

ROBERT and **Josyane Young** have traded from the same unmodernised Battersea shop for nearly 40 years. As it started to show its age, with a rotten lintel over the shop front and an ailing roof, they had to take action.

So, says Robert, "It was time to consider our future, either sell up and work in a different way or invest, against the current trend, in our retail 'high street' premises and work to expand our footfall further, gallery trade and develop the potential offered by a central (relatively) London exhibition space".

They chose the revamp and, after the grim task of emptying the whole building, overhauled it, just (and only just) in time for their annual *Exhibition of Folk Art* from May 7-16.

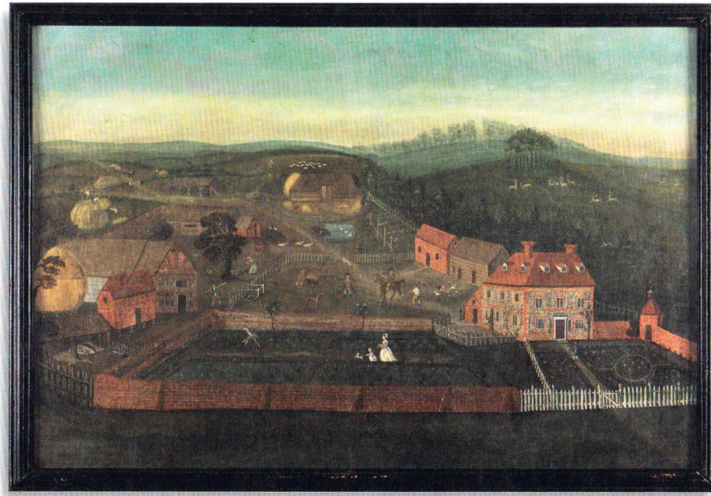
Robert asks visitors to take them as they find them as they may still be re-installing in the first few days.

While internet sales have increased markedly over the past years, Robert is a firm believer in the antiques shop as a dedicated space in which to present works, creating 'still lifes' with groups of objects, in order for potential buyers to experience the sensory pleasure of these pieces and so fully understand them.

The same RYA atmosphere and style, however, will remain, with the cosy log fire greeting visitors in the colder months, and Robert plans to hand-paint the window display with the same design he created for the 1991 *British Interior Design Exhibition*.

Last summer, the *British Folk Art*

Robert gets to grip with the changing picture of folk art



Left: *Prospect of Littlecote Home Farm*, a "rare and significant" English naive school oil on canvas work dating to c.1720 in its original period frame, 2ft 11in x 4ft 3in (88cm x 1.28m), priced at a five-figure sum.

traditional to the more individual and eccentric: "They like crusty old paint and wonky perspective and unusual forms and now naturally gravitate to them with less nervous curiosity and more confidence than before."

However, rising interest also means increasing competition to buy good things: "We now struggle to find honest works, untouched and original, with integrity and spirit. We and the market appreciate works in original condition, raw, real and sensitive. Of course they have largely disappeared."

Yet still things do pop up, enough to stock Robert Young Antiques' 42nd catalogue of folk art with 52 typically quirky pieces of folk art and vernacular furniture, ranging from a group of sculptural Windsor chairs through treen to tavern signs and naive paintings, a selection of which are pictured here.

■ robertyoungantiques.com

exhibition at Tate Britain widened the audience for what had been seen as a niche interest, though its impact upon the market has been hard to measure, says Robert, and he had noticed a growth in interest before the exhibition.

"I think that it certainly helped establish that there was a merit and quality to 'art'

from outside the mainstream narrative of our art history and it really was a landmark exhibition, for this reason alone, if nothing else," he adds.

He has noticed that more people are familiar with the terms folk, primitive, naive and vernacular, and seem to "get it", with tastes moving away from the



Left: "Bright, colourful, uninhibited, bold: all the good things about naive art" is how Robert Young describes this Swedish Bonad or Kurbitz School painting of a horse and rider, entitled *I Travel to my Little Friend*. The c.1830 water and body colour piece on hand-made paper, 20 x 23in (51 x 58cm), is priced at £4500.

Right: these two c.1825 miniature dummy boards by George Smart, 'The Tailor of Frant', were included in the 2014 *British Folk Art* show at Tate Britain and are currently the only known surviving examples of Smart's work in this form. The blackbird and cat, each standing 7¾in (20cm) high, are made in a collage of velvet and mixed media on shaped pine boards and priced at £3200 each.



May date for Galloway at Arley Hall



Left: the first of Galloway Fairs' two art and antiques fairs at Arley Hall, near Knutsford in Cheshire, runs from May 8-10. Held in the Tudor barn and the hall itself, there are 30 exhibitors including antiques dealers *Lancaster House* and *Adrian Harris Antiques*, picture dealers *Plumb's Fine Art* and the jewellers *Plaza* and *Billy Rae*. Shown here is a stylised German porcelain vase decorated with a design in silver overlay against a turquoise background by Friedrich Wilhelm Spahr & Co, c.1950, priced at £1195 from *John Newton Antiques* at Arley Hall. ■ gallowayfairs.co.uk

The Annual Buxton Antiques Fair
at The Pavilion Gardens

Antiques, Jewellery, Books, Maps

Thursday 14th - Sunday 17th May

Thursday 11am - 7pm
Fri & Sat 11am - 6pm
Sunday 11am - 5pm

Admission £

Enquiries: 01278 784912
www.cooparents.com

