



# Artisan Mid Cap Value Fund

QUARTERLY  
Commentary

Investor Class: ARTQX | Advisor Class: APDQX | Institutional Class: APHQX

As of 30 June 2021

## Investment Process

We seek to invest in companies that are undervalued, in solid financial condition and have attractive business economics. We believe that companies with these characteristics are less likely to experience eroding values over the long term.

### Attractive Valuation

We value a business using what we believe are reasonable expectations for the long-term earnings power and capitalization rates of that business. This results in a range of values for the company that we believe would be reasonable. We generally will purchase a security if the stock price falls below or toward the lower end of that range.

### Sound Financial Condition

We prefer companies with an acceptable level of debt and positive cash flow. At a minimum, we seek to avoid companies that have so much debt that management may be unable to make decisions that would be in the best interest of the companies' shareholders.

### Attractive Business Economics

We favor cash-producing businesses that we believe are capable of earning acceptable returns on capital over the company's business cycle.

## Team Overview

Everyone on the team functions as a generalist with respect to investment research and the entire team works together on considering potential investments.

## Portfolio Management



Thomas A. Reynolds IV  
Portfolio Manager



Daniel L. Kane, CFA  
Portfolio Manager



Craig Inman, CFA  
Portfolio Manager

## Investment Results (%)

As of 30 June 2021	Average Annual Total Returns						
	QTD	YTD	1 Yr	3 Yr	5 Yr	10 Yr	Inception
Investor Class: ARTQX	3.56	19.22	54.16	9.86	10.99	9.44	10.43
Advisor Class: APDQX	3.62	19.34	54.40	10.02	11.14	9.53	10.48
Institutional Class: APHQX	3.66	19.38	54.41	10.09	11.23	9.67	10.55
Russell Midcap® Value Index	5.66	19.45	53.06	11.86	11.79	11.75	10.39
Russell Midcap® Index	7.50	16.25	49.80	16.45	15.62	13.24	10.79

Source: Artisan Partners/Russell. Returns for periods less than one year are not annualized. Class inception: Investor (28 March 2001); Advisor (1 April 2015); Institutional (1 February 2012). For the period prior to inception, each of Advisor Class and Institutional Class's performance is the Investor Class's return for that period ("Linked Performance"). Linked Performance has not been restated to reflect expenses of the Advisor or Institutional Class and each share's respective returns during that period would be different if such expenses were reflected.

Expense Ratios	ARTQX	APDQX	APHQX
Semi-Annual Report 31 Mar 2021 <sup>1</sup>	1.20	1.05	0.99
Prospectus 30 Sep 2020 <sup>2</sup>	1.22	1.06	1.00

<sup>1</sup>Unaudited, annualized for the six-month period. <sup>2</sup>See prospectus for further details.

Past performance does not guarantee and is not a reliable indicator of future results. Investment returns and principal values will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be lower or higher than that shown. Call 800.344.1770 for current to most recent month-end performance.



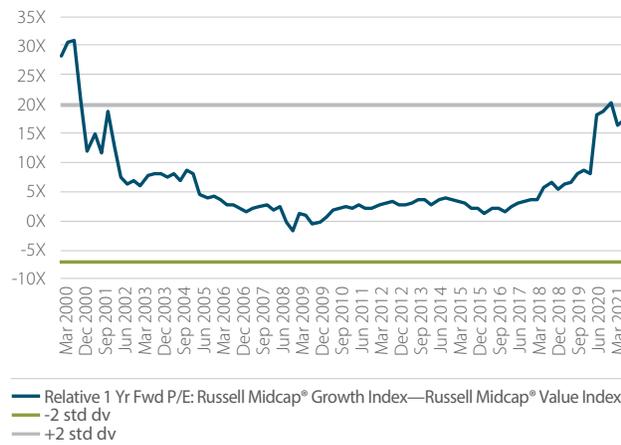
### Investing Environment

Markets continued higher in Q2 on the prospect of a more normal economic environment. Even if some optimism faded with the surge in delta variant cases and rising potential for lockdowns, stocks reached record highs, economic data was robust and inflation climbed higher.

Helping drive prices higher, fiscal and monetary authorities remained committed to providing support through transfer payments and asset purchases. In aggregate, consumers and households are in a historically strong financial position, leaving them flush with savings. All this potential new demand is still being met with supply chain disruptions and shortages in many parts of the economy. One thing there is no shortage of is equity market capacity. The Financial Times recently reported, “Investors are pouring into global equity funds with a fervour never seen before...if the pace of inflows continues at the same clip for the remainder of the year, equity funds will take in more money in 2021 than in the previous 20 years combined.”<sup>1</sup>

With investors pouring money into equities, multiples are expanding, and valuations have been soaring, but not uniformly. Exhibit 1 illustrates the valuation spread (one-year forward price-earnings ratio) between the Russell Midcap® Value Index and the Russell Midcap® Growth Index. Growth hasn’t been this expensive relative to value since the dot-com bubble. The opportunity for investors who demand appropriate compensation for the risks of being a minority equity owner in a publicly listed business has shrunk, but we believe active managers can still identify opportunities through hard work and appropriate due diligence.

**Exhibit 1: Valuation Spreads at Historical Extremes**



Source: Bloomberg.

Value had a great Q1 and first half relative to growth but trailed in Q2, and as previously mentioned, it continues to lag growth’s spectacular run over the last five years. Value’s underperformance is accompanied by the normal pondering of why? A common refrain we hear during these more ebullient conditions is “fundamentals don’t matter.” This is

wrong, of course. Certainly, excitement during bull markets leading to speculation is a normal aspect of the market cycle. And speculators will care less about fundamentals than about momentum and trends. Examples of fundamentals being discarded are playing out before us: meme stocks, booming IPOs, SPAC issuance shattering records, etc. In this kind of investing environment, fundamentals will appear as if they don’t correlate to a stock price. Why do we bristle during these more risk-seeking periods? Because we know fundamentals always matter, even when they may appear temporarily suspended.

### Performance Discussion

The Russell Midcap® Value Index returned 5.66% in Q2 notably supported by the financials, real estate and industrials sectors. Our portfolio lagged the benchmark as our holdings within the consumer discretionary and materials sectors, as well as our lack of exposure to energy, emerged as the largest headwinds.

Among the notable detractors were Air Lease Corp, Thor Industries, Marriott and Gentex.

Airplane leasing firm Air Lease, RV manufacturer Thor Industries and hotel operator Marriott had performed well in the pandemic reopening trade. Their subsequent weakness reflects that trade’s slowing momentum in Q2 as virus variants surged globally and rising uncertainty weighed on economic growth expectations. Still, we remain confident in these businesses. Each are leaders in their respective industries with wide moats and superior business economics. Each is led by a battle-tested management team we believe is executing well on appropriately set strategy to deliver shareholder value. They are carefully and wisely financed, and they have undemanding valuations based on normalized earnings power.

Gentex is a manufacturer of automatic-dimming mirrors and related driver-assistance systems for the global auto industry. Margins have continued to improve year-over-year as management focuses on cost mitigation and product mix (particularly in emerging markets). Vehicle production levels have faltered, negatively impacting shares, due to the shortage of semiconductors and other parts. While auto suppliers face cyclical headwinds in general, Gentex maintains a significant cash position and dedicated capital return program, making it a clear anomaly among automotive parts supplier peers.

Among the notable contributors were Analog Devices, Lions Gate Entertainment, Lamar Advertising, Moelis & Co, Liberty SiriusXM, nVent Electric and Centene Corp.

Analog Devices is the second-largest analog semiconductor chip maker in the world. In 2020, the company announced its planned acquisition of Maxim Integrated Products, a fellow chipmaker, which should boost Analog’s scale and add high-value intellectual property as well as human capital over the long term. Steadily increasing demand from automakers and communications clients has supported earnings, trends we expect to continue. Although supply remains

tight, management was prescient to add incremental foundry capacity earlier in the year and is deftly managing inventory with its hybrid go-to-market approach. The company has been executing well across all business segments, and we highlight the considerable, shareholder-friendly, free cash flow generation. Analog has been a portfolio holding since 2006, having been an excellent compounder of value due to its leadership position in its industry, strong balance sheet and cash generating properties.

TV and film content machine Lions Gate Entertainment is benefiting from a return to production with a robust TV and movie pipeline. Its Starz business is adding subscribers and generating strong free cash flow. We also think Starz's transition to an a la carte model will help insulate the business from multichannel video programming distributor contract risk in the future. Further, the purchase of MGM Studios by Amazon for \$8.5bn highlights the value of unique media content. Lions Gate is now the largest independent movie/TV studio in the world. We continue to see a large discount between the market's assessed value of Lions Gate and our estimates of intrinsic value.

Lamar Advertising operates outdoor advertising structures such as billboards, digital billboards and transit ads. While print media has been eviscerated, the out-of-home industry steadily grows as it remains relevant to advertising. Unlike print advertising, the out-of-home audience is correlated to population growth. Local advertisers use the billboards to replace the lost eyeballs from print. National advertisers use out-of-home as well, due in part to the ability to judge advertising outcomes. Lamar has high market share in areas it serves, and it has shown a disciplined appetite for rolling up smaller local and regional shops. With a record of consistently generating free cash flow and growing dividends, we consider this company a good fit within our process and portfolio.

Boutique investment bank Moelis & Co has consistently taken market share from second-tier bulge bracket competitors. Moelis' collaborative culture and team-based salary incentives result in good outcomes for clients and in increasing advisory business for the firm. Moelis carries zero debt and has a variable cost model, allowing it to remain cash flow positive even in stressful times. The firm returns all its excess cash flow to shareholders in the form of regular and special dividends. While Moelis is currently benefiting from a boom in M&A activity, it is well balanced with a leading restructuring group and growing capital markets capabilities. We believe founder and CEO Ken Moelis has built a company that can sustain strong performance over the long run.

Liberty SiriusXM is a tracking stock whose key assets are 3.2 billion shares of Sirius XM Holdings (SIRI) and 70 million shares of Live Nation Entertainment (LYV). The tracking stock currently trades at over a 30% discount to net asset value. We believe the discount is attractive due to the high quality of assets owned, the undemanding look-through valuation of SIRI stock and management's history of creating value for shareholders. SiriusXM delivers curated audio content creating a loyal

subscriber base of over 30 million customers. Over the long term, we believe SiriusXM will continue growing its subscriber base as it rolls out its new 360L product, increases streaming penetration to existing customers, and as deals with BMW and Toyota drive penetration of SiriusXM radios installed in new cars.

nVent Electric provides electrical connections and protection solutions. These are mission-critical elements in commercial electrical and mechanical systems and civil infrastructure. COVID-19 was the first recession nVent navigated as a stand-alone public company, and it passed the test with flying colors. As economic activity picked up with the arrival of vaccines, strong demand for nVent's products drove strong financial results and a higher stock price. With the low cost of its products relative to a project, and high failure costs for customers, nVent has good pricing power and sustainable margins. The respected management team has a strong pedigree and is operating independently after a 2018 spin out by previous parent Pentair.

Centene Corporation is among the largest managed care organizations in the US and is the well-positioned leader in the fast-growing Medicaid managed care market. The US has a health care spending problem: costs are difficult to control. Fortunately, managed care organizations are a part of the long-term solution. In addition to maintaining a dominant market position and solid membership growth, Centene's financial condition is excellent, with a low debt-to-capital ratio and strong free cash flow. Concerns around short-term state Medicaid funding and potential health policy changes following the US election have largely abated. We think Centene's managed care model can deliver more care at lower cost—a winning combination.

#### Portfolio Activity

We did not open any new positions nor close any existing ones in Q2. In the absence of any buys or sells to discuss, we thought it would be instructive to offer a deeper insight into our process by way of a comparison. As fans of Daniel Kahneman's research, we agree with his conclusions: people are much better at judging risk using comparisons than trying to make an absolute judgement.<sup>2</sup> To highlight how we evaluate risks and rewards when selecting stocks, let's compare car retailers AutoNation, a holding since January 2016, and Vroom, a digitally enabled competitor that is part of the Russell Midcap® Value Index.

Auto retailing is a business we have followed for over a decade. Due to overestimated cyclicality, mid-teens returns on tangible capital, strong free cash flow generation and an underappreciated variable cost structure, it's a better business than the market gives it credit. Like every industry, selling cars is evolving with advances in technology. In other words, people are increasingly buying cars online. Vroom Inc (VRM) represents the new era of online-only used car retailing. AutoNation represents an incumbent, "old-school" auto retailing model, relying on physical locations. At the beginning of 2021, market participants valued these two companies at almost the

same market value—approximately \$5.5bn. As we outline the fundamentals of each business below, ponder this: if you had to pick one of these two businesses to buy for \$5.5bn, which would you choose?

**Financial Condition:** As we go to print, a review of the SEC filings shows that Vroom appears well financed with \$940mn cash and no debt. However, the business is forecast to lose \$265mn in net income in 2021, after losing \$170mn in 2020. Vroom will burn even more cash in 2021 as inventory growth will be needed to meet expected sales growth, along with rising capex needs. Its strong balance sheet can finance growth today, but unless Vroom's business model scales quickly, it will need external financing in the next three years. As for AutoNation, the business has \$350mn in cash and \$1.8bn in debt. Car dealerships, due to their steady parts and services business, tend to use leverage. AutoNation currently has the lowest leverage in the company's history and among peers. If management wanted to use an industry average level of debt it could pay out a dividend of roughly \$30 per share, which is 30% of the company's current market value. AutoNation requires no external financing and is a regular repurchaser of its shares.

**Valuation:** Vroom is growing rapidly with revenue up 150% YoY as of Q1. Gross profit per unit sold in the e-commerce business is \$2,000 per unit. While gross profit per unit sold is improving, further sales growth is needed because Vroom's losses are mounting as they grow—a real-world example of the timeless business joke “we lose money on every sale but make it up on volume.” As for valuation, it is difficult to take a snapshot of Vroom because it is not expected to earn a profit for at least five years and requires external financing to fund growth in the next three years. However, the business sells at a healthy multiple (~1.7X) of 2021 sales. Unlike Vroom, AutoNation also sells new cars and has a valuable parts and service business, which is a key differentiator. Instead of relying solely on the autocycle to generate profit, AutoNation has a steady parts and service business. In a normal year, the parts and service revenue stream will generate 45% of gross profit. New cars sales contribute just 15% to AutoNation's gross profit yearly, dampening the cyclical effects on the business mix. While these are different profit pools relative to Vroom, it is important to note both businesses compete head-to-head in retailing cars to consumers. In 2021, AutoNation is on track for a record year of \$1.3bn in EBIT and over \$14 in EPS. The market currently values AutoNation at 8.0X 2021 earnings.

**Business fundamentals:** Used car retailing is a business which requires sourcing inventory at attractive prices and turning over that inventory quickly to generate acceptable returns on capital. The best operators source cars cheaply via trade-ins and smart auction buying and resell vehicles fast. Also, scale in local markets and owned reconditioning facilities are key to the used car retailing effort, whether done online or via physical stores, because owned facilities drive down the cost per unit sold. As for Vroom, it outsources used car reconditioning efforts and delivery services; outsourcing makes the business more capital light but drives up delivery and reconditioning costs per unit

sold. AutoNation owns its stores and does all used car reconditioning internally, allowing it to control quality and lower costs per unit sold. By owning stores and selling new cars alongside used, AutoNation also sources attractively priced used car inventory from consumers who take advantage of the trade-in option. If given the choice, Vroom may likely want to own its reconditioning and delivery network, but given the cash burn, it can't afford to insource those operations at this time.

Inventory turnover days is another key metric to assessing an auto retailer's execution abilities. One of the advantages to many online-only retailing businesses is they can turn inventory quicker than traditional brick-and-mortar stores. When we compare Vroom and AutoNation, the inventory turnover stat jumps off the page, and not in a good way for the online-only model. In 2020, Vroom turned over its used car inventory every 66 days, and the figure jumped to every 83 days in Q1 2021. AutoNation continues to show impressive operational chops, turning over new and used car inventory every 40 days in 2020, and every 30 days in Q1 2020. With over 60 days, on average, needed to turn inventory, Vroom's execution must improve dramatically if it wants to earn acceptable returns on capital. Online retailing also often leads to greater selection, which is a key reason consumers have been swift to shift buying habits online. This dynamic is not the case for auto retailing. At the end of Q1 2021, Vroom had \$340mn of inventory, while AutoNation had \$2.2bn. Another way to frame the inventory discussion is AutoNation has over 6X the selection of Vroom.

Finally, the convenience of having items delivered to one's home has created consumer desire to purchase goods online. Vroom's revenue growth is a clear sign of consumers' interest in buying cars online. Traditional auto retailers are responding to changing consumer habits. Thanks to its scale, AutoNation has spent years building digital tools that allow consumers to buy cars online without setting foot in a store. Today, AutoNation will deliver cars to customers' homes in local markets, essentially matching the service Vroom provides.

The point of this comparison is to highlight market participant's embedded expectations regarding two similar businesses. To us, the evidence presented here makes a clear case AutoNation is a more valuable business than Vroom. Of course, the future is uncertain, and Vroom's tremendous revenue growth shows there is strong consumer interest in its business model, which should cause investors to pay some premium.

For us, the key question is always what is the proper price to pay for a business? We know the answer isn't any price, no matter how strong future revenue growth appears or how good the financials look today. So how does one evaluate competing opportunities? For one, we don't use single scenario outcomes in our analysis. We consider multiple scenarios and think probabilistically. This often leads us to invest in businesses we feel have good long-term prospects but have faced a recent setback, wringing out excess investor optimism. By being active managers, investing in these lower expectation

situations—and being opportunistic in our approach—we are attempting to tilt the odds in our favor of delivering superior returns relative to a passive index tracker.

Finally, let's get to the punchline. Which business did you want to buy at the start of 2021 for \$5.5bn: Vroom or AutoNation? As we head to print, AutoNation's stock is up 68% YTD, while Vroom is down 3% YTD. Timing is always uncertain—this we know—but fundamentals absolutely matter. We will only invest when the fundamentals are on our side to skew the potential outcomes in our favor.

### An Update on Our ESG Integration

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues have always featured in our fundamental analysis of individual businesses. We work hard to identify as many risks to a business as we can, and we carefully think through as many future scenarios as we can envision, testing our assumptions along the way. We spend a lot of time—sometimes years—researching and learning before we make an investment. How could assets become impaired? Are there contingent or off-balance sheet liabilities lurking? What could disrupt this business's normalized earnings power? Is management credible and do they have the right incentives? These are just some of the questions we'll ask when vetting an opportunity.

The answers to these questions are essential in our risk-aware framework. In the past, we would not have categorized or bucketed these risks according to any rubric. With the rise of ESG, now we can.

We're actively—and explicitly—incorporating ESG factors into our research process because there's power in the way it allows us to identify, categorize and describe risks. It provides us with a new, more precise language to explain how our process evaluates known risks, as well as emergent ones.

Still, the key issues or factors in our ESG analysis will vary widely, depending upon sector and industry, the company's life cycle, geography, whether the business is capital and resource intensive, etc. A list of factors we choose is by no means exhaustive, rigid or meant to incorporate all ESG risk aspects of the business. The factors are part of the inputs we use to make a holistic assessment of the investment opportunity and are flexible by design. Assessing ESG factors and issues requires a deep understanding of companies, industries, geographies and products/services provided.

To facilitate our ESG evolution, we added third-party ESG research provider Sustainalytics to complement our existing research process. However, in our opinion, simply boiling down a company's entire ESG profile to a single letter grade or numerical score does not do the process justice; it is a shortcut for the sake of brevity and neatness. Such abstraction can hide more than it reveals, and we think the important nuances are more subtle. Proper ESG analysis is a part of fundamental analysis, which requires deep research and thinking. Companies are complex institutions and require a comprehensive method to assess their ESG progress, failures, targets and policies.

Therefore, we use a qualitative analysis approach, supplemented by quantitative data.

We're evolving and refining our ESG framework as we gain experience with it. We'll be updating you regularly with our progress and sharing what lessons we're learning. Stay tuned.

### Business Update

We are very excited to announce that in July, Rosa D. Vazquez joins the Artisan Partners U.S. Value Team as a research analyst based in Chicago. In this role, she'll conduct fundamental research as a generalist. Prior to joining Artisan Partners in July 2021, Ms. Vazquez was an equity analyst with Perkins Investment Management. Before that, she was a senior associate consultant with Bain & Company. Ms. Vazquez holds a bachelor's degree in finance and management from Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

### Perspective

Recently, particularly Q4 2020 and Q1 2021, the market environment rewarded value factors over growth. Whether or not this rotation proves long-lasting and sustained, we'll allow others to pontificate. What we do know is valuation spreads remain wide between areas of the market with exciting growth prospects and our lower-expectations opportunity set. It's in these conditions—elevated and widely dispersed valuations—where our opportunistic and disciplined style of investing can find favor, raising our odds of delivering benchmark beating returns over the market cycle.

<sup>1</sup>Eric Platt, "Inflows into equity funds smash records," Financial Times, 4 Jul 2021. <https://www.ft.com/content/85b06040-1993-4752-bf4f-7964fed3fe26>

<sup>2</sup>Beverly Goodman, "Daniel Kahneman Says Noise Is Wrecking Your Judgment. Here's Why, and What to Do About It," Barron's, 28 May 2021. <https://www.barrons.com/articles/economist-daniel-kahneman-says-noise-is-wrecking-your-judgment-heres-why-and-what-to-do-about-it-51622228892>

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Carefully consider the Fund's investment objective, risks and charges and expenses. This and other important information is contained in the Fund's prospectus and summary prospectus, which can be obtained by calling 800.344.1770. Read carefully before investing.

Current and future portfolio holdings are subject to risk. Securities of small- and medium-sized companies tend to have a shorter history of operations, be more volatile and less liquid and may have underperformed securities of large companies during some periods. Value securities may underperform other asset types during a given period.

Russell Midcap<sup>®</sup> Value Index measures the performance of US mid-cap companies with lower price/book ratios and forecasted growth values. Russell Midcap<sup>®</sup> Index measures the performance of roughly 800 US mid-cap companies. Russell Midcap<sup>®</sup> Growth Index measures the performance of US mid-cap companies with higher price/book ratios and forecasted growth values. The index(es) are unmanaged; include net reinvested dividends; do not reflect fees or expenses; and are not available for direct investment.

This summary represents the views of the portfolio managers as of 30 Jun 2021. Those views may change, and the Fund disclaims any obligation to advise investors of such changes. For the purpose of determining the Fund's holdings, securities of the same issuer are aggregated to determine the weight in the Fund. The holdings mentioned above comprise the following percentages of the Mid Cap Value Fund's total net assets as of 30 Jun 2021: Analog Devices Inc 3.9%, Lamar Advertising Co 2.7%, Moelis & Co 2.5%, nVent Electric PLC 2.4%, AutoNation Inc 2.4%, Air Lease Corp 2.3%, Gentex Corp 2.2%, Centene Corp 2.2%, Marriott International Inc 2.1%, Thor Industries Inc 1.5%, Lions Gate Entertainment Corp 1.0%, Liberty SiriusXM Group 1.0%. Securities named in the Commentary, but not listed here are not held in the Fund as of the date of this report. Portfolio holdings are subject to change without notice and are not intended as recommendations of individual securities. All information in this report, unless otherwise indicated, includes all classes of shares (except performance and expense ratio information) and is as of the date shown in the upper right hand corner. This material does not constitute investment advice.

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