



DEALERS *Who* COLLECT

“Great things go with great things,” Arlie Sulka commented recently about the harmonious eclecticism in the entryway of the New York midtown apartment she shares with her husband, Andy. As the owner of Lillian Nassau and a regular on the Antiques Roadshow circuit for her expertise in glass- and metalworks by Louis Comfort Tiffany and Tiffany Studios, Sulka is drawn to items that exhibit superior craftsmanship while at the same time are playful and whimsical. For example, in the foyer, their recently acquired Murano glass Pulcini bird (1962) designed by Alexandre Pianon (1931–1984) for Vetreria Vistosi is front and center on an elegant shelf by George Nakashima (1905–90) while a strikingly modern painting of African safari zebras, gazelles, and birds by the American painter Dahlov Ipcar (1917–2017) hangs above.

“Great things go with great things”



Arlie Sulka
Lillian Nassau

A Scandinavian rug from the 1950s anchors these works. The lively composition is enhanced by the elegant leaded-glass ceiling inset with turtleback glass, and the sconces finished in rare silver plating, both by Tiffany Studios—an outstanding example of the artwork Sulka displays in the gallery she acquired in 2006 (after working there for more than twenty-five years).

The couple’s fondness for whimsy is also evident in the dining/living area, where a

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polychrome Vargo clock (1995) by Wendell Castle (1932–2018) rests on a ledge behind an impressively large table designed by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbins (1903–76), which was made for the Guggenheim family, in 1939. Also on the ledge is her husband’s collection of art pottery whose metallic glaze was developed by the French-born artist Jacques Sicard (1865–1923) at Weller Pottery in Fultonham, Ohio. While Sulka insists she “married into” the Weller collection, its iridescent quality complements the Tiffany works she had been collecting, which were also made in the early twentieth century.

Sulka was raised in Portland in a life enriched by natural beauty, music, and art. Though she would eventually settle in New York, she has never lost her connection to Maine, exemplified by her numerous paintings by Monhegan artists. As a kid, however, her collecting did not extend beyond international postage stamps—even though the gorgeous one from Mozambique still sticks out in her mind.

Above: On the George Nakashima shelf, Pulcino by Alexandre Pianon for Vistosi c 1962, iridescent Weller Sicard Pottery, a Shiebler salt and pepper shaker. The painting is by Dahlov Ipcar (1917-2017). The ceiling fixture and sconces are by Tiffany Studios.

It wasn’t until Sulka took “amazing” courses in art history at Smith College that she came to appreciate her “visual memory,” an asset in the art business, she believes. Following graduation, in August 1978, she pounded the hot pavement” in New York with a rather “pathetic resume” in hand. She lacked a network but nonetheless was so determined that she even knocked on the door of Louise Nevelson (1899–1988) since the American sculptor had also grown up in Maine (although “not a thing came from it”).

Sulka did, however, find a job in a small auction house and rose in the ranks quickly to become head of the Art Nouveau material. It was there that she met Lillian Nassau (1899–95), a “grande dame” who, beginning in 1945, established the market for Tiffany: lamps, ceramics, glass, metalwork, mosaics, and more. Nassau took a deep interest in Sulka by introducing her to the period literature in her extensive library as well as the objects themselves, “The things that came through here were unbelievable . . . We saw just about everything,” Sulka recalled. She credits her own success in part to her honest and forthright disposition. “What you see is what you get with me. If someone asks me what lamp

I like better, I am going to tell them.” The genuineness that illuminates her conversation is underscored by her description of her own office as “a shrine to the Boston Celtics and Red Sox.”

As an exhibitor at The Winter Show since 2018, Sulka enthused, “It’s a destination. The high standard of production creates a year-round buzz that sets the show apart from others.” She especially appreciates the meticulous design of each booth that provides visitors the sense of entering an individual gallery, an experience with “gravitas.”

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Dining Room: The dining table is by T.H. Robsjohn Gibbins, circa 1939, and was created for the Guggenheim family. The table features a Tiffany & Co. wine coaster, Shiebler Etruscan salt and pepper shaker, a Gorham butter dish c. 1882, Orivit vermeil dishes c. 1900, Tiffany and Co. lap over edge flatware, and a MoMA Design Store pebble bowl. The display ledge features a collection of Weller Sicard pottery and a Wendell Castle “Vargo” clock c. 1995. The wall features a collection of landscapes by Monhegan artists which remind Sulka of Maine.