

All Things Auctioneering

With Cato Crane Valuers & Auctioneers and John Crane Fine Art

Fake or Fortune? How would you know? Well, the answer – sad to say – is that most people would not know!

People who watch the plethora of antique programmes on TV suddenly decide to become antiques dealers with absolutely no experience whatsoever and then start giving advice to people regarding expensive purchases. I have even heard recently the purchase of old objects described by amateur dealers being as ‘good investments’, but how can this be when most furniture and most pictures are one third of their value from fifteen years ago? It is all often careless talk and careless speculation by those who don’t really know. Unless you solicit the correct advice you could do better putting your money on a horse instead if you want a speculative investment!

There are, however, rules to safeguard your decision-making process. The London and Provincial Antiques Dealers Association (LAPADA), which was founded in 1974, is an association of 550 antiques dealers across the UK with 50 members abroad who have particularly high standards. Members of LAPADA must adhere to a code of practice at all times and display the ‘Golden Hanging Chandelier’ motif as proof of membership.

If you buy an item from a LAPADA member the receipt will show the approximate date of manufacturer, any known restoration or repair that has been undertaken, and the price paid plus tax if appropriate. If there is any doubt in the future regarding authenticity then LAPADA have a complaints process and conciliation procedure.

Recently in September I spent a few hours at the LAPADA Antiques Fair in Berkeley Square in Mayfair in London; a grand affair. There were 112 dealers exhibiting and plenty of choice. The picture and jewellery dealers appeared to be busy together with those exhibiting general antique decorative items. Some furniture had red ‘sold stickers’ on the best pieces, but buyers were cautious – so would you be if you were buying a pair of side tables for £120,000!

I was particularly pleased to meet my old friend and namesake, Lennox Cato, who trades in Edenbridge in Kent. He has one of the ‘best eyes’ in the business and regularly appears on the Antiques Road Show.

So, if you want to get good sound advice, look for the Golden Chandelier Logo – you might pay just a little more for your special purchase but admiring your purchase should last many years after you have forgotten the price.



Renewing old friendships – Cato and Cato!

Occasionally in the Auction Rooms we have mysteries which are difficult to solve. They are not often important, but they are just irritating. We had this high-quality watercolour portrait (below) in a while ago, of almost photographic quality, painted in about 1950–60 and signed by an artist called Marcus Stone. If you search on the internet for this artist there is a Victorian painter with this same name, but he would have predated this portrait by several decades. If anyone knows of the C20th Marcus Stone or recognises the subject, I would be pleased to have the information.



I always say, to the surprise of some, that business is not all about making money. I firmly believe it. We all should use our talents for the benefit of all in society in any way we are able to.

One of my monthly pleasures is to have a live radio conversation with Steve Evans, the Chairman at Radio Clatterbridge which broadcasts to the patients seven days a



With Steve Evans, Chairman of Radio Clatterbridge

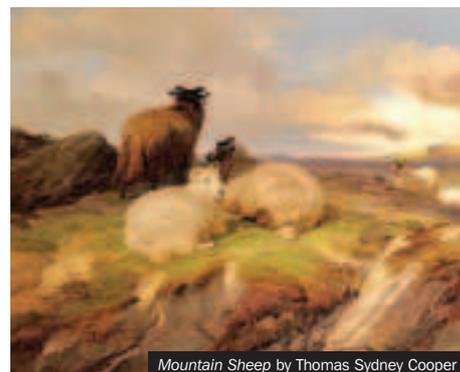
week and is staffed entirely by volunteers. Fortunately our business handles a huge variety of objects, so there is always a new discovery to discuss. This photograph illustrates their new studio with me trying to describe an African ivory Igbo tribe ceremonial side-blown trumpet. Surprisingly they do turn up in houses more frequently than you might imagine, as they were often sold in the coastal towns of Nigeria to visiting sailors and tourists.



French Pastoral by Marcel Dyf

It’s always interesting to know what is in demand and selling at the top end of the market in pictures. Very few pictures are in this category, but French impressionist art is certainly in demand as well as the solid English pastoral subjects of sheep and cattle. Pictures by Marcel Dyf 1899–1985 were in evidence at the LAPADA Fair and several had the red ‘sold’ stickers on them.

One of my favourite artists is Thomas Sydney Cooper 1803–1902. Cooper was a



Mountain Sheep by Thomas Sydney Cooper