

COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

The bespoke bible: 71 top craftsmen

Shaggy dog: the story
of an endangered sheepdog

'Beautiful and useful':
the life of William Morris





For collectors' eyes only

This weekend's fair at Two Temple Place has treasures ranging from Egyptian antiquities to a Hepworth bronze

ONE of the principal functions of Two Temple Place, the fine Victorian Gothic townhouse on the Embankment that was originally the Astor estate office and is now owned by the charitable Bulldog Trust, is to provide a London shop window for out-of-town, publicly owned collections. It can be hired for events, too. Such is the temporal confusion engendered by the past two years that I cannot be sure if the first Eye of the Collector hybrid fair, first planned for May 2020 and opening today (www.eyeofthecollector.com; September 8–11), is the first commercial event. No matter, the virtual component of the fair is viewing by appointment, the idea being that every physical view should be a fairly private one, whereas online viewing rooms can be accessed via Christie's (www.christies.com).

There are 29 galleries, for the most part London-based or connected. Those from beyond the M25 include the Long-Sharp Gallery from Indianapolis, US, with modern and contemporary fine art, plus the Ting-Ying Gallery from Hong Kong and Oxford

Fig 2: Egyptian jar, 4000BC–3200BC. With Charles Ede



Fig 1: *The Garden at Sidi bou Said* by Lavery. With Patrick Bourne

Ceramics Gallery, both with contemporary pots. The last is in Walton Street and presumably so called to distinguish it from previous Oxford Galleries in the High. Among its offerings at Temple Place is a coolly handsome 10¼in-high bottle vase with flared neck (Fig 3) thrown by Lucie Rie in 1972.

There are considerably older pots with Ariadne, Kallos and Charles Ede. The last has a 7½in-high Egyptian terracotta jar (Fig 2) of 4000BC–3200BC. Much of the body has an earthy, red-orange tone, with an uneven black band around the top, and the entire exterior surface is richly burnished. The effect is timeless and the pot has an emotional charge far greater than its unassertive, if perfect, form might suggest.

The Impressionist to Modern art dealer Willoughby Gerrish, who operates from Thirsk, North Yorkshire, as well as London, has a bronze cast of the 1971 *Three Forms* (Fig 4) by Barbara Hepworth, which would sit very well next to the Ede pot.

London picture dealer Patrick Bourne is not only participating here, but following with an exhibition at home (at 6, St James's Place, London SW1) of 'Artist-Travellers 1850–1950', to coincide with the launch of a new book by Kenneth McConkey, *Towards the Sun* (Paul Holberton). Common to both fair and show is John Lavery's 20in by 24in *The Garden at Sidi bou Said* (Fig 1).

This fair is one of the ways in which the art market is trying to adapt to our new world. Another is Cromwell Place, where

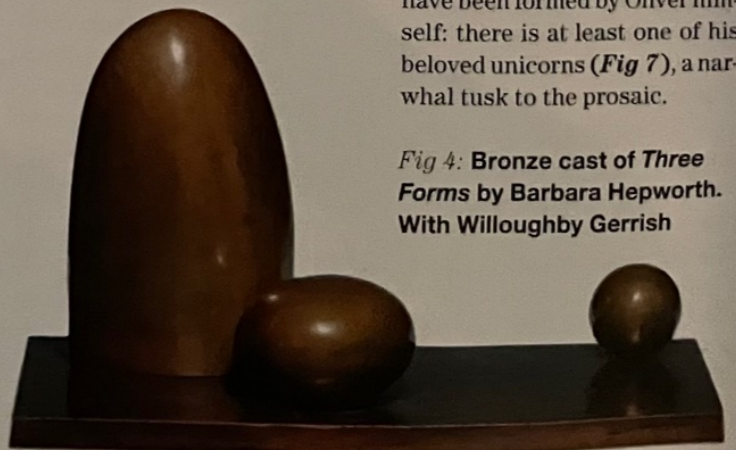


Fig 4: Bronze cast of *Three Forms* by Barbara Hepworth. With Willoughby Gerrish

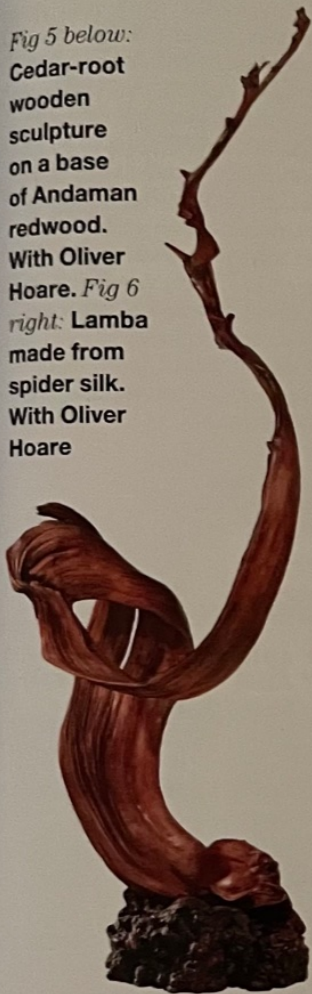


Fig 3: Bottle vase by Lucie Rie. With Oxford Ceramics Gallery

Lavery's very grand studio has been turned into the upmarket 21st-century descendent of the antiques markets that sprang up in the 1970s and 1980s. Dealers can take spaces for longer or shorter periods for exhibitions or offices. Visitors may amble from one room to another in a pleasantly relaxed manner.

The first to see the building's potential was the late Oliver Hoare, expert in Middle Eastern antiquities and creator of cabinets of curiosities. His business, now run by his son, Damian, with Ann Corne, has returned to Gallery 3, Cromwell Place with an exhibition, 'Natural World' (September 22–October 22), that might have been formed by Oliver himself: there is at least one of his beloved unicorns (Fig 7), a narwhal tusk to the prosaic.

Fig 5 below:
Cedar-root
wooden
sculpture
on a base
of Andaman
redwood.
With Oliver
Hoare. Fig 6
right: Lamba
made from
spider silk.
With Oliver
Hoare



Another natural wonder is a Japanese or Chinese scholar's 60½in-high cedar root wood sculpture (Fig 5) dating from the 17th or 18th century on a base of Andaman redwood. Might it not distract more than aid contemplation? There is also a pair of gilded bezoar stones, found in stomachs and, when powdered, regarded as an infallible antidote to poison; they belonged to Ranjit Singh, Lion of the Punjab (1780–1839).

Modern wonders are represented by three of only four existing textiles made from the silk of golden orb-weaver spiders (*Nephila madagascariensis*), one of the rarest materials in Nature. The two shawls and a *lamba*, a long Malagasy shawl (Fig 6), are the product of 15 years of research and five in the making, by a designer, Simon Peers, and Nicholas Godley, an entrepreneur, with a team working by trial and error, drawing on 18th- and 19th-century notebooks.

Eighty men and women were employed to scour the Madagascan hills each morning in search of spiders to be 'milked', or 'silked', before being released in the evening. The work involved harnessing 24 spiders at a time, each placed in an individual compartment with equipment custom-designed and built to enable the silk to be threaded from their spinnerets onto cones.

Next week Chelsea revived



Fig 7 far right: 'Unicorn' or narwhal tusk. With Oliver Hoare

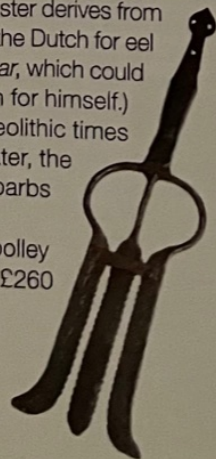
Pick of the week

Our modern languages master at school, who spoke 16 languages, 'but only eight of them fluently', would rebuke us if we mispronounced the German word for 'and'. 'Oond,' he proclaimed, 'is the Urdu for camel'. As a result, I have always been interested in connections and disconnections between languages. When I saw a fishing trident, or leister, as used for eels on the Severn and salmon on the Tweed, in a July sale at Woolley & Wallis in Salisbury, I was a little confused. Could the word be Dutch in origin, especially as the Dutch are famous for eels, I wondered.

Recently I have been researching the wonderful Dutch 17th-century painter Judith Leyster, but her surname had nothing to do with fishing—it meant 'lodestar', and was adopted by her father because he owned a Star Brewery. In fact, leister derives from Scandinavia and is a Viking legacy, whereas the Dutch for eel spear is *aalgeer*. (A Dutch spearman is an *elgar*, which could have given Sir Edward an Enigma Variation for himself.)

Leisters vary from region to region. In Neolithic times they were made of wood and bone, but, later, the prongs were metal with backward-facing barbs or serrations to secure the prey.

The 19th-century example offered at Woolley & Wallis was missing its shaft, but sold for £260 (right). A couple more have been sold this century: one for £65 at Sworders in 2018, together with six gin traps, and one for £180 at Bonhams in 2008, complete with its hazel shaft and a salmon landing net.



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