

The Winter Antiques Show Embraces the Evolving Definition of Antique

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER JAN. 18, 2018

The definition of antique has slowly shifted over the past decade, and now an object no longer has to be at least 100 years old to qualify. The Winter Antiques Show has increasingly been a reflection of those changes, with art included in the fair in addition to the furniture, decorative arts, tapestries and other artifacts. Some of the objects at this year's show are museum quality — a special exhibition on loan from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts spearheads the art on display here. But alongside high-end paintings and portraits are smaller curios and oddities, which means quite a few themes run through the show. Here is a roundup of some of the highlights.

VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS The booth at the entrance to the fair is more like a mini-museum, courtesy of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Va. The exhibition here celebrates a century of art patronage and serves as an ode to its founding collectors and the objects they donated to create the collection. Among the standouts are a George Bellows painting, “Tennis at Newport” (1920), composed around a rushing, dynamic take on linear perspective, as well as paintings by Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, Max Pechstein, Beauford Delaney, Berthe Morisot and Eastman Johnson. Decorative arts include a Peter the Great Egg

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PORTRAITURE Although these works are part of a relatively conservative genre of painting, the Winter Antiques Show nonetheless has some interesting and historically significant examples. Alexander Gallery is exhibiting an early-19th-century portrait by an unknown painter of the Haitian president Henri Christophe (1767-1820), who reigned after the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) that ended both slavery and French colonial rule on the Caribbean island. Christophe is shown in this beautifully rendered painting with his wife and daughter, his hand tucked into his jacket just like Napoleon, after whom he styled himself.

A number of terrific portraits are on view at Adelson Galleries, including an 1890 John Singer Sargent painting of the American actor Lawrence Barrett and Jamie Wyeth's 1971 portrait of his pet dog Boom Boom, a Newfoundland who was stolen in Maine and tracked down outside of Philadelphia.

A moody brown-and-gold self-portrait of the artist Guy Pène du Bois is at Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts. The painting pays homage to the palette and composition of Velázquez's famous "Las Meninas" (1656), a royal portrait with a cameo of the artist behind his easel. Pène du Bois made his painting in the early 1920s while he was in Westport, Conn., hanging out with other artistic types, like F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Elle Shushan gives its entire booth to portraiture, particularly miniatures. The pieces here range from Franz Heuberger's wildly canny wax portrait from the 1840s of a German king to Bettina von Zwehl's contemporary photographs, which replicate 19th-century ovals, silhouettes and other early photographic portraiture techniques.

ASIAN ART A display from the Muromachi period (1392-1573) at Michael Goedhuis includes a large Japanese "Jizo Bosatsu Bronze in the Lotus Position," which is a representation of a deity who protects children and is the only bodhisattva to be represented as a monk, making him both human and divine.

Across the aisle, Apter-Fredericks is showing an 18th-century Chinese screen depicting upper-class family life in a lush garden and a red lacquer "japanned" (treated with a varnish imitating Asian lacquer work) bureau from the early 1700s. Positioned on that bureau are two small plaster figures made around 1790 whose removable portrait heads bob up and down, simulating a nodding gesture.

At Ralph M. Chait Galleries, three Han dynasty figures sit in a row. Made from grayish unglazed pottery, their smiling faces and musical instruments suggest that they were crafted to entertain the dead they accompanied to the tomb.

Along with ethnographic sculptures from Africa and other regions, Tambaran is showing contemporary work by the South Korean artist Sung Hee Cho, who makes mulberry paper, hand-paints it and sculpts it into colorful, abstract wall reliefs. More top-drawer art can be found at the booth of Joan B. Mirviss, a specialist in contemporary Japanese ceramics.

CLOCKS There are plenty of fine chairs, desks, tables and other functional objects at the fair, but among the most captivating are the clocks. A gorgeous silver chime that caught my attention came from a tall clock by the Connecticut clockmaker Thomas Harland (1735-1807) at Nathan Liverant and Son. The London dealer Robert Young Antiques has a wonderful 1921 British railway clock, crafted in teak to withstand the weather. The original instructions for how to wind the clock can be found inside it. James Infante has a sexy silver “Cobra Clock” from around 1925 made by Edgar Brandt, the French Art Deco blacksmith and designer.

TEXTILES The craze for quilts has left the environs of antiques and migrated into contemporary art and museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which now regularly exhibits them. Olde Hope Antiques has a possible museum candidate in a quilt sewn in 1869 by a Virginia-based Quaker named Elizabeth Holmes. Unable to vote, Ms. Holmes used her formidable quilting talent to celebrate the North’s Civil War victory and the presidencies of Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. Vice President Schuyler Colfax, who served under Grant, gets a nod as well. The none-too-subtle slogan “Union Forever” is emblazoned beneath their names.

Tapestries and rugs are on view at Keshishian, including one from the 1960s — formerly installed at a university in Tbilisi, Georgia — that features a psychedelic composition with sinuous sea nymphs and dolphins.

A much smaller work, but one of the most talked about at the fair, is a wool-and-cotton wallet depicting household servants, possibly slaves, on view at Stephen Score. A small hand-embroidered object with a jagged red-and-yellow flame stitch pattern, the wallet features a black woman carrying a teapot on one side and the

figure of a black man holding a tray with a goblet on the other. Found in a box of old family artifacts in Massachusetts, the wallet dates from around 1760.

Winter Antiques Show

Jan. 19 through 28 at the Park Avenue Armory, Manhattan; 646-740-1976,

winterantiquesshow.com.

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