

What buyers are snapping up in Fine Art Salerooms

By **Denis Drum** FIAVI

When Victoria died at Osborne House in the Isle of Wight on the 22nd January 1901 her reign officially came to a close after 64 years. She was one of the longest serving monarchs in history. She oversaw enormous changes throughout the Western World. During her tenure, the Industrial Revolution came together and the streamlining of the Steam Age was also witnessed.

Many fine cabinet making firms appeared on the horizon during her tenure, some producing pieces of great quality, others manufacturing more inferior items, which remain inferior to this day.

Two fundamental pieces of advice, when buying art and antiques, neither of which has ever let me down: Always buy quality and only buy it if you like it personally. It was Royce of Rolls Royce, to whom the following comment was attributed: "The quality remains long after the price has been forgotten".

Researching Apollo Magazines in and around the time of the death of Victoria, the most sought after furniture then was Georgian walnut. One hundred years later most of these very sought after pieces are now in serious private collections or museums. The art magazines of the time were not laying great store or waxing eloquent about furniture from the Victorian Era.

I have seen many changes in salerooms trends over my years in the business. The last seven to eight years have been the most dramatic, with

specific pieces gaining ground and larger pieces of brown furniture being less sought after. I have also seen a very healthy trend in the repatriation of Irish art and antiques during this

referenced with the various clock making books, in particular with "Watch Makers and Clock Makers of the World", by GH Baillie. Needless to say the case and hood must be original and match the face.



"Marie" without a chaperone, a pastel sold at Drums for €18,700.

Rare and well marked Belleek pieces in fine condition have an international following, particularly in the United States. There are a number of avid collectors here, who follow the auction list and will always be there to bid on appropriate items. Victorian and later dinner services, tea sets etc, in a world of polystyrene coffee cups, have taken a hit downwards.

time. The depressing situation of the 1970's and 80's, when there was a vast exodus of art from the country, has now been reversed.

Irish Art has been the main winner in recent years and prices have reached heights which would never have been dreamt of 10 to 15 years ago. Art is seen as a good investment and a bulwark against inflation and has remained consistently high where other areas have proved to be less resilient.

Brass faced Irish Georgian long case clocks (Grandfather clocks) with good dark Cuban mahogany cases, in the doldrums up to the mid 1990's have also increased dramatically in price and are seen as a particularly fine investment. For the top money here, all the boxes must be ticked. The brass face and works must be in their original state. A clearly identifiable makers name and city or town of origin, all matching and cross

Precious gems and diamonds have been in great demand over the last ten to fifteen years. In latter days, the bigger the better. Money has been no object, if the right piece comes to the market. Large carat diamonds and other trophy pieces have been the order of the day. These items are also considered wise investments and a good hedge against inflation.

The last few years in particular, has seen the inexorable rise and interest in the sale of historic literature and memorabilia, relating in particular to Irish history of the 19th Century, The 1916 Rising, The Civil War and The War of Independence. Arguments have raged on both sides as to the ethics of these sales. This segment of the market is also heading skywards. I would find it hard to speculate what prices may be achieved, when we reach the year 2016. ■