

BLOUINARTINFO

5 Best Booths at the Winter Antiques Show in New York



An installation view of the Les Enluminures booth at the Winter Antiques Fair.

(Photo by Regina Mogilevskaya)

More than 70 antiques dealers have unloaded their prime wares and stray curiosities across the Park Avenue Armory in New York, where the Winter Antiques Show runs January 22 through 31. Far from the image that the event might conjure — blighted and battered baubles collected by your grandma — here, there are no cramped notions of what an “antique” is. Objects are a catchall of styles and date from antiquity (like a fertility statue carved 7,000 years ago) to mid-20th century modernism (such as a pair of suave wing-backed lounge chairs from Italy). In total, the fair is a repository for small

wonders and little historical revelations. Here's a look at some of our favorite booths.

Arader Galleries

What is the “most important map in American history”? Arader Galleries claims to have it, and has written out this declaration in big block letters above the 6-and-a-half-foot long linen cartographic engraving of North America. Combining information from both the British and French, the 1773 Mitchell Map represented the boundaries of the United States for the first time. It was what diplomats used in the Treaty of Paris of 1783 that ended the Revolutionary War, and later determined the border between the US and Canada. Sold for \$350,000, the map comes with the original marbled slipcase.

Nearby, transfer-print watercolors by Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) — a German-born natural history illustrator who left her husband and traveled with her daughter to Suriname, on the coast of northern South America, in 1699 — also document the natural world in exquisite detail. The anatomic studies include a harlequin beetle, jelly-green colored caterpillars, and owl moth with tendrilled antae, among other winged and creeping creatures.

Les Enluminures

While this gallery specializes in medieval manuscript illuminations, some of the works on display here riff on the visual traditions of that era. One intimate scene of the Holy Family dates from 1560 and is by Giulio Clovio, an illuminator of the late Italian Renaissance who Vasari calls “Michelangelo in miniature” in his “Lives of Painters.” This particular Clovio work was on loan to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles for a number of years. Meanwhile, the 19th-century craze for all things neo-Gothic is encapsulated by an illuminated prayer book commissioned by Alexandre Gustave, the architect of the Eiffel Tower. On one page, caryatids and flourishing floral forms frame a miniature depiction of the Eiffel Tower, the size of a row of postage stamps. In nearby cases, dozens of rings — a gold Frankish band inlaid with garnets, a

wide, spiky Jewish wedding ring dating from the 18th century — range in price from \$5,000 to the six figures.

Rupert Wace Ancient Art

The oldest work at the fair resides in the Rupert Wace Ancient Art booth. Carved more than 7,000 years ago, the fertility idol, around the size of a clementine fruit, depicts a round, slope-shouldered Neolithic woman. Wide hipped, crossed-legged, and hands clutching breasts, the prized work is going for \$230,000. Also a stunner, an Egyptian painted wood sarcophagus panel from the Middle Kingdom has maintained its rich jewel-like tones that multiply into a rigorous, rectilinear pattern, almost architectural in its illusory depth. Next to it, a small bronze head of cat dating from the Late Dynastic period stares out with wide eyes, its ears pierced for earrings. (The cast would have covered the embalmed head of a dead pet in this time.)

Donzella

Donzella has laid out an inviting modernist living area, with a fleet of mid-20th century furniture designs — much of it Italian, austere, low-slung, and very suave. Most desirable are the seating options, in particular a pair of wing-backed chairs designed by the prolific Italian architect and designer Gio Ponti, dating to around 1929. Nearby, another Italian designer, Paulo Buffa, is represented by a set of open-arm lounge chairs from 1952, made of polished walnut frame, ribbed arm rests, and upholstered green leather. A rare 1950s bench from the Widdicomb Furniture Company, founded in Grand Rapids, Michigan, holds court in a corner, a cohesion of strong angles in dark stained walnut and brass, propped outward with spunky attitude.

Geoffrey Diner Gallery

One of the strongest works in this booth is in fact underfoot: a rug by English textile designer C.F.A. Voysey, working in the Arts & Crafts style. The piece depicts an elaborate floral pattern and dark-leaved bramble dyed with deep purples, blues, and greens. Following the organic motif, the gallery has also included a leather-topped writing desk designed by Gustav Stickley, of the

American chapter of the Arts & Crafts movement. Atop the oak table sits a rippled green glass “turtleback” shade from Tiffany Studios New York. Finally, a wrought iron fire screen and andirons dating from 1930 are made by the renowned American blacksmith Samuel Yellin, with the straight rows of decorative pillars on the screen unfurling like little plants.