

Antiques

Under the hammer

For **Pierre Grech Pillow** from Obelisk Auctions Gallery, we should be proud of Malta's rich antiques heritage.

Obelisk Auctions is one of Malta's leading auction firms, specialising in antiques and fine arts, arms and militaria, property, cars, industrial and liquidation, hotels and catering equipment and government property auctions. Obelisk Auctions has also been court appointed to act as auctioneers for judicial sales by auction.

The company has invested heavily in its new gallery at 1, Mdina Road, Attard. The premises, a large 18th century palazzo, has been professionally restored and houses the firm's offices, galleries and auction rooms. The main gallery has a multi-purpose function and is used for lectures and seminars. The large courtyard and garden are used for outdoor cultural activities.

Obelisk Auctions also provides services for holding auctions in private properties and in drawing up inventories for the purpose of insurance, valuations, inheritance and divisions.

Q: What inspired you to become an auctioneer?

A: I was brought up in an environment where antique furniture, old master paintings and fine works of art were the order of the day. As a result, I had an early appreciation of the antiques and fine arts business which I grew to love. I learnt a lot from as far back as I can remember. The fact that I worked with most local auctioneers also gave me the impetus to become an auctioneer with a view to provide a better service than was generally available in Malta.

Q: Would an auctioneer normally also value an object which is up for auction? In which case, what would be the parameters that determine its value?

A: The value of an object depends on its condition, age, origin and quality of workmanship. It is also affected

by the level of current demand for a specific item. An auctioneer takes all this into consideration to arrive at a potential price estimate for an object up for auction. At Obelisk Auctions Gallery, we also make use of a wide range of leading consultants, local and foreign, to determine an appropriate estimate.

Q: Auctions are usually associated with antiques. However, are there other items which you auction?

A: We are the only auctioneers to have developed a customised IT system to control all aspects of an auction from catalogue production, client registrations, bidding process, invoice production and financial reconciliation for each auction. We have carried out various types of auctions such as court auctions, arms and militaria, antiques and fine arts, property auctions, industrial auctions, car auctions, jewellery auctions as well as private client valuations. The auction process is the same, independent of what is being auctioned.

Q: As an auctioneer, how would you value Malta's heritage with regards to antiques?

A: We are exceedingly lucky in Malta to have such a rich heritage in antiques and fine arts which is testimony to Maltese craftsmanship.

Q: Has the antiques market been hit by recession and post-recession slowdown, or are antiques still a wise investment?

A: Antiques and fine arts are always a very good investment. The economic climate does not hugely affect the market, though there may be seasonal fluctuations in the value of specific items. To date, we have achieved an average of 75 to 80 per cent of sales of lots in each auction.



Pierre Grech Pillow