

Sixth Annual

EXHIBITION OF ANTIQUE FOLK ART
At Robert Young Antiques
68 Battersea Bridge Road, Battersea, London SW11 3AG

Friday 13th May – Saturday 21st May 2005

PRESS RELEASE

“Texture, Line, Surface and Form , these are the elements that we cherish in Antique and Vintage Folk Art” says Robert Young, prior to the opening of his Sixth consecutive Annual Exhibition to be held and their unique Gallery on the South Bank of the Thames, in Battersea.

Folk Art is so hard to define or describe in a few words. *”Essentially it is the work of untrained hands, work often made for function or in honour of tradition, yet bearing the marks of the creative spirit , individuality of expression and even sometimes the personality of their creator.”*

Folk Art covers a multitude of disciplines. It can be appreciated in the form of woodcarving, metalwork, sign painting, needlework, leatherwork, shellwork and painting on almost any surface to hand, (wood panels, planks, canvas, paper, cardboard and furniture).

Neglected, often as humble ‘bygones’ and ‘naïve’ from generations past, Folk Art is currently enjoying a renaissance of interest and acclaim. *“As with so much in the field of the creative and visual arts, it has taken hindsight to acknowledge and applaud the aesthetic and cultural value of these pieces that could and may have been created by any of our forebears”*, says Robert. *“Raw and Untouched”*, *“in their own juice”* is how we like to find our pieces. The passage of time and nature lend an added dimension and interest to these objects. Again Robert Young says; *“we love to find evidence of use and weathering on an old Trade Sign, hand whittled Decoy Bird or Toy Boat made by a Father for his son”*.

Spectacular discoveries for inclusion in this years Exhibition include a MAGNIFICENT SAILING SHIP WEATHERVANE from the late 19th century, 59” high x 58” wide, complete with masts and rigging, made from heavy gauge beaten sheet copper and copper wire, all decorated with gold leaf now weathered and worn , creating a wonderful patchwork of lines where the gold leaf sections originally overlapped.

A most engaging and charming pair of ‘ COMPANION ‘ or ‘DUMMY’ BOARDS in the form of a SEATED CAT AND A SPANIEL, discovered in the attic sale of WOBURN ABBEY. Such a wonderful provenance for Folk Art pieces is unusual and it is delightful to think of the estate carpenter or painter creating these likenesses of cherished family pets for the noble children of such a great house.

A GLOVE MAKER’S TRADE SIGN in the form of a massive hand carved and painted glove, 21 ¼” high x 9” wide x 1 ½” deep. Static, sculptural and immediate, it personifies the simplicity and unpretentious aesthetic of pure folk art.

Localised National and Rural Traditions have bred wonderful examples of Folk Art. The Scandinavian Countries for example have roots in their traditions going back to the Vikings. A TWIN HORSE HEADED ‘KASA’ or CEREMONIAL DRINKING VESSEL, hand carved from a solid piece of burr birchwood, especially for a wedding

feast. The horse, admired by the Vikings for its nobility and strength, is a traditional motif for protection against evil and fire in Norse Folklore and is frequently found on Love Tokens and Wedding Gifts of this nature.

Fine examples of European Wedding Chests and Caskets, sensitively painted and decorated with depictions of the homestead, fanciful floral motifs, initials of the Bride or Groom, (or both), and dates of the marriage form an important part of the Folk Art heritage of many European communities. These were usually commissioned from itinerant craftsmen and artists who would travel from village to village taking work decorating these chests as well as painting Tavern or Trade Signs and even on occasion Prize Animal or Human Portrait likenesses.

A glorious group of SIX WATERCOLOUR AND COLLAGE IMAGES OF TROUT AND SEATROUT made and painted by G M Alington over seventeen years of the mid 19th century, depicting some of the prize specimens he had caught both in Britain and in Germany. Discovered in a long neglected portfolio, these direct naive images, (created by cutting out the drawn silhouette of the freshly caught fish from a piece of newspaper or other paper to hand and then rendering a colourful, lively impression of his trophy in watercolours), represent the true spirit of Folk Art, in spite of their aristocratic creator.

A Carpenter's TRADE SIGN in the form of a MASSIVE HAND SAW, 54" long x 12" high x 1" deep. A Whimsical Collection of VINTAGE GARDENER'S WATERING CANS, retaining crazed, blistered and colourful old painted surfaces, hand made and painted WOODEN TOYS, an early 19th Century Blacksmith made WROUGHT IRON GARDEN COURTING SEAT also retaining its original old green painted surface, made with individually drilled and pinned joints (prior to the advent of welding), a wonderful little collection of WHIRLIGIGS and WEATHERVANES, hand carved and painted DECOY BIRDS, COUNTRY and PRIMITIVE FURNITURE from Taverns and Farmhouse, made from 'hedgerow' and 'to hand' materials and decorated with simple carved and painted motifs and a group of engaging PRIMITIVE PAINTINGS.

Robert and Josyane Young, who have specialised in Folk Art for over 25 years have noticed a greater enthusiasm and interest in the subject over recent years and the previous shows have been virtual SELL OUT SUCCESSES.

"Younger clients have been seduced by the pure beguiling nature of these pieces. They are taken by their wit and charm as well as their sincerity and individuality" and collectors and decorators both here and abroad are increasingly combining pieces of Antique and Vintage Folk Art with CONTEMPORARY ART and as accents within CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS. *"It may have something to do with nostalgia or even the current vogue for organic produce, farmers markets and a re evaluation of lifestyle, but really I think that people are just more widely interested and educated in the visual arts than they were a few years ago and with that interest a confidence has grown in the young and buying public"*, says Josyane, who is renowned for the styling and presentation of these exhibitions. *"There is something timeless and honourable about the nature and character of Folk Art, that young people have the sensitivity to appreciate and the confidence to buy. It is such a pity that so much has been lost to us over the years through neglect and a kind of intellectual artistic arrogance."*