

# To Reassure Exhibitors and Buyers, Antiques Show Is 'Vetted'

By LYNNE AMES

**W**HEN Carol Goldberg arrives at the Antiques Dealers' Association of America show at the County Center in White Plains next weekend, she will feel "secure and confident," she says, from two points of view — that of exhibitor and of buyer.

Mrs. Goldberg and her husband, Jesse, deal in 19th-century American furniture and 19th- and 20th-century American painting from the Artemis Gallery at their home in North Salem. (She specializes in painting, he in furniture.) They will both be sellers at the show and, should any of the other exhibitors' wares strike their fancy, buyers, too.

She is confident, she says, because the event is vetted, which means that every object is scrutinized in advance

The dealers' labels must get the experts' approval.

by a committee of experts to assure that it is being described accurately by the exhibitor.

The vetters, as they are known, ascertain the age, origin and condition of the item and any repairs done to it and check their findings against the label the seller has put on it. If they disagree with something in the exhibitor's description, they leave a note suggesting that a correction be made.

Mrs. Goldberg, who is herself on the vetting committee for paintings, says the process insures ethical business standards and quality control in a field where esoteric knowledge is often required of both customer and seller.

#### A Benefit to Everyone

"Vetting benefits everyone," she said, explaining that when it comes to antiques, honest errors may be made by just about anyone. A relatively obscure painting, for example, could be thought for many years to be done by one artist, but, unknown to the dealer, more recent research may have shown it to have been the work of someone else. A subtle repair done to an object may escape even the



Carol and Jesse Goldberg at home with 19th-century American furniture and 19th- and 20th-century American paintings. At right, "Wild Roses" by George C. Lambdin. Mr. Goldberg specializes in furniture, Mrs. Goldberg in painting.

Photographs by Susan Harris for The New York Times

most observant dealer unless another expert points it out.

"I leave my booth when my paintings are vetted," Mrs. Goldberg said. "So far, I have not gotten any notes. But it would not bother me in the least if I did. I would simply ask, tell me why you feel this painting is different from what I described it as. It would be a learning experience. And, at the show, if I want to buy something in a field that I don't know that much about, I feel confident as a buyer, knowing it has been vetted. I should think the public would feel the same way."

The event is the sixth annual show sponsored by the Antiques Dealers' Association of America, a nonprofit organization based in Westport. More than 50 exhibitors will present American furniture, folk art, ceramics, textiles, candlesticks and fireplace tools,

paintings, clocks, rugs, glassware and toys. Prices range from \$25 or so to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Each category will be vetted by a separate committee of experts.

The show's hours are next Saturday, from 11 A.M. to 8 P.M., and Sunday, noon to 5 P.M. Admission is \$8.

A preview on Friday from 4 to 9 P.M. will benefit Historic Hudson Valley, the preservation organization, which is co-sponsor of the show. Tickets for the preview, which includes wine and cheese, can be bought at the door for \$35. Tickets costing \$125 also include dinner at the home of an arts and antiques dealer and membership in the Friends of Historic Hudson Valley. These tickets must be reserved in advance; call 631-8200 for information.

On Saturday at 10 A.M. a tour of the show will be led by Joseph T. Butler,

curator of Historic Hudson Valley. The price is for \$50 a person; call 631-8200 for reservations.

A free symposium, "Buying Antiques With Confidence: The Principles and Practice of Vetting," will be held on Saturday at 3 P.M.

The Antiques Dealers' Association of America has several hundred members, who deal in 18th- and 19th-century American furniture and decorative objects and who have been in business at least four years. It was founded in 1984 to encourage "integrity, honesty and ethical standards," said Satenig St. Marie, the executive director. The organization sponsors shows, lectures and seminars on antiques and on buying and selling.

Peter Eaton, a dealer of 18th-century American furniture in Newburyport, Mass., is chairman of the association's ethics and vetting commit-

tees. The committee deals with any complaint of misrepresentation that might be brought against a dealer by the public.

In the organization's eight-year history, "only three issues" have come up, Mr. Eaton said, declining to give further details. He did say that any dealer found to knowingly misrepresent an item would be expelled from the association.

#### No Dealer Is Exempt

As chairman of the vetting committee, Mr. Eaton selects the individual committees of experts. These include dealers and other professionals like as museum curators and scholars.

Price, Mr. Eaton emphasized, is not considered in the vetting process. Some vetting requires special equipment: the painting vetters, for example, use an ultraviolet light to examine the condition of the paint in a



painting. Items are vetted at a show in one 12-hour day before the opening, Mr. Eaton said. The next morning, exhibitors may address questions to the vetters.

Vetting is "a long, tedious process by which we look at each other's material," said John Russell, the owner of John Keath Russell Antiques in South Salem.

"It is not unpleasant but it is very difficult," he added. "It is also very important. I think it brings out a certain thoughtfulness, a thoughtful attitude between one dealer and another. We are all very professional. When one is in error, we take great pains to make it a learning experience. Vetting ideally should educate not only the buying public but we like to educate each other."

No exhibitor is exempt. At last year's show, for example, Mr. Eaton found a note next to a 17th-century mid-drip brass candlestick — a candlestick with a drip pan halfway down the shaft — that he was exhibiting. "I had labeled it English, but the metals vetting committee said it should be labeled Dutch," he said. "I was grateful, because I learned something. It was a good example of exactly what we are trying to do."