

Weekend

The New York Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004



Les Enluminures

Detail of an illumination in the Burckhardt-Wildt Apocalypse (circa 1290-1300), in the Enluminures booth at the Winter Antiques Show.

ART REVIEW

The Winter Games For Antiques

By ROBERTA SMITH

The Winter Antiques Show is one of the great indoor sporting events of New York's post-holiday season. It is simultaneously a spectator and participatory attraction, like an art-oriented cross between the New York Marathon and a basketball game at Madison Square Garden. Its sumptuous displays require stamina, concentration and attention to detail. But they also provide unobstructed, close-up views of seasoned competitors battling it out in tiptop form.

By seasoned competitors I mean not the art dealers but the objects: art from around the world, across time and in every conceivable medium, fine and folk, functional and not, antique and ancient, American, European and Asian. And unlike most games, this event offers scores of winners' in every category, snaggle by a tremendous range of checkbooks. And the 67th Regiment Armory isn't the only arena: this week's ad hoc antiques festival is taking place in at least a half-dozen spots around town.

This is the Winter Antiques Show's 50th anniversary, and everyone seems to have gone all out. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has mounted a succinct display of works from its superb holdings in American fine and decorative arts, including a case of Tiffany Favrite glass. Many of the show's longtime participants occupy their usual places of pride along the central aisle: Elinor Gordon, the doyenne of Chinese Export porcelain, and Barbara Israel,

A chance to watch as an array of treasures go for the gold.

whose garden antiques have anchored the central axis for years, are present, as are Peter Tillou, Hirschl & Adler, Ralph M. Chait, À la Vieille Russie and James Robinson.

As usual, several booths have special concentrations. One instance of immersion is Les Enluminures, where illuminated manuscripts prevail and the sights include a double-sided illumination from the late 13th-century Burckhardt-Wildt Apocalypse, whose recto shows an angel with a red trumpet summoning the end of the world and a red comet.