

Early *Pride and Prejudice* and signed Beckett books among rare treasures for sale

Stirrings Still by Samuel Beckett, with illustrations by Louis le Brocquy, is among this week's finds while the collection of a renowned expert in Asian art also goes on sale



Sylvia Thompson

Carefully bound books with elegant hardback covers and internal drawings and illustrations have always been things of beauty that people have collected for centuries.

But with such instant access to information online now, it is sometimes easy to forget how important books are – and were – as purveyors and repositories of knowledge, history and literature.

Fonsie Mealy's Chatsworth Summer Rare Book and Collectors' sale on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, June 23rd-25th is one of two books, documents and printed ephemera sales, the Co Kilkenny auctioneer holds each year.

With about 1,300 lots in the three-day live and online sale, there is a mind-boggling treasure trove of printed materials to peruse.

"About 75-80 per cent of it comes from executors' sales, and the rest is made up of collectors selling items," says George Mealy. The internet has widened the audience for such historical material. "We have a more diverse and international collector base now, which includes Irish expats around the world viewing our online catalogues and bidding online."

Some eye-catching items in the literature section include the three volume second edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (€5,000-€8,000). The English novel, pub-

lished by Egerton in 1813, was written by Austen before she turned 21, the same age as her fictional heroine, Elizabeth Bennet.

A limited edition copy of *Stirrings Still* by Samuel Beckett, with illustrations by Louis le Brocquy (€1,500-€2,000) is another book of interest. Signed by both author and artist, and published by Blue Moon Books in 1988, the book is composed of the last three prose pieces Beckett wrote in English.

Mealy's book sale also has a rich selection of signed, limited editions of poetry books by Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley and other Irish poets. Even more recently published signed hardback books, such as *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch, and *The Beestings* by Paul Murray (both with an estimate of €120-€180), are up for grabs.

Meanwhile, there is plenty of original source material valuable for writers and historians. This includes political pamphlets, literary journals, historical cookery and natural history books such as the two-volume *Description of Genus Pinus* on how to cultivate various pine tree species (€1,500-€2,000). A book about the Irish International Exhibition 1907 (€150-€200), focusing on Irish rural life and industry with suggestions for the future, and the earliest known printed house contents sale catalogue in 1728 (€3,000-€5,000) should also arouse curiosity.

"It came from the descendants of the Wingfield Family from Powerscourt House. The house contents auction by Bailleauctioneers on Abbey Street, Dublin, predates the foundation of the international auctioneers, Christie's and Sotheby's," says Mealy. (Sotheby's was founded in 1744 and Christie's in 1766.) In-person viewing of items takes place on June 20th, 1pm-5pm and on Monday 22nd, 9am-5.30pm, in Chatsworth Auction Rooms, Chatworth Street, Castlecomer.

Meanwhile, a children's book about an elephant in Java inspired a European diplomat to begin collecting Indonesian art in the 1960s. While working in India and Nepal in the 1970s, he expanded his focus to include Himalayan art from these countries, seeking out original pieces in the antique markets of Old Delhi and the Hanuman Dhoka antiques bazaar in Kathmandu.

Now Adam's is selling more than 1,000 pieces of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, South Asian and African art from this, and other private collections, at the Asian and Tribal art auction on June 24th and 25th. Wei Wang, head of the Asian art department at Adam's, says that this collector (whose identity remains anonymous), amassed one of the largest southern Asian art collections in Europe and had connections with prominent dignitaries, art galleries and dealers in

therregion.

"He was a renowned expert in Asian art. He became a close friend of the first president of the Indonesian republic, President Sukarno, and frequently visited the studio of the Indonesian artist Affandi," says Wang.

Affandi (1907-1990), a self-taught expressionist, abstract painter, is one of Indonesia's best-known artists. Following Indonesia's independence, Affandi travelled first to India and then to Europe, where he exhibited in Paris, London, Brussels and Rome. His work was shaped by the dramatic gestures and stylised forms of Javanese shadow puppetry known as Wayang, and his home in Yogyakarta is now the Affandi museum. The painting, *The Cab from Yogyakarta* (1962), which was gifted to the European diplomat by the artist, is for sale in Adam's auction with a guide of

€50,000-€80,000.

The auction also includes blue cloisonné enamel works (known as Jingtailan in Chinese) from a Parisian collector. Historically crafted in Chinese imperial palace workshops for members of the royal court, these robust metal decorative art pieces are more durable than ceramics. The pieces for sale include a bronze turquoise cloisonné enamel lotus vase from the Yongzheng period (€8,000-€12,000). Most of the pieces for sale will be on view at Adam's from 10am-5pm today, tomorrow, Monday and Tuesday.

Finally, soccer fans currently immersed in the World Cup may be interested in Bonhams current sports memorabilia online auction, which ends on June 24th.

It includes the 1968 European Cup winner's medal (£150,000-£250,000/€170,000-€290,000) presented to George

Best in the famous match held in Wembley Stadium on May 29th, 1968. At that game, between Manchester United and Benfica, Best put United in the lead by scoring a goal during extra time. Two further goals by Brian Kidd and Bobby Charlton made United the first English team to win the European Cup, with Best named as the European Footballer of the Year at just 22 years old. In 2010, Bonhams sold this medal to a collector for £156,000 as part of a 13-piece collection of George Best's estate.

fonsiemealy.ie; adams.ie; bonhams.com





■ A limited edition copy of *Stirrings Still* by Samuel Beckett (far left), with illustrations by Louis le Brocqy goes on sale at Fonsie Mealy's next week and a bronze turquoise cloisonné enamel lotus vase from the Yongzheng period is on view at Adam's