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Antiques Trade Gazette

is published and originated by Metropress Ltd, trading as Auction Technology Group Ltd auctiontechnologygroup.com

Chief Executive Officer	Duncan Painter
Publishing Director	Matt Ball
Deputy Editor, News	Laura Chesters
Deputy Editor, Features & Supplements	Roland Arkell
Chief Production Editor	Tom Derbyshire
Digital & Art Market Editor	Alex Capon
Dealers & Fairs Editor	Frances Allitt
Creative Manager	Helen Eida

SUBSCRIPTIONS ENQUIRIES

+44 (0)1293 312161

atg@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk

EDITORIAL

+44 (0)20 3725 5520

editorial@antiquetrade gazette.com

ADVERTISING

+44 (0)20 3725 5608

advert@antiquetrade gazette.com

UK & US AUCTION ADVERTISING

Rachel Tolley +44 (0)20 3725 5569

racheltolley@antiquetrade gazette.com

Eden Oram-Killas +44 (0)7379 095530

edenoram-killas@antiquetrade gazette.com

INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING

Elena Scianna +44 (0)7345 732953

elenascianna@antiquetrade gazette.com

CALENDAR CONTROLLER

Jorge Jarical

calendar@antiquetrade gazette.com

CREATIVE TEAM

creative@antiquetrade gazette.com

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Antiques Trade Gazette,
Harlequin Building,
65 Southwark Street,
London SE1 0HR
+44 (0)20 3725 5500
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Printed by Buxton Press Ltd SK17 6AE



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Warm response in the heat

Latest bustling *Treasure House Fair* took place at a lively time for the art and antiques market

by Gabriel Berner

Treasure House Fair got under way amid a timely shot in the arm for London's summer art market, courtesy of a strong run of auctions led by Sotheby's £249.3m sale of the Lewis Collection – the most valuable single-owner auction ever held in the UK.

The latest edition, which opened on June 24 in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea after a VIP preview the previous evening, continued that momentum from the rostrum to the aisles, with dealers reporting encouraging sales across multiple disciplines during the fair's seven-day run.

Within hours of opening, the fair had produced a record of its own when **Wartski** sold a Nicholas Hilliard portrait of Lady Arbella Stuart with an asking price of £3.75m, apparently setting a significant new benchmark for a British portrait miniature (see *ATG* No 2751).

For the first time in several years, London's June art market appeared to benefit from a convergence of high-quality material, well-timed events and renewed buyer confidence. "Livelier than usual," was how one dealer summed up the week in the capital – and this was despite the exceptional heat that settled over the city early on.

But the brighter picture does not change the fact that these remain challenging times for the trade. Both dealers and fair organisers are contending with tighter margins, while the costs of staging and participating in art fairs continue to rise.

This was the fourth edition of *Treasure House* since its launch in 2023 to fill the gap left by the much-missed *Masterpiece London*. Established under tougher trading conditions than those enjoyed by its predecessor, the fair has evolved into a more compact event (60 exhibitors took part this year, down from 72 in 2025 despite a freeze on stand fees).

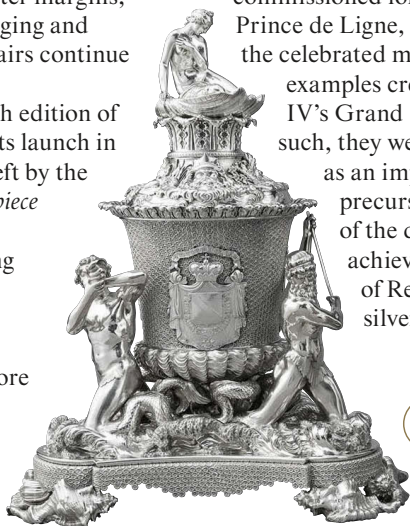
With dealers becoming increasingly selective about which events they support, and the higher build and operating costs involved in staging bespoke temporary fairs like *Treasure House*, the priority for the fair, says co-founder Thomas Woodham-Smith, is to focus on "quality not growth".

Silver stars

One of the stronger-performing categories at this year's fair was silver, which has continued its revival recently, helped by higher precious metal prices and renewed collector demand.

Specialist **Mary Cooke** reported selling around 50 pieces during the fair. Alongside a set of six Queen Anne Britannia standard silver gilt salvers by David Willaume (London, 1704) with an asking price of £79,500, the dealership in south-west London also sold a pair of George III silver gilt sugar vases and covers by to a classic model by Benjamin and James Smith (London 1810) priced at £36,500 and a great rarity, a George III knife tray by Charles Kandler II (London, 1782) with the arms of Charles, 10th Duke of Norfolk, (1720-86) priced at £12,500.

Meanwhile, **Koopman Rare Art's** top sale was a pair of marine-style ice pails by Philip Rundell (London, 1819), which went for a six-figure sum to a private English buyer. Apparently offered on the market for the first time since they were made, the ice pails were commissioned for Eugène, 8th Prince de Ligne, and pre-date the celebrated marine-themed examples created for George IV's Grand Service. As such, they were billed as an important precursor to one of the defining achievements of Regency silver.



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Animal magic

Among the early sales at furniture and works of art specialist **Thomas Coulborn & Sons** was a pair of 'fuseau' vases with Dihl & Guérhard porcelain bodies and ormolu mounts by Pierre-Philippe Thomire priced at £30,000 and a 17th century Italian ebony and pietre dure table cabinet made at

the Galleria de'Lavori, the Medici grand-ducal workshop in Florence, c.1620. The cabinet, inset with 17 hardstone panels of animals around a central panel depicting the legendary poet Orpheus, had apparently been in an English private collection since c.1760. It was priced at £350,000.

Mayfair dealer Simon Phillips of **Ronald Phillips** reported a flurry of sales too, with several in the six figures. These included a pair of George II giltwood console tables formerly



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belonging to the Lairds of Duchray, and an unusually large, life-size Great Dane bronze by the 19th century French sculptor Hippolyte Peyrol (1856-1929).

Folk focus

Success at the fair was not confined to the highest-priced works, however. Folk art specialist **Robert Young** brought items at a wider range of price points. Dealers operating at this level inevitably rely on volume rather than a handful of headline successes, with Young selling 29 pieces including paintings, sculpture furniture and treen.

Among them was a large naïve oil on panel ship portrait with an asking price of £18,000 that sold to a buyer visiting from Australia.

Dated 1801 and named for the Captain William Chapman, the subject is the *Lady Juliana*, a boat chartered by the British government



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Selection of sales from the latest *Treasure House Fair*

1. Thomas Coulborn & Sons sold this 17th century Italian ebony and pietre dure table cabinet made at the Galleria de'Lavori, the Medici grand-ducal workshop in Florence, c.1620. The cabinet, inset with 17 hardstone panels of animals around a central panel depicting the legendary poet Orpheus, had apparently been in an English private collection since c.1760. It was priced at **£350,000**.

2. Among the multiple pieces sold on **Robert Young's** stand was this c.1801 British School oil on pine panel of *Lady Juliana*, the first ship to transport exclusively female convicts to Australia in 1789. It had an asking price of

£18,000 and sold to a buyer visiting from Australia.

3. These royal marine ice pails, bearing the coat-of-arms of Eugène 8th Prince de Ligne, were the centrepiece of **Koopman's** stand and sold to a private English buyer for a **six-figure sum**.

4. This 18th century Carrara marble wine cooler sold on the stand of **Vagabond** with an asking price of **£12,500**.

5. Large *Baboon* sketch (1985) by Elisabeth Frink, sold for **£18,000** from **Christopher Kingzett Fine Art**.

6. Among **Ronald Phillips's** sales was a life-size Great Dane bronze by the 19th century French sculptor Hippolyte Peyrol (1856-1929), which sold for a **six-figure sum**.

a decade earlier to transport female convicts. Her first voyage carrying 226 convicts from Plymouth to Port Jackson in 1789-90 took 309 days.

Lady Juliana gained the reputation for being a floating brothel. Her steward John Nicol wrote in his memoir that "when we were fairly

out to sea, every man on board took a wife from among the convicts, they nothing loath".

The south London gallery also sold works to new collectors, including a sculptural English armchair, dug-out and hand-carved from a solid oak tree trunk, c.1780,

acquired by a Hong Kong-based client for a five-figure sum.

New faces

Elsewhere, this edition of *Treasure House* reflected a broader trend seen at leading fairs in recent years, with younger dealers increasingly

favouring a cross-period approach over traditional specialism.

Around a third of this year's exhibitors were new, replacing more established dealers who have retired or stepped back from exhibiting.

Joe Chaffer of **Vagabond Antiques**, returning for his second *Treasure House*, found buyers for multiple works from his Grand Tour-influenced stand. An early sale was a statement 18th century Carrara marble wine cooler, priced at £12,500, and containing an abundant display of blush dahlias.

The Petworth firm also sold an early 18th century vase carved in Rome from Egyptian imperial porphyry, priced at £85,000, a white marble head of Medusa, Rome, c.1884, after Canova's famed Rondanini Medusa at £35,000 and a pair of French terracotta urns, c.1880, for the same sum.

Modern art also traded well. A large *Baboon* sketch (1985) by Elisabeth Frink (1930-93) was sold by **Christopher Kingzett** for £18,000 during the VIP preview before the fair officially opened. The gallery also reported "lots of enquiries" for a group of David Hockney works on paper.

Back next June

By the fair's close on June 30, *Treasure House* had attracted around 15,000 visitors. Following the event, co-founders Harry van der Hoorn and Woodham-Smith said the strong trading had "fully vindicated" their belief in the need for a "high-quality multidisciplinary art fair" in London at the end of June.

The next edition will take place from June 23-29, 2027. ■

► treasurehousefair.com

Research? Get to the bottom of it

Gregory Ebbs has a reminder for dealers and auction houses: "always check underneath the seat – you never know what history might be waiting to be found".

Ebbs has just finished researching documents he discovered inside a painted and parcel-gilt dome-top sedan chair.

It had been offered at a Midlands saleroom in September 2025 catalogued as 19th century.

Ebbs secured it for a price in the low four figures (including buyer's premium) and set to work on researching it.

However, he quickly made a "remarkable discovery: several documents concealed beneath the seat, signed by two of Napoleon Bonaparte's generals and dated 1798 and 1808".

He said: "Among the papers are documents signed by generals Jean Dejean and Cazais,

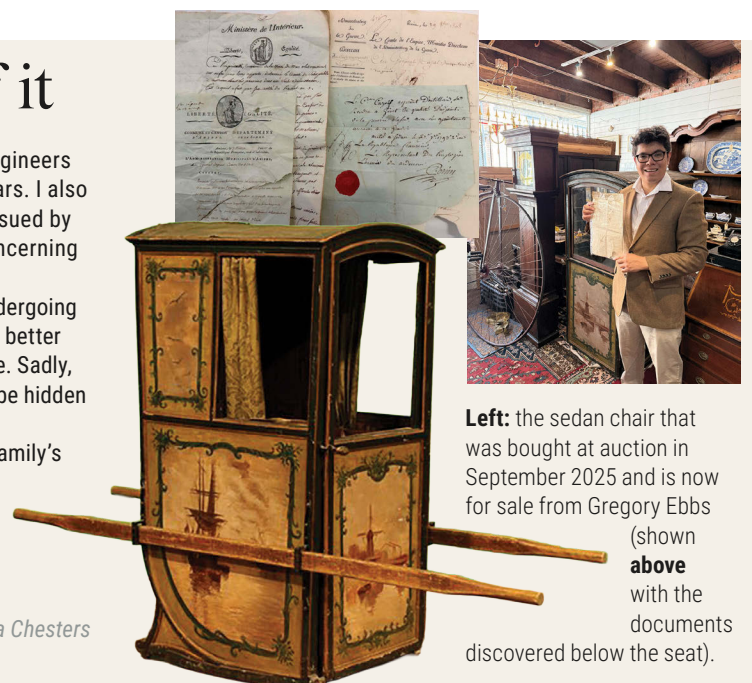
both distinguished French military engineers who served during the Napoleonic Wars. I also uncovered an additional document issued by the French Ministry of the Interior concerning the French timber trade.

"These documents are currently undergoing further investigation and translation to better understand their historical significance. Sadly, we may never know how they came to be hidden beneath the seat."

Ebbs, an antiques specialist at his family's antiques shop, Raven Yard Antiques in Whitchurch, Shropshire, is now offering the chair, which he believes to be 18th century, alongside the documents for a price of £3500.

► raven-antiques.com

Laura Chesters



Left: the sedan chair that was bought at auction in September 2025 and is now for sale from Gregory Ebbs (shown above with the documents discovered below the seat).