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THE BEST ART AND ANTIQUES AT LONDON'S MASTERPIECE SHOW

Text by Mitchell Owens | June 25, 2014

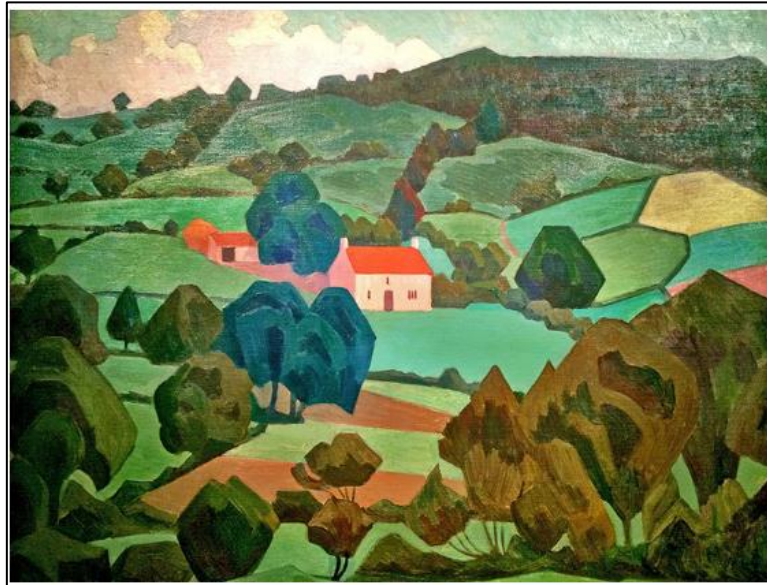
Bleary-eyed from an overnight flight but fueled by a double espresso, The Aesthete arrived early this morning at London's Heathrow Airport and raced to the city's historic Royal Hospital Chelsea to attend the press preview of Masterpiece, the fifth annual art-and-antiques fair that opens on June 28 and closes on July 2.

From the glories spread out before me and my fellow journalists, it is readily apparent that the organizers chose this upstart young show's name exceptionally well.

Booth upon booth is loaded with century-spanning eye candy, from the elegant to the extravagant: important jewels with supernova brilliance, magnificent paintings bearing serious signatures and head-spinning provenance, statement furniture demonstrating centuries of cabinetmaking prowess, and so much more. And that includes four chic temporary restaurants, one of which is a 58-table outpost of Le Caprice.

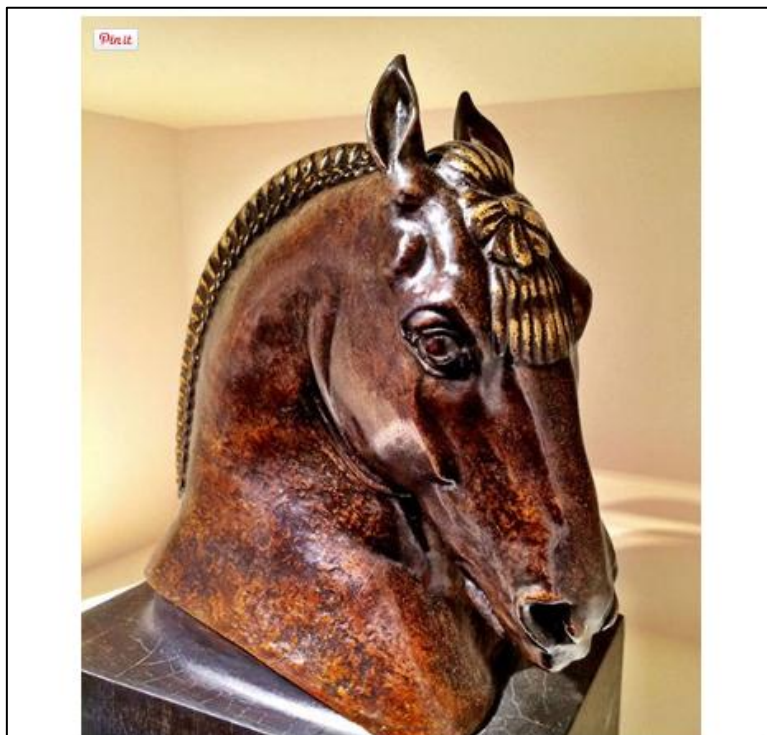
The price tags may be eye watering at times but the objects offer an incredible education for just the price of admission: £25, or a little more than \$42. Each one is proof of mankind's boundless creativity and our eternal pursuit of the rare, the beautiful, and the unique.

So what would I buy at Masterpiece had I the deepest of pockets? [Click here to see my dream dozen.](#)



Burford Farm, Devon, a 1918 work by British painter Robert Bevan, is being sold by *Offer Waterman & Co.* The pastoral scene of rolling English farmland shows the wartime artist's debt to Cubism and Van Gogh, particularly in the angular shapes of the fields and the blocky silhouettes of the trees. It is priced at £120,000 (approximately \$204,000).

Photo: Mitchell Owens



American sculptor Herbert Haseltine cut a fashionable figure in the early- to mid-20th-century art world and was particularly admired for his depictions of farm animals, which were snapped up by country squires on both sides of the Atlantic. What makes this 1925 bust, called *Suffolk Punch Stallion Horse Head*, so special, says Flo Horswell of *Sladmore Gallery*, is the sensitive integration of the patinated-bronze head and the wood base; the latter is an unexpected detail, since Haseltine preferred to use marble bases. It is priced at £65,000 (approximately \$110,000).

PHOTO: MITCHELL OWENS



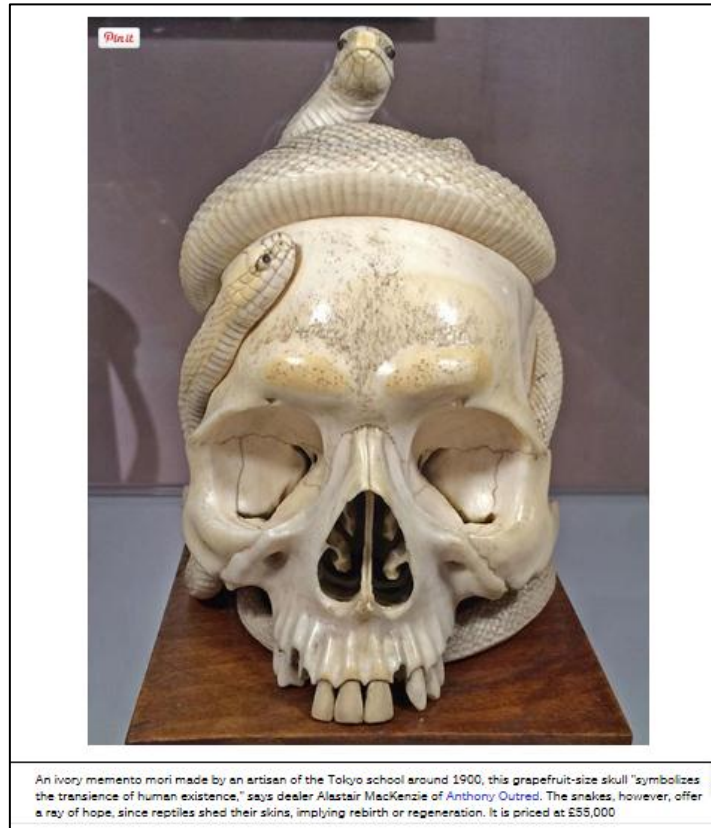
Standing more than seven feet tall, this grandiose circa-1825 candelabra was commissioned for the Painted Hall at Chatsworth House, the Derbyshire residence of the Dukes of Devonshire. It is made of lacquered brass and being sold by Ronald Phillips for £195,000 (approximately \$314,000).

PHOTO COURTESY OF RONALD PHILLIPS ANTIQUES



This Louis XVI lyre clock in the booth of Switzerland's Richard Redding Antiques is a rare design whose turquoise-blue Sèvres-porcelain surface renders it even more unusual. It is priced at £195,000 (approximately \$314,000); the dealer has an almost identical timepiece in a darker, slightly more common shade of blue for £120,000 (approximately \$204,000).

PHOTO: MITCHELL OWENS



An ivory memento mori made by an artisan of the Tokyo school around 1900, this grapefruit-size skull "symbolizes the transience of human existence," says dealer Alastair MacKenzie of Anthony Outred. The snakes, however, offer a ray of hope, since reptiles shed their skins, implying rebirth or regeneration. It is priced at £55,000



This late-16th- to early-17th-century traveling cabinet was fashioned in southern India, likely by an expatriate Portuguese craftsman. The angled "chapel" silhouette echoes a chapel, dealer Jorge Welsh explains, noting that it is a form so rare that he has only seen ten or 12 similar cabinets in his entire career. It is priced at £85,000 (approximately \$144,300).

PHOTO: MITCHELL OWENS



Ariadne Galleries is selling a shapely ancient Egyptian unguent container made of picturesquely speckled gneiss, a metamorphic rock. It costs £110,000 (approximately \$187,000).



Dated 1878 and likely made to be shown at the Paris Exposition of the same year, this towering Italian fruitwood sideboard features all manner of extravagant carving—including gathered curtains that conceal a central drawer. Butchoff Antiques is selling this conversation piece for £225,000 (around \$382,000).

PHOTO COURTESY OF BUTCHOFF ANTIQUES



Two suave English Aesthetic Movement back stools made of brass-accented oak (a matching mahogany pair also is available). "It's a very smart design and useful in bedrooms or halls beside a telephone," says dealer James Harvey. "I usually see about six pairs a year and always buy them." Designed by Shoolbred and Company, circa 1890, they cost £12,500 (about \$21,240) for the pair.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES HARVEY



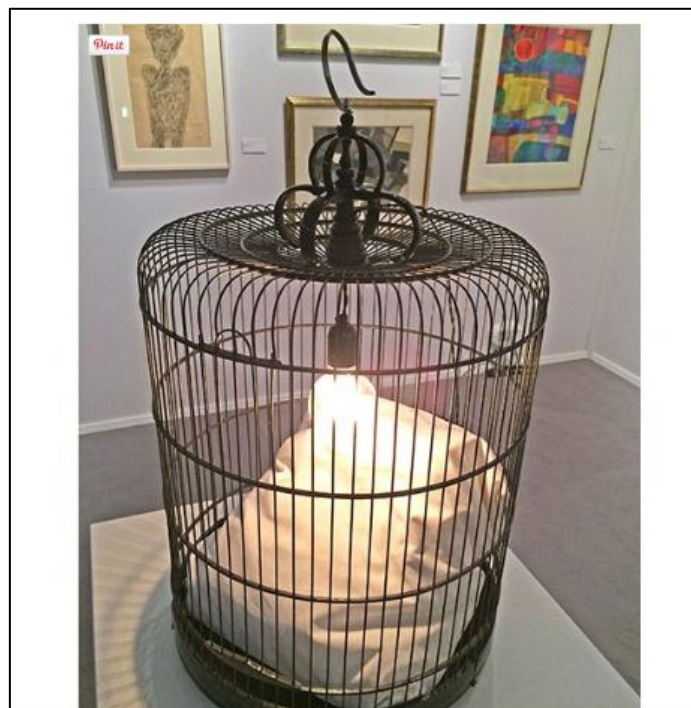
Designer Romeo Rega created these dining tables and chairs in 1970 for a prominent Milanese family, say the owners of the Italian gallery *Robertaebasta*. The chrome-plated chairs are padded in blue suede, while the tables are shape-shifters—closed they show a round suede surface that would be perfect for playing cards, and open they are shining squares of black Formica. The tables can also be combined to make one large table that seats ten. Prices are £12,000 (approximately \$20,370) for each table, while individual chairs are \$2,000 (approximately \$3,400).

PHOTO: MITCHELL OWENS AND COURTESY OF ROBERTAEBASTA



According to Paris-based dealer Didier Cramoisen of Dragesco-Cramoisen, the blue-and-white lambrequin motif ornamenting this 19th-century French set of six porcelain-handle dinner knives is inspired by the Renaissance period. They are priced at £6,400 (approximately \$10,870) for the set of six. And, yes, the knives are meant to be used, even now—though, as Cramoisen notes, “used very carefully.” Which means hand washing only and drying thoroughly so the steel blades do not rust.

PHOTO: MITCHELL OWENS



Rolf Sack's sculpture *A Light Breath* is a mesmerizing mechanized wonder: The embroidered linen pillow inside the lacquered Chinese birdcage gently puffs up and then collapses, as if it is respirating. Number one out of an edition of 17, it costs £9,000 (approximately \$13,580) at Leila Heller Gallery.

PHOTO: MITCHELL OWENS