

## THE EMPIRE STATE RARE BOOK AND PRINT FAIR

BY LEXI WOLF



Edward and Eve Lemon

### FINE BOOK FAIRS

Fine Book Fairs is the brainchild of Eve and Edward Lemon. Both have been avid book collectors for most of their lives, and now they are sharing their passion for the book trade throughout the United States. Having hosted previous events in Georgetown, Newport, and Philadelphia, the fair's next stop is New York City. This iteration, aptly named The Empire State Rare Book and Print Fair, is bringing in

50 exhibitors from across the country to showcase a dazzling array of books, prints, and a broad range of ephemera, all of which would be considered crowning jewels for any collector.

Taking place at St. Bartholomew's Church on 51st Street and Park Avenue, the fair's opening night party, Thursday, October 5, is a ticketed event where guests can enjoy wine, live music, and canapes while getting a sneak peek at the displays. Tickets cost \$125 and a portion of the proceeds will go the Antiquarian Booksellers' Benevolent Fund, which helps booksellers in need. For the remainder of the weekend, tickets cost \$15 for adults, \$10 for students, and free for those under 16. Admission is free for everyone from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on October 7. An appraisal service will also be offered on site.

Eve and Edward hold the positions of director and assistant director at Fine Book Fairs, respectively. Their idea spawned in 2022, when they began to delve deeper into the world of rare books and wanted to find a creative way to raise funds to preserve a historical building in the nation's capital. Although, at that point, they had only attended one book fair, they set out to create one of their own. The pair quickly found success in this specialized sphere, establishing their business shortly thereafter.

### FIRST EDITIONS:

#### Gutenberg Bible & Harry Potter

Both Eve and Edward believe the fair is a unique opportunity to connect with another era and provide a firsthand experience of history. "In the digital age, it's crucial to maintain a tangible

link with history, and books, being physical objects, provide that connection to the past," Eve said. From their perspective, the first pressings of books are the optimal way to achieve this goal. "So many changes occur over additional printings. The first edition of a book is the closest representation of the author's intent, besides the original manuscript," Eve added.

These first editions can fetch upwards of \$100,000 at auction. Among the remarkable pieces they have presented in the



"Buy books you want to read.  
Books are meant to be read"  
Eve Lemon

past was a leaf from the Gutenberg Bible; one of the first printed books, dating to the 15th century; and a first-edition copy of *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, of which only 500 copies exist. They have also showcased documents signed by Napoleon Bonaparte as well as coveted first editions of Frederick Douglass's autobiography and the beloved children's novel *Anne of Green Gables*.

### GUEST SPEAKERS:

#### Including Royal Biographer Hugo Vickers

In addition to a massive array of books and prints, Eve and Edward curated an impressive lineup of guest speakers. "We want our guests to leave feeling more informed. The goal is to have a series of talks covering various areas, so we can attract a broad range of people and provide them with an opportunity to hear from leading experts in their respective fields," Edward said. One standout speaker among the roster is Hugo Vickers, a renowned royal biographer and broadcaster. Notably, he was a studio guest for Princess Diana and then Prince Charles's wedding as well as Diana's funeral. Vickers will be conducting a book-signing at the opening night preview party. The opening night will also feature a live performance from Ryan Miller, the singer of the indie rock band Guster, in collaboration with the organist of the New York Philharmonic. They will play Guster's song "Empire State."

However, the Lemons' fairs are more than commercial

events; they are social gatherings designed to foster a welcoming experience for both veterans and novices of book collecting. "We want the fair to be accessible. There will be items selling for six figures, but also materials that can fit any budget," Edward explained.

### THE DEBATE: Digital vs Physical

Today, the debate between reading digital books versus physical books has become a prominent discussion. While both options remain popular, the pair have noticed an increasing shift towards hard copies and are optimistic about the future, particularly with the new generation of collectors and readers. "When you look up on the subway, the people reading are often those who are younger. I think that's very encouraging," Edward said. This shift has been evident at their events. "We have a diverse mix of attendees," Eve added. "But notably, a large number are young people. That is one of the top comments we hear from our exhibitors and sellers." To address any possible hesitations among these new collectors, Eve offers a reassuring piece of advice: "Buy books you want to read. Books are meant to be read. That's what we believe in as collectors."

**Fine Book Fairs**  
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