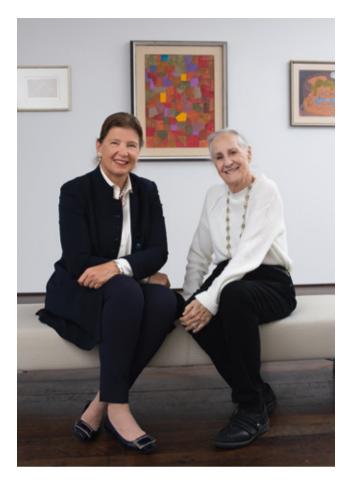


Isabelle Junod Hinderer

APPRAISING ART

JANET BRINER KNOWS HOW TO QUANTIFY THE VALUE OF ART



Very few people in the world today have the exclusive opportunity to be granted access to the most important private collections and to transform their passion for art into their profession. This is still a great honour – and it has remained one for more than thirty years - for Janet Briner, who first studied languages and history. Afterwards she began her career at the Koller Auction House in Zurich before finishing her art history studies. The numerous magnificent works of art which she is regularly privileged to view and to appraise often stir her to flights of enthusiasm: "I see so many unique objects and every encounter with a new work of art offers a new story and a new experience. In some collections, I would even be willing to pay an entrance fee rather than accept remuneration for my appraisal." Although she talks about her work with bright eyes and unrestrained inspiration, discretion always remains the top priority - because discretion is equally highly valued by collectors and institutions alike.

close relationships with most of the cultural institutions in the city, e.g. the Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art. She therefore enjoys sharing opinions with its curators when she appraises Far Eastern art. Due to his activity in the tea trade, Alfred Baur spent much time in Colombo at the beginning of the 20th century. He discovered his love of art while travelling throughout Asia. His collection, which ranks among of the most valuable of its kind in the world today, comprises some 9,000 objects from China and Japan, including some artworks from the Tang Dynasty.

As the daughter of the Lucerne merchant and art patron Viktor Lüthy, Janet Briner developed a savvy eye from an early age on. Her particularly close and friendly relationship with Angela Rosengart also dates from this phase in Janet Briner's life. With its masterpieces of Classical Modernist art, the Rosengart Collection Lucerne has ranked among Switzerland's most important museums since 2002. Janet Briner continues to add to her expertise today by annually visiting local and international fairs, auctions, exhibitions and galleries, always in quest of examples which can be compared with clients' artworks. Attending these art events enables her to view and touch as many original pieces as possible, as well as to feel the pulse of the times and develop a sense for the market.

Many of her private clients are experts on their collections and very well informed. Janet Briner considers herself more as a generalist rather than as an expert, and this opens many doors for her. "Everyone wants to become an expert in a certain field. But I wanted to become a generalist appraiser early on and to work with renowned specialists whenever necessary," she adds. In the course of her exemplary career, which has earned her an international reputation, she has been privileged to appraise objects in diverse genres including, but not limited to, paintings, sculptures, silver, porcelain and furniture from the 16th century to the present day.

How can one imagine the process of an appraisal? And what are the essential factors that must be considered? Determining the commercial value of a cultural asset is a complex and delicate task that must be based on numerous components and criteria. It is indispensable to view the original work of art firsthand in order to recognize its artistic quality. The first question to ask is whether the appraisal refers to the piece's replacement value for insurance purposes or to its liquidation value in the event of a sale or a division of an estate. The motives for an appraisal can be very different and each motive can exert a direct impact on the object's estimated value, which must regularly be reviewed and adjusted to conform to the current market value.

After the artwork has been identified (artist, title, description, technique, signature, date of production, dimensions), Janet Briner asks further questions about authenticity (existing expert opinions), provenance and state of preservation (status reports and restorations). The object's rarity, fashion trends and the artwork's location also influence the appraisal: e.g. a Bernese chest of drawers from the 18th century by Mathäus Funk would be appraised at a lower price if it were presently in Australia rather than in Switzerland. It is also important to know in which museums the object has already been exhibited and in which publications it is listed.

Many private and institutional collections nowadays are assembled by professional curators. The estimated value of the individual works of art in these collections can be readily determined because the necessary information is already documented. An appraiser's work has become much easier and the art market has become more transparent thanks to the internet and digitization. Although a collector's personal connection and his emotional relationship with his or her art objects cannot be quantified, it is sometimes possible to take this subjective added value into account for the purposes of insurance estimates.

The monetary value ultimately determined when an appraiser's work is complete represents a justifiable value for a particular purpose and at the time of the appraisal, but does not in the slightest reflect the joy and emotions that Janet Briner has experienced during her conscientious work and research.

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Previous page: Janet Briner in front of "The Tuileries garden" by Edouard Vuillard, Left Janet Briner with Angela Rosengart, the founder of the Rosenaart Collection Lucerne. Below: Alfred Baur established a fertilizer factory in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1897,



Through her residence in Geneva, she has developed quite

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