



Just as John Keats poetically mused, “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,” Brett Sherlock is surely of one mind with such a timeless sentiment. Over twenty-five years he’s parlayed obvious ardour for beautiful, distinctive objets d’art into a sterling calling card of remarkable experience and exquisite taste.

Acting since November 2010 as Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Christie’s Canada after nearly ten years with the eminent auction house, it’s the zenith of a professional career having specialized in silver, Faberge and fine jewelry, culling the treasures of the celebrated and the legendary.

Although he has travelled the globe extensively during a career based in London, Geneva, New York, and Los Angeles, Sherlock now splits time between Christie’s offices in Toronto and the welcome ambiance of Niagara-on-the-Lake, being the seventh-generation of his family to reside in the town.

His four-member household includes partner James (a corporate lawyer turned editor), a cat named Sergeant, who spends weekdays with Sherlock’s mother at her home nearby, and a new pup dubbed Bollin who does the weekend commute from Toronto.

Sherlock’s international connections to iconic offerings infuse a résumé which includes sales of numerous important collections — jewels from the personal collection of Princess Salimah Aga Khan, the jewels of the Duchess of Windsor, jewels of Marie Vergottis, property from the collection of HRH The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon, and recently, the collection of Elizabeth Taylor. The Christie’s landmark December 2011 New York auction of Taylor’s effects, reached an unprecedented \$156,756,576 US.

Yet Sherlock is equally charmed by the significant cultural and historical artifacts surrounding us. He recently retired from the board of The Niagara Foundation, whose mission is preserving the venerable architectural heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake, was instrumental in publishing a relevant update to the respected 1967 volume, *Early Architecture of the Town and Township of Niagara*. The revised book was reissued this year to coincide with the War of 1812 bicentennial and to commemorate the Foundation’s 50th anniversary.

Intriguingly, the subsequent line of Keats’ “thing of beauty” ode is also decidedly fitting to express Sherlock’s worthy endeavours — “Its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness.”

Brett Sherlock

BY CHRISTINE DARRAGH | PHOTO BY ROBERT NOWELL

Describe yourself in one sentence.

Be it private or professional life, I love the adventure of the hunt.

What would people be surprised to learn about you?

The state of the trunk of my car.

Are you a collector of anything?

You see a lot of amazing pieces working for an auction house. I’ve traditionally collected 19th century furniture and 20th century paintings. I now have the courage and confidence to be looking at contemporary art. What you collect should reflect you, so it’s important that James and I buy separately. His taste is reflected in the Toronto flat and mine is in the Niagara house.

What is your most treasured possession?

My family and the Irish 18th century blanket box in our front hall, which has lived with me in New York, London, Geneva, LA. They better bury me in it!

All-time favourite movie quote?

In the movie *Cleopatra*, in the burning of the library, Cleopatra (Elizabeth Taylor) says to Caesar (Richard Burton): “But neither you nor any other barbarian has the right to destroy one human thought.”

What are you currently passionate about?

The new addition to our family of three, the fourth being our new schnoodle puppy called Bollin. If I’m allowed another, it would be the works by Paul-Emile Borduas.

What theme song would you choose to play behind you when you enter a room?

The theme song from *The Dick Van Dyke Show*.

Favourite place and/or things to do in Niagara?

It’s always been to walk the town early in the AM or late in the PM. It’s when the tourists are asleep and it feels that it’s yours again.

What era would you most like to visit?

Do I just have to visit? Can I not just be transported back into the 18th century. Possibly 1766, to start the company alongside James Christie.

Which four living celebrities would you like to share dinner with and why?

Maggie Smith; for her wit, but she wouldn’t put up with me.

Hubert de Givenchy; he’s a friend and the most charming person on earth.

Anish Kapoor; to discuss how he has created infinity in his art.

The Queen; for her humour (believe it)

Most interesting celebrity you’ve met?

Richard Meier, architect of the Getty Museum. We sat next to each other at a small dinner in LA. We spoke the entire evening about the Getty and the intricacies of building a state-of-the-art museum. I don’t even remember who was on my other side.

Most fascinating (for you) collection/piece Christie’s has auctioned?

The collections are the obvious and I was lucky to be an integral part of these sales. The jewelry collections belonging to The Princess Aga Khan, HRH The Princess Margaret and Elizabeth Taylor. A Muslim Princess, A Royal Princess and a Hollywood Queen. NM