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Dirty money: Is now the time to invest in rallying's golden era?

10 October 2014 | Joe Breeze

We've seen some heady prices for genuine rally monsters and their road-going offspring in recent months, but is this a sustainable trend? Classic Driver investigates...

Back in February, Artcurial sold a genuine ex-Works Calberson Renault 5 Turbo at Rétromobile for almost €400,000, shattering both its pre-sale estimate of €280,000-320,000 and a World Record in the process. Pierre Novikoff, motor car specialist for the French auction house, believes this was far more than merely a case of a romantic purchase in the car's homeland: "Before the sale, I had many calls from people telling me I was crazy to put such an estimate on a Renault 5 Turbo. But I was always confident it would make the price – in France alone, there are several serious collectors of great rally cars, and the same applies to the UK, Spain, Germany and even further afield." The three other rally cars in the auction surpassed their estimates by some margin.

Jumping prices



As with other genres of collector cars, the key focus with these machines is on originality, authenticity and competition history. “It’s important to separate the factory cars and those with period competition history from those that are modified or built up from road cars,” says Max Girardo of RM Auctions. “As always, if you buy the best, it’ll pay off.” Pierre Novikoff echoes that sentiment: “Authenticity is vital. It’s a well-known fact that many conversions are in circulation.”

Homologation heroes





While genuine competition cars appeal to a select community of collectors that value period history over competition eligibility (there are still relatively few events that allow Group B cars to be driven to their potential, although this is gradually changing), the market for the road-going homologation spin-offs is growing rapidly. Evidence of this was seen at [RM's sale in September](#), when a highly original [Peugeot T16 road car](#) sold for £156,800. "It's a generation thing," says Max Girardo. "During that period, more people were watching Group B than Formula 1. Some of those enthusiasts are now in a position to own a car with a direct association."

More to come?



The next high-profile sale of a factory car with certified competition history will be the [Group B Lancia Delta S4](#) at [Artcurial's 2 November auction](#). Winner of the 1986 Rally Argentina, it carries an estimate of €650,000-750,000 (Novikoff says it has already generated plenty of interest) – but given the renewed interest in these genuine examples and Artcurial's appetite for surpassing estimates, that could yet prove to be conservative.

Photos: RM Auctions / Artcurial

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