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Introducing Ancient Andean Art in the United  
States: The Guillermo Schmidt Pizarro  
Collection from the Brummer Gallery Records

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the transactions of the Peruvian antiquarian and collector Guillermo Schmidt Pizarro (Tacna, 1880 – Lima, 1964) with the Brummer brothers, through the analysis of the Brummer archives recently made available online by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We were able to iden-

tify some of his clients and study his sales and pricing strategies. We could also identify the actual location of some purchases and, in some cases, virtually reconstruct several scattered artefacts from the same archaeological context. This work demonstrates the effectiveness of analysing the archives of private merchants in provenance research.

## Introduction

Guillermo Schmidt Pizarro (Tacna, 1880 – Lima, 1964)<sup>1</sup> was among the most significant art collectors and antique dealers of Andean art in the early twentieth century. He was involved in the circulation of Peruvian artifacts from the pre-Hispanic, colonial, and republican periods in Europe and the United States.

In a previous paper,<sup>2</sup> we offered an insight into his life, sales strategies, his collection's provenance and main deals with, at least, thirty different public institutions. However, we deem that there is much more to be unveiled about his life and businesses and that many more antiquities previously belonging to his collection are yet to be identified.

Until now, we did not have access to a detailed scenario of his dealings with private clients. This article will focus on his transactions with the renowned Brummer brothers, Joseph and Ernst, who sold their artefacts mainly in North America. Unlike our previous paper, which was primarily devoted to textiles, here we also cover other materials such as ceramic, stone and metal artifacts. Most of the records conserved in the Brummer archive are available online<sup>3</sup>, which enabled us to understand the dynamics of deals from the moment when a specific piece was purchased from the original owner (in our case, GSP) to the moment when the piece was privately sold by the gallery to antique dealers, private collectors or museums.

After a brief introduction on the Brummer brothers and their role in the Andean art market, we will focus on identifying the buyers involved with the gallery's business and the Brummers sales strategies; we also aim at defining GSP's corpus of objects within the gallery records and where possible, virtually reunite artefacts presumably dispersed from the same site. Moreover, we will look at the purchase and resale prices of the GSP's objects resold by the Brummers, taking into consideration how the artistic milieu of the time influenced their perceived value. By drafting GSP's role in the Brummer Gallery business in the United States, this paper also demonstrates how this kind of research can contribute to appreciating the dynamics of the antiquities market and to reconstructing objects and dealers' biographies.

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1 Hereinafter referred to as GSP.

2 Carolina Orsini and Anna Antonini, *Life of a Peruvian Art Collector: Guillermo Schmidt Pizarro and the Fostering of Public Collections of Pre-Hispanic Art in the first half of the 20th century*, in Lena Bjeerregaard and Ann Peters, eds., *Proceedings of the International Textiles Conference VIII*, (Lincoln: Zea Books, 2019).

3 <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/watson-digital-collections/cloisters-archives-collections/the-brummer-gallery-records>

## From Paris to New York: the Brummers' sense for "tribal art"

Scholars have pointed out that the trend of collecting pre-Hispanic antiquities in modern times kicked off in 1912, when US diplomat and collector Robert Woods Bliss (1875–1962), one of the co-founders of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington D.C., stepped over the threshold of the Brummer Gallery in Paris, where he made his first purchase, an Olmec piece of jade.<sup>4</sup>

Between the two World Wars, Paris turned into the focal point for the so-called ethnographic art market, also becoming the crossroads for most transactions that involved pre-Hispanic art and antiquities of Andean origin.<sup>5</sup> In this cultural and artistic milieu, the Brummer brothers found fertile ground for their business endeavor and soon became owners of one of the most renowned galleries of the time. Moreover, they were able to align with the market trends of the first half of the twentieth century by moving their business from Paris to the United States when the purchasing power shifted over there.

Austro-Hungarian by birth, Joseph Brummer (1883–1947) established his first art gallery in Paris in 1906. After a few years, his brothers Imre (1889–1928) and Ernst (1891–1964) joined him, and the Maison Brummer took on the name *Brummer Frères: Curiosités*.<sup>6</sup> In 1914, Imre moved their business to the United States and opened an art gallery in New York together with Joseph, named *Joseph Brummer Ancient Art*,<sup>7</sup> while Ernst took over the art gallery in Paris toward the end of World War I. After some disputes, the three brothers resumed their collaboration creating a bridge between Paris and New York: consequently, a number of artifacts acquired in Europe were destined to be relocated to the United States.

Thanks to the synergy between the two branches and the "eye" of the Brummer brothers, their galleries became a key point for the art market in the first half of the twentieth century.

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4 Michael D. Coe, From Huaquero to Connoisseur: The Early Market of Pre-Columbian Art, in Elisabeth Hill Boone, ed., *Collecting the Pre-Columbian past: a symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 6th and 7th October 1990*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993).

5 Léa Saint Raymond, *À la conquête du marché de l'art: Le Pari(s) des enchères (1830-1939)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021). Élodie Vaudry, *Les arts précolombiens: Transferts et métamorphoses de l'Amérique latine à la France, 1875-1945* (Rennes: Presse Universitaire, 2019).

6 Yaëlle Biro, African arts between curious antiquities and avant-garde at the Maison Brummer, Paris (1908-1914), in *Journal of Art Historiography*, 15 (2015).

7 William R. Johnston and Henry Walters, *The Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 213.

eth century, in particular for so-called “tribal art” – beginning with African art.<sup>8</sup> While Joseph’s interest was oriented toward contemporary art and sculpture, with its inspiration taken from African art,<sup>9</sup> Ernst specialized in classical antiquity: he had studied art at the Sorbonne and at the École du Louvre under Salomon Reinach, archaeologist and director of the Musée d’Antiquités Nationales.<sup>10</sup> He had traveled to Egypt and the Near East on more than one occasion<sup>11</sup> and had great interest in pre-Columbian antiquities. In 1928, he published the book *L’art précolombien* together with Adolphe Basler, a Polish art critic, and collector.<sup>12</sup> Only in 1940, at the outbreak of World War II, did Ernst join his brother in the United States where he would remain at the helm of the New York art gallery after Joseph’s death in 1947.

## GSP in the Brummer Gallery Records

In 1980, Ella Baché Brummer, Ernst’s widow, donated a nucleus of documents related to the Brummer Gallery to the Metropolitan Museum, which was later integrated with further archival material in 2016. This collection constitutes a very important source of information for the study of the art market in the first half of the twentieth century, when some of the greatest American and European museum collections were formed. The Brummer archive consists of documents, correspondence, registers, photographs and an index of more than 15,000 object cards containing information about the pieces acquired by the galleries. Each card includes a photograph of the object, indications on the condition, date of arrival and acquisition, information on the purchase (price, date, seller) and subsequent resale negotiations, and value estimates. Over 1,300 cards in the Brummer Gallery records were devoted to the category of “primitive art”, including pre-Columbian art from Mexico and Peru.

Thanks to these cards, we could establish that GSP sold approximately two hundred Peruvian archaeological finds to the Brummers between 1928 and 1931. Such a high volume of transactions makes the Brummer archives a unique and crucial source to study the beginning of GSP activities in the US. Within the scope of this paper, we could analyze only some of the plentiful information contained in the card files relating to the GSP objects.<sup>13</sup> From these cards, only a group of five pieces was sold directly to the New York art

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8 Yaëlle Biro, African Art. New York and the Avant-Garde, in *African Arts*, 46/2 (2013), 88-97. Christine E. Brennan, The Brummer Gallery and the Business of Art, in *Journal of the History of Collections*, 27/3 (2015), 455-468.

9 Biro, African arts between curious antiquities and avant-garde at the Maison Brummer, 1-15.

10 Pierre Koller and Isidor Kahane, eds., *The Ernst Brummer Collection: Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art. Vol. 1*, (Zurich: Spink & Son – Galerie Koller, 1979).

11 Ernst Brummer archaeologist dies, obituary in *The New York Times*, 23 February 1964.

12 Adolphe Basler and Ernest Brummer, *L’Art Précolombien* (Paris: Libraire de France, 1928).

13 <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16028coll9/search/searchterm/schmidt>.

gallery (as the letter N placed before the inventory number indicates).<sup>14</sup> Almost all the pieces are identified by a serial number preceded by the letter P, meaning that they were acquired by the Parisian art gallery and later shipped via parcel post to New York.<sup>15</sup> Most cards examined are marked with a reference to correspondence concerning the deal, which is unfortunately not preserved.<sup>16</sup>

## Who's who: identifying the buyers of the GSP's objects

Thanks to their contacts in the United States, the Brummer brothers introduced GSP's name into the top echelons of US clients. Those who acquired his pieces from the Brummer brothers were mainly high-level eclectic collectors, dealers and institutions. Although most of these items were resold directly to new buyers, a large quantity (seventy) remained unsold until after Joseph's death in 1947 and were eventually auctioned at three events organized by Ernst in 1949 through the Parke-Bernet auction house.<sup>17</sup>

In the following section, we will give an overview of the different categories of buyers of GSP's pre-Hispanic objects.

### Museums

In a 1934 letter<sup>18</sup> GSP expressed contempt about the suggestion that his pieces would be enjoyed by a broader audience, were they exhibited in museums.<sup>19</sup> In that sense, he correctly referred to the Brummers as middlemen. Indeed, Joseph Brummer, like some antique dealers of that time, not only sold directly to museums but also contributed to creating some significant collections which later entered into public institutions.

Direct purchases of GSP material via the Brummers were made by the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Museum of the American Indian, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Textile Museum of the District of Columbia (today, the Textile Museum of Washing-

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14 Three textiles (N2454, N2455, N2456) and a silver object (N2453) in 1928, and a small green gemstone idol (N2948) in 1931.

15 GSP closed his first deal with Joseph in 1928, and his presence in New York is confirmed by Ellis Island ship manifests. Afterwards, he mostly dealt with Ernst in Paris and his major deals were closed in 1929. His antiquities were sent to NY later to enter the market in the US.

16 Michael Carter 2022, pers. comm.

17 Parke-Bernet Inc., *Part One of the Notable Art Collection belonging to the Estate of the Late Joseph Brummer* (New York: Parke-Bernet, 20-23 April 1949).  
Parke-Bernet Inc., *Part Two of the Notable Art Collection...*, (New York: Parke-Bernet, 11-14 May 1949).  
Parke-Bernet Inc., *Part Three of the Notable Art Collection...*, (New York: Parke-Bernet, 8-9 June 1949).

18 Letter from GSP to Pietro Barocelli, director of Pigorini Museum in Rome, dated 3 September 1934 (Muciv Museum Archives, Rome).

19 See Orsini and Antonini, *Life of a Peruvian Art Collector*.

ton D.C.). Other direct buyers were the Royal Ontario Museum, the Walters Art Gallery (today The Walters Art Museum), and the Albright Art Gallery (today the Buffalo AKG Art Museum).

Sometimes, directors or curators made personal purchases and later donated the items to the institution they managed. This was probably the case for Edward W. Forbes, who was an art historian and longtime director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, some personal collections were ultimately turned into museums, with the founders becoming their first directors. This cultural philanthropy was undoubtedly boosted by the paramount availability of private capital, which remains an essential component of north American museum finances. Examples are the following clients of the Brummer Galleries who acquired, among others, some GSP items: George G. Heye, founder of the National Museum of American Indians, Chauncey J. Hamlin, director and founder of the Buffalo Museum of Science, George H. Myers,<sup>21</sup> whose collection was the core of the Textile Museum of Washington D.C., and Frederick C. Morgan from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>22</sup>

## Private clients

Most private buyers of GSP's antiquities at the Brummers were not specialists in pre-Hispanic art but multifaceted collectors interested in several types of artefact, since they bought no more than one or two pre-Columbian pieces. Among these private collectors we find Hayford Peirce, who specialized in Byzantine art, Mr and Mrs Haas, two philanthropists from Detroit, Alastair Bradley Martin, whose Guennol Collection was a famous forerunner of trends to come, William Royall Tyler, who also focused on Byzantine art and was a longtime director of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection and, lastly, Grenville L. Winthrop, a lawyer and art collector and important sponsor of the Fogg Art Museum, who collected Western and Eastern Asian art. Other multi-category clients of the gallery were Robert Rousset, a businessman and famous collector of Asian art and Vladimir Gregorievitch Simkhovitch, a professor of economics at Columbia University and owner of a large collection of antiquities which was dispersed across the market. Among private buyers disposing of considerable capital was William R. Hearst, who seemed to be a major buyer of the pieces offered by the Brummer art galleries, including GSP's objects. His legendary collection was also later dispersed.

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20 The piece that E.W. Forbes purchased at the Brummer Gallery was a silver plate (P6780), entered in the yearly report drawn up by the same Forbes (Forbes E., Report in *Annual Report (Fogg Art Museum)*, No. 1929/1930 (1929 - 1930), p. 16. However, the Brummers recorded this acquisition as a personal deal.

21 Myers purchased a total of fifty-one textiles and other objects via the Brummers. Later on, GSP would sell many more pieces directly to the Montreal museum.

22 The name is misspelled in the Brummer Gallery records, where he is listed as J.C. Morgan. He was appointed as the first curator of Decorative Arts at the Art Association of Montreal, now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

## Middle-men, artists and experts

Among Brummers' buyers, we find Julius Carlebach, whose name is often tied to the Surrealist artists' world, as he was their privileged "supplier" of ethnographic pieces, including Andean ancient art.<sup>23</sup> Carlebach made his purchases from the Brummer New York branch in 1942 and through the auction sales organized in 1949, acquiring nineteen pieces overall.

Another buyer of GSP artifacts through the Brummer galleries was Albert Eugene Gallatin (1881 – 1952), connected to the avant-garde circle. He was also an acclaimed artist and an important collector of American and European contemporary art who purchased few pieces from the Brummer brothers, but of great value. He possibly examined Brummer's pieces in Paris and then had the goods shipped to the United States, paying for them upon his return to New York. Gallatin regularly traveled to Europe, and most probably to Paris, since his name often appears in the ship manifests on arrival at the port of Ellis Island, as does that of GSP who was based in Paris in those years.<sup>24</sup>

This close network of expert art dealers was directly connected with the world of contemporary art and design of the inter-war period. This included, for example, Morris De Camp Crawford,<sup>25</sup> an expert in textile design, and Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, an architect and renowned art collector. A similar role was played by the artist and Olmec culture scholar Miguel Covarrubias, who sold several pieces originating from Mexico to the Brummer Gallery and enriched his collection with a couple of textiles from the GSP collection.

Other professional buyers were Alice and Nasli Heeramaneck. American collectors of Indian origin, they bought twelve pieces between 1948 (direct sale) and 1949 (auction). Many of the antiquities of their pre-Columbian collection are today at the National Museum of India in New Delhi, while others were scattered across several US museums, including the LACMA of Los Angeles.

Finally, there was Robert Bliss' advisor, the archaeologist Samuel K. Lothrop, who specialized in Central American cultures and was a longtime research associate of the Peabody Museum at Harvard University, to which he donated several antiquities, including Peruvian artifacts. Unfortunately, the GSP's items he purchased from Brummer cannot be traced for now.

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23 Florence Duchemin-Pelletier, Julius Carlebach (1909–1964) and the Trade in So-Called "Primitive" Arts, in Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez, Anne Helmreich and Martin Schieder, eds., *Networking Surrealism in the USA. Agents, Artists, and the Market*, arthistoricum.net, 2019 (Passages online, vol 3).

24 Between 1927 and 1931, Gallatin went back to the United States once a year, spending part of the year in Europe, in particular Paris, to develop his career as an artist.

25 See Orsini and Antonini, *Life of a Peruvian Art Collector*.

No doubt due to the sales to the Brummers, GSP established a reputation in the United States, where he would have one of his core market in later years.<sup>26</sup>

We cannot confirm whether the Brummer brothers revealed their sources to their customers, which included GSP, but we know that some of Brummer's clients later became GSP's direct buyers. George D. Pratt<sup>27</sup> and F. Cleveland Morgan are among the outstanding figures contacted by GSP in the following years. The latter did business with both the Brummers and directly with GSP between 1936 and 1938.<sup>28</sup> In 1955 he visited GSP in Lima to acquire other pieces.<sup>29</sup> Another significant name is the above-mentioned Samuel K. Lothrop who, after his purchase from the Brummer Gallery in 1931, closed a deal directly with GSP in 1938 on behalf of the Peabody Museum at Harvard University upon the suggestion of Alfred Tozzer, professor at Harvard University in Mesoamerican studies.

## The objects traded by Guillermo Schmidt Pizarro via the Brummer galleries

The type of antiquity that GSP submitted to the Brummer brothers was quite varied. As regards materials, most of the objects were from metal (sixty items including thirty-three gold and/or silver artifacts), followed by fifty-five textiles, twenty-six stone artifacts, twenty-eight ceramics, ten wooden objects, and other organic materials objects including malacological (three), bone (two), and feather (one) items, as well as other pieces from mixed or non-identified media. A comparative study of the information stored in the Brummer Gallery records allows a twofold analysis: firstly, we look at reuniting groups of antiquities that were dismembered even though GSP originally offered them as one lot with the same provenience data;<sup>30</sup> secondly, the approach via provenance research may allow an – at least partial – reconstruction of the objects' biography.

### Objects with the same provenience attributes

GSP sold some of his objects as lots, which were frequently dismembered when resold. These included a group of small corn or llama-shaped Inca sculptures known as

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26 See Orsini and Antonini, *Life of a Peruvian Art Collector*.

27 See Orsini and Antonini, *Life of a Peruvian Art Collector*.

28 In the letter from Frederick Cleveland Morgan to GSP dated 10 March 1937, we read "I've found prices much higher than those quoted in NY", meaning that, between 1936 and 1938, he dealt both with the Brummers in New York and directly with GSP (Archives of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts).

29 Erell Hubert 2020, pers. comm.

30 In this paper, we consider the difference between provenance and provenience as stated by Clemency Coggins, United States cultural property legislation: Observation of a combatant, in *International Journal of Cultural Property* 7(1) (1998), 52–68.



“conopas”, namely domestic votives (P6989 b, c, k, l, m, n) and a complete “Inca dress”,<sup>31</sup> (P6990 a, b, c), which more probably was a late Nasca garment from the southern coast of Peru. Two of the three pieces comprising the “dress” (P6990 b fig. 1 and fig. 2) and a belt (P6990 c) were sold to the Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation (today the National Museum of the American Indian, NMAI; inv. no. 18/946 and 18/945), while P6990 was sold to George Pratt in 1930.<sup>32</sup> We also found information on another set (P6893), consisting of a silver crown with earrings, a pin, and two “earspools”, originating from the Huacho area in Peru, which was exhibited on two occasions, first in Minneapolis in 1938 and then, in Los Angeles in 1940.

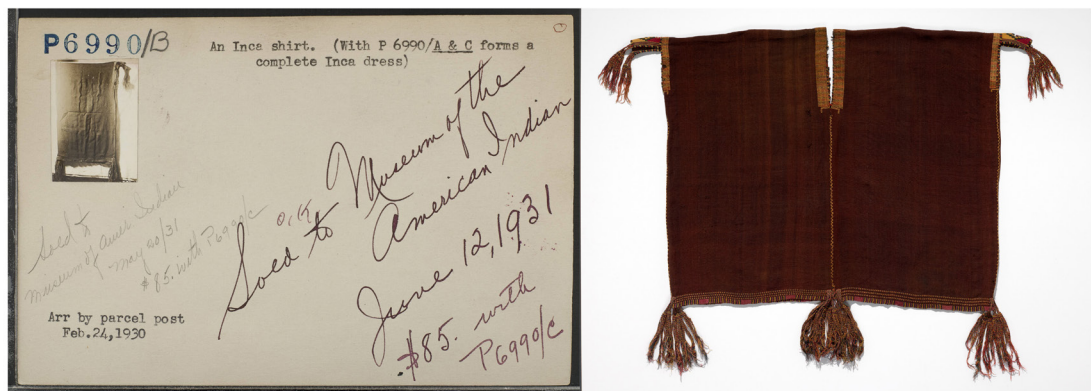


Fig. 1: Card P6990b “An Inca shirt”. The Brummer Gallery Records were donated to The Metropolitan Museum in 1980, through Ella Baché Brummer, wife of Ernest Brummer. Transferred to The Cloisters Archives in 1993.

© The Libraries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 2: Poncho, probably Nasca (100-600 AD). National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (18/946). Photo by Nmai Photo Services.

Among the items acquired from GSP, some had presumably been excavated from the same site: worth mentioning are two small green-stone and turquoise idols, very similar to the well known Huari idols retrieved from the Peruvian site of Pikillacta.<sup>33</sup> We suspect that the two objects might come from this very site, although GSP sold them separately and on different dates to the Brummers. The first of these two statuettes (N2948),<sup>34</sup> was acquired directly by the Gallery in 1931 for \$100.<sup>35</sup> It was later auctioned in 1949 and is today in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum (inv. no. 86.224.106 donation of Ernest

31 The definitions and cultural origins attributed by GSP are not often reliable. Most of the antiquities are improperly classified as Inca.

32 We wish to thank Emily Kaplan and Maria Galban for helping us with the GSP objects in the NMAI. We know that many of Pratt’s Andean textiles were donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but at the moment we are unable to identify this specific object.

33 Anita Cook, The Stone Ancestors: Idioms of Imperial Attire and Rank among Huari Figurines, in *Latin American Antiquity*, 3/4 (1992), 341-364.

34 Parke-Bernet Inc., Part Two of the Notable Art Collection., 105 no.434.

35 The object decreased in value till the price was set at \$30 in 1943.

Erickson Foundation). The second statuette, recognized as “Huari” (P6820; fig. 3) on its index card, was purchased as part of a lot in 1929 and was resold in 1949 to the Heeramanek Gallery for \$100; it is currently in the MET collections (inv. no. 2020.386.2 donated in 2020 by the MOL shipping company; fig. 4).

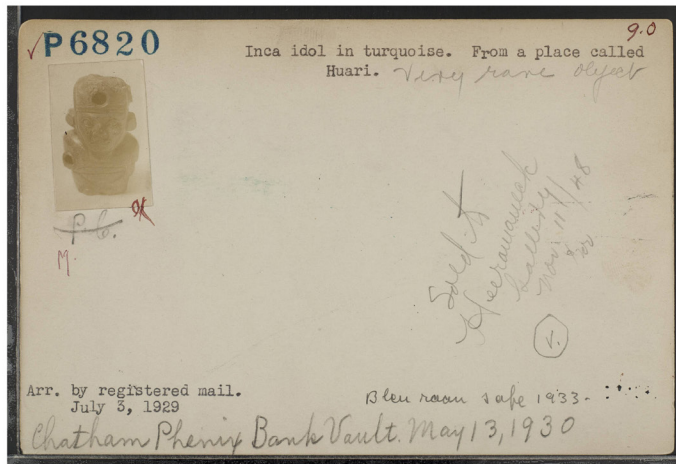


Fig. 3: Card P6820 “Inca idol in turquoise”. The Brummer Gallery Records were Donated to The Metropolitan Museum in 1980, through Ella Baché Brummer, wife of Ernest Brummer. Transferred to The Cloisters Archives in 1993.

© The Libraries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 4: Wari Warrior Figure (500-800 AD)

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Some other pieces with the same provenience data are described as grave objects from the same burial site. However, it is impossible to ascertain whether the “sets” mentioned in the cards truly corresponded to grave objects from the same tomb, or whether the mention of a “prestigious” provenience was merely sale strategy. A set of seven items (P6990d, e, f, g, h, k, l), which GSP attributed to a single burial site, consisted of a series of five bronze masks embellished with two shells. This set was resold to Julius Carlebach. Another notable group of antiquities consists of an alleged set of items retrieved in the “burial place of an Inca princess” excavated near the port of Huarmey, along the central coast in Peru. This lot, which arrived via parcel post on 17 July 1929, was divided and sold to three separate buyers: George G. Heye (now at NMAI, inv. no. 212006), Mr. Tyler, a private collector, and George H. Myers. Apparently, other pieces from the same group remained unsold and were auctioned in 1949.<sup>36</sup> The items sold to Myers casino (P6785-86-87. P6825-26, textiles, and clothing accessories) produced a substantial return for the gallery: they were sold in a lot for \$3,000, and had been purchased from GSP for \$1,950.

36 In Ernst’s auction catalogues the names of art dealers, collectors, art galleries, etc. are often handwritten next to the auctioned lots and might refer to the final buyers of the lots. Should this be the case, P6789 and P6827-28 were most probably sold to Julius Carlebach.

Furthermore, we noted another group of objects that was parceled out which presumably had been retrieved from a single burial place. On the index cards drawn up for the acquisition of seventeen items received on 12 July 1929, we read: “Found at an Inca grave on the coast north of Lima, at a place called Pativilca”. This group includes three silver bowls tapered at the center:<sup>37</sup> two of them (P6781-82) were sold to Heye (currently inv. no. 212004 and 212005) as one lot in 1948 for \$500, while the third one (P6780) was sold to Forbes in 1930 for \$20 (Brummer had paid GSP only \$5 for it). Other items allegedly from Pativilca were “two Peruvian wooden masks: one male and one female” (P6821a-b), “ten pieces of Peruvian textiles (these textiles are painted)” (P6822a-f), and two “clay idols” (P6823-24). The masks and the textiles were sold to Myers in the lot that included the alleged set of the “Inca princess” mentioned above. The clay idols met a different fate: one was offered during the third Parke-Bennet auction in 1949,<sup>38</sup> while P6824 was sold to William Randolph Hearst in 1933 within a larger lot against an overall price of \$1,600.

## Reconstructing ownership histories

Beside the virtual reconstruction of grave goods, the review of the card files in the Brummer Gallery records, allowed us to deepen the provenance of some pieces from the GSP collection, which passed through the hands of several owners before flowing into their present location.

On top of the two small stone idols mentioned above, we could trace the ownership history of the bone spoon P6913 that was sold to the Walters Art Gallery in 1943 and is currently part of the Walters Art Museum collection (inv. no. 71.1111 donated by Marvin C. Ross in that same year);<sup>39</sup> an architectural model (P6797), a bronze idol (P6973), a carved wood weaver’s dagger (P6777), and a silver ceremonial beaker (P6898), which were purchased by Mrs. Haas,<sup>40</sup> were donated to the Detroit Institute of Arts (inv. no. 55.334, 55.327, 55.332, 55.324).<sup>41</sup>

Among the GSP’s antiquities acquired by the Brummers and then sold directly to the MET (P6902, P6903, P6904, P6853) there are two pieces classified as originating from the GSP collection (inv. no. 31.20.1, inv. no. 31.20.2) in the museum’s online catalogue; a further piece cannot be distinctly identified due to the lack of an image on the corresponding

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37 GSP undoubtedly possessed a further bowl, which he sold within a lot to the Museo del Castello Sforzesco of Milan for 5,000 liras and which is today at Mudec (PAM 30).

38 Parke-Bennet, Part Three of the Notable Art Collection..., unidentified lot. no.

39 However, the listed provenance for this object is Egypt.

40 We did not manage to locate three more pieces purchased by Mrs. Haas (P6896, P7144, P6844), although they were probably donated to the Detroit Institute of Art.

41 *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, XXXV/3, 1955-56.

card;<sup>42</sup> while the P6904 card, which might coincide with inv. no. 30.52.2 thanks to available images, does not state remarks concerning GSP.

## The market value of GSP's pieces

The price of an object placed on the antiques market is determined by a series of variables, including historical, social, and, above all, economic factors.<sup>43</sup> Even if it can be quite complex to identify value markers and their relevance in defining the price of an antiquity on the market, looking at object pricing within the Brummer business still allows to getting a sense of taste and interests which establish monetary value.

In our case, most of the items were acquired and then resold within lots consisting of various types of items. This makes it difficult to properly assess the profit that the Brummer brothers earned from specific sales.

Eleven out of the 192 cards examined describe objects “presented” to various contacts; five pieces were instead used as “bargaining chips” for new acquisitions (with or without a cash supplement),<sup>44</sup> and at least three artefacts were divided up and the pieces sold separately (a common practice at the time, which GSP himself would often resort to when dealing with textiles). In the case of P6784/P6784a – a pectoral plate with a llama originally belonging to the alleged burial set from Huarmey mentioned above – the image of the animal was removed from the plate in 1933 and sold for \$26, while the plate remained in the Brummer Collection until 1949 (fig. 5); a shell (P6991d), which was originally part of a necklace (P6991e), was sold to Joseph Brummer<sup>45</sup> for \$15 in 1947, while the silver portion of the necklace was auctioned in 1949; the bone idol (P6789a), included in a second necklace (P6789) upon its acquisition, was later removed from it, and both the bone idol and the necklace were auctioned, but at two separate sales (fig. 6).<sup>46</sup>

The fact that only about ten out of the almost 200 artifacts were purchased and resold as single items made it impossible to precisely assess the average profit earned by the Brummer brothers for each piece. However, considering the sample examined, we could confirm that the net profit margin was variable but basically advantageous for the art gallery. Profits could result from as much as triple the purchase price – as was the case for P7275, purchased at \$48.6 and resold at \$150 – or even further increase exponential-

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42 It may correspond to inv. no. 30.52.1.

43 Haydi Geismar, ‘What’s in a price? An ethnography of tribal art at auction’, in *Journal of Material Culture*, 6/1 (2001), 28.

44 P6793 (Gilded bronze idol to Mr. Simkhovitch); P7149 (Stone bowl to Albert Gallatin); P6830c (One piece of textile to M. Covarrubias); P6843 (Ceremonial hat of feathers to Ratton); P6843 (Piece of Inca cloth to M. Covarrubias).

45 The circumstances under which these kind of trades among family members occurred are not clear.

46 If the handwritten notes on the catalogues actually referred to final buyers, the two pieces would ultimately flow into the Carlebach collection. Parke-Bennet, Part One of the Notable Art Collection. Parke-Bennet, Part Two of the Notable Art Collection.

ly.<sup>47</sup> In other instances the art gallery made only a small profit, although this was rare (e.g. P7150 was purchased at \$15 and resold at \$25), or the resale price equaled the acquisition value of the object (e.g. P7146), or a transaction even resulted in a loss (e.g. P7148).

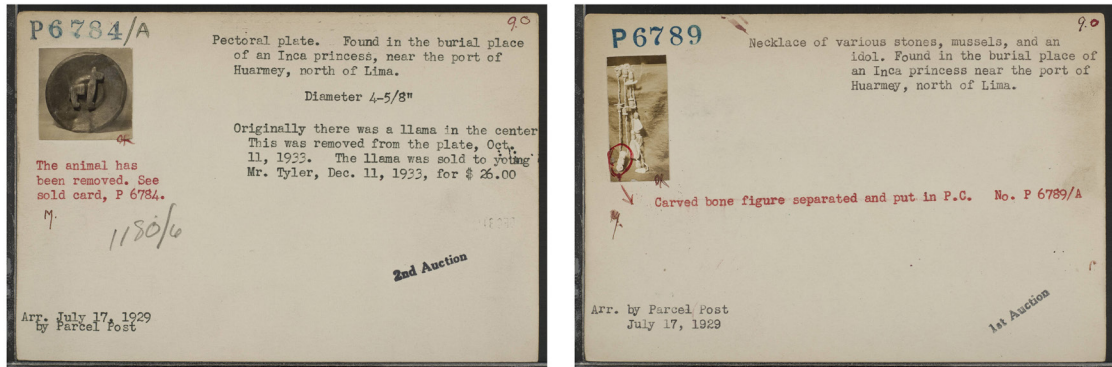


Fig. 5: Card P6784a “Pectoral plate”. The Brummer Gallery Records were Donated to The Metropolitan Museum in 1980, through Ella Baché Brummer, wife of Ernest Brummer. Transferred to The Cloisters Archives in 1993.

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Fig. 6: Card P6789 “Necklace”. The Brummer Gallery Records were Donated to The Metropolitan Museum in 1980, through Ella Baché Brummer, wife of Ernest Brummer. Transferred to The Cloisters Archives in 1993.

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Among the social factors influencing price oscillations, exhibitions and publications cannot be disregarded, especially if they had a lasting effect in forming artistic taste and trends. The interest in antiquities originating from Central and Southern America increased in the United States when they began to be marketed as artistic expressions, especially after the 1913 Armory Show,<sup>48</sup> and Joseph Brummer had the good business sense of being the first to deal in pre-Columbian antiquities as “fine arts”.<sup>49</sup> The importance of the Brummer brothers in this specific antique market niche is confirmed by the fact that the gallery, together with major museums, lent pre-Columbian artifacts to the American Sources of Modern Art exhibition held at MOMA in 1933. This display was aimed at showcasing the artistic quality of antiquities originating from central and south America. The exhibit was a milestone for the following exhibitions devoted to pre-Hispanic antiquities and highlighted the increasing interest in this artistic production.<sup>50</sup> Also worth mentioning is the Brummer Gallery participation in the pre-Columbian Art exhibi-

47 E.g.: P6985 was acquired at \$800 and resold at \$1,500.

48 Holger, Cahill, American Sources of Modern Art, in American Sources of Modern Art. Catalogo dell'esposizione, 10 Maggio – 30 Giugno 1933, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 1933), 7-9.

49 D. Coe, From Huaquero to Connoisseur, 270.

50 Megan O'Neil E. and Mary Ellen Miller, An Artistic Discovery of America. Mexican Antiquities in Los Angeles 1940-1960s, in Wendy Kaplan, ed., *Design in California and Mexico, 1915-1985: Found in Translation* (Los Angeles: LACMA, 2017).

tion at the Los Angeles County Museum in March 1940. In both exhibitions, the Brummer galleries lent some of the objects they had previously acquired from GSP.<sup>51</sup>

The stone cougar P7141, acquired by Brummer for \$20, was later sold for \$300, quite possibly because of its display at the 1933 MOMA exhibition. Another interesting case is the “huaco” P6889, bought by the Brummers for \$100 in 1930 and resold for \$250 in 1934, after being displayed in the same exhibition.

Unfortunately, for other objects that were displayed in these exhibitions, we could not verify whether their value increased after the events because they were resold in lots or at auctions.

## Final thoughts

Through mining the Brummer Gallery records, this study shows that in-depth analysis of antique dealers’ archives not only contributes to the appreciation of the antiquities market dynamics but also leads to an understanding of how antique dealers influenced the taste, the perception and the economic value of certain objects across the art collecting world. GSP was perfectly versed in these dynamics, both nurturing and being nurtured by the trends of the time.

Research on how original lots of items were re-sold helps to discover the ownership history of important objects that are today part of public collections. Moreover, the study of how different nuclei entered the Brummers’ collection could lead to a virtual reconstruction of the original context of archaeological lots. As argued by Coe,<sup>52</sup> the study of the art collecting world is in itself a (non-destructive) archaeological exploration that highlights the stratifications of objects’ long-period agency.

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51 Thanks to cross-referencing the MOMA exhibition catalogue reporting notes of the registrar (available on <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2932>) with the Parke-Bernet auction catalogues from 1949 and the cards from the Brummer Gallery, we could identify the following items, albeit lacking images: N2948 (Cahill 1933, no. 93c), P7141 (Cahill 1933, no. 93d), P 6989a (Cahill 1933, no. 93e; Parke-Bennet 1949b, 110 n461), P6889 (Cahill 1933, no. 171), P6890 (Cahill 1933, no. 172), P7143 (Cahill 1933, no. 212), P6794 (Cahill 1993, no. 213), P7137 (Cahill 1933, no. 215), P7147 (Cahill 1933, no. 216). Regarding the 1940 Los Angeles exhibition, the Brummer brothers exhibited GSP’s P6770.

52 Coe, *From Huaquero to Connoisseur*.