

Arts and Antiques

If You Love Antiques – You'll Love The Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair

by Abby Cronin

Depression? What depression? Move on from that sense of economic gloom in the air. If you are feeling blue, remember London's superb antique fairs are still up and running. Make a date to visit one of the best - the Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair in the marquee, Battersea Park in April. The warm and relaxed atmosphere of this event is bound to cheer you up and may even inspire you to have a bit of a flutter. Launched in 1985, this fair features some of the best stock of period treasures in the London antiques calendar. An exceptional range of high quality competitively priced furniture, accessories and 20th century designs is beautifully displayed by expert dealers. Whether shopping at the high end or just browsing for decorative items to spruce up your home, you won't be disappointed. These sellers know their merchandise well and offer good advice on design options. Collectors, interior decorators and an increasing number of first time buyers have come to rely on the reputation of established exhibitors at this fair. Exhibitors come from all over Britain and the Continent.



Patricia Harvey Antiques

Datelines do not dictate. You will find an abundant selection of antiques -everything from traditional English wood furniture, painted 18th century rococo chandeliers through to modernist 1960s wall lighting. Graceful decorative and painted furniture is displayed comfortably side by side with carved and gilded mirrors. Serious interest in textiles is catered for at every Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair and there is a lot to learn from these dealers. They know about kilims, hand-printed cottons, woollens, and chintz as well as tapestries oriental rugs and many unique fragments. Take the time to sift through their stock and discover many one-offs - often made up as cushions and curtains.

Each fair features a themed foyer exhibition. Indian Prints: The History of Chintz introduced visitors to the story of chintz at the January 2009 fair. When vast quantities of Indian fabrics were imported to Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, European textile manufacturers feared they would be put out of business so these imports were banned for a time. However, these ever-popular designs were transformed into traditional English-style chintzes and have remained a mainstay of English interior décor ever since. The foyer exhibit was a virtual museum-quality show. Historic archival hand-printed textiles loaned by Bennison Fabrics were on display. Joss Graham supplied a stunning collection of oriental furnishing fabrics, wall hangings and exquisite quilts. A unique selection of bespoke lampshades made up in contemporary chintz

Art Deco Games Table



PHOTO COURTESY PR

designs by Caroline Ashworth hung from the foyer ceiling. The atmosphere in the foyer set the scene beautifully and welcomed visitors, especially textiles passionistas.



Philip Thomas-Art Deco Stand.

All manner of textiles are easily found at this fair. Charlotte Casadéjus offers an extensive collection of antique French embroidered linen including a number of rare collector's pieces. Katherine Pole stocks indigo blues and rustic linens. Savour the unusual carpets, rugs, runners sourced from Russia, Turkey, China and Tibet sold by Jenny Hicks Beach-(see photo of Jenny Hicks Beach's stand next door to Clock Props). Rhona Valentine's reputation for blending 17th, 18th, 19th and early 20th century textiles is unsurpassed. She has dealt for many years and is well-known for sourcing originals by William Morris, Mario Fortuny and even Raul Dufy. Without doubt, centuries of cloth are to be found, each with its own story.

There is no shortage of 20th century objects. Delight in finding lighting, suites of furniture, mirrors, sculpture, paintings and chests. Furnishings from this period are highly sought after and Art Deco sales are particularly buoyant. Dealers take pride in selling some of the best designers. It wouldn't take much imagination to find a few twenties and thirties pieces to give your homes the atmosphere of a Hollywood film set, though this may not be your personal style. Still, the fun comes when you find a quirky item for a special place in



PHOTO COURTESY PR

Billiard Room

your home. Some of the best Deco exhibitors are Berg Brothers and Phillip Thomas (see image). You will also find Deco items and lots of post-war accessories dotted about on the more eclectic stands.

Some 120 dealers will be exhibiting at the April 2009 fair. Among the many regulars, Martin Murray's stand never fails to attract good custom and strong sales. For aficionados of country furniture, Murray is a dealer who knows how to source the best in distinctive English country furniture, folk art and accessories. His philosophy of collecting transcends fashion. The stock has integrity, sculptural appeal and sheer beauty. If you visit Murray's stand, you'll find an exceptional selection of distinctive chairs, settles, pottery, primitive pictures – and even deer antlers. (see image here) Such quality items are hard to resist because they suit many traditional interiors. However, for those of who are fascinated with old-fashioned kitchens furnished with sturdy farmhouse tables, sideboards, Welsh dressers and scales, look out for Smithson Antiques. They specialise in 19th -20th century kitchen and dairy objects. A variety of original wooden molds, bread boards and simple milk jugs are just some of the large stock available. If it's a bit too late for Christmas gifts, you'll find mementos to collect which remind you of items you admired in your granny's kitchen. The Lennox Cato Gallery excels in presenting fine quality 18th and 19th century English and European furniture and accessories. Their stand is arranged as period rooms which are so inviting that passers-by are tempted to stop in for tea. (see photo) And make sure you take time to examine Patricia Harvey's high-end display of antiques. Her large stand is directly in front of you as you move into the main

Clocks & Kilims



exhibition hall. Mrs Harvey founded the fair in 1985 and has run it successfully ever since. Although she sold the fair to David and Jane Juran of Magus Antiques in December 2008, she remains a director and exhibitor. She has a remarkable eye for combining a first-rate selection of traditional and unusual furniture, paintings, mirrors, china, chests, sculptures and hard-to-source objects (pictured here).

The foyer theme at the April fair will feature a men's Club Room furnished in the manner of a gentleman's bolt-hole, circa 1900. The organisers have assembled a Victorian billiard room, complete with leather seating, a library area, sporting and gaming memorabilia plus drinks-related trappings – all for sale- (see a few items pictured here). As you stroll around the main hall, dealers will be delighted to tell you more about their unusual pieces. They can also help by discussing current fashionable trends such as the increasing use of industrial or factory furniture, shop fittings, antique architec-

PHOTO COURTESY PR



Art Deco Anglepoise Lamp

tural garden ornaments, and even odd fossils. Keep your eyes open; be flexible and even a little impulsive. Remember - design options are limitless. Don't be frightened to take a bit of a risk and buy something idiosyncratic. I remember when a friend impulsively bought a set of gorgeous antique carved wooden church doors. She had a carpenter fit them so they divided her dining room from the kitchen. They worked beautifully in her home. So-use your imagination. One unique piece of furniture or some unusual lighting can renew what feels like a tired interior. Come to think of it—perhaps antiques is a form of recycling.

Make every effort to attend the Spring 2009 fair from April 21st – 26th. The marquee in Battersea Park is easily reached from Sloane Square where a courtesy shuttle service meets fair visitors in front of the Sloane Square Hotel.

PHOTO BY ABBY CRONIN



PHOTO BY ABBY CRONIN

Smithson Antiques



PHOTO COURTESY PR

Indian Textiles

Not only are there high quality competitively priced furniture, accessories and 20th century designs to tempt you, you will also find well behaved dogs accompanying their owners. So far, I have not been disturbed by any barking. Quite the opposite: this is a restful, welcoming fair with a restaurant and café on site. Take a break over lunch or tea and think about which antiques you would like to have in your home.



PHOTO COURTESY MARTIN MURRAY

Martin Murray Antiques

A packing and shipping service is on site, so there is no need to worry about transport. And if you are a first-time visitor, remember – it is held three times yearly. So if you miss it in the spring, don't forget the autumn fair - from 29th September – 4th October 2009. No matter which of the thrice yearly Decorative Antiques and Textiles Fairs you attend, there are always surprises. The excitement of this fair is due to the combination of period accessories and furnishings, both traditional, and contemporary –literally something for everyone. ■

Website: www.decorativefair.com

Fair Dates: Spring 21st-26th April 2009

Autumn 29th-4th October 2009

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