



The Decorative Antiques and Textiles Fair in Battersea (January 24-29) is a good place to find folk art

## FOLK ART

With its simple and characteristic naive style, folk art appeals to modern interiors as well as more period looks. The antithesis of fine art, folk art is primarily practical and was typically produced by the poor of any indigenous culture covering many different geographical areas and periods.

In America and the UK, pieces that fall into the folk bracket include weathervanes, old shop signs, itinerant portraits, roughly carved chairs, carousel horses and even tribal masks, made in a variety of materials. At auction, prices vary hugely, but generally speaking the more sought-after pieces are artistically pleasing and retain much of their original decoration.

This butcher's shop diorama can be considered as an icon of the British folk art tradition. Each piece is hand carved and painted

and the joints of meat are technically correct in detail. There are two theories as to their original purpose, one that butchers hung them in windows as a trade sign, the other suggesting they were used as teaching aids in the kitchens of large private houses to demonstrate butchery and cuts of meat. Whatever their purpose, there is a small known body of these works, all seemingly created by the same hand, and sharing a naive sculptural quality, unique to the British tradition.

While auction houses do not tend to offer dedicated folk art sales, local salerooms in areas rich in folk art such as Cornwall often include pieces. Robert and Josyane Young run Robert Young Antiques in Battersea, [www.robertyoungantiques.com](http://www.robertyoungantiques.com); Denzil Grant also has a fine selection.

## EXPLORER CHIC

The modern day *kunstkammer* or cabinet of curiosities look is reserved for those with more exotic tastes. The trend can be achieved by juxtaposing old maps, globes, books and large glass fronted cabinets, with quirky fossils, large taxidermy and other curios.

If you want to invest, buy the oldest pieces you can find, preferably made by well-known makers. For instance, buy Victorian taxidermy by renowned firms such as Van Ingen of Mysore or anatomy drawings and models which date to the early days of medical advancements in the 19th century.

Campaign furniture tops the list of must haves for the modern day *kunstkammer*. With the rapid growth of the British Empire in the 19th century, came the increased movement of administrators, colonists and of course the army and navy. It was not uncommon for an officer to have what would now be considered a ridiculous amount of luggage. Hence the growing demand for portable furniture. Ross and Co. of Dublin were one of the most important makers of campaign furniture in the Victorian era and, justifiably, their name still stands out as a leader in their field today.

Christopher Clarke Antiques is one of the very few antique shops that specialises in military campaign furniture and travel related items. Its inventory also includes naval and marine furniture, Anglo colonial antiques

TimeLine Auctions, as well as the gentleman's library sales at Molloms. While antiquarian book specialists such as Dominic Winter and Forum Auctions offer old maps.



'Mr. Bunsen's inflexible globe' ticks all the collector's boxes. Made of tin

# ANTIQUE COLLECTING

DEC/JAN 2016-17