12 melodies shown by name above the chapter ring.



Godfrey Poy large musical table clock in a substantial case with inverted bell top surmounted by a gilt brass figure with pineapple finials on pedestals and an elaborately pierced brass gallery with sound frets.