

The longer than ever opening morning queue meant busy aisles from the start to the close of the first day at the NEC's spring Antiques for Everyone fair, which ran from 16th - 19th April 2009. Regular exhibitor Alan Walker's comment proved typical of so many made by exhibitors who expressed their surprise and delight that despite all the prevailing economic news, the fair proved to be as important as ever for both trade and private collectors.

Alan Landis, a dealer from Australia was third in the opening day queue and spent the next five hours buying ceramics for shipping home. 'This is without question the best fair in Britain,' said Alan, who had spent three weeks trawling the UK for fresh stock.

Trade buying was strong throughout the opening day, focusing mainly on ceramics, glass, decorative items, folk art and the huge number of collector's pieces. The fair is well known as the largest vetted fair in Britain for ceramics, from early English pottery to Moorcroft and Art Deco. Most specialist dealers recorded good sales, to both new and regular buyers and, again, many were surprised that interest was so strong in the current climate. 'We came with very low expectations,' said **Mark Diamond**, porcelain specialist from London, 'but we have found business much better than expected.'

Chinese Blue & White specialist **Catherine Hunt** from Cheltenham declared the fair her most successful ever, in twenty years of exhibiting. Others selling well included **John Newton** from East Yorkshire, **Alan Finney Antiques** from Staffordshire, **David & Sally March** from Bristol, **John Howard** from Woodstock, **Andrew Muir** from Halesowen, **Roger de Ville** from Staffordshire and **Barling Fine Porcelain** from Essex.

Much interest was focused on the many period furniture specialists, since furniture has been an area of the market particularly affected by downturn. The vast majority were extremely pleased with the level of private buying. Susannah Midwinter from **Richard and Susannah Midwinter Antiques** from Shropshire sold a late 18th century glazed mahogany breakfront bookcase for £15,000, among several more pieces. From Poole, **Beechridge Antiques** sold several items including a pair of George III card tables for around £20,000. **C.J.Antiques** from Anglesey found a buyer for a late Victorian bookcase cabinet by Edwards & Roberts for £8,500, among other sales.

Also pleased with furniture sales were **S.& S.Timms** from Bedfordshire, newcomer **Robin Cox** from Rutland, **Peter Bunting Antiques** from Derbyshire, **F.E.Anderson** from Wales, **Kembery Clocks** from Bristol, **Smithson Antiques** from Lincolnshire, **Mark Seabrook Antiques** from Cambridgeshire, **Walter Moores & Son** from Leicestershire, **Yellow Lantern Antiques** from Hove, **Sue Killinger** from Great Missenden, **Melody's Antiques** from Chester, **Vaughan Antiques** from Peterborough, **Tim Saltwell** from West Sussex, **Edward Burd Clocks** from London, and many others.

Fine art and sculpture has always been a strong sector of the NEC fair and once again sales proved to be better than anticipated for the majority of specialists. **Callaghan Fine Paintings** from Shrewsbury were notably pleased, selling several 20th century oils by French artists, with prices in the £12,000 to £25,000+ region. Daniel Callaghan also sold

several bronze sculptures by the contemporary artist Carl Payne, including 'Athena', 68" tall, for £22,000.

Also specializing in contemporary and earlier art was **Books Illustrated** from Salisbury. They also sold several contemporary sculptures, two in the £13,000+ region, in addition to contemporary paintings by Peter Malone and older works by Edmund Dulac and others.

Traditional paintings sold across the board. Regular exhibitors **Rowles Fine Art** from Welshpool, **Haynes Fine Art** from Broadway and **Benton Fine Art** from Moreton-in-Marsh recorded sales to new and regular collectors, **Ryland Fine Art** from East Yorkshire made eighteen sales of 19th century oils, while **Phoenix Fine Art** from Cheshire made more than fifteen sales of early English watercolours. Others also pleased with sales included **Graham Bentley Watercolours** from Kenilworth and **Neville Contemporary Art** from Hampshire.

Antique sculpture, particularly late 19th century French sculpture, also sold well with specialists **Hazlehurst Antiques** from Kent and **Garret & Hurst** from West Sussex both pleased with business. Also enjoying a very successful fair with a large stand was **Hickmet Fine Art** from London, specializing in Art Nouveau and Art Deco sculpture.

In other specialist areas, **James Strang** of **Mod-i.com Art & Design** from Scotland enjoyed a successful fair selling rare Scottish Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau ceramics, metalware and furniture. Among James's sales was that of an extremely rare four-piece silver and ivory tea set in the Art Deco style by Philippe Wolfers, Belgium, circa 1930, that sold for in excess of £10,000, and a widely exhibited repousse copper mirror, titled 'Water Nymphs, by Marion Henderson Wilson, circa 1905, that sold for £9,500.

Among the silver specialists, London dealer **Jeffrey Neal** found sales more encouraging than for some time, a comment repeated by several more silver specialists. Whilst among the jewellers, many declared business to be up and above expectations.

Also pleased with business was **Garth Vincent**, the arms and armour specialist from Lincoln, so too **Chiltern Antiques** from Henley-on-Thames, with scientific and medical collectables.

Among the more unusual items to sell was a tiny piece of Princess Louise's wedding cake, dating from 1871, on sale from **John Shepherd and Erna Hiscock** from Kent. It sold for its asking price of £145 to the great great grandson of the Princess's equerry.

The next Antiques for Everyone Fair takes place from 23rd - 26th July 2009.

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