

Antiques

Eve M. Kahn



MAGEN H GALLERY

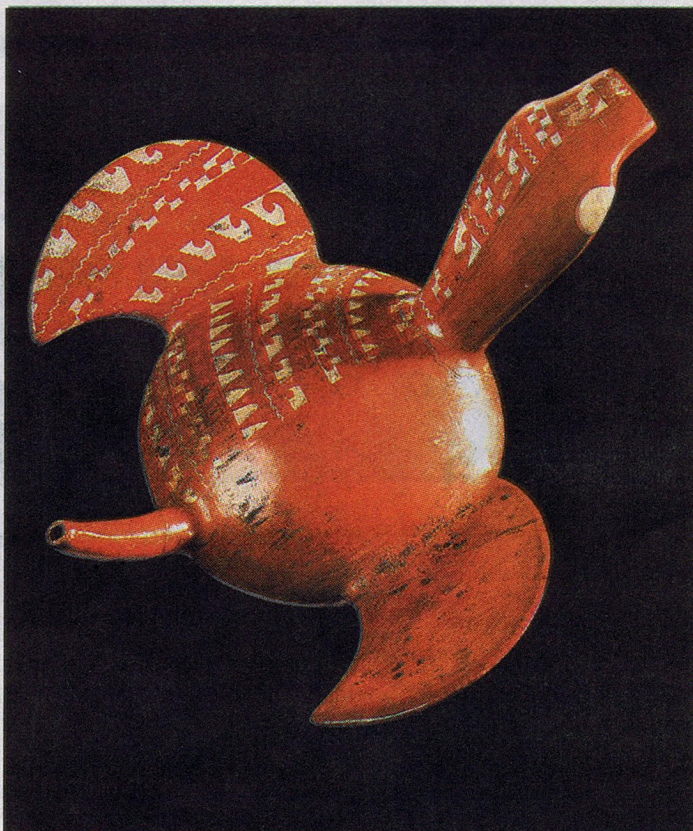
ge Garotte is part of the
rance, at Magen H Gallery.

On the Barcelona museum's
sing day, the newspaper El
s reported, "There were bare-
0 last-minute visitors to the
rld's largest private collection
re-Hispanic art."

Estimates at Sotheby's reach
to the seven figures apiece for
ra-cotta, stone and wood ves-
sels, masks and statues of deities
and animals, made by cultures
attered from Alaska to Patago-
A few had previously be-
ged to famous expatriates in
xico, including the film direc-
John Huston and the French-
adian collector Guy Jousse-
t.

Collectors in the pre-Columbi-
field typically focus on one re-
n. But Jean Paul Barbier-
eller, the family patriarch,
ferred to cover the whole
stern Hemisphere.

He bought against the cur-
ts of fashion," said Jacques
zy, Sotheby's specialist for the
e.



STUDIO FERRAZZINI BOUCHET — MUSÉE BARBIER-MUELLER

A pre-Columbian bird sculpture from present-day Mexico will
head to auction in Paris because a Barcelona museum closed.

Other portions of the family's
art collection remain on view
elsewhere. At the Barbier-Muel-
ler Museum in Geneva, a show of
100 masks includes pieces from
Asia, Africa and the Americas,
along with contemporary face
protectors for athletes and work-
ers.

In Manhattan the family has
lent works to the current Neue
Galerie retrospective of the Swiss
painter Ferdinand Hodler. Gab-
riel and Ann Barbier-Mueller,
a son and daughter-in-law of
Jean Paul and his wife, Mo-
nique, have been lending
their samurai armor and arti-
facts for traveling displays;
the Museum of Civilization in
Quebec City is showing the
pieces through early 2013.

African gold objects that the
family assembled, which now be-
long to a mining company, are
displayed in an 18th-century
Dutch slaveholder's house in
Cape Town.

moners still went to extremes
with precious-metal commis-
sions, and the trend gained
ground after Rome fell. Byzan-
tine leaders shamelessly posed
for mosaic portraits "bedecked in
jewels, pearls and sumptuous
garments," the historian Jeffrey
Spier writes in the catalog for
"Byzantium and the West: Jew-
elry in the First Millennium," a
show that opens on Thursday at
Les Enluminures gallery in Man-
hattan.

The gallery is offering about 40
pieces (with estimates into the
six figures each) that helped Byz-
antines flaunt their wealth. Rock
crystals, emeralds and garnets,
and the occasional glass imita-
tion, are set on long prongs. Fili-
gree gold pinnacles on ring set-
tings look like church spires. Key
patterns woven into their shafts
were meant to imply that the
wearer had "valuable property
locked up at home," Mr. Spier
writes.

Encouraging slogans about
military victory and marital har-
mony are engraved on the gold,
along with the first names of a
few original owners. Portraits of
brides and grooms appear on
marriage rings, detailed down to
the jewelry dangling from the
brides' hair and necks.

The gallery's owner, Sandra
Hindman, acquired the objects
mainly through private collec-
tors, and provenance trails rarely
survive. "There's virtually no
auction market," she said in a re-
cent phone interview. "I like to
say it's a market from pocket to
pocket."

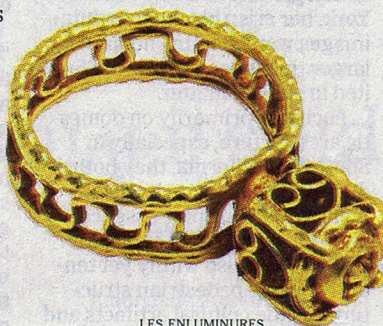
There are stirrings of an auc-
tion market. On Dec. 5 an antiques
auction at Christie's in New
York will offer Byzantine jewelry,
with estimates ranging from
\$2,500 for a ring engraved with a
menorah to \$300,000 for a pearl-
and-sapphire pendant.

Ms. Hindman's next jewelry
research projects focus on wear-
able reliquaries, which contain
saints' artifacts, and posy
rings, etched with love poems.
The British jewelry dealer
Wartski Ltd. has reprinted a
1931 reference book, "English
Posies and Posy Rings," that
collected rhyming inscriptions
like "God sent her me my wife to
be" and "Be truly wise lest death
surprise."

Byzantine Bling

The ancient Romans tried to
ban most jewelry. "The worst
crime against man's life was
committed by the person who
first put gold on his fingers,"
Pliny the Elder wrote around
A.D. 78.

Despite imperial decrees, com-



LES ENLUMINURES

A ring in the forthcoming
show "Byzantium and the
West," at Les Enluminures.