



DEALERS *Who* COLLECT

In the art world, there are curators, connoisseurs, and collectors. And then there is Stuart Feld, an impassioned, erudite dealer of American and European art as well as nineteenth-century American decorative arts. His participation in The Winter Show for the past forty-nine years affords Feld a perspective most others do not have: Unlike the show today, in which a broad selection of objects from around the world are offered for sale in sophisticated installations, he remembers nothing made after 1830 could be on display.

At that time, dealers would work the show circuit across the country, buying and selling for an entire year so they could “put their very best foot forward,” oftentimes with “beyond remarkable” objects, primarily American.

Feld did his fair share of buying at The Winter [Antiques] Show both for gallery stock and for his personal collection, including an outstanding painted klismos chair, which was part of a suite made in the Baltimore Baltimore workshop of John and Hugh Finlay in about 1820 for the Alexander Brown family. In the Feld living room, the chair is complemented



Stuart Feld
Hirschl & Adler Galleries

by a console table of about 1815 designed by the New York cabinetmaker Duncan Phyfe. For years, Feld had admired the table at the New York Historical Society without realizing that it was on loan from the Beekman family, and in 2000, he was

Above:
An “ingrain” carpet, c. 1830, a New York secrétaire à abattant by Duncan Phyfe (1768–1854). A marble statue of Leander by American artist William Henry Rinehart (1825–74), stands at the windows, and a bronze horse by Edgar Degas (1834–1917), is on the center table. Included also are a half-dozen examples of lamps from an extensive collection of French, English and American lighting of the Neoclassical period.

delighted to have the opportunity to purchase it at auction.

Feld entered his profession after a productive six years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. His introduction to connoisseurship, however, was at the age of about thirteen when he attended an antiques show and fell in love with a folk painting illustrating Adam and Eve with their sons, Cain and Abel—a simple, naive composition that was easy for him to understand. That piece led to his first collection of American folk art, the best of which later sold to the legendary folk art collector Stewart E. Gregory (1913–76).

As a graduate student at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, Feld made another foray into collecting eighteenth-century American furniture but quickly realized (after buying a rather ordinary Queen Anne tea table) that he could not afford the quality pieces he desired. Instead, having written his senior thesis at Princeton University on the British architects Robert (1728–92) and James (1730–94) Adam and their influence on Neoclassical architects in America, he decided to focus on early nineteenth-century American furniture.



Above:
Duncan Phyfe small console table, c. 1815. Feld admired it on view at the New-York Historical Society for years, assuming that it was a part of its permanent collection. But it was actually a loan from the Beekman family. The heirs consigned it to Sotheby's where the Felds bought it in 2000.

The painted chair, made by the Baltimore firm of John and Hugh Finlay c. 1820, from the set made for the Alexander Brown family was purchased at The Winter Antiques Show in 1983. Only this chair and one at the MFA, Boston, are outside the Brown family. The still life of plums is by Samuel Marsden Brookes, and was painted in San Francisco in 1872.

Left:
Pier table probably by Joseph Barry of Philadelphia, c. 1815-1820. The table was included in one of the Metropolitan Museum's centennial exhibitions in 1970, 19th Century America, and was on loan to The White House from 1970 to 1974.

A French mirror, in the Empire taste, c. 1820

Fletcher and Gardiner silver coffee urn

A French pair of reticulated porcelain baskets, c. 1820,

An English five-arm Argand chandelier probably by the firm of Johnston Brookes of London.

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The front hall features four views of Niagara Falls by George Catlin (1796–1872), 1827, hanging above a pair of Philadelphia side chairs. On the New York pier table, c. 1810 (which belonged to Henry Walker Livingston, and, later, to Mrs. William H. Osborn, at Callendar House, Tivoli, NY) is a pair of French Sinumbra lamps, c. 1820 and a French c. 1820 Ormolu and Patinated Bronze Clock with Cornucopia (also descended in the Livingston family). A statue of Thetis by Rinehart, c. 1862, is reflected in a German mirror by Peter Schmuckert (1765–1841), c. 1820.



His introduction to connoisseurship was when he attended an antiques show.

Alas, he discovered that this period of production was underappreciated; the museums had little on view and since dealers tend not to invest in objects that they do not think they can sell, there was little on the market. His interest was buttressed, however, when in 1962 the Newark Museum staged the exhibition *Classical America, 1815–1845*, an eye-opener for the great variety of material on view. In time, Feld was able to establish standards for neoclassical American furniture, following the “good, better, best” model that the New York dealer Albert Sack (1915–2011) developed for eighteenth-century American furniture.

In 1970, Feld married Sue Kessler, and for the next fifty (plus) years, the couple, along with their two children, engaged in building their collection of American neo-classical decorative arts. Along the way, the family also formed a comprehensive collection of American drawings, 1725–1920. It started unwittingly when Feld purchased two drawings by Eastman Johnson (1824–1906) from the descendants of the Hatch family, the subject of the well-known painting of 1871 in the Metropolitan Museum, where its acquisition committee had already passed on the Hatch prints.

Whereas such drawings can be neatly stored away, the sizable pieces of neoclassical furniture—sideboards, pier tables, and secretaries—that Feld preferred took up much more space than he had. Since he could not stop himself from buying (Feld admits to being “too much of a junkie”), he began to furnish his office at Hirschl & Adler with his own furniture. Lo and behold, he discovered, his clients loved it, and a new business endeavor was born. When in 1980, the Felds moved into their current Manhattan apartment, their daughter, Elizabeth “Liz” was five and their son, Peter was one. The children had “free run” of their home, which was “none the worse” from their play, he says. In fact, both developed a lifelong appreciation for the arts; whereas Peter’s interest is more contemporary, Liz is dedicated to the succession of historic styles in American decorative arts. For nearly 25 years, she has specialized in the field, not only as director of decorative arts but also as managing director of both Hirschl & Adler and Hirschl & Adler Modern.

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