



David Moss
email: davidmoss@
antiquesadagezette.com
tel: 020 7420 6624

Learning the vernacular

NOWADAYS, we are always on the lookout for some positive news, and here it comes in the perhaps unlikely guise of European folk art.

It was when talking to international folk art specialist **Robert Young** about his forthcoming exhibition that I learned that this field is less esoteric than I thought and a bit of a recession buster.

The economic turmoil was in full swing a year ago when Robert held his most successful gallery show ever.

He went on to enjoy a good Olympia where, for the first time, he sold more to new clients. He was more than satisfied with a fair in San Francisco in the autumn, and almost surprised himself with an enormously successful Winter Show in New York in January – particularly as Americana, which is of course folk art, was nowhere near as buoyant as usual. Luckily, Robert Young's stock is European.

Probably because the Americans (and just the Americans) go overboard for Americana, I had assumed the main customers for all folk art were American.

Not so. Even at the New York show, more than 30 per cent of Robert Young's sales were to Europeans. And there are customers in Japan.

I gather that at a time when many sectors of the market are suffering, there is a real renaissance of interest in the best folk art, trend and vernacular furniture.

It is true that folk items have a crossover with interior design, suit left style living and mix well with contemporary. This is one of those odd incidences of art and design managing to look modern.

Not surprisingly, it is also an area at which more dealers are looking. After Partur Convention I never thought I'd see another Folk Revival.

Look on the bright side, folk!

■ Specialist sees market holding up after his year of hard work

■ Cotswold dealer's legacy adds more choice to selling exhibition

FOLK art specialist Robert Young, has had to work as hard as anyone else over these tough last 12 months, but, unlike too many dealers, he can look back on a successful year. It seems his sector of the antiques market is holding up better than anyone might have predicted.

This bodies well for one of the high spots of Battersea-based Robert's year, his annual selling exhibition of folk art which will be held for the tenth year at 68 Battersea Bridge Road, London SW11 from May 8 to 16.

The show comprises around 100 pieces, with 36 in the exhibition catalogue. Prices range from £500 to around £20,000.

It is always difficult to define folk art precisely, but a look at Robert's stock brings instant recognition of what this field is all about. The objects are quirky and often naïve. But, although there is a decorative flare, it is also a timeless appeal.

Which is probably why quite a lot of



the young stock goes to younger buyers and collectors of contemporary.

This show features staples of the genre, such as weather vanes, carved and painted toys, primitive animal portraits, decoy birds, painted shop signs and a classic Welsh love spoon.

There are also some good pieces of early English turn and several fetching examples of farmhouse, tavern and vernacular furniture.

The latter includes a monumental, c.1700 Welsh oak 'Carnarthen' chair. This specific geographic term is not one I've come across before, but the 3ft (91cm) wide chair certainly has exceptional patination and it is among the more expensive pieces in Robert's exhibition.

While maybe not everyone's idea of folk art, a more unusual item – an English c.1865 bonemaker wrought-iron and cast-iron bicycle – does have a simple

Left: dated c.1880, this 14½in (37cm) wide, French horse-head trade sign in weathered repoussé zinc with a gilt surface is priced at £2200 at **Robert Young's** annual exhibition.

Right: one of a number of pieces from the Roger Warner Collection in Robert Young's folk art show is this 11in (28cm) high English c.1790 figure probably depicting George III. The carving, with untouched, crumbly, original painted surface costs £6500.



sculptural quality that sits well in the catalogue. Robert is particularly pleased with a choice selection of pieces put together by the late Cotswolds dealer Roger Warner and offered in the Roger Warner Collection at Christie's South Kensington on January 21-22 as reported by my colleague **Anne Cane** in *ATG* issue 1877.

Robert says "Mr Warner had some very pure, untouched and rare objects and vernacular furniture in his collection.

"He had an innate understanding of the ware with a sensitivity to form and colour that was really some way ahead of his time."

Last year, Robert sold over 80 per cent of his exhibition making it the most successful show in his shop to date.

This year he says that, while it is getting more and more difficult to buy this work, and prices are not cheap, there does appear to be a consistently high demand. It seems that while the art may be folk, the hard-headed market for it is far from folkly.

Tcholaria helps gallery off to a dream start

AFTER moving from their eponymous premises on Hay Hill in London's Mayfair, the Hay Hill Gallery is now firmly established not far away at 23 Cork Street, London W1 (Tel: 020 7734 7010). The first major show at the new gallery

Tudor venture

KENT dealer, and more recently antiques centre owner, Lemox Cato launches a new venture at the second annual *Spring Open Weekender* at his Enderbridge Galleries on May 9 and 10. Sixteen years after launching the upmarket galleries, he opens an extension at Taylor House, a Grade-2 Listed building dating back to the 15th century adjoining the more modern main galleries.

"Expanding the galleries into the Tudor building is the start of a new phase," says Lemox. "I feel Taylor House will particularly lend itself to country dealers as the building offers a wonderful backdrop for oak and country furnishings."

Joining the Enderbridge collection in time for the open weekend are East Sussex English porcelain specialists Jupiter Antiques, which keeps the tally of Enderbridge dealers at ten. Lemox is particularly pleased to have recruited Jupiter since for some time he has been keen to incorporate a certain dealer into the gallery.

Art dealer turns artist

IS there a life beyond the trade? James Kirkman's proof positive that there is, from the early 1970s to his retirement in the 1990s, he was among London's most influential dealers handling the works of Lucian Freud, Henry Moore, John Piper and Graham Sutherland to name but four. Unlike other dealers, when he retired he gave up the business completely and became an accomplished painter, much inspired by Mexico where he and his wife, Claire, have lived for 15 years.

From May 6 to 9, he shows *Strokes, Elements & Other Figures*, a solo exhibition of 60 recent works, at *Indar Pasricha Fine Arts*, 22 Connaught Street, London W2.

Prices range from £300 to £4500 and the entire proceeds go to REE, a school for deaf children at San Miguel, Mexico.

Settling the Trinity question

LAST year, when I previewed the *International Fine Art Fair* in New York (May 1 to 5), I mentioned that among those making their debut was Trinity Fine Art from Broadway, Westchester, who opened their High Street gallery last year.

In recent, of course, *Trinity House Fine Art* as the real Trinity Fine Art quickly reminded me. Trinity Fine Art were founded in Mayfair in 1984 and work from 29 Bruton Street, W1 with other premises in New York and Milan.

Apologies.



WELLERS AUCTIONEERS
70 Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 9HL
Tel: 01932 568678 Fax: 01932 56862

www.wellersauction.com antfairs@wellersauction.com



ON-SITE AUCTION OF
ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES AND
RECLAIMED BUILDING MATERIALS
TO BE SOLD WITHOUT RESERVE

Friday 15th & Saturday 16th
May from 10.30am

At The Green, Wood Street
Village, Nr Guildford, Surrey,
GU3 3DU

VIEWING: Sat 9th May - Wed 13th May - The 14th May 10am to 4pm
On Sale Days from Sun 1

Download catalogue from www.wellersauction.com or purchase on View Days for £4