

Living in eclectic dreams

Next month's auction at Sworders marks the final chapter in the extraordinary story of the legendary London antique dealer, Guinevere. For 60 years, its highly distinctive approach inspired Mick Jagger, Ralph Lauren, Valentino and generations of interior designers. Its influence has changed the trade forever, says COUNTRY LIFE's interiors editor, Giles Kime



Guinevere's famed window displays cleverly brought together antiques from different eras and elevated them to new heights

REFERRING to Guinevere as an antique dealer doesn't quite cut the mustard. 'Disruptor', 'innovator' and 'hugely influential force' are probably closer to the mark.

Guinevere's founder Genevieve Weaver, her sons Kevin and Marc and Marc's wife, Heather, reinvented how antiques were both perceived and presented. While their

competitors specialised in a single period or genre, Guinevere's reach had few limits; its focus was often on styles and parts of the world that other establishments overlooked, ranging from unfashionable European styles to furniture from India, China, Pakistan and Thailand. Heather Weaver cemented the dealer's reputation for African and Indian textiles.

The magic lay in the juxtaposition of what the team assembled: vast amounts of antique lighting, Georgian crystal, altar tables, Murano glass, Italian paintings and Chinese ancestor portraits, teetering piles of antique linen sheets, Han dynasty horses and gilt-wood furniture. In the capable hands of Dean Robinson, Guinevere's in-house alchemist, this eclectic mix was brought to life both



Where it all started: Guinevere opened its doors on King's Road, SW6, in 1963 and soon expanded into four neighbouring shops

in the shop itself and its windows—and also in the hands of others including Alidad, Nina Campbell, Neisha Crosland, Martyn Lawrence Bullard and De Gournay. 'I aim to inspire, entertain and demonstrate that by combining colour, texture, pattern and different periods, an overall harmony can be achieved,' explains Mr Robinson.

'There'll never be another Guinevere. It's an enterprise that grew because of a series of coincidences over 60 years'



Guinevere made its name by bringing together items often overlooked in the art world

GUINEVERE: THE LAST HURRAH

The auction of nearly 500 lots, without reserve, will take place on Tuesday, February 18 at Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers

London viewing: Monday, January 20–Monday, February 3 (weekdays, 11.30am–5.30pm; open Saturday, February 1, 10am–1pm). Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers, 15 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4EZ

Stansted Mountfitchet viewing: Friday, February 14–Monday, February 17 (weekdays, 10am–4pm; Sunday, 10am–1pm). Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers, Cambridge Road, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, CM24 8GE

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