

Finding Your "Find"

The San Francisco Fall Antiques Show, the West Coast's oldest and most prestigious event of its kind, will grandly open its doors at Fort Mason Center's Festival Pavilion on October 27 to celebrate the show's 30th anniversary. An oversized carved relief will welcome guests at the entry. No, that's not what it is—it's actually a grisaille-style trompe l'oeil rendering, designed by Willem Racké Studios. This curiosity is a first hint at the show's theme: *Hidden Treasures: Celebrating 30 Years of Surprising Finds*.

"All my clients come to the show," says **Willem Racké**, whose work adorns the homes and workplaces of the Bay Area's most influential designers and their clients. "I have been participating for quite a while, creating backgrounds, decorative paintings, and murals. This year's show is really my personal specialty."

The term "museum quality" is overused and often incorrectly used (confused with "inexpensive reproductions" or "custom-created"), but it's an accurate term when attributed to the San Francisco Antiques Show. In fact, at the 2010 show, the Asian Art Museum scooped up an ivory ceremonial dagger hilt (circa 1700-1800) for the recent Bali exhibit. The dealers who set up shop for the antiques show are really curators, and they stake their reputations on the authenticity of their collections.



Midori Gallery horse, 18th Century
Kyoto School netsuke

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The Metamorphic Peacock will be a show standout

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For a few thousand taste-makers and seekers, the antique show is their destination of choice for one-stop, no-fly shopping for "finds" from 60-plus renowned decorative and fine art dealers with gilt-edged international addresses. These include Mayfair, St. James, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Milano, Fifth Avenue, and our own Jackson Square. The dealers specialize in American, English, Continental, and Asian furniture, silver, ceramics, glass, jewelry, rugs, textiles, paintings, prints, and photographs of all styles and periods.

Socialites hobnob with designers; designers shoptalk with dealers, and pre-shop for their clients. Or else, they accompany their clients to treasure shop with them. The show also draws many novices, offering them the rare opportunity to talk to the supreme experts in an informal manner.

"Younger collectors have often inherited a piece or two and want to learn about their treasures, and how to mix what they now own with 20th century designs," says the show's strategic and creative consultant, **Lisa Podos**. She adds, "The show also features contemporary dealers."

S. Collier Gwin, an exhibitor and the owner of Foster-Gwin Period Antiques on Jackson Square, says, "If you don't ask questions, you don't learn. A quality dealer is keen to talk to you. We welcome questions. That is why we come to the show. The San Francisco Fall Antiques Show is an excellent venue for doing some due diligence: discovering the way the pieces are made, learning how to mix pieces, and understanding the provenances. Every pearl has its oyster."

Speaking of pearls (which happen to be the traditional 30th anniversary gift), chef **Tyler Florence**, who has claimed the Bay Area world as his oyster, is chairing the glamorous opening night preview party on October 26 with, what else, an oyster bar plus an *amuse-bouche* for what many veteran "culturati" hail as the party of the year: oyster shooters, anyone?

"Opening night really has morphed into *the* party, especially now that the younger group has found us," says **Laura King Pfaff**, chairwoman of the Collectors' Circle. "Men love the party because the only people in tuxes are the bartenders, and because of McCall's signature menu, including the amazing caviar stations. I love that you can return to the show all week long, because the party itself is all-consuming for me, leaving little time to shop."

"We are looking forward to seeing, and tasting, whatever Tyler has cooked up for us," says **Michele Goss**, show chairwoman. "What better place than San Francisco to have a famous foodie as the opening night chair? Also, it is quite invigorating to have a number of new dealers this year. They will be a huge draw. As to the opener, if you have fabulous pearls to wear, this is the time to wear them, in your hair, on your shoes, your bag everywhere!"

This year, six speakers will bring their personal, fascinating points of view to the show, covering topics ranging from why and how royal families collected their heirlooms, to fabulous pearl jewelry and the society swans who wore them—to a presentation by the FBI's "real Indiana Jones," the ultimate "finder," **Robert Wittman**. Inspiration for numerous films, Wittman will recount notorious worldwide heists that he helped to solve, including his recovery of Rembrandt's 1630 *Self-Portrait* (worth \$36 million) for the Swedish National Museum, his rescue of 2,000-year-old Pre-Columbian gold armor plates looted from a royal Peruvian tomb, and his retrieval of an original copy of the Bill of Rights, valued at \$30 million.

The opening night party benefits the non-profit organization, Enterprise for High School Students, whose mission is to create new and exciting opportunities for San Francisco youth. Founded in 1969 and open to all high school students in the city, the group has helped more than 20,000 San Francisco teenagers find careers, prepare for them, and become successful in the competitive workplace. ■

Sandra J. Swanson writes about fashions in food, culture, travel, gardening, and yachting.



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