



A PIECE OF THE AUCTION: BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE AUCTION HOUSE

SIMON COTTLE

The Arts Society Fylde

Lowther Pavilion Theatre

2 September 2026 at 2.00pm

A warm welcome back to all our members after the Summer break. We are looking forward to a fascinating, diverse range of lectures for the 2026-2027 season. The first of these is about the international art market which is dominated by four great British auction houses, all founded in the eighteenth century, whose record prices and headline sales regularly make news around the world. But what really happens behind the scenes? How do auction houses operate? What goes into preparing a sale, and what is required to bring together the right objects, specialists, buyers and bidders to ensure its success? Drawing on almost 40 years of experience at Sotheby's and Bonhams, this partly interactive lecture provides a fascinating insider's view of the international auction world. Beginning with a historical overview of the development of the four leading houses, Simon will explore their rise to international prominence and their operations in major cities, including London, New York, Paris and Hong Kong. Along the way he will reveal some of the stories, personalities and unexpected events that lie behind the glamorous world of the international saleroom.

SIMON COTTLE

Simon Cottle is a leading international specialist, author, auctioneer and lecturer in British and European glass. Now retired, he was Managing Director of Bonhams Europe and Director of European Ceramics and Glass at Bonhams, London from 2007 to 2023.

Previously he was Head of European Ceramics and Glass at Sotheby's, where he was also a director and auctioneer from 1990 to 2007. From 1979 to 1990 Simon was a senior curator of ceramics, glass and silver at museums in London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Glasgow. He is Honorary President and Chairman of The Glass Society, a Fellow of the Guild of Glass Engravers and a Fellow of the Corning Museum of Glass, New York.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Rogues and Scholars: Boom and Bust in the London Art Market, 1945-2000 by James Stourton
(Bloomsbury, 2024)

Sotheby's: Bidding for Class by Robert Lacey (Little Brown & Co., 1998)

Illustration: www.sothebys.com