dealers' diary



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That's all the rage, folk!

- Pioneer Robert Young reaps rewards as newcomers move into his specialist market
- Sophisticated urban decorators embrace the naive rustic image

EVEN Robert Young, the London dealer who, more than anyone else, has pioneered the rise of European folk art in the UK, is astonished at the current popularity of his speciality.

On the eve of his 11th annual exhibition of Antique Folk Art at his gallery at 68 Battersea Bridge Road, he tells me that over the past ten years he has noted the unprecedented growth of interest in these pieces, especially with younger clients.

And over the past three years he has seen the field become not just voguish but one of the really hot sectors of the antiques market.

The decorators have noted European folk art, and it is interesting that the majority of buyers are sophisticated urban rather than folksy rural collectors.

All of which bodes well for the forthcoming annual exhibition, which has its preview evening on Election Night, May 6, and then runs until May 15. This is the 11th selling show but it is the 27th catalogue, publications which

themselves have now become collectors'

There are just over 50 pieces in the catalogue, priced up to around £15,000, but there are at least 130 pieces on offer during the show.

Robert Young says: "Great folk art makes you smile. There is invariably something slightly quirky in the perspective, proportions, graphics or colours of these pieces that almost defines the genre."

Created or painted by untrained hands, its "kookiness", says the dealer, is partly responsible for the current popularity of what has hitherto been an underappreciated field.

Original 'as found' condition is another desirable attribute of genuine folk art and is apparent in the wide range of pieces in the show.

There is an original 19th century painted toll bridge sign from the Lake District; hand-carved wooden pigeon decoys, Norwegian ale bowls, love tokens, weather vanes, trade signs, pieces of vernacular furniture and some very playworn toys, definitely not in mint and boxed condition.

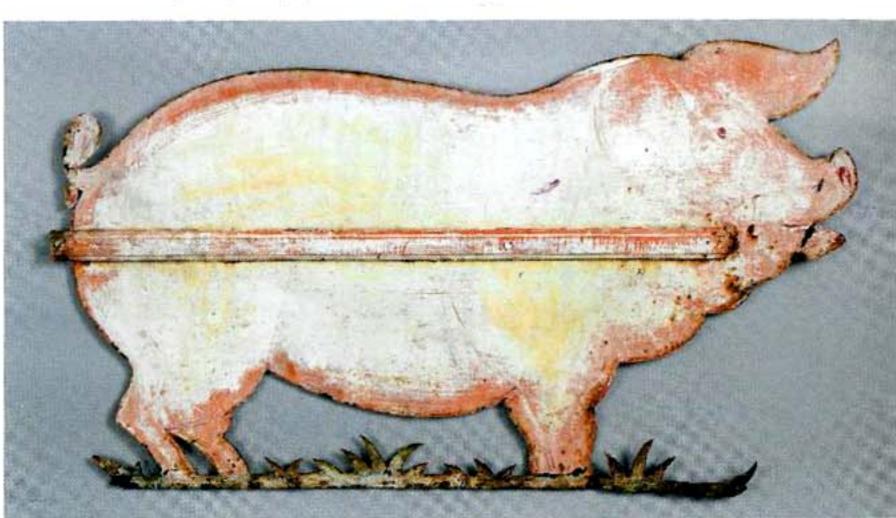
These pieces are individual but, as the dealer points out, they also have a curious compatibility with contemporary art and interiors, another factor which beguiles many of the new collectors and furnishers

Interestingly, whereas the onceseemingly lunatic prices and appeal of



Above: an English c.1880 vintage child's tricycle in painted wrought iron and wood for which Robert Young asks £1200.

Below: at the folk art exhibition in Battersea this French weathered painted metal butcher's trade sign, with traces of the inscription 'Charcuterie', c.1890, 3ft 41/2in (1.03m) wide, is priced at £3500.



American folk art have gone off the boil, US interest in Robert Young's European folk art has risen, and the dealer has enjoyed major sales at fairs in San Francisco and New York. His is no longer the only exhibition centred on folk art, but it probably remains the most true to its roots.

This year, there is one major change from all previous years in that the Youngs are selling directly from the catalogue. It was the case that everything would be for sale only once the exhibition preview was under way. But this became difficult as international demand increased and some awkward situations arose.

So now items are available from the catalogue on a first-come, first-served



collebrated her return to the London art.

At the reception, I repa and global PR

firm Gong Communications announced a

Freya dedicated to the arts, antiques and

Going Younder Namba Shirley was

colleague. "The chance to work with Freys

was too good to pass up," she said, adding

"Bille think the time is right for an agency

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Magnachile, at it seed chronicled, Mr.

Leader Huskes. No debut as director of the

Summer Olympia fair next month.

Denzil broadens

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