



Conchology

Guido T. Poppe & Philippe Poppe - Since 1994

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NEWSLETTER: 16 JANUARY 2025 - FROM MACTAN ISLAND

Above, a view on the new banners, seen yesterday noon in the center of Cebu City. They were hanging there for the first day and announce the upcoming Sinulog. The Sinulog Festival is the biggest event in the year, happening in Cebu City. It takes place every third Sunday in the month of January. It is the most anticipated annual event in the Philippines. Over 3 million people flock to Cebu city each year for this cultural and religious Festival.



*A beauty Queen showing her Santo Niño.
Photo Wikipedia.*

This Festival has been built around the Christian cult of the Santo Niño. In fact, the story goes that in the 16th century Magellan gave a Santo Niño statue to a princess on Mactan Island.

The events turned green for the Europeans after that: Magellan got killed, the remaining crew left with the two boats remaining (out of 3) in Mactan Island, they sunk one boat somewhere near Bohol and 18 survivors reached Europe many months later. There was one man amongst the survivors who wrote down all events on Magellan's epic voyage: Antonio Pigafetta, and thanks to him we know much of what happened and how.



This portrait is believed to show Antonio Pigafetta, although there is also a theory it concerns another Pigafetta. After Wikimedia Commons.

Spain sent an expedition to the Philippines, to take revenge on the previous revolt. During the massacre that followed, soldiers found the statue of the Santo Niño in a house in the south of Cebu city, and thought that was a miracle.

The statue was Flemish in origin and made in Gent. It still exists today and calls for the Sinulog in January - each year.

While all are preparing Sinulog, in our company we continue the regular work: buying shells, recleaning shells, documenting shells, photographing shells and selling shells. Preparing the auctions is a big job, but it's for me a pleasure to research about the different species offered in the prestigious auctions.

We now start the weeks with the "regular auctions" which features 100 lots of selected shells, all starting at 1 euro each, and this auction is followed by the prestigious auction, featuring 24 highly selected specimens.

This involves also acquiring a lot of shells, in order to obtain 24 special shells, which we succeed as we buy a lot from the local fisherfolk each week. Often people wonder how good the pricing on our auctions goes, but in fact there is no secret on that: the price of investment in equipment, gasoline, fishing, traveling, processing and cleaning of the shells we buy is also enormous and it involves the time of hundreds of people. Looking at that, the final shell prices become very reasonable indeed. And each shell becomes like a little jewel.

Here a teaser for our next PRESTIGIOUS AUCTION, I cannot stop looking at this shell.



One of the most amazing *Pterynotus elongatus* ever found in the purple form. This species lives shallow, is almost invisible in its biotope and is very seldom found in nice condition. The present piece is definitely amongst the few very best purple one's ever collected, possibly even THE best one.

The last month has been tragic with the loss of several conchological - malacological people and in this very case also the loss of personal friend/s.

A terrible loss for all who got the privilege having known her, is the passing away of Christina Groh on 8 January this year, few days ago in fact.



Christina Groh - Madeira, 2025.

As many disciplines, the "malacological and conchological microcosm" of a few ten thousand very enthusiast amateurs and professionals, is driven by a few dozen

people who usually "do their thing", but which are also the main motors of the entire happening. Christina Groh was such a motor for our discipline. She worked in the background, but her activities changed the lives of many, including mine.

Born in 1951 in Langen, south of Frankfurt/M., Germany, she became a bank clerk in Leonberg, northwest of Stuttgart. She met with Klaus Groh in 1967 and married him in March 1971. Got a daughter Julia in Darmstadt, in 1984. Became branch manager at Dresdener Bank in Darmstadt, until 1987.

Between 1984 and 2012, she was much engaged as the "Soul" of Christa Hemmen Verlag in Wiesbaden, later ConchBooks. That company, which belonged to the Groh's and the Hemmen families in equal parts, published conchological books of importance, a specialist bookstore and an antique bookstore about mollusks and marine invertebrates. Klaus was a close personal friend of Jens and together they decided to publish my first important books: European Seashells I & II, which sold out at 5000 copies in no time... And Christa was definitely one of the decision makers for that one.

In 1994, Christa Hemmen Verlag became property of the Groh family alone who renamed and extended the business as ConchBooks. Also, in 1993, the Groh family moved to Hackenheim, near Bad Kreuznach, where they found the proper place to host ConchBooks: the stocks of books became indeed considerable under their leadership and needed a lot of space. For almost two decades Christina and Klaus managed masterly this company, which became the number one for conchological/malacological publications on the planet. In 2013, the company changed ownership and went into the hands of Anke and Carsten Renker. The Groh family is still very close to the Renker family at present.

Unfortunately, Christina, got a hemorrhagic stroke on 3 January and died 5 days later in Madeira. She was cremated on 11 January 2025 in São Martinho, Madeira. Her ashes will be buried in the rest forest of Bad Dürkheim, under an old oak at the end of this month.

Christina, apart from being very busy with all malacological, conchological affairs, was an avid collector of antique glasses, mainly of the youth style and art deco period. She loved traveling, especially to ancient historic sites and loved flowers. She supported her husband Klaus in all his endeavors.

All in Conchology, Inc. support Klaus in these difficult moments. Occasionally Klaus and Christina visited us in the Philippines, and they were loved by the ladies working in our company...

You can send a message to Klaus: klaus.groh@conchbooks.de

Conchology, Inc. and our family wish strength to Klaus in this difficult period.

Here a few more photos of Christina, in her memory. She was especially close to Sheila, which she considered "her second daughter", and she acted for her as such, as a friend and a mentor.



Christina and Sheila, in Bad Dürkheim, Germany, 2014.



Christina and Klaus, with what I should call "their extended conchological families",

the Poppe & Renker families. From left to right: Mona, Philippe, Alex, Anke, Christina, Klaus, Sheila, Carsten & Guido. In 2023 in Saint-Hippolyte, l'Alsace, France.



We also lost a few weeks ago the third man from the left here, Roger Tilloy. He was an ophthalmologist from France and collected all SHELL RELATED things. Here a photo of him with 6 more fellows of that special branch of conchologically related objects, such as stamps, coffee-cups with shells depicted, and anything that resembles or has a shell depicted on it. Includes also stamps and postcards. The photo here was taken on 21 May on the Shellshow in Antwerp, and these enthusiast collectors called themselves "the group of 7". From left to right: Jean Consuegra (France), Jérôme Juillard (France), the late Roger Tilloy (France), Régis Lepoutre (France), Cécile Hoskens (Belgium), Peter Ackermans (The Netherlands) and Marc Streitz (France).

Later Louis Tavora joined, and it became the group of 8.

Now we move back to more conchological subjects: our beloved shells.



A few weeks ago, we got this fabulous conchological item: the great classic in cowries, *Cypraea tigris*, the "tiger cowry", but then a specimen with 3 spines. The shell measures a stunning 82.3 mm, and has been collected in Guindacpan Island, north of Talibon, Bohol, the Philippines. Guindacpan is a very small Island, not very far from the better known Nocnocan Island, lost in a myriad of minuscule islands and hard to navigate shallow water along the north coast of Bohol. It is an underwater paradise for photographers there, it is rich in shells, but it's also a sea for experts and experienced people in the quite dangerous marine realm of coral reefs. The waters are, amongst others, infected by different kind of stone fishes - by the millions - and by sea snakes - by the millions. I was never bitten by a sea snake, but I was the victim of kind of stonefish, and passed almost away in a hospital hours later... saved in extremis by 6 doctors who worked hard - witnessed by Sheila.

The shell here shown is in very nice condition, we did not clean it further than the fisherfolk did. We also don't know the cause of the formation of spines on top of the shell. It is definitely an award deserving piece...

Interested conchologists can contact sheila@conchology.be on this subject.

AUCTION RESULTS

Our last PRESTIGIOUS AUCTION was exciting because the buying public was definitely very interested to acquire the shells offered. There were what I think two record prices realized.



This beautiful gigantic 223 mm Neptunea vladivostokensis from Japan, went for a stunning 1315 euro. The shell went through 22 different bids to reach that price. It is an ex-Havelet shell, and as such an ex-WRS size. We got indeed only 3 more, much smaller vladivostokensis in the past. It is clear this is a very rare species in collections.



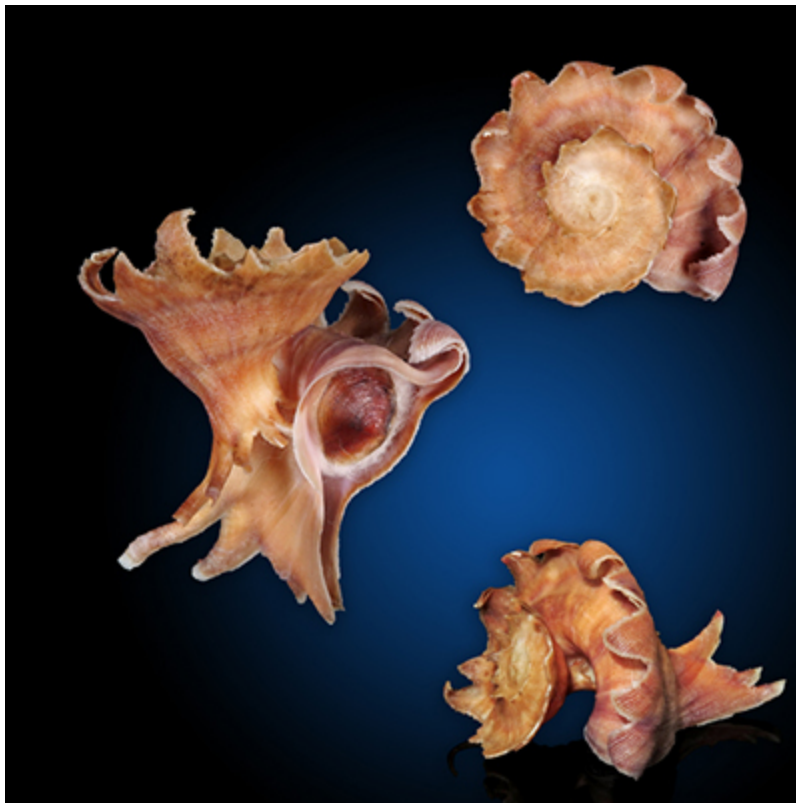
The beautiful townsendi of this auction, an Oman shell, surprised all of us, as this malacological treasure got 15 bids and the price reached 1590 euro. The size is a

stunning 210 mm, and the quality cannot be gem for a scallop of this size, but it's particularly exceptionally good. The color is fresh.



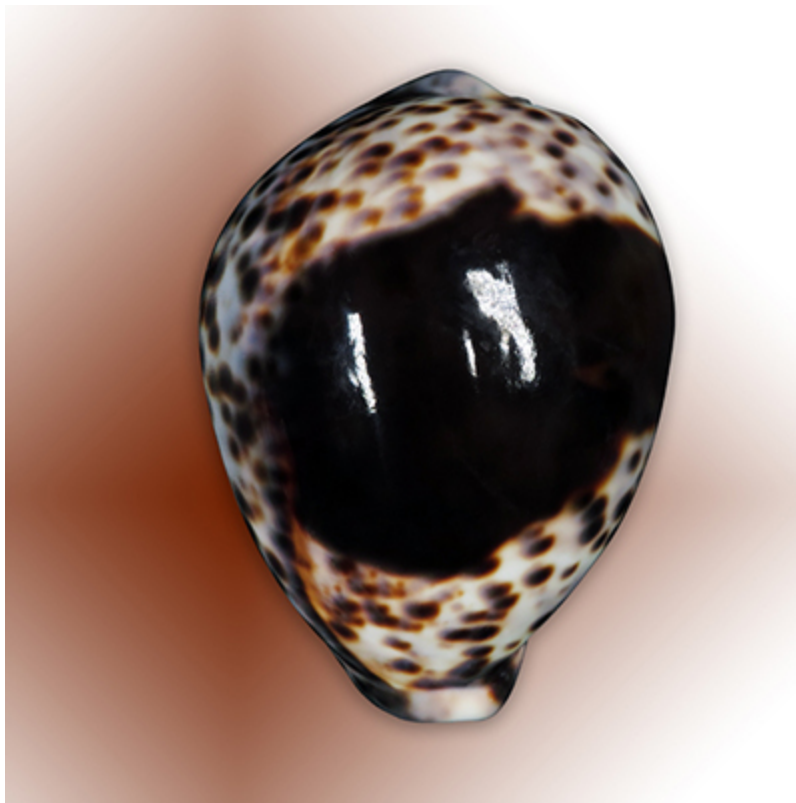
This wonderful deep-water animal comes from pretty shallow: about 200 m, while usually we see them from 400 m or deeper. Its colors are wonderfully well preserved. The price tag of 655 euro is, I think, kind of gift for the buyer, as I saw this same animal in major auctions in the west reaching prices between 6000 and 8000 euro in the not so far past!

All by all the auction was very exciting and satisfactory. We prepared a new auction, for the end of this week, and two more teasers:



A fabulous *mawae* in GIANT size for this form: a stunning 55.6 mm; and of excellent quality. This shell has been fished in Dipolog, in northern Mindanao. There are only a few nets set in that area, which is quite industrial already, but sometimes Dipolog brings fascinating shells to the surface, like giant *Conus gloriamaris*.

The *mawae* reaches bigger sizes in the Taiwan region, but these specimen are thick shelled and look quite rough compared to the thin shelled fragile and ultra-beautiful Philippine *mawae*. Here a piece in dark brown, with operculum and 55 mm+, which is gigantic for the area.



From Bohol, a tiger cowry with a gigantic black spot on the dorsum. This beauty belongs to the form IONTHODES, characterized by black spot(s). But very seldom, the spots reach the size as in this one. Below the spot, apparently a very classic white with multiple dark dots tiger. Well sized, and as such a GRAND curiosity that will attract the attention in collections and displays.

The public has the two first weeks with a double auction embraced with pleasure. We wish all of you great conchological pleasure, with your collections, with your studies on shells and with the excitement of adding new pieces to your existing series.

Sincerely Yours,

Guido T. Poppe
For Conchology, Inc.

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