

Folk art, the latest loft apartment trend

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Designed as functional forms for use in everyday life, primitive pieces retain their consumer appeal

Folk art, artwork and decorative everyday objects, ranging from Toby Jugs to needlework, is having a moment. The boho-chic look, a popular style in the early Noughties, has resurfaced this summer especially with hip festival-goers — the model Poppy Delevingne was spotted wearing a pair of leather and tapestry kilim boots at this year's Glastonbury festival. It's also the subject of a exhibition at Tate Britain; *British Folk Art: The House That Jack Built*. People who are enthused by the exhibits will be able to acquire some examples of their own at the Lapada Art & Antiques Fair and the Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair.

So why are people suddenly keen to pay so much for things such as old weather vanes? M Charpentier Antiques, an exhibitor at the Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair, is selling a Flemish 19th-century weathervane for £850, for example. Primitive Windsor or stick-back chairs, which were first made in the 16th century, can also command very high prices, fetching anything from £3,000 to £8,000. Rarer models sell for even more.

Helen Linfield, of Wakelin & Linfield, a Lapada dealer and a specialist in the sector, says that folk art's appeal lies in its charm, its humour and the way in which it depicts daily life. "Most of these things were functional but their iconography celebrates the lives, loves, achievements, beliefs and politics of the working man and his family," she says. Also, the strong sense of line and design that characterises folk art pieces means that they work very well in contemporary interiors.

An English 19th-century maquette of a boat, £975, M Charpentier Antiques

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Buyer's guide

• David Knell's English Country Furniture 1500-1900 (£45, accdistribution.com) contains examples of some good primitive pieces

• Folk art pieces were one-off items made for everyday decorative or other use in ordinary homes and businesses. They were not signed by the artist, who was self-taught, and were not seen as commercially valuable.

• The definition covers a wide range of items, including old shop signs, oil paintings of prize sheep and pigs and weather vanes.

• One of the reasons for folk art's popularity is its scarcity, says Linfield. "A lot of these pieces, things like spoons made from fruit wood, needle work and carvings, weren't kept because they weren't seen as precious."

• Lapada Art and Antiques Fair (September 24-28); Decorative Antiques and Textiles Fair (September 30-October 5)
