



Paul Mrkusic at his shop Bancroft in Village Walk.

THE PEOPLE WHO COVET COLLECTIBLES

Rare, valuable, desirable and collectible. Four local antique dealers talk about loving what they do, finding the perfect piece and the SAADA National Antiques Fair.

Paul Mrkusic of Bancroft

Paul Mrkusic isn't really what you'd expect of an antiques dealer, but then, neither is his shop. Bancroft is a treasure trove of all things old, quirky and valuable. It's filled with an eccentric and eclectic array of antiques, vintage goodies and modern pieces from furniture to art. If it's intriguing or practical, Paul's interested.

'I originally studied to be an architect but after I'd finished varsity I needed a break. My parents owned an antique store so I'd been going to fairs since I was 12 and had already started collecting pieces ... it was natural for me to go in with them for a bit. That was six years ago!

'I want to show people that antiques can be fun and they aren't always stuffy and stiff. That's why we deal in vintage stuff as well. It's not old enough to be antique but it still has a story to tell and some of it is just as rare and beautiful as the antiques we sell. I'm particularly interested in art deco that affected everything from the architecture of the times (1935 to 1945) to the way women dressed. Really well-designed, quality art deco pieces are incredibly rare and valuable. There's so much interest in it that SAADA even allows it at the Antiques Fair. It doesn't often do that unless there's enough interest or value, and each piece is individually vetted.

'One of my favourite art deco pieces is a side table with a drinks cabinet hidden inside. You flick a switch at the bottom and the top rises up revealing your bottles ... it's very Austin Powers. I love stuff like that ... multi-functional things that fold away or have unexpected uses.

'One of the most expensive pieces in the store at the moment is a six-seater Harry and Lou Epstein dining suite. It comes with a sideboard and it's really good quality. It's going for around R160 000.

Poison ring circa 1900, R4 450.



'We also sell modern, costume, vintage and antique jewellery.

'If you can't afford the antique pieces, vintage is a great way to go.'

Bancroft Studio, Village Walk, Sandown. Details: 011-784-6922.

Pam Thomson of Read's

Read's specialises in antique jewellery, silver and fabulous local contemporary jewellery. Owner Pam Thomson says, 'I married into the well-known Read family a million years ago and feel honoured that they trusted me to take the business into the next generation. The business has been going since 1912 ... although I've not been around quite that long.

'I'm passionate about antique jewellery ... the historical side is absolutely fascinating. I've been interested in it since I was a little girl and was introduced to the silver side by my mother-in-law, Marion Read.

'We have some wonderful pieces in

the shop at the moment ... like a 12 place setting canteen of sterling silver cutlery in its original oak box with all the extra pieces that make dinner a real celebration, which is priced at R140 000. We've also got some beautiful antique jewellery like a topaz necklace, circa 1840, for R12 570 – earrings also always sell incredibly well.

'The Antiques Fair shouldn't be missed by anyone who loves beautiful things ... it's a real treat. When it comes to buying antiques I believe one should firstly listen to one's heart and then look for condition, price and so on. I don't believe in buying just on price. We live in very difficult times, so one should really love one's purchases.'



Pam Thomson with the 12 place setting canteen of cutlery she'll be taking to the antiques fair.

Read's, The Zone, Rosebank. Details: 011-880-2702.

Simon Leighton-Morris of Leighton-Morris Antiques

Simon Leighton-Morris was already visiting antiques fairs at the age of 12 and knew it was the only thing he wanted to do in life. He's been in the antiques business for 35 years now and he's still loving it!

Specialising in 18th and 19th century English furniture, his Parkhurst store boasts some truly gorgeous antique pieces. As the trends move away from minimalism and modernism, unique quality pieces are in demand and, according to Simon, the recession in England means antique prices are incredibly reasonable, so now's the time to buy.

'The quality of English antique furniture is incredible. Because of the size of the British Empire their craftsmen had access to some of the most amazing wood, like South American mahogany. It's illegal to cut down any of those trees any more so you really won't find a modern alternative. They also had access to cheap labour and great craftsmen, and they took the time to do everything well.

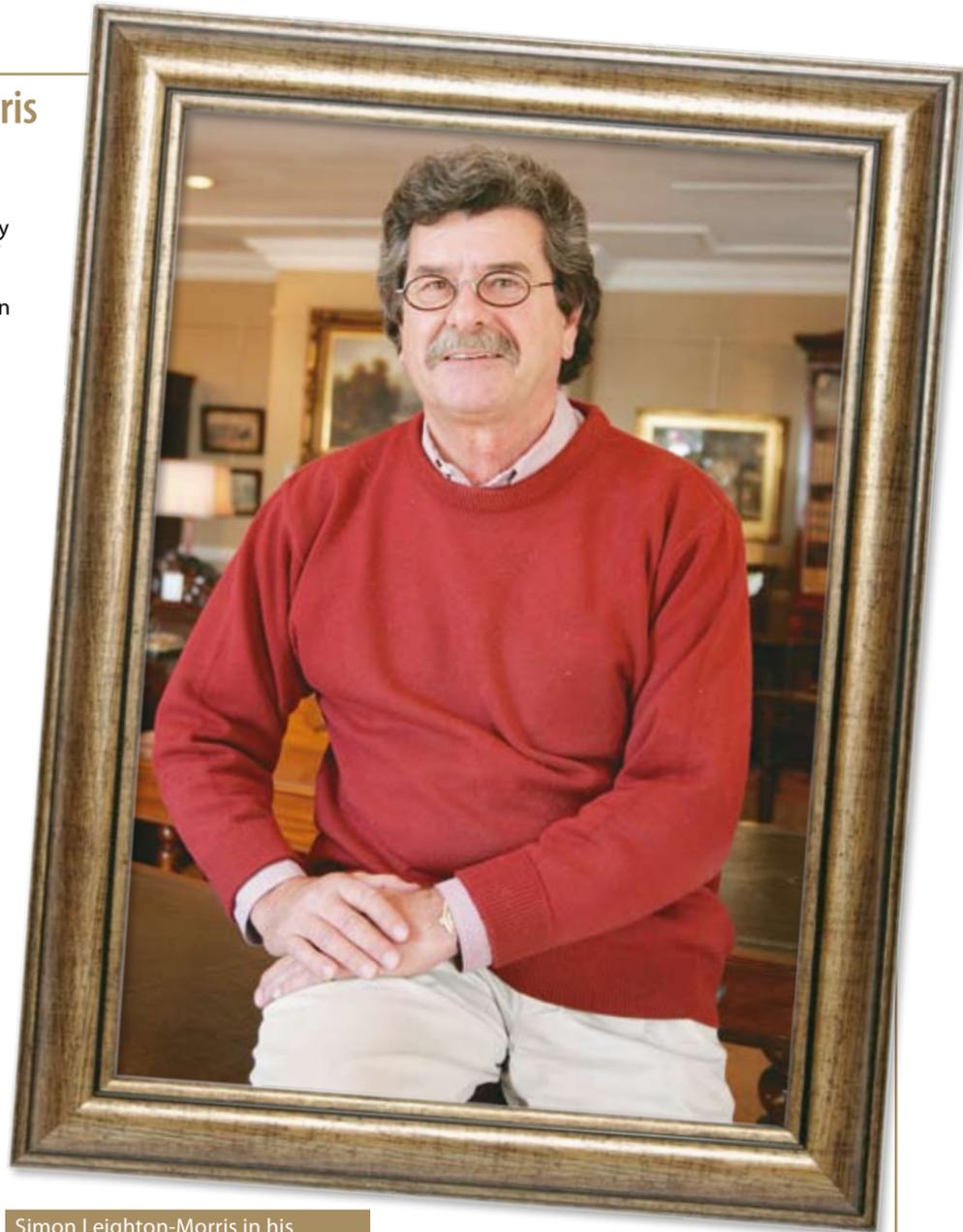
'I love knowing that when someone buys an antique it's being passed on from one generation to the next, to be loved and cared for as it has been for the last 100 years or more.

'I think every house should have a linen press. It's a really big, solid piece of furniture that adds presence and elegance to a room, and

I love knowing that when someone buys an antique it's being passed on from one generation to the next.

it's practical. You can use it as a drinks cupboard, a TV stand ... anything. My favourite piece in the store right now is a linen press, circa 1860, that's going for about R30 000.

'A good entry piece for first time collectors is a chest of drawers. They



Simon Leighton-Morris in his antique furniture shop in Parkhurst.

tend to be big, solid pieces with a lot of wood in them and, let's be honest, who doesn't need a chest of drawers in their bedroom? You can buy a good Victorian set for between R8 000 and R14 000. We've got a wonderful George III set for R13 900.

'The SAADA antiques fair is wonderful for collectors and first-timers. There's so much variety, there's a lot to see and learn, you can compare prices and just learn a lot about antiques. I love it.

'My top tips for caring for your antique furniture would be don't use too many products on it. Don't over-polish or wax it, it's just not good for it. And if something breaks, keep all the pieces! It makes it cheaper and easier to restore. On that note, we do restore all sorts of antique furniture.

'My last tip is, don't forget to bargain. That's what the antiques world is all about and I know a lot of antique dealers, including me, traditionally give a 10 per cent discount.'

Leighton-Morris Antiques, cnr Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street, Parkhurst. Details: 011-788-6316.

Text: Ann Baker. Photographer: Jacky Letard

Maryanne Rowlings of A D Antiques

Maryanne Rowlings of A D Antiques has seen a definite move from small collectibles to having one exceptional piece. Forty-three years ago her parents, the then owners of A D Antiques, suggested she give them a hand while she 'found herself' and find herself she did!

'I love what I do. No two days are the same and no two pieces of furniture or silver are the same. There's the pleasure of interaction with all sorts of people and the learning never stops.

'I specialise in English antique furniture, pre 20th century and English hallmarked silver from early 18th century up to the present.

'My favourite items in the shop are a bullet teapot which dates back to 1737 and a beautifully made rosewood writing box with brass mounts, circa 1830 - the William IV period. I also have a Charles II tankard which has a hallmark dating it to 1663 - it's a highly prized piece.

'My advice for all buyers, especially first-timers, would be to buy the best you can afford. Watch out for repairs and replacements, although there are parameters that are acceptable.

'I'm looking forward to the SAADA fair. Buyers can be assured of quality and authenticity and I'll be paying attention to what members of the public are looking for. I enjoy the challenge of sourcing stock I may not have and by viewing other exhibitors' displays I can learn. There's always something new and exciting to see, which gives buyers and sellers much joy.'

A D Antiques, 48 Eleventh Street cnr Fourth Avenue, Parkhurst. Details: 011-788-6214.

Rosewood box with mother-of-pearl inlay, circa 840, R1 800.



Maryanne Rowlings relaxes in a gilded wood wing back armchair, circa 1900, R 28 000 for a pair.

SAADA Antiques Fair

The 46th SAADA (South African Antique Dealers' Association) Antiques Fair features a host of reputable dealers selling a vast array of fascinating antiques. It's a great opportunity to do some window shopping, add to your antiques collection and make use of the wealth of knowledge the dealers bring with them. It opens on Friday, October 9 and closes on Sunday, October 11, so make sure you get to The Wanderers Club in Illovo between 10am and 6pm to do some serious antiquing. Tickets cost R50. Details: 011-880-0815.