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**THE NATIONAL ANTIQUE & ART DEALERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS AS A PRE-EMINENT TRADE GROUP**

***THE PASSION OF COLLECTING: 50 YEARS OF NAADAA ON VIEW AT  
INTERNATIONAL FINE ART & ANTIQUE DEALERS SHOW, OCTOBER 21***

**NAADAA DEALERS VOICE OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE**

NEW YORK: The hand-wringing over the future plight of the art and antique dealer is greatly misrepresented according to members of the National Antique & Art Dealers Association of America (NAADAA), a powerhouse trade organization comprised of forty-five elite American art and antique dealers, many of whom have been in existence for over 100 years. Founded in 1954, NAADAA celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on a high note of optimism with a series of events that will mark the illustrious history of its members.

Among the events planned for 2004/ 2005 are: a special exhibition, entitled *The Passion of Collecting: 50 Years of NAADAA* at The International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show, which opens in New York at the Seventh Regiment Armory on October 21, 2004, featuring archival photos and memorabilia highlighting the history of the organization, its members and their roles in forming major art and antique collections; and a dinner honoring Eric Shrubsole, the 92-year old sole surviving founding member of NAADAA as well as other founding galleries including A La Vieille Russie, the Ralph M. Chait Galleries, James Graham & Sons, James Robinson, and Stiebel, Ltd.

“The rumors of dealers caving to auction house competition have been greatly exaggerated,” stated NAADAA’s president Mark Schaffer, who with his father Paul and uncle Peter Schaffer, are principals of the New York-based A La Vieille Russie, specialists in Russian decorative and fine arts, antique jewelry, and Fabergé, since 1851.

“Our members, many of whom are third and fourth generation businesses, are confident that the next fifty years of business will be even stronger than the first.”

“From its inception, the organization’s goal was to safeguard the interests of those who buy, sell or collect antiques and works of art through honorable and ethical trade practices and to advance the knowledge of our members’ collecting fields to the public-at-large,” Schaffer said. He also cited the ability to network with other dealers and to confront issues involving the entire marketplace as primary functions of NAADAA.

Carswell Rush Berlin, a specialist in 19<sup>th</sup> century American classical furniture, said that the organization has raised his stature within the greater dealer community and provides a forum for him to discuss issues facing his profession. “Since I am a private dealer and don’t have a gallery, it’s very important for me to be part of an organization which can deal with issues directly related to our business.”

One critical issue Berlin cited was the impact of the auction houses on the antiques business. “An organization such as NAADAA is important to our trade because we are able to act as strong counter balance to what the auction houses espouse to the public. Our group consists of the top dealers who cover a wide array of collecting fields, providing expertise and professionalism to collectors on a much more intimate basis.”

Despite the recent spate of negative publicity surrounding the business practices of the auction houses and the exodus of many important experts due to loss of revenue, dealers are quick to respond that they don’t want to portray an “us against them” attitude. “Let’s face it, our businesses are linked,” said Schaffer. “However, we are in a much stronger position to point out the positive aspects of doing business with antique dealers, which oftentimes gets lost in the brouhaha of big sales.”

## **CASTING A WIDE NET TO COLLECTORS**

An important component of NAADAA is educating the public about what constitutes quality art. “The public is confused,” Mark Schaffer said. “There’s been such a proliferation of media coverage about fakes and unethical business practices that we feel it’s important to educate the buyer.” Since NAADAA members are among the most highly respected and recognized authorities in their fields, covering a wide array of collecting categories, they have organized lectures and symposia in conjunction with distinguished museum curators, scholars and decorative art specialists, and cultural institutions such as New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Bard Graduate Center for Decorative Arts.

Henry Neville, president of the New York division of Mallett Inc., specialists in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>- century English furniture, asserted that antique dealers have a stronger position than ever in the marketplace and have the collective power – through their depth of knowledge and expertise -- to cast a wide net to collectors. “Great connoisseurs, great collections, are all built through and often preserved with the guidance, expertise, and energy of great dealers,” said Neville. “NAADAA members have a committed purpose to benefiting the whole marketplace, by the sharing and development of the their role in this process of education through involvement, with the beautiful works of art in which we all trade.”

“Between all of us exist thousands of years of experience and knowledge in the art market,” he said. “The sharing of this knowledge is what enables a dealer to develop and grow his business, not only in acquiring stock of quality, but also in acquiring clients who become collectors and, hopefully in their own way because they have shared in a wide group of dealers, connoisseurs in their own right.”

“As dealers, we disseminate knowledge enthusiastically and freely to any visitor whether in our shop, at a fair or even, as is often the case, in general social conversation,” said Neville. “Nor is this dissemination of knowledge, of aesthetic judgment, and of connoisseurship limited only to clients and visitors, but it is also given to other

colleagues, to curatorial departments in museums and private collections, and to conservators and restorers.”

Thomas Colville, a Connecticut-based American 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>- century paintings dealer, who recently joined the organization, finds that the business is all about connoisseurship. “Through our knowledge and expertise, dealers are in a much better position to point collectors to the top tier of work.”

NAADAA members have noticed a return of collectors. “We’re seeing more collectors return to the fold wanting to sell back their collections to us,” said Allan S. Chait, whose father Ralph M. Chait founded the namesake gallery, which specializes in Chinese porcelain and export silver, in 1910. “I think collectors are realizing that despite what the auction houses promise, they’re feeling a higher comfort level dealing one on one an individual dealer.”

Margaret Gristina, Director of the Chinese Porcelain Company, said that NAADAA has given their gallery prestige and a forum to discuss issues facing the trade. “We’re proud of being a NAADAA member, and think it’s important to be part of a group of established dealers,” she said. She concurs with Chait that clients have stated their preference for dealing one-on-one with individual dealers rather than the large auction houses. “We’re more exclusive and are able to give our clients more personal attention and access to collections that they wouldn’t ordinarily have if they went to an auction house.”

Mark Schaffer also noted that his gallery sold the Forbes family 80% of their Fabergé, including nine out of fifteen of its Presentation Easter Eggs.

### **NAADAA FLEXES ITS LEGISLATIVE MUSCLE**

To counteract the impact of illegal and unethical practices in the trade, NAADAA has acted as an important lobbying entity to protect art buyers. Over the years, the

organization has flexed its muscle within the state and federal legislature to enact laws to protect the art buying public. For example, in 1968, Lefkowitz ruled that issuing false certificates of authenticity with an attempt to defraud was a misdemeanor. The warranty of authenticity was binding unless the dealer signed a disclaimer of liability. The group was also responsible for getting a measure passed that limited the authority of general disclaimers in auction catalogues.

According to Gerald Stiebel, who specializes in Old Master paintings and drawings, and Renaissance and Medieval works of art, and 18<sup>th</sup> century porcelain and French furniture, NAADAA is a vehicle which allows dealers to be heard in Congress. He recalled that he went to Washington representing NAADAA in both 1978 and 1979 for issues relating to the UNESCO Agreement and cultural patrimony. “The issue at hand was the UNESCO Agreement,” he said. “I testified at a hearing the Committee of Finance in 1978, and the next year before a subcommittee on trade for the Committee of Ways & Means to help them enact legislation that would be acceptable to the collecting community.”

### **AN EXCLUSIVE DEALER NETWORK**

Membership to NAADAA is highly selective and by invitation only. In order to be considered, a dealer must have been in business for a significant number of years and be a recognized authority in his or her field, practicing the highest standards of professional ethics in all their dealings. “I’ve been a member for four years,” said Clinton Howell, who specializes in English furniture, paintings, and objets d’arts from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, “and the association represents a standard of excellence and credibility which in the end is what this business is all about. In the most mundane form, NAADAA membership is the antique trade’s equivalent of the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.”

Among NAADAA members’ areas of specialization are American furniture and decoration, antiquities, Asian antiquities, art and ceramics, English and Continental ceramics, English, French and Continental furniture, glass and lighting, maps and prints, Medieval and Renaissance Art, Russian works of art, paintings, rugs, tapestries, textiles,

scientific instruments, silver, jewelry and sculpture. The majority of dealers are New York-based galleries with the others located in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Many of these establishments are multi-generational with some over one hundred years old. Among them are the Ralph M. Chait Galleries, A La Vieille Russie (1851), Didier Aaron Galleries, James Graham & Sons (1857), Blumka Gallery, Philip Colleck, Dalva Brothers, The Old Print Shop (1898), S.J. Shrubsole, and Stiebel Ltd.(1870)

“When a collector purchases something from a NAADAA member they can be confident that it is of utmost quality and integrity,” said Schaffer. “Each of our members is a recognized authority in his or her various field, and has earned a high reputation for integrity and fair dealing in all their transactions.”

NAADAA also has a longstanding association with Brian and Anna Haughton’s International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show, the first vetted fair in the United States. Said fair organizer Anna Haughton: "The International Fine Art and Antique Dealers Show has had the cooperation of NAADAA since its inception in 1989. It has been a privilege for us to work with such an important and prestigious organization. We congratulate NAADAA on a spectacular 50 years and hope that the next 50 years are as equally successful!"

Further elevating its stature in the international art market, NAADAA is a member of La Confédération Internationale des Négociants en Oeuvres d’Art (C.I.N.O.A.). Founded in 1935, this organization is comprised of leading art and antique dealer associations in twenty-one countries worldwide.

## **CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION – NAADAA’S CONTRIBUTION**

According to Henry Neville, the association’s members also contribute to an economic sub-stratum of restorers and conservators. “Here the practical and manual skills of conservators working in many different and varied fields, in porcelain and glass, on cabinet woods or lacquer, on bronze and precious metals, are refined and guided and honed to a much greater level of expertise by the input of the dealer’s knowledge,” he explained. “This aesthetic and academic input is essential towards the improvement of the nation’s skill base. The national repository of knowledge in the fine and decorative arts is greatly increased by the expertise that the dealers are continuously learning and sharing through their everyday work in handling and researching what they buy and sell.”

## **THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS**

What’s in store for NAADAA in the next fifty years? Schaffer answered philosophically: “The faces will change and the market will change, but in the end there will still be expert dealers passionate about what they do, standing behind what they sell, and putting their money and reputations at stake everyday. Afterall, fifty years ago, who would have predicted that Russia and China would emerge as viable art markets?”

For more information, visit [www.naadaa.org](http://www.naadaa.org).