



A fair growing in size and in confidence

Exhibitor numbers at *Masterpiece* rise to 160 as trade prepares for summer showcase

By Frances Allen

Not one's everything, but as *Masterpiece London* returns bigger than ever this month, its growth seems to reflect both continued good marketing and promise for the future.

The fair, which takes place at The Royal Exchange T Cloisters from June 26 July 4, falls in the middle of the two-and-a-half-week stretch of auctions and exhibitions that represent the height of London's fine antique season.

Since its debut in 2000, *Masterpiece* has retained the great spirit of early fairs, despite being one of the more aggressive events on the circuit. Reports of last year's event were generally positive with news of first-time buyers and sales across the board. Several dealers reflected that, right now, it had struck the right balance between luxury taste and traditional trade fairs.

Following that strategy, M&C Group, owner of the fair, has become *Masterpiece's* majority shareholder. Lucie Richardson,



Left: *Ballroom* brings the pair of George II grandsons from 1770, given in the region of £700,000

Above: An ornate-mounted cabinet, with an ornate silver and mercury application, comes in at 170-172, reflecting *Masterpiece's* reputation for being a platform for historical pieces. Auction Price: £1,000,000. A former part of *Masterpiece's* 100-year-old collection that will see concurrently at both *Masterpiece London* and the *Sotheby's* gallery in Great Street, Mayfair



Above: *Robert Young Antiques* brings a pair of Scandinavian red-treated Merganser drake decoys with sculptural details and original painted decoration. Made with painted wood, horse hair and verdigris copper wire, c.1880-1900, the pair is offered for £5500.



Above: *Philip Wood* brings this portrait miniature, possibly of Queen Elizabeth's son-in-law Robert Rich, 1st Earl of Graham. The 17th-century miniature, painted by Simon Kneller or other artist, comes in priced at £25,000

5 Questions

Paul (left) and Mike (right) started trading their years ago and opened a business in London in 2000. They are exhibiting at the art & antique fair from June 26-27. Below, Paul discusses the art's transformation from collectors to dealers.



1. How did you get your start?
 We were furnishing our apartment in a Grade II listed house in Westminster. We had longed for things of quality and different periods and quality and we ran out of space and had to start selling. Trading was never an intention - collecting was.

As the volume of buying and selling increased, our hobby developed into a serious business and effort to spend on research, knowledge acquisition and trade development. As some point we had to get realistic - this was no longer a hobby but a full-time job. We thought of the business and started trading as *Masterpiece's* friend.

2. The first sale you remember making?
 A collection of stamps in a 1980s or 1990s. It was probably worth more than the day I got into the market.

3. How has the trade changed?

Above: *John Mitchell Fine Paintings* includes 'The Shadow of Mount Zion as Seen by Gabriel Light' painted from the summit in August 1970 on its stand. The painting, completed in oil on card with an oak frame, measures 12 x 16in (30 x 40cm) and is dated 1970. It is priced at £60,000

