

Palm Beach Jewelry & Antique Show

by Wendy Moonan

“I think it’s the most promising show in America,” said Ron Bourgeault, the New Hampshire auctioneer, walking through the 2006 Palm Beach Jewelry & Antique Show in February in West Palm Beach. “There’s a great mix of dealers and the crowds are huge. It’s got energy and buzz.”

After only three years, this show has already made its mark, with solid sales in excess of \$200 million and an incredible attendance: 56,000 spread over five days. Scheduled on Presidents’ Day weekend, the show this year had 205 dealers and many diverse specialties, including 19th- and 20th-century American paintings, Chinese antiquities, Meissen porcelain, Swedish Gustavian furniture, Georg Jensen silver, antique maps, Old Master paintings, and vintage handbags; 51 of the dealers offered antique and period jewelry.

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Most of the dealers did well. Ralph M. Chait Galleries, Inc. of New York, for example, was thrilled to sell a pair of fierce, 3.5-foot-tall unglazed Tang Dynasty Lokapala guardian figures that had once guarded a Chinese tomb. “They are wonderful quality, and may have even been portraits of individual people,” Ralph Chait said. “They have great suits of armor.” Ira Spanierman of New York sold his most expensive painting, a 1910 oil by Lee Lufkin Kuala titled *Reading*. Nula Thanhauser, a dealer of vintage purses based in East Hampton, NY, almost sold out her booth. She had to bring in bunches of additional bags every day to fill her display.

“It’s a very well-organized and beautiful show,” said Paulette Peden of Dawn Hill antiques, New York, who said she sold three

major pieces this year. Others echoed her thoughts. So why is this show more successful in attracting visitors, and therefore sales, than a myriad of others? That is the \$64,000 question. The solid results are no accident; they can be traced to the hard work and creativity of its founders: Kris R. Charamonde, Scott Diamant, and Rob Samuels, all young jewelry dealers based in West Palm Beach.

Charamonde, the managing partner, began planning the fair six years ago after attending a jewelry show in Los Vegas. He thought a fair with 25% jewelry, 25% fine art and 50% decorative arts would be a good mix. “It was a very specific vision,” his partner Diamant said. “A strong jewelry component with a variety of other things: rugs, glass, paintings, furniture, dog pictures, pottery.” Samuels added, “We thought it would be perfect for this area.” The partners started making trips to London and Paris to persuade dealers to participate in the fair.

“All we had was a Xerox of a floor plan and our business cards,” Samuels recalled. “Still, we had a contingent of 60 London dealers in our first year.” Charamonde said, “In January 2000 people laughed at us. They only stopped in 2004, when 5,000 people attended our first opening night and set a record for valet parking at the convention center.”

This year Palm Beach Jewelry & Antique Show increased the number of paintings dealers to 30 percent, illustrating the growing interest in this area of collecting.



Charamonde is a gifted promoter. (“I believe in campaigns,” he said.) He took out ads on the inside back covers of *Art & Auction*, *Veranda*, *The Magazine Antiques*, and this publication for months. He prepared an 8-page advertorial for the *Shiny Sheet*, Palm Beach’s favorite society newspaper. He hosted a party for the concierges of local hotels so they could steer guests to the fair. He purchased radio spots on local stations and plastered Palm Beach with billboards. Participating dealers were given thousands of invitations to mail to favorite customers—M.S. Rau of New Orleans sent out 3,000. “People come to the fair from all over Florida, across the country, and from abroad,” he said.

All this activity apparently has impressed the bankers at UBS, who became the fair’s main sponsor the first year and have continued its support. (UBS had a hospitality lounge for clients at the fair, where Doug Telepman, a senior vice president for investments at UBS Financial Services, was always on hand to greet customers and talk art, his own passion.) Finally, the partners were on the floor during the entire fair, making sure everything ran smoothly.

As a reporter who covers dozens of fairs every year for *The New York Times*, I found the show refreshing, especially because there were some affordable things along with masterpieces like *The Annunciation*, an \$800,000 painting by Jan de Beer at Alexander Gallery, New York. At Spanierman Gallery, for example, there were many top paintings like the Prendergast *Beach Scene* of 1903, which was priced at \$150,000, but there were also some fine less expensive works like *Lovely White Flowers* (2005), an oil by Yin Yong Chun of China, for \$14,000.

Fine art is becoming more important to the show, with the promoters increasing the number of art dealers to 30 percent. Exhibitors such as Godel & Co. Inc. Fine Art from New York said they were “extremely pleased” with their many sales, saying they



TOP LEFT:

One of a pair of Chinese unglazed pottery Lokapala Guardian figures, Tang Dynasty, AD 617–907, found a ready buyer.

TOP RIGHT:

Tiffany Studio, New York, 18-light *Lily Lamp* with iridescent gold shades on a gilt bronze lily pad base, circa 1800. Shades all signed, “L.C.T.” Base signed, “Tiffany Studios New York.” Priced at \$125,000. Courtesy of Macklowe Gallery.

BELOW:

Fishing, Early Spring by Herman Herzog (1832–1932), circa 1880, offered by Godel & Co., was priced at \$95,000. The gallery was extremely pleased with their sales. Courtesy of Godel & Co.





LEFT TO RIGHT: David & Company's sales ranged from \$800 to \$250,000. Among the jewelry that sold was a platinum ring consisting of one center cushion cut Sapphire weighing 6.29 carats surrounded by 8 oval colorless diamonds with a total weight of 2.10 carats. Courtesy of David & Co.; London-based Guinevere's booth was framed by a gilt cast-iron lion and tiger, remarkable for their aesthetic form and rarity.

found the attendees “very knowledgeable and quite discerning.” New exhibitor Peter Tillou of Connecticut brought a variety of exceptional paintings including an \$850,000 Old Master painting, in addition to decorative arts, and European and American furniture. As Ron Bourgeault said, “When Peter Tillou does a show you know it’s up and coming.”

There were also some amusing things, a rarity at an upscale antiques show. Eve Stone of Connecticut had antique English copper and brass kitchen equipment and utensils, the uses of which could not always be determined. “The Victorians had pieces for everything, even cooking one egg,” she explained.” She also had a copper pot the size of a small tub. “It’s a turbot cooker; it works like a convection oven,” she said.

John Hamshere of London may be the only antiques dealer who specializes in dog pictures and dog jewelry. (“I have the largest collection of dog jewelry in the world,” he claimed.) He had a charming drawing with several scenes showing a dog cavorting with children, titled “The Adventure of Pincher.” It was by C. Burton Barber, a popular book artist whom Queen Victoria appointed as her official dog painter after Landseer died. His jewelry offerings included a series of dog micromosaics created in the Vatican Workshops in Rome in the 19th century.

Daniels Antiques, of Aspen and Miami, specializes in Black Forest carvings, wooden animals, often life-size, and furniture adorned with animals, created in Switzerland over the past 200 years. Simon Daniels had a tobacco jar in the form of a stag head for \$45,000 and several small tables held up by crouching bears. The piece de resistance was a ten-foot-tall clock nestled into a mesh of carved tree branches held up by two standing bears. Price: \$350,000.

The showstopper at TK Asian Antiquities of Williamsburg, Virginia was a magnificent, 67-inch-tall marble Buddhist figure from China, circa 550, that was dressed in a clinging garment that betrayed strong ancient Greek influence.

Guinevere Gallery of London had a mix of antiques from all over: India, Tibet, China, Italy, and England. A handsome suite of English Arts & Crafts oak furniture made in 1890 included two chairs and two benches. The pair of chairs was priced at \$4,600. Most striking was a mammoth pair of golden cast-iron jungle animals modeled by Jacquemart and cast and stamped by the Val D’Osne foundry in France (founders of the Statue of Liberty), circa 1870. The lion is identical to one that still stands outside the factory. The tiger is a very rare model, according to co-owner Heather Weaver.

The offerings were diverse and appealing,

Odisseus of Stockholm, Sweden, had a magnificent Venetian chandelier for \$8,000 and a solid silver champagne fountain. Macklowe Gallery of New York had a magnificent Louis Comfort Tiffany “Wisteria” lamp. Among their sales was a Tiffany Studios 18-inch *Lily Lamp*, with signed shades and base, priced at \$125,000, and a Zsolnay Art Nouveau iridescent pitcher priced at \$35,000. “We made great sales to our own clients and to new collectors as well,” said Ben Macklowe. “There is great energy amongst the collectors who came to the Palm Beach show.”

Jewelry dealers also did well and had a variety of offerings. David & Company of Massachusetts sold contemporary and vintage jewelry ranging from \$800 to \$250,000. Commenting on the show, Cynthia Pischdotchian of David & Co. said, “This was the best Palm Beach Jewelry and Antique show we have exhibited at. It was very successful for us. Every detail concerning the show was carried out beautifully and completely.”

Mark West, a dealer in antique Venetian and Val St. Lambert glass, was the only dealer interviewed who said he would probably not sign up for the fair again...but he did.

Wendy Moonan writes the antiques column every Friday for The New York Times Weekend section.