

John Giltsoff

I first met John Giltsoff in London in 1981. He was having one of his rare sojourns in his country of birth and plying his trade from a well-appointed flat in South Kensington. I had just joined the tribal art department at Christie's in London, working with Hermione Waterfield and Bill Fagg, thus technically our relationship was of a professional nature. I quickly came to realize, however, that a "professional" relationship with John was going to be like no other.

John began his working life at the BBC as a journalist for the World Service. His growing interest in tribal art led him to abandon a promising career there and to take up art dealing. He rapidly became one of the leading dealers of his generation. He had a great eye, which was complemented by a deep knowledge of the works in his field and the cultures that produced them, as well as by an intense passion for the objects themselves. He loved to look, to touch, to hold. He was obsessed with the age, the signs of use, the wear, the integrity of any given object. A desirable work for him had to be not only well carved but have just the right patina. It was this combination of knowledge and passion that enabled him to build up such a loyal following of collectors. He was an expert strategist and savvy businessman too, with a great understanding and feel for the tastes of different clients and an instinct for what they might like. Helping a collector build a great collection gave him tremendous satisfaction.



It's impossible to write about John without testifying to his lust for jollity. He was handsome, charming, roguish, rakish, and full of mischief. He was a brilliant raconteur and teller of jokes, and he was never happier than when seated with friends at a table loaded with fine food and wine. On visits to his apartments in New York and Brussels I'd be greeted with the words "I think this calls for some shampoo." John would then dive into the fridge and the champagne would be uncorked in the blink of an eye. He had a great sense of style—if his cash-flow situation was healthy enough, he'd happily take a vintage Rolls Royce or convertible sports car in exchange for art.

John was truly blessed to spend the last twenty-two years of his life with his third wife, Rita, who became involved in the business and brought a sense of stability to his personal life that in the past had sometimes been absent. They were inseparable and a formidable team in their business pursuits. And they were magnificent, generous hosts, the laughter always flowing as freely as the wine.

John was, above all, a deeply loyal and caring friend to many, both inside and outside the tribal art community. He was a "character" in every sense of the word. He will be missed by all of us who were touched by his love and friendship, and also by a significant number of *mâtres d'hôte* from all corners of the earth.

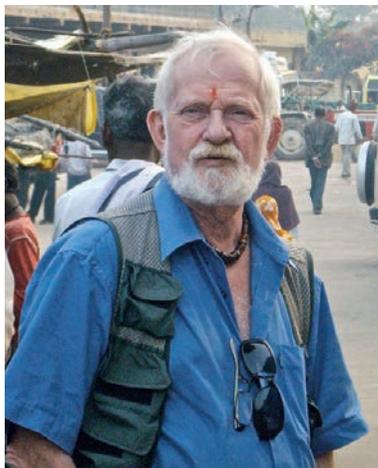
Timothy Hunt

Gérard Wahl-Boyer

Gérard Wahl, AKA Boyez, AKA Bébé Rose, AKA Bébé, AKA Gégé ...

Our friend, our "Bébé," left us on a gray day in January, and the fact that we've all felt like orphans since then speaks volumes about him. We have lost a friend, a role model, and an inspiration.

He was ahead of many of us in years, and in every respect he was our elder and our master. He had an enormous talent for finding treasures in the small-



est antique stores or country rummage sales. Just recently he turned up a truly masterful but previously unknown Kota reliquary figure, all the greater because it was a rare small type with fiercely concentrated power and beauty.

The depth of his knowledge was matched by his desire to learn ever more about all cultures, not just the so-called primitive ones—about the var-

ied artifacts of the Virgin, the Buddhas of Burma, the secret treasures of the minority cultures of China, as well as the antiquities of Rome and Athens, the Cyclades, and the Congo.

His greatest quality was a rare humility. There was no glory, no great gallery. He preferred his kingdom of the flea market. His objects were the result of the excitement of the chase and he often placed them with new owners, but only after he had lived with them for a while. He wasn't particularly interested in the act of selling nor in being in the spotlight.

Bébé was proud of his independence and his freedom. He was also a great judge of character—he either liked people or he didn't. It was clear and straightforward, and it was always justifiable.

He never wanted to conform or be pigeonholed. He was never very reasonable or very wise. And why should he have been? Why miss out on an emotion, a work of art, a smile, a face, or a dream? He often said he had neither regrets nor remorse.

Just before Christmas, he said to me in his weakened voice, "Look over my shoulder—wasn't mine a beautiful life?" How could I contradict him?

We miss you too much, adorable pirate.

Pierre Loos