## British Eclecticism at its Best



After earning his BA in film and video, James embarked on a television career for four years before deciding his future lay with telling stories about objects as opposed to people. In 2009, after four years part-time managing a well-established antiques center, James launched Doe & Hope as a truly unique online inventory offering a cocktail of decorative, rare and unusual antiques and curios. Doe & Hope has since gained somewhat of a cult following. The ability to haggle for the best price sets the site apart as do the detailed narratives and atmospheric photography that accompany each and every object.

# As the Founder of Doe & Hope, you focus on rare and unusual antiques. What are your specific areas of interest and expertise?

My expertise and aesthetic are rather eclectic, but as a rule I mix and match pieces in a cinematic way. I blend antiquities right through objects from the 1930s and include decorative and architectural elements with furniture, mirrors and painting. My specialist areas of knowledge include ventriloquist dummies, portraiture, taxidermy, and English furniture from the seventeenth century.

# You're a young guy! How did your interest in antiques develop and how did you establish yourself in a business traditionally dominated by an older generation of dealers?

I always had an imagination for things that had gone before me. Imagining both the object's life and the object's owner were fascinating for me. When I lived in the quaint town of Saffron Walden, south of Cambridge, I began dealing and started visiting the local junk or second hand shops for old furniture to furnish my new home. I had caught the dealing bug and the rest is history. To establish the brand I had to train my eye over the years and trust in my instinct. Luckily I had an eye for the unusual, which I am not sure you can teach, and gradually I built my client base piece by piece. The industry needed some new blood and I think I have been able to provide it with something to think about. At least, I hope that's the case. There are many older dealers whom I take inspiration from and I'm thankful to all of them for the guidance they have shown me. Dealing is where art and money spectacularly meet and it can be a difficult balancing act.

#### Can you share a few of your most memorable or surprising antique finds?

I've had a few, but one is particularly memorable. I bought a painting of a child blowing bubbles that turned out to be by Hans Van Meegeren. Van Meegeren was born in 1889 and was the most notorious and celebrated forger of the twentieth century. He forged paintings by some of the world's most famous artists, including Frans Hals, Pieter de Hooch, Gerard ter Borch and Johannes Vermeer. I picked up a painting and it turned out to be one of his own original works and it was signed. I made a handsome profit, but I enjoyed learning about this extremely interesting historical figure first and foremost.

### What's the best advice you can give to new collectors just starting out?

If you don't genuinely care about something, there's really no point in collecting it. Don't feel constrained to one period or aesthetic, rather, go with your gut instinct and buy what you currently love. That love may change, but it's a journey you need to take before you realize what it is that you truly love.

### What are the biggest pitfalls antique collectors face today?

You need to trust the seller from whom you are buying. Some of the traders are dishonest and you'll need to judge and analyze the dealer before the item. Dealing is an art form. Don't buy from a rogue seller – buy from a dealer who is passionate about the same thing as you are, if you do that, you won't go wrong. Yes, you may pay a little more, but that's better than landing a fake or something that's been cobbled together haphazardly.

You were recently awarded the Antiques Young Gun of the Year. What does this award mean to you?

I'm naturally delighted to take on the mantle of AYG from the superb ambassador that is Tim Medhurst! I'm looking forward to both the challenges and benefits that come with the role. It means a lot to be the first bona fide dealer to win the award and I hope I can leave a distinct mark on the year's proceedings and help the movement continue on an upward trajectory. Since I was part of the first core of AYGs championing the movement on social media, it is wonderful to be recognized by my peers as an AYG winner. I've had many a kind word from all those involved in the trade since the awards which has been incredibly important to me. There are many people who've inspired me in the trade and whose work I continue to admire. I see dealing as an art form and I believe there are many an artist out there, many of whom are incredibly underrated. I hope I can bring as much positivity and respect to the trade as I can whilst I am the holder of the award.