



OPINION COLUMN

Currie museum to foster Jurassic fascination



By George Jacob, Museum Matters
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Very few know that the auction house Sotheby's is one of the first publicly-traded companies on New York Stock Exchange. Established 271 years ago in London by Samuel Baker, Sotheby's conduct 250 auctions a year in 40 countries. It's been entrusted with many world treasures over time, including the Estate of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer*, Rubens' *Massacre of the Innocents*, Picasso's *Garçon à la Pipe*, Bacon's *Triptych*, the 5,000-year-old Guennol Lioness, the Magna Carta, the first printing of the Declaration of Independence and The Martin Luther King Jr Collection.

Operating from 53 offices in 32 countries, Christie's has grown an equally powerful auction house for extraordinary art and quality of service since its establishment in 1766. With former Ambassadors, Duchesses, Baronesses and leading Industrialists on their board, both Christie's and Sotheby's have dominated the world markets on art, designer-ware, memorabilia, curios, works of historic significance and antiquities. While steady, but low-volume competition from French, Dutch and German auctioneers, among others, has added to the conversation, the most serious powerhouse in recent years, has in fact, emerged from China.

Beijing-based Poly International Auctioneer is part of the state-owned \$40 billion corporation with last quarter earnings crossing \$620 million and record revenue of over \$2 billion in 2011. The group's diversified management strategy controls movie theaters, museums, film and television networks and a vast cultural practice that embraces curatorial services, cultural preservation, conservation and galleries.

Auction house IM Chait made news in July 2007 when Hollywood actor Nicholas Cage outbid Leonardo DiCaprio to take home the \$276,000 skull of the 67-million-year-old Tyrannosaurus Bataar- a carnivorous dinosaur from the Gobi Desert in Mongolia. A few years later, auctioneers Bonhams and Butterfields auctioned two rare dinosaur skulls, one belonging to a 65 million-year-old Triceratops for \$242,000 and the other to a related species of the Tyrannosaurus rex for \$206,000. The astonishing discovery of a Triceratops locked in a mortal combat with T-Rex teeth piercing its skull was headed for a \$10 million auction price-tag in 2013.

Dinosaurs hold a commanding presence in the imagination of both young and old. From blockbuster movies, books, toys, T-shirts, memorabilia and designer merchandise, it is the single largest grosser of themed retail in the world. The ever-increasing, record-breaking numbers at Dinosaur Provincial Park and the Royal Tyrell Museum are but a few indicators of similar attention and draw that dinosaur discoveries commanded across continents, making dig sites into destinations of great interest and scientific value.

The much-awaited launch of Jurassic World in June is poised to spur the fascination with dinosaurs to new heights!

While the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum has recently launched an e-shopping module on its website, its 'Kaleidosaur' museum shop will offer unique merchandise that celebrates local talent and regional dinosaur finds at Pipestone Creek. The museum has engaged two of the world's leading paleontology artists and illustrators who have worked closely with paleontologists to create customized illustrations of anatomically accurate renditions of various species on display at the museum. The works of Julius Csotonyi and Scott Hartman are also incorporated into interactive multimedia exhibits being rendered in 3D visualizations at the museum.

While 'Night at the museum' beckons the willing in months ahead, many of these will also be on display at the upcoming Amber Ball on Sept. 26 at the ENTREC Centre. Mark your calendars!

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