What is an antique?

Find the perfect blend of antique and contemporary pieces for your home at Mayfair's showcase. By **Corinne Julius**

WHAT is an antique? That is a tricky question. It is generally accepted that objects should be 100 years old, but these days antiques fairs include all manner of objects, a raft of artefacts, styles, materials and interests – in other words, something for everyone.

With the increased interest in the contemporary, antiques have to some degree fallen from favour. The finest objects have continued to do well, but items for domestic use, rather than collecting, have had more varied success.

MIX IT UP

However, there is a trend now to mix the contemporary with the antique. As the curator of Future Heritage, a show that exhibits the best of contemporary British craft and design – the antiques of the future – I am a firm believer in mixing the best of each design period. Mid-century designers the Eameses and the Days both mixed the old and the new in their homes.

Billy Cook, of William Cook – who will be exhibiting at the annual **LAPADA Art & Antiques Fair** in Berkeley Square, Mayfair, opening on Tuesday next week – agrees. "Good design is good design, whether it is from the 17th, 18th, 19th or 20th centuries.

"The role of antiques in the home has changed over the past years. In a time of conformity they can make an individual's home unique." He sees a shift in tastes, with people less interested in brands and more concerned with individuality and expressing themselves.

THIRTYSOMETHING FANS

Mieka Sywak, director of LAPADA, The Association of Art and Antiques Dealers, is a convert to antiques. She started her career working with contemporary design, helping to establish the PAD design fair.

"Young professionals, people like me in their thirties, are increasingly interested in antiques. It was the showcase of a craftsperson's creative process, just like work by contemporary makers."

The individuality of antiques is very important, says LAPADA dealer Allan Hatchwell, of Hatchwell Antiques. "There is an element of excitement for the buyer to get that certain piece before it has gone. That's why the LAPADA fair is one of the best places to see a very wide range of art and antiques for sale, displayed in a way that they can be visualised within an interior."

While antiques can be an investment, Billy Cook advises: "Essentially buy whatever appeals to you, and always have in mind the quality, originality and good colour. Anything you buy for your home is an investment."

BREXIT BOOST

Adds Mieka Sywak: "You have to go on wanting to look at it and live with it. Modern British paintings have recently done well, as has Czech glass."

Brexit may also affect the market. "Americans are finding the UK a very cheap place to buy and the US is the major market for brown furniture," says Cook. "It is a good time to buy brown furniture of quality and colour." Most people don't inherit furniture, so buying an antique is a chance to enjoy an object of beauty, proven value and great craftsmanship.

For first-time buyers it might all seem a bit daunting, especially as the image of antiques veers between fusty and a bit posh, and at the other extreme rather dodgy, with cowboys selling fakes. LAPADA helps to quash those qualms.

EXPERT ADVICE

Established in 1974, LAPADA has 600 expert members worldwide. Any object displayed at the fair, which has antiques from £500 upwards, has to be vetted by a 70-strong committee made up of members, restorers and auction house specialists.

The majority of visitors are private buyers seeking items for their own homes. The annual LAPADA fair is a chance to see and buy with experts on hand to help.

■ *LAPADA Art & Antiques Fair, Berkeley Square, W1, from September 13 to 18, admission £20 (lapadalondon.com).*

Below: Venini glassware, from £700, Horton London; right, Phil Shaw 2015 print The Special Relationship, £6,500, Rebecca Hossack Gallery