

Robert Young Antiques

Fourth Annual Exhibition of Folk Art

Friday 14th May - 22nd May 2004
Press Release

Following the remarkable success of their three previous Annual Exhibitions of Folk Art, Robert and Josyane Young have been delighted by the continuing enthusiasm and growing interest in the wide variety of quirky, colourful, unusual, graphic, sculptural and often unique rural pieces that are collectively known as Folk Art.

Robert Young wrote in the introduction to his book 'Folk Art' (Mitchell Beazley, 1999) "*These unpretentious objects were not created as art; what art they have is in their forms, their surfaces and their stories. Once commonplace, they are now increasingly rare and increasingly treasured for their essentially visual appeal of line, form, surface and an unselfconscious purity; for their personality, charm and intimacy*". Many of these objects have roots deep in the Traditions and Folklore of various European cultures. Ancient motifs and symbols are employed as decorative devices and can now be useful as keys to unlock the history, origin and purpose of specific items.

This year the Youngs will be showing a wide variety of pieces including Hand Carved and Painted LOVE TOKENS, DECOY BIRDS and TRADE SIGNS. A collection of patinated figurative WEATHERVANES, HAND WOVEN BASKETS, Sponge and Slip Decorated POTTERY, early Domestic WOODEN OBJECTS and Utensils (collectively known as Treen), NAÏVE PAINTINGS, PAINT DECORATED, COUNTRY AND STICK FURNITURE from all over Europe.

Amongst the finest pieces on show is a hand carved and PAINTED LIFE SIZE FIGURE OF A HIGHLAND PIPER. The largest example that Robert Young has ever found, this monumental figure was reputedly made as a Trade Sign for a Whiskey Distillery in Perthshire. Seated on a barrel the engaging figure is depicted playing his bagpipes with a joyous expression suggesting he has enjoyed plenty of the Whiskey he was created to promote. "*One of the qualities common to great Folk Art is that it attracts ones attention and can make you smile*" says Robert Young.

Another exceptional piece is the fine 18th century PAINT DECORATED MARRIAGE CUPBOARD from Central Europe. Dated 1780, it is decorated with figurative painted Panels depicting the Four Seasons through the Ages of Man. Inspired by magnificent architectural Baroque furniture of the early 18th century, this piece exemplifies the character of great Folk Art. Made as a wedding gift, probably for a prosperous rural family, it has a bold colourful and graphic charm common to the finest Folk Art and probably painted by an itinerant artist who would travel from village to village and paint to commission. Robert Young states "*So few pieces of this age and quality have survived in such fine condition, particularly with initials and 18th Century date. The*

inspiration from grand Baroque architecture and fashionable interior decoration is so evident yet the execution of the decorative paintwork with its clumsy perspective and naïve portraiture make it quite unique. This is a museum quality example”.

A fine pair of FULL LENGTH INSCRIBED PORTRAITS of Mr and Mrs Thomas Hemmingway by J Hemmingway and dated 1828. Retaining their original faux painted rosewood frames, are a prime example of their genre. Posed rather pompously within stylised interiors, the sitters are depicted dressed in fashionable attire of the period with furnishings and details designed to mark and possibly exaggerate their station in society. They also display the stiff static quality, lack of accurate proportion and perspective in their execution that we associate with the work of untrained artists who often learnt their trade as coach painters, glaziers, gilders, tavern and trade sign painters and then used their skills to develop a sideline as portrait and livestock artists. These painters and their work are now cherished and sought after for their guileless confident nature, colourful, decorative and sometimes almost abstract qualities. Josyane says that she “*finds something powerful and straight forward in the bold lines and confident use of colour of naïve paintings*” that she believes “*have something in common with modern, even great abstract art*”

Robert and Josyane Young believe that the enormous growth of interest and demand for these pieces has been partly fuelled by their COMPATIBILITY WITH MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS. Each is individually crafted, has a history and tradition surrounding it yet has an eclectic quality that is somehow timeless. Robert believes “*Great Folk Art is invariably intriguing often engaging and displays a spirit of innocence and vitality that is curiously refreshing*”.

Other specific highlights from the exhibition will include a FULL BODIED WEATHERVANE in the form of a cow, a full length hand carved and painted TEA TRADE SIGN OF AN ORIENTAL LADY holding a cup and saucer, a life size sporting trophy in the form of a CARVED AND PAINTED PIKE set within a glazed case in simulation of the taxidermists art, a wonderful ‘LOBSTER POT’ BACK PRIMITIVE WINDSOR ARMCHAIR, a racing PIGEON PORTRAIT by renowned naïve painter Andrew Beer, a hand woven Rag Rug depicting a life size Spaniel, a pair of engaging child water colour portraits by Richard Dighton, WATERING CANS with original painted weathered surfaces, HAND WOVEN BASKETS, PAINTED BUCKETS and a BOOT SCRAPER in the form of a dog.

Josyane is renowned for mounting beautifully displayed, exciting Exhibitions and there will be an illustrated colour catalogue describing many of the Exhibits. The Exhibition will be held at Robert Young Antiques, 68 Battersea Bridge Rd, London SW11 3AG. All items will be for sale.

Fine Quality professional images and Jpegs are available of many exhibits.

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