

# CUPBOARD LOVE

To highlight how furniture designs have changed over the centuries we asked three exhibitors at the upcoming South African Antique Dealers' Association (SAADA) Fair to showcase a cupboard that epitomises the era they specialise in

## RIAAN BOLT ON AFRICANA FURNITURE 1800 – 1850

"I picked this yellowwood and stinkwood *jonkmanskas* because it conforms closely to the Neo-Classical style (1652 – 1900) that was popular in Cape country furniture from around 1800 – 1850," explains Riaan, specialist in Africana furniture. "It was made around 1830 in the Oudtshoorn district and is a typical two-drawer, two-door piece that's a study in elegance and restraint with tall, elegant proportions and delicate inlay work. It also retains its original yellowwood shelves and back. It was illustrated in the book *Cape Country Furniture* by Michael Baraitser and Anton Oberholzer (Struik), which adds to its value and appeal."

### DESIGN NOTES:

"Cape country furniture is characterised by its simplicity. Pieces have straight, simple lines and any adornment is kept to a minimum with inlays of contrasting woods providing the only decoration."

### NAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

"Very little is known of the cabinetmakers at the Cape during this period, but good examples of early 19th-century cupboards typically come from the areas of Riversdale, Swellendam and Oudtshoorn."

### BUYING TIPS:

"If you're looking for an investment, buy from a reputable specialist dealer," Riaan advises. "The difference between a poor example and an excellent one is

not always apparent to a collector new to the field. Age, condition, craftsmanship and provenance all contribute to the value of the piece. Has a piece been restored and sanded? Have panels been replaced? Is the inlay from a later date? These are all important questions to ask when buying."

### EXPECT TO PAY:

"Prices range from about R15 000 for a late 19th-century example to over R250 000 for early 19th-century examples with inlay work, the original colouring and a good provenance."



TEXT DIANA WEMYSS PHOTOGRAPHS SAADA

## PAUL MRKUSIC ON ART DECO DESIGN 1920s – 1930s

"A lot of fairly basic furniture was produced in the 1930s that nevertheless reflected the stylistic elements of what became known as Art Deco – this wardrobe is typical of such designs," says Paul, who deals in 20th-century modern, '50s and '60s retro and Art Deco pieces.

### DESIGN NOTES:

"The Great Depression and the equally devastating World War I had manufacturers looking for cheaper techniques to produce functional furnishings that would still be aesthetically attractive. An example would be the veneering of expensive, decoratively-grained sheets of walnut onto a cheaper timber base structure.

"As bold shapes and heavy proportions were preferred over fussy and intricate detailing, the Art Deco style could successfully be applied to luxury high-end items and more ordinary pieces."

### NAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

"Pieces were not usually signed or labelled. Some exceptional pieces of furniture were produced by Harry and Lou Epstein – two brothers who worked in England in the early 20th century – and also by fellow Briton, Ray Hille."

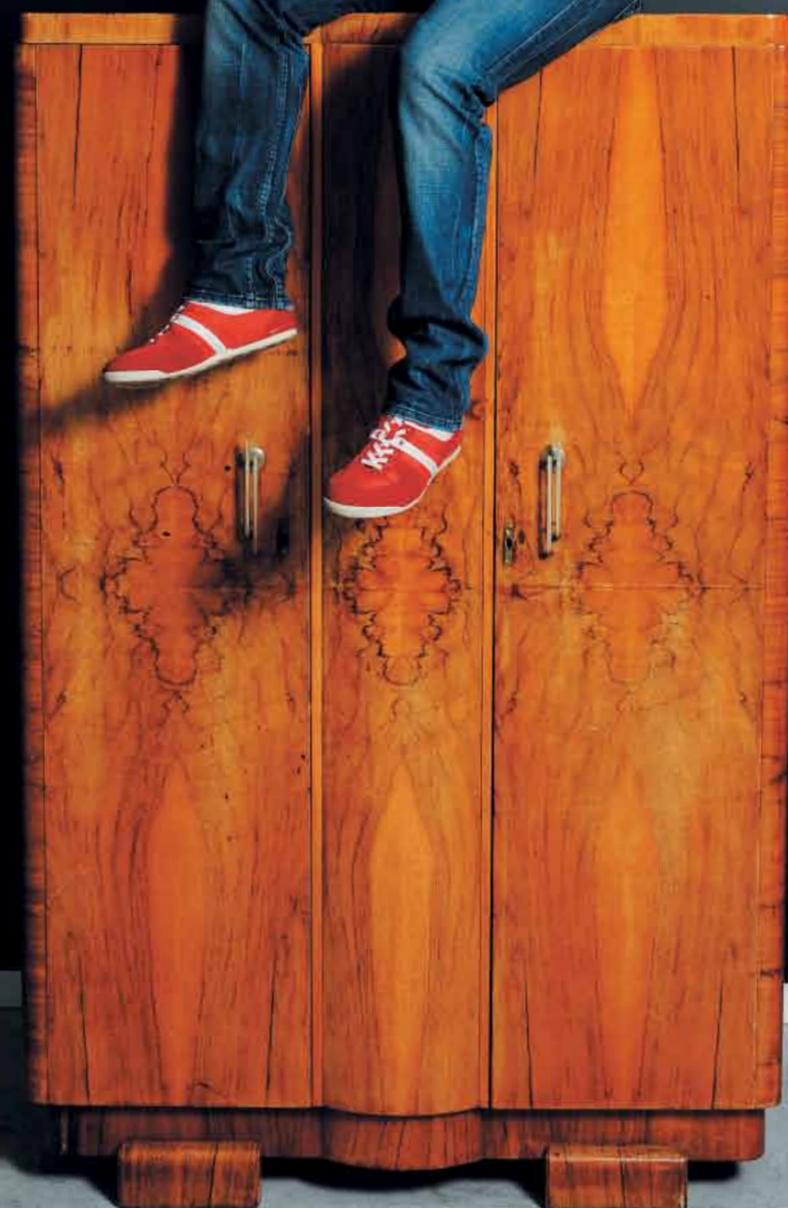
### BUYING TIPS:

"Consider the overall condition of the piece. Many examples have been poorly looked after, which does affect their value. Scratched or dented woodwork, peeling or bubbled veneers, patchy sun-bleaching, water marks and streaked varnishing are all signs that should caution you against something that at first glance seems like a good deal – restorations can be very expensive.

"Beware of later reproductions; a piece must be in good condition, but must still be stylistically correct for an item made about 80 years ago. Turn a piece upside-down (if possible), look inside and pay attention to the details, for example that the handles are original and of the right style."

### EXPECT TO PAY:

"Condition, the quality of materials, good design and workmanship are important, but more interesting items – for example a fun cocktail cabinet – are always valued higher than basic items like wardrobes. Expect to pay anything up from as little as R3 000." >



## MIKE BARNETT ON GEORGIAN FURNITURE 1714 – 1811

At just 126cm high, the size of this George III dwarf mahogany linen press makes it particularly rare. “It could have been made for a children’s room or for a small space,” says Mike, who deals in small furniture, silver and *objects de vertu* from any period providing, as he puts it, “such pieces are antique or of exceptional quality and made before 1935.”

This piece dates from 1790 – 1810 and boasts its original escutcheons, handles, hinges and adjustable shelves. It has an outset moulded, stepped pediment with a rectangular top, above an applied floral tracery frieze, and is set on four ogee bracket feet (with a double curve; convex at the top, turning to a concave shape at the bottom).

### DESIGN NOTES:

“Linen presses were introduced in about 1750. Up until 1780 many were made from solid wood, predominantly mahogany. Later cupboards were often veneered. They were practical bedroom pieces rather than decorative drawing room furniture, as they have later become,” Mike explains.

“Designs regularly included panelled doors, a feature that brought out the colour and pattern of the wood. From the late 18th century, carved blind-fretwork borders started to appear on furniture, such as the decoration on this piece. The ogee bracket feet were fashionable from 1750 – 1780.

“The more common ‘big brothers’ of this cupboard can exceed 2m or more in height, and come in two, three or four sections (including base/stand, drawers, the top cupboard section and pediment).”

### NAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

“Fairly common during this period, very few linen presses were marked with their maker’s names. Thomas Chippendale (1749 – 1822) was the best-known maker of quality furniture and his pieces can be traced from books and sketches published at the time. Later known makers include Maple and Co. and Gillows, both of whom produced pieces that were often marked.”

### BUYING TIPS:

“Beware of ‘marriages’ where the tops and bottoms of different pieces have been put together,” cautions Mike. “Always be sure that the top matches the base; check the boards at the back to make sure they are similar in terms of wood type and conformity.”

### EXPECT TO PAY:

“Prices vary from R1 500 up to R50 000 for rarer examples in rosewood, those that are veneered and inlaid with elaborate decoration or are bow-fronted.” **GMH**



## THE SAADA FAIR

The annual South African Antique Dealers’ Association Fair will be held at the Wanderers Club, Jo’burg from 26 – 28 October. Visit [saada.co.za](http://saada.co.za)

**WIN TICKETS!** We’re giving away 20 double tickets valued at R100 per pair. TO ENTER SMS\* **SAADA**, YOUR NAME AND CITY TO 36174. See terms and conditions on page 36. Entries close on 18 October 2012.

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