
Christie's Auction 2 December 2003 , London - Review

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Such was the pre-sale interest in the headline lots at Christie's December London Sale that it was strictly 'standing room only' at the Jack Barclay showrooms just across the Thames from the Houses of Parliament. The deceased estate 'SHY' collection was up for auction, and of course there was the exciting story of the Bizzarrini, Alfa Romeo TT33, Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost and McLaren quartet. The last two sold and someone new will be sitting in the F1's driving seat this week - for the princely sum of over £700,000.

Bidding on the **McLaren** started vigorously and, as auctioneer Rupert Banner explains below, soon developed into a 'a long battle' with several members of Christie's staff fielding overseas enquiries, and at least two bidders in the body of the house - one on a mobile near next to your correspondent. In an atmosphere carvable by the legendary knife, the price just kept on going up - a slight pause then it resumed its relentless climb. The hammer finally fell at a figure that translates (with buyer's premium) to £731,250 - the highest price paid at auction for a motor-car this year. Hearty applause greeted the hammer going down and a delighted bidder turned round to look at his new purchase. It really was one of those moments.

Neither the **1965 Bizzarrini America 5300GT (7 litre) Racecar** nor the **1974 Alfa Romeo Tipo 33TT12** sold despite some encouraging bids being taken. I have no doubt buyers will be found for these unique cars before too long.

Great interest surrounded the four cars belonging to a deceased estate. All bearing variations on the 'SHY' numberplate theme, they had clearly been left outside for many winters and as a result were (apart from the 'plates) worth low money. First to go was the **1988 Jaguar XJ-S V12 Convertible**

(A2 SHY) at £6,815, then the **1988 Ferrari Testarossa** (25 SHY) going for a high £25,850. Roll on the **1990 Rolls-Royce Corniche III Convertible** (1 SHY). This was obviously the one that had drawn the crowds. Estimated at £15,000 – 20,000 it had looked a bit of a gift despite its condition. When the hammer finally went down at £52,000 (£61,100 with premium) there was an exodus from the building of number-plate traders with faces as long as the **1997 Bentley Turbo R Long Wheel Base Four Door Saloon** (R2 SHY) that followed it. This went for a still generous £31,725, and a very nice car to boot.



The **1912 Rolls-Royce 40/50HP Silver Ghost Limousine by Thrupp & Maberly** achieved £368,250 in such a sublime fashion that one hardly noticed such very large sums being offered. All very gentlemanly in keeping with the ethos of the car.



The **1994 Honda NSX GT2 Racecar** really did look superb and very 'on-the-button' given a good race prep. £115,250 was the final price and a tremendous bargain considering the amount of 'no expense spared' development the car has benefited from over the years.

A very nice **1963 Maserati Mistral Coupé**, a 1963 factory prototype, failed to sell but one of your author's favourite pieces of automobilia did – Lot 88, the silver-painted bootlid from **Ferrari 250GT SWB chassis 2445**, totally destroyed in a racing crash in 1962. Complete with faded racing number 59, the hand-beaten aluminium is all that is left of the car and £1293.00 is likely to be about the cheapest way of entry to the 'SWB Club' for most of us.

Final comment from Rupert Banner, Associate Director, Auctioneer & Head of Motor Cars, Christie's:

"We are delighted with the results of this sale. The 1998 McLaren F1's £731,250 exceeded all our expectations, is the highest price paid for a car at auction in the UK this year, and was achieved after a long battle between bidders on the telephone and in the saleroom. Interest throughout the auction was international, with many lots secured by Continental and US buyers. All five collections, four of automobilia and one of cars were 100% sold, with some exceptional results, most notably £9,987 for Fernand Gabriel's gold and jewelled stick pin brooch. This sale concludes the 2003 season for Christie's International Motor Cars and brings worldwide sales to £13.7million (\$22 million). We look forward to our return to Paris for the Rétromobile auction on 14 February 2004."

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