

IN THE  
SALEROOMS

## Sheppard's

An auction of Transport Museum and Vernacular Collections takes place online and live at Sheppard's in Durrow, Co Laois, on May 13. Highlights include a 19th-century penny farthing bicycle (Lot 395: est €4,000 to €6,000) and an 18th-century Irish ash dug out chair (Lot 425: est €2,000 to €3,000).

The sale is followed, the very next day, by an evening sale of Irish and International Art (May 14, 7pm).

Louis Le Brocquy's exuberant Garlanded Goat (below), an Aubusson tapestry dating from 1950 (est €80,000 to €120,000), must surely be the star of the show, with the title hotly contested by Emer (2004) a unique life-size statue of a horse by Anthony Scott (est €30,000 to €50,000).

See [sheppards.ie](http://sheppards.ie)

## Lot 100

The Maysale of contemporary art at Lot 100 (online from May 9 – May 20) is the new auction house's biggest sale to date.

The most likely top lot is Sean Scully's aquatint Liliane #1 (Lot 9: est €5,000 to 7,000) with other highlights including Go Softly (Lot 6: est €4,000 to €5,000), an abstract painting by Katherine Boucher Beug.

As Ken Madden of Lot 100 writes, "collectors are drawn to her exquisite works and never want to part with them... this is one of her very finest." The painting, dating from 1999, has a gentle grid structure "with layering and re working allowing the narrative to develop."

Dancing at Lismore Castle, Ireland (Lot 14: est €3,000 to €5,000) is a rare painting by the American artist Dale Chihuly, who spent some time at Lismore Castle in 1995. See [lot100.ie](http://lot100.ie)



## TREASURES ELEANOR FLEGG

Rare Kashmir sapphire ring  
in 1940s setting at Adam's

Confirmation of its Kashmiri origin took the sapphire and diamond ring's estimated value from under €15,000 to €150,000 – €250,000

to €250,000) is going under the hammer at Adam's sale of Fine Jewellery and Ladies' Watches on May 13.

The story of Kashmir sapphires reads like historical fiction. In 1890, Tom D LaTouche, deputy superintendent of the Geological Survey of India, described how the first sapphires were brought into Shimla, now in Himachal Pradesh, in India. They had been uncovered in "the mountains on the borders of Zanskar, where a landslip had laid bare the rocks beneath the soil, and disclosed the presence of the gems."

LaTouche tells the tale of a shikari (hunter) who lost the flint from his gun while hunting and, with no other way of lighting his pipe, searched for a piece of rock to strike a spark. He "picked up a small sapphire, and finding that it answered his purpose better than the ordinary fragments of quartz he was in the habit of using, carried it about with him for some time." Eventually, the hunter sold the stone to a Laholi trader, from "whom it was taken to Simla, where its value was recognised."

Now, they can fetch astounding prices. On April 25, an 11.56 carat Kashmir sapphire and diamond ring sold at Sotheby's in Hong Kong for HKD \$6,350,000 (€721,514).

"I think this is the first time a Kashmir sapphire has been auctioned in Ireland," says Claire-Laurence Mestrallet, head of jewellery at Adam's. The stone is mounted in a retro sapphire and diamond ring, circa 1940, and catalogued as "of tank design, centring a cushion-

shaped sapphire weighing 6.22cts, between old brilliant and tapered baguette-cut diamond shoulders, and between baguette-cut diamond borders."

It comes from a private collector in France, who bequeathed the collection to her son. Before the stone was identified as a Kashmir sapphire, it was expected to sell for between €8,000 and €12,000.

It's famously impossible to identify a Kashmir sapphire by sight, but something in the quality of the stone alerted Mestrallet to the possibility. "Kashmir sapphires have an intense blue colour and a velvety appearance," she says. "It's unusual to find one in a 1940s ring." Because of the short period of their mining, most Kashmir sapphires were mounted in Victorian jewellery.

The stone was sent to a Gemmological Certification Services (GCS) London for testing and pronounced "of Kashmir origin, with no indications of heating."

Many sapphires are heated at extremely high temperatures to intensify their colour and improve their clarity. This one is a natural stone. It then went off to Switzerland where the Swiss Gemmological Institute (SSEF) confirmed it as a Kashmir sapphire.

About 25 years ago, Madagascar started producing large volumes of sapphires. Since "a fine, classical Kashmir sapphire can be sold for many times more than a Madagascar sapphire of exceptional quality and size", finding out the source is undertaken with care and deliberation.

All the information about Kashmir sapphires comes from historic stones with provenance that can be proven. "The mine was only open for five years," Mestrallet explains. "Then it closed. It's been closed for more than 100 years."

Sapphires can be identified by mineral inclusions (materials trapped within the crystal's structure) or by identifying the "patterns of silk and particle clouds" within the stones, which are described as: "These milky bands are the cause of the sleepy, velvety texture so admired in fine Kashmir sapphires."

See [adams.ie](http://adams.ie)

## MURTAGH BROS

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There's wild excitement in the auction rooms, as a hitherto undiscovered Kashmir sapphire is on its way to market. Its owners, although aware they had a valuable sapphire, did not know it came from Kashmir.

The discovery put another zero on the price – Kashmir sapphires are the rarest, finest and most beautiful in the world.

They come from the Zanskar range of the Himalayas, and were mined between 1882 and 1887. The stone (Lot 23: est €150,000

O'REILLY'S  
THE DESIGN SALE

Lots 93 & 94

LIVE AUCTION Wed, 14<sup>th</sup> May at 12pm

Viewing: Sun 11<sup>th</sup> 12 - 4pm, Mon 12<sup>th</sup> - Tues 13<sup>th</sup> 10 - 4pm & Wed 14<sup>th</sup> 10 - 11.30am

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## IRISH & INTERNATIONAL ART

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