The Golden Age of English Horology: Masterpieces from the Tom Scott Collection by Richard Garnier and Jonathan Carter (The Square Press, 2015, 480 pp., hardbound, £125 plus S/H from The Square Press, [www.thesquarepress.co.uk]).

These days, the most important art and antiques collections typically are dispersed at auction, and usually by Christie’s or Sotheby’s. The lavish catalogs become lasting references, even if their primary purpose is to entice the highest possible bids. This has been true for clocks and watches, and my bookshelf sagged under the weight of auction catalogs from the collections of Seth Atwood’s Time Museum, Peter Guggenheim, and other collectors who died or were downsizing, changing focus, or upgrading.

A current exception is the “selling exhibition” of the Tom Scott collection by premier English horological dealers Atwood’s, Edward Bangs & Co. and the publication of a thick hardbound volume, The Golden Age of English Horology. Most potential buyers would have been more than satisfied with the softcover exhibition catalog the dealers also published. Part 1 arrived in my mailbox, alerted me to the heavy hardbound book, and offered 127 large full-color pages of backgrounds, descriptions, provenances, and closeup photographs. Forty-one items are on the price list, with asking prices (exclusive of 5% VAT) ranging from £2200 to £4,500,000.

Tom Scott, an English businessman who moved to the tax-haven Channel Islands, died in 2012 of prostate cancer. In the late 1980s he quietly began buying top examples of classic English clocks from 1660 to 1780—the “golden age”—from dealers and at auctions. Eventually he amassed more than 100 world-class pieces, including sundials, barometers, and a 1718 compass by John Harps. However, the private collection mainly featured large long-case clocks, bracket clocks, and watches by makers Thomas Tompion, George Graham, Daniel Quare, Stephen Hawkes, Thomas Mudge, Justin Vulliamy, and the Knibb family. No other names are as important in English horology, and Scott’s timekeepers entice the highest possible bids.

These include the “Hanover Tompion” with Queen Anne provenance, the “Medici Tompion,” which was gifted to the Cornish De Medici by King William III (who never paid Tompion for it), and the “Brady Tompion” and “Hereford Tompion,” which descended in those families. The “Scott-Cumber Tompion” is so named by the authors, who connect its year-going movement with Prince George of Denmark, husband of Queen Anne. Tom Scott in 2012 commissioned the making of an appropriate case and dial to house it.

Each clock and watch is fully described, with dimensions, materials, and provenances that point not only to noble families but also to some of the most prominent English dealers of the 20th century. F.H. Green and R.A. Lee are two prime examples. Of course, provenance listings also show auction firms Christie’s, Sotheby’s, and Bonhams as Tom Scott pursued top lots during the past 20 years.

The descriptions and photos are quite detailed, even down to hallmarks inside watch cases. At recent conventions of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, I showed the Carter Marsh & Co. exhibit a catalog to Philip Fristey, an English watch expert who authored Watch Case Makers of England, a 1994 NAWCC publication. He browsed and admired its pages, then noted an error that perhaps only he would spot. A circa 1725 gold-case watch by Daniel Delander reportedly had hallmarks indicated as THS. Fristey took the time to write down for me the actual stamping—SJ.JL—identifying Sarah Jaques and John Lee as the makers.”

Other famous clock collections have had books published. Some of its clocks are on the Scott roster. It is unusual, however, for a major book such as this one by Garnier and Carter to be created and published by the dealers who are in the process of selling those clocks. We may be seeing an effort by dealers to recover some ground, increasingly surrendered to the big auction houses, by decreasing the need for subjective estimates, which can be far exceeded during competitive and emotional auction room bidding.

Because Carter Marsh & Co. expects to lose money on the book, which weighs more than six pounds, it can be purchased only from the dealers, via (www.thesquarepress.co.uk). There is no distribution by Amazon or other bookellers, and the dealers believe that only the 300 remaining copies will satisfy the demand for this expensive tome. While most clock and watch collectors do not have Scott-size checkbooks, they often are seeking more affordable English timepieces with similar moves, names, cases, and places in horological history, so the book presents a valuable reference guide for their own collections and acquisitions and family pieces. For readers who feel that the contents are an even classier binding, 58 English engravings and color illustrations were produced, and some of these still are available for £350 plus shipping.

Bob Frishman

Red & White Quilts: Infinite Variety by Elizabeth V. Warren, with Maggie Gordon (Skrira Rizzoli, 2015, 352 pp., hardbound, $60 plus S/H from Skira Rizzoli’s Collectors’ Club, 2015, 559 pp., hardbound, $145 plus S/H from Antique Collectors’ Club’s [www.acdistribution.com]

Joanna S. Rose’s 651 red-and-white quilts spanning three centuries were displayed at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City for six days in March 2011 in an exhibit that Lita Solis-Cohen described as “a jaw-dropping experience” and “an extraordinary, awesome, revelatory, happy masterpiece of installation art [that] provoked tears of joy.” Those 651 quilts and the two that did not make it into the exhibit are now cataloged in this gorgeous book by curator Elizabeth V. Warren and art expert Maggie Gordon with additional text by Anne-Imelda Radice of the American Folk Art Museum, Joanna S. Rose, Martha Stewart, and designer Tom Hennes, and photographs by Gavin Ashworth.

The first few chapters of the book tell the story of the 2011 exhibit, from its genesis as an 80th-birthday gift idea for Joanna Rose through its design and mounting. The Rose family and the American Folk Art Museum hope that the exhibition, which approximately 26,000 people were able to see, can someday be re-created elsewhere. In fact, much of the exhibition literature and all of the hanging devices have been stored rather than discarded, and the quilts were packed away in the order in which they were hung.

Subsequent chapters illustrate all the quilts, grouped by design type: whole-top, Log Cabin, patchwork triangles, signature, etc. Brief captions identify the pattern and size of each quilt. The index of nearly 300 pattern names is testimony to the creativity and hard work of the “women who labored for untold hours over quilting frames, often in candlelight, to sew . . . this incredible array of American optimism, all in red and white.”

Designer British Silver from Studios Established 1930-1985 by John Andrew and Derek Styles (Antique Collectors’ Club’s [www.acdistribution.com]

Maureen Edgar decided to study with “the interesting old man in silver” after an art school examiner failed her and told her she could never be a painter because she wanted to use her fingers on the canvas. Grant Macdonald keeps a packed suitcase in his office so he can travel to meet clients on very little notice, and he always wears “a finely tailored dark pin-striped suit even when the temperature is . . . scorching.” Malcolm Appleby once said, “You’ve come to the wrong man” to someone who commissioned a series of beakers and said that he liked his silver “plain and uncomplicated.” (The commission proceeded nonetheless, with Appleby being given carte blanche for the design.)

These are just a few of the intriguing details revealed in this book’s in-depth profiles of the work and lives of 30 British designer-silversmiths. The profiles are based mainly on one-on-one interviews, and the book includes around 500 full-color images. It took 20 years to research and five years to write. All of the living silversmiths are interviewed and most could provide corrections and additions. Gordon Hamme, the founder of British Silver Week, writes in the foreword that the book brings its “diverse characters to life, making it a joy to read.” Hamme also comments that he learned more in the chapter “on Gerald Bennet” than he did reading in the “Rolling stones” on his life and work.”

The book’s 44-page introduction sets the context by showing how Britain became “a creative melting pot for silversmiths” in the years from 1930-1985. Following the 50 profiles are brief biographical details for 230 British designer-silversmiths working between 1945 and 1948. A guide to U.K. museums where designer British silver can be seen; a list of common abbreviations; a glossary; a bibliography; and an index.

Red & White Quilts: Infinite Variety by Elizabeth V. Warren, with Maggie Gordon (Skrira Rizzoli, 2015, 352 pp., hardbound, $60 plus S/H from the American Folk Art Museum Shop, [shop.folkartmuseum.org] or [646] 783-5985).
Mangle Boards of Northern Europe: Suomi, Danmark, Island, Norge, Deutschland. Jay Raymond (Streamline Press, 2015, 288 pp., hardbound, $185 plus S/H from Streamline Press, 6 Cedar St., Frenchtown, NJ 08825 or [www.streamlinepress. com]).

A mangle board is a plank of wood smooth on one side and carved on the other, often but not always with a handle. Mangle boards were used from the 16th to 20th centuries to smooth damp linen that had been folded and rolled into a scroll around a wooden rolling pin. The process of smoothing the linen continued as it was unrolled on a long table, and the linen received a final smoothing when the mangle board was pressed down on it, using two hands, one on the handle, if there was one, and the other near the end of the board.

Some mangle boards were carved by naive carvers, unschooled in the academic traditions, and others were made by professional carvers trained in the styles of their times. Jay Raymond presents scores of mangle boards, discusses their decorative motifs drawn from antiquity forward, and identifies their regional variations.

Like Raymond’s first book about Art Deco press-irons, this book was commissioned by William C. Carson, a New Jersey collector who owns 240 mangle boards. Raymond traveled in Europe for three months, visiting regional museums and private collections and gathering hundreds of photographs of mangle boards. He says he examined nearly 7000 and had 1500 photographed. A student and teacher at the Barnes Foundation, Raymond and another student, Austen, gathered and photographed hundreds of photographs of mangle boards. Dr. Albert Barnes and Violette de Mazia to examine the aesthetic qualities of mangle boards from the Netherlands, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Germany.

He explains in his preface that the reader should not expect every mangle board to be a perfect work of art. It may have artistic merit, or it may be decorative, or it may have academic careers, but their scintillating art reflects the carver’s familiarity with academic traditions. Some have linear plant forms; others have basket-weave designs. Raymond calls them sophisticated art.

A study of Icelandic mangle boards by Norwegian historian Ellen Marstrander (1918-2008), cited in the book, points out that the heyday of the Icelandic mangle board was the 17th century. There are boards dated 1641 that have handles in the shape of a whale. The carvings were dependent on driftwood and imported wood from Nor- way and Denmark.

Manglebretter, the mangle boards of Norway, show influences from the six other countries. Some are sim- ilar to those of Denmark, Sweden, or Finland, but others have distinct similarities with Danish boards, and some are purely Norwegian. Norwegian, like Danish boards, are colorful and ener- getic. The Norwegian boards made along the northern coast are more primitive than Icelandic boards. The Norwegian boards have dynamic swirling and undulating vegetation compared to the static Danish ornament. Norwegian boards were left unpainted more often than Danish boards but far less often than Friisian, Swedish, or Finnish boards. Some Norwegian boards are more sophisticated, thicker, and narrower than other boards.

The abundance of the natural world is expressed in Nor- wegian mangle boards. Acanthus appears in Norwegian carving in the 1600s. The earliest Norwegian board is dated 1590, and they continued to be made until 1860. Raymond notes that the natural history of mangle boards is a story of the struggle of men to control nature in a mil- ling pot of classic styles and local experiments. One dated 1795 and with a stylized lion handle shows a laundress courting gifts. Raymond notes that the dominant Frisian tradition, while others are like Danish boards because the land- mark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and Germany.

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