

Catawiki? Cowabunga!

A small bottle in a big world of cow manure

A shipload of ... stuff from Ralph Finch

(Whatever you find on the internet, watch your step)

It started with a text from a collector friend in Michigan who alerted us to a Facebook reference she thought we might be interested in. That took us to an auction in the Netherlands, but not before we exchanged messages with a friend in northern England, and another in Germany and one in Antwerp, Belgium.

Actually, before we got on our magic flying rug, it really all started while we were having breakfast in early January, sitting in our jammies enjoying toast and coffee. (And, by the way, a toast to the internet, which allows us to ignore the virus and spend money without getting dressed, always ignoring the threat of the pending poorhouse looming ahead. If we are sent to the poorhouse, will we be allowed to wear our jammies there?)

Catawiki, the Dutch auction house, boasts that we can “bid on over 65,000 special objects every week, selected by 222 experts in areas such as fashion, stamps and antiques.” I tapped on “antiques” and 2,776 items came up!

The item that caught the Finch eye (which is slightly better than a fish eye) was this painted bottle, described as: “Lot 44246879 (!): Mouth-blown bottle with original hand painting, Netherlands, 18th century. 35 cm for length (13.8 inches), painted with a sea scene with a Dutch three-master (see the red/white/blue flags). It is a beautiful object, it has a few small spots in the painting. These spots are not disturbing. We will ship it with track and trace.”

(Catawiki translates its offerings into a dozen languages. And the flags on the ships are the flags of the Netherlands.)

We did put in a bid, but, in of mid-January got this response: “You’ve been outbid.” (I’ve heard that before!)

The current bid was €140 (\$172), and at that time we were told that shipping to the States would be \$57. The auction house adds a fee of a modest 9 percent.

The nice bottle, “typical continental in shape and color, looks like a 1750s piece,” said our friend John Ault of northern England, except ...

Except we then got advice that we should abandon ship when Willy Van Den Bossche of Antwerp (Belgium) reported: “This bottle is, as far as I know, a mid-20th century bottle (1950s-’70s), a limited edition from the Dutch Amsterdam Bols liquor company founded in 1575, to commemorate their 400th birthday to promote the company.”

“Originally there was also the word BOLS painted on the neck of this bottle, but it has been removed to avoid recognition of its origin. Lucas Bols N.V. is a Dutch public company in the business of alcoholic beverages. It claims to be the oldest distillery brand in the world.”

Well, the auction house says the bottle is from the 18th century? So close, yet so very not close.



Looks good, but ... it's not old, maybe a circa 1975 “souvenir” bottle made by a Dutch liquor company.

On January 13, the vintage item sold for €260 (\$316)! But the Finches had done our homework, yet the auction house apparently didn’t care to do its research. Nor, apparently, did the buyer.

FYI: Noted author and researcher, Willy Van Den Bossche was inducted onto the FOHBC Honor Roll in 2019. He published the *Bibliography of Glass: From the Earliest Times to the Present* in 2019. It contains 4,210 titles, and cost Willy twelve years of his life. You can order it on the internet.

Thanks to Willy and John Ault. I am so happy that I have such smart friends who make me look good.

For comments in a dozen languages (although I only speak English, and someday just barely) feel free to email rfinch@twmi.rr.com