

I have never been happy with American isolationism in art, antiques, or politics. This issue, a mix that joins sophisticated European and American tastes, strikes me as healthy for both sides of the Atlantic. Of course it is no simple matter to find writers like our regular contributors James Gardner and Barrymore Scherer who are as much at home with Old Masters as with American regionalists or outsider art. Laura Beach, who delivers sparkling reports in this issue on London's Masterpiece fair and on a fine collection of decorative arts and paintings in New Jersey, is another such rarity. Anyone who reads the antiques press will be familiar with Laura's byline, but everyone in the field should be grateful for the persistent depth, wit, and judgment of her work. I am secretly in awe of her reportorial skills and graceful prose. Here is a woman every editor dreams about—someone you could send to Papua, New Guinea, or Galena, Illinois, with equal confidence.



You have been following the antiques and art market since 1976 when you were a child intern at the Museum of International Folk Art in your native New Mexico. The late 1970s and early 1980s are usually thought of as a high water mark in the field so it must have been exciting to witness that.

I grew up in Los Alamos and discovered my calling in nearby Santa Fe, two wildly anomalous towns that prepared me for life in the most idiosyncratic of all industries, antiques. The museum bug bit me at nineteen and I still have a major weakness for anyone who loves old stuff. I came to New York in 1978 to work for the inveterate showman Robert Bishop, who was putting the American Folk Art Museum on the map, and through him met the publisher R. Scudder Smith, who rallied a young generation of collectors and dealers when he started *Antiques and The Arts Weekly* in 1963. Those were exciting times, and innocent ones.

Since that time a lot of talented dealers and adventurous collectors have come and gone. Change of this or any sort always seems to dismay many in our world. Should it really be a fresh cause for mourning? Do we really need any more crepe hanging?

I feel blessed to have known, if only briefly, so many trailblazing figures of the postwar years, people like Charles Montgomery, Nina Fletcher Little, Herbert Waide Hemphill, Alice Winchester,

and Russell Carrell, themselves links to early twentieth-century antiquarians. One of the great things about collecting is its communal nature. Each generation builds on the wisdom of the past but also interprets the past in a new way. Provenance fascinates me. It's a schematic way of representing how objects connect us. Beyond that, taste, like fashion, is cyclical. I'm even seeing more floral wallpaper of late.

It is good to find that you have the gift of a long view and expect the waxing and waning of prestige in old things. Is it possible that a lull just now presages a period of rediscovery in which the progeny of Mark Zuckerberg will thrill to the chase of samplers?

Absolutely. A dealer friend of mine says she only wishes she could live long enough to buy it all back. The other joy of a long view is seeing young collectors discover what older ones missed. New Mexico painting of the 1950s to 1970s is hot now, which amazes anyone who bought it at local arts association fairs in the 1960s.

If I dropped you down in Papua, New Guinea, could you bring back a juicy report on their decorative arts scene by week's end?

A dream assignment, especially if I find that Michael Rockefeller is alive, well, and dealing somewhere deep in the jungle.



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