



# ANTIQUES ROADSHOW™ INSIDER

VOLUME 4  
NUMBER 3  
MARCH 2004

News, Trends, and Analysis from the World of Antiques and Collectibles

## ON THE LOOKOUT

### ONE FOR THE AGES

A stunning still life by Luis Egedio Meléndez (1716–1780) sold for \$4 million at Christie's in January. The oil on canvas—featuring berries on a plate, apples, a barrel, and bread rolls on a table—easily beat its pre-sale



Meléndez's record-setter: \$4 million.

estimate (\$1.5–\$2 million) and in the process set a world auction record for the artist.

### TOY TREND?

You've seen the spectacular views of Mars made possible by Spirit, the land rover that reached the Red Planet Jan. 3. Now you can collect rover toys licensed by the California Institute of Technology, which runs the Jet Propulsion Laboratory for NASA. Lego Co., for example, is making an 858-piece Spirit model. Another company is making 1/10 scale models that sell for around \$150. Will these toys increase in value? Perhaps; space-related memorabilia has been attracting attention in recent years. But keep in mind that late-1990s toy rovers made by Hot Wheels (after earlier vehicles landed on Mars) sell for under \$10 today.

### EYE-CATCHERS

A January auction at Rago Arts offered hundreds of lots of pottery by such makers as Grueby, Newcomb, and Rookwood, among others, along with dozens of pieces of Stickley furniture. The Rookwood cylindrical vase shown here (standing around 13 inches high and bearing a painting by Bruce Horsfall of a maiden dropping blossoms) fetched nearly \$15,000. Several Ohr pieces drew five-figure bids as well. The biggest seller, at \$115,000: an early-1900s Stickley desk/bookcase designed by Harvey Ellis.



The 15K vase.

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## TREASURED CHESTS

Once the space-hogging bane of the antique shop back room, antique trunks now find appreciation among antiquers as artifacts themselves.



By Don Fluckinger

In the days before automobiles zipped from city to city via modern interstate highways and passenger jets filled the skies, travel involved more than just an easy car trip or a few hours in the air. Back then, in the days when people relied heavily on train transportation, "traveling light" wasn't so simple, nor was "carry-on baggage" an option. Up until about the 1930s, travelers used trunks as their main form of luggage.

To meet the demand for trunks, legions of companies in the United States and Europe manufactured millions of them in varying sizes and quality, in finished wood or covered with paper, canvas, leather, and even metal. Today, those old trunks—from the most basic wood models made in colonial times up to more ornate, stamped-metal designs of the industrial era—have inspired a collector following.

The heyday of trunk manufacturing



Trunks can have flat tops, domed tops, and, as in this case, curved tops.

Travelers considered Louis Vuitton models, like the one above, the Rolls-Royces of trunks.

ended in the 1930s, although some companies made trunks into the 1940s (and a very few still do today). "As transportation changed from ships and trains to cars and airplanes, luggage had to change, too, from trunks to suitcases," says Paul "Pat" Morse, a trunk dealer and author from Barrington, N.H.

The familiar rectangular box shape was the mainstay of trunk design. Many variations exist, including curved tops and even rarer dome tops, which can have either straight or curved sides. Furthermore, the inside of a trunk could be completely open, or it could contain trays or compartments, or—in the case of wardrobe trunks designed to be used as dressers on board ships or in summer homes—it might include racks, clothes hangers, and drawers.

Morse and his partner, Linda Edelstein, have been restoring trunks since the mid-1970s. At the time they started, antique dealers typically didn't

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Don Fluckinger is a freelance writer and editor based in Nashua, N.H. He covered vintage Hot Wheels and Matchbox cars in last month's Insider, antique stoves in our October 2003 issue, and cast-iron cookware in February 2003.



Images provided by Paul Pat Morse and Linda Edelstein

## ANTIQUe TRUNKS

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want the dozen or so trunks they invariably had accumulated in a back room, so they'd sell them for a few dollars each. Most trunks came into a dealer's possession through estate buys, not as artifacts but rather as vessels in which they had hauled other booty.

Over the years, Morse and Edelstein learned about the history and construction of trunks. There are basic colonial wood boxes and "Jenny Lind" trunks, the hourglass-shaped design named after the popular actress who made it famous. There are "Saratoga" trunks, known for their high-quality construction. And



This Excelsior model's oak-slat cover is a particularly desirable feature among those who collect antique trunks.

there are top brands that command top prices from collectors today: A. Louis Vuitton, Haskell Brothers, Goyard, and Gillmore, to name a few.

The days of the \$3 unrestored trunk are pretty well gone, Morse says. He typically pays more like \$30–\$50 for trunks "in the rough" at flea markets and antique shops. They can also be found at yard sales from time to time, and even by the side of the road on trash-pickup day. Remarkably, some of them are very well preserved, having been stored over the decades in dry, well-ventilated attics.

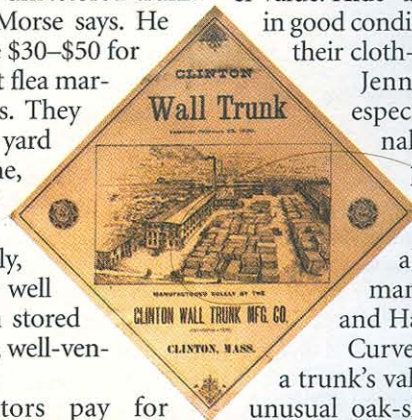
The price collectors pay for

restored or refinished trunks has gone up, too. Morse sold his first trunk (after refinishing it) for around \$45 some 25 years ago. Now, trunks can sell anywhere from a few hundred dollars to upwards of \$6,000 depending on condition and rarity.

What makes one trunk more valuable than another? Values hinge on such factors as a trunk's maker and its shape, condition, and special features. The older the trunk, the more it's worth, especially if it dates to the 18th century. Those with original hardware (locks and keys, handles, and latches), as well as original coverings (inside and out) command a higher value. Hide- and metal-covered trunks in good condition are worth more than their cloth-covered counterparts.

Jenny Lind-style trunks, especially those in top original condition, command a premium. High-quality trunks from the other makers mentioned above as well as such manufacturers as Oshkosh and Hartmann also desirable.

Curved or domed tops add to a trunk's value, as do bevel tops and unusual oak-slat coverings. Cedar or

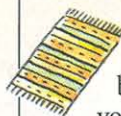


This Drucker trunk label reads "The best trunks bear this trade mark." It also notes, "Registered Jan. 12th 1897." The label at right is from the Clinton (Mass.) Wall Trunk Mfg. Co.



## TEXTILE RESTORATION

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items can arise from your storage plan. If you store your textiles, it's better to do so in archival boxes. If you store, say, a quilt in a cardboard box or wooden chest for long periods of time, it can get brown stains from the acid, Ambrose says.

Also, make sure your storage area is rodent-free; mice and similar pests can chew right through such boxes.

Here are some other tips our experts offer in the care of textile items:

- In the case of a favorite quilt, do not wash it in a washing machine and do not use a dryer—the fabrics can shrink unevenly, causing the quilt to pucker. And never dryclean it.
- Instead, hand-wash your quilts in a bathtub with cold water and gentle cleaners (Orvus, Quilt Wash, and Vintage Wash are three that experts recommend). Then dry the quilt out of the sun in front of a gentle fan.
- Finally, if you have a textile wall hanging, don't hang it behind glass; such pieces "like to breathe," Ffrench says. ❁

## SOURCES & RESOURCES

For further information, here are three organizations worth contacting.

- **The Textile Museum** ([www.textilemuseum.org](http://www.textilemuseum.org))

2320 South St. NW, Washington D.C. 20008

Phone: 202-667-0441

E-mail: [info@textilemuseum.org](mailto:info@textilemuseum.org)

*Note: The Textile Museum hosts a "Conservation and Eastern Hemisphere Curatorial Consultation" the first Wednesday of the month, September through May. Visitors can bring in up to three textiles and are served on a walk-in basis.*

- **Textile Society of America**

([www.textilesociety.org](http://www.textilesociety.org))

P.O. Box 70, Earleville, MD 21919-0070

Phone: 410-275-2329 • E-mail: [tsoa@dol.net](mailto:tsoa@dol.net)

- **Western Association of Art Conservation**

(<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/waac/>)

c/o Odile Madden, Williams Art Conservation

5180 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90016

E-mail: [omadden@earthlink.net](mailto:omadden@earthlink.net)

Phone: 323-936-2331

*Here's the contact information for the experts quoted in this story.*

- **Sally Ambrose, Ambrose Appraisal Service**

P.O. Box 536, Leavenworth, WA 98826-0536

Phone: 509-548-7472

- **Douglas Deihl, Skinner Inc.**

Heritage on the Garden, 63 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116 • Phone: 617-350-5400

- **James A. Ffrench, Beauvais Carpets**

12 East 86th St, Apt. 736, New York, NY 10028

Phone: 212-688-2265

- **Melissa Rausch, Linens Limited**

240 N. Milwaukee St., Milwaukee, WI 53202

Phone: 800-637-6334

- **Bruce Shackelford, Independent appraiser**

P.O. Box 15707, San Antonio, TX 78212

E-mail: [bruce@bshack.com](mailto:bruce@bshack.com)

## HOT TIP FOR ANTIQUE LINENS: A HOT BATH

If you send out your antique bed linens or grandmother's wedding veil for cleaning and restoration, what happens? Experts at Linens Limited in Milwaukee tell us they start by putting the sheets into copper boilers for whitening. From there, the sheets would be hand-washed and blocked out—stretched and pinned—for drying, then ironed, says Melissa Rausch. If textiles are highly fragile (as in an antique wedding veil), they're not put into the boilers. Instead, they're soaked in tubs with gentle products like "Yellow Go." Cleaning a lace tablecloth would cost about \$120 with shipping; a full wedding dress could run to \$500.

—Erica Winter

