

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore Show Reborn, Attendance Triples, Dealers Sell!

by Robert Kyle

A few days before Labor Day weekend the Three Musketeers rode into Baltimore from Florida and turned a venerable antiques show—and possibly the entire trade—upside down. In a daring, dashing, swashbuckling display of promotion, organizational genius, and unbridled spending, the trio of young men from the Sunshine State saved the day, the show, and perhaps the future of antiques with vision, energy, optimism, knowledge, and a budget to back their dreams.

The Palm Beach Show Group, in its first Baltimore Summer Antiques Show after buying it from Shador in October 2005, demonstrated how to transform quickly a long-standing annual event with average attendance into a fresh, vibrant, exciting new East Coast venue that's now got everybody talking and dealers begging to get into it.

The gate more than tripled, from about 9000 in 2005 to close to 30,000 this year. Interviewed dealers confirmed more traffic and higher sales. Even the food concession told the promoters it sold more than two-and-a-half times what it did last year. The show ran from August 31 through

September 3 at the Baltimore County Convention Center.

Outside of Florida, the Palm Beach Show Group is relatively unknown. But many southern dealers who know them followed them to Baltimore, convinced the time and cost would be worth it. Praise was heard down every aisle.

"It's a lot nicer, and the traffic is better," said dealer Charles Cohn of Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. "They've done a really good job of promoting. There was a lot of advertising, good advertising. I sold across the board."

"I haven't been here in nine years, but I came because of the new promoters," said Susie Lorin of Asiantiques, Winter Park, Florida. "I knew they would bring in a good crowd."

"We sold a wonderful diamond ring for six figures and will definitely be back next year," said Bill Rau of M.S. Rau Antiques, New Orleans. He also sold a Paul Revere silver spoon for \$26,000, a 40-drawer butterfly cabinet by Watkins & Doncaster, complete with thousands of preserved butterflies, for \$52,000, and a \$21,500 Art Deco cocktail cabinet.

"I made my show the first two days," said pottery and print dealer Susan Tillipman of These Old Jugs, Annapolis, Maryland.



A fine flag with a great story was available from Pennsylvania dealer Jeff Bridgman for \$8500. It had been found in the attic of a home on 66 Bradford Street in Provincetown, Massachusetts, once occupied by ship captain Francis Joseph. The presence of 13 stars dates the flag to circa 1876. It's surmised this flag flew from one of his ships.

"It was a phenomenal show," proclaimed Lawrence Perlmutter of Acanthus Antiques, Bethesda, Maryland. "I'm really impressed with the way the Palm Beach Show Group managed it. There's a certain level of splash they brought to it." In 15 years exhibiting there, he said this was "one of our best." He sold paintings, furniture, and jewelry. He had sales after the show, including a letter (not an e-mail or phone call) from a man who wanted to buy a President Benjamin Harrison presidential china plate he saw in the booth. He bought it.

"I saw new faces," Perlmutter said. "There was a lot of wealth walking around." He said many buyers were from out of town. "This is now a destination show," he said.

"We sold to people all over the country," said Mark McHugh of Spencer Marks, East Walpole, Massachusetts, dealers in silver. "We shipped to places like Utah

and Florida. We sold a lot to collectors looking for specific items. About a third of the buyers were new customers."

"The first two days were better than the weekend," said Bruno Francois of Framont, Greenwich, Connecticut, which sells paintings. "The advertising the promoters did paid off."

"I sold a little bit of everything—porcelain, glass, and silver," Oklahoma dealer Marita Wornom remarked.

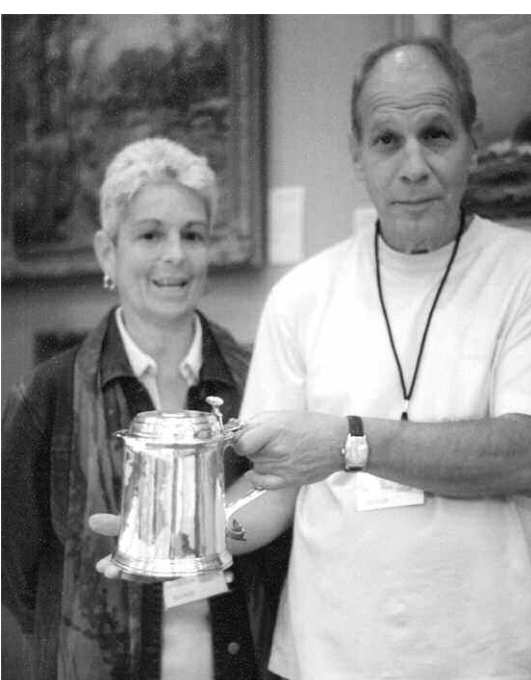
The Palm Beach Show Group consists of three Florida jewelry dealers: Kris Charamonde, Rob Samuels, and Scott Diament. Before the Baltimore show, they had promoted only four shows in their lives.

They launched their first Palm Beach Jewelry and Antique Show in February 2003. They had planned it as a jewelry-only event but added antiques and arts dealers who had asked to get in—and are they glad. The 205-dealer show at the new Palm Beach Convention Center is always sold out with a waiting list as long as the Great Wall of China. "I have a four-inch high stack of one-page applications," Charamonde said.

Rob Samuels, 36, was born in West Lafayette, Indiana. He graduated in 1990 with a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of Florida. A year later he graduated from the Gemological Institute of America. While a college student, he worked in his father's Miami store, the Jewelry Merchant, which his father opened in 1988 after a career in the U.S. Navy.

The father-and-son team opened Provident Jewelers in West Palm Beach in 1993 with a new partner, Scott Diament, a longtime friend of Rob's. Diament graduated in 1991 with a business degree from Florida Atlantic University. He graduated from the same gemology school in 1992. Now 34, he is originally from New York City.

The Miami store was closed in 1998, and



Robert Jackson and Ann Gillooly of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, specialize in sterling silver. He's holding a circa 1740 marriage tankard by Richard Van Dyke priced at \$95,000. "We've been shopping the show for eighteen or nineteen years and decided to do it this year," Jackson said. Their sales were a cross section of their merchandise and included silver and paintings.



Self-taught artist Hugh H. Campbell (1905-1981, according to Jackson and Gillooly, but other dates are given elsewhere) captured his bucolic scenes in the Mt. Holly, New Jersey, area and along Rancocas Creek. This 36" x 48" oil on canvas, *Old Church in a Field*, was priced at \$15,000 from Robert Jackson and Ann Gillooly.



The new promoter of the Baltimore Summer Antiques Show is the Palm Beach Show Group. From left, Scott Diament, Kris Charamonde, and Rob Samuels. Originally Florida-based jewelry dealers, they expanded into show promotion in 2003 with the Palm Beach Jewelry & Antique Show in February. They purchased the Baltimore show in October 2005 from Frank Farbenbloom of Shador. Photo courtesy of Palm Beach Show Group.



Awaiting the Fleet by Daniel Ridgeway Knight (1839-1924) was available from M.S. Rau Antiques, New Orleans, for \$850,000.



A pair of large antique globes drew attention all weekend. These folks are checking out a 21" terrestrial globe made in 1815 by John Cary. It was offered with a 1799 Cary celestial globe for \$325,000 for both by M.S. Rau Antiques.



A portion of the over 6000' of wide white carpet, which the new promoters transported by rail from Florida to brighten the appearance of the Baltimore show.



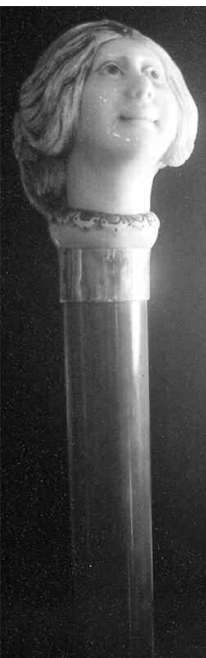
"I haven't been here in nine years, but I came back because of the new promoters. I knew they would bring in a good crowd," said Susie Lorin of Asian-tiques. This time last year her New Orleans shop was in ruins. Starting over, she relocated to Winter Park, Florida. She specializes in Oriental items, such as the snuff bottles behind her. She said her show was good with sales of Asian items to collectors and dealers.



Sarasota, Florida, dealer Sandy Butler (right) of Butler & Butler had a nice corner booth at the front of the show. Her choice to bring a diverse mix of smalls—from sterling and ivory to clocks and crystal—attracted plenty of lookers, resulting in a successful show. "It's been very good for me, but I handle a lot of things in what I call the affordability range," she said.



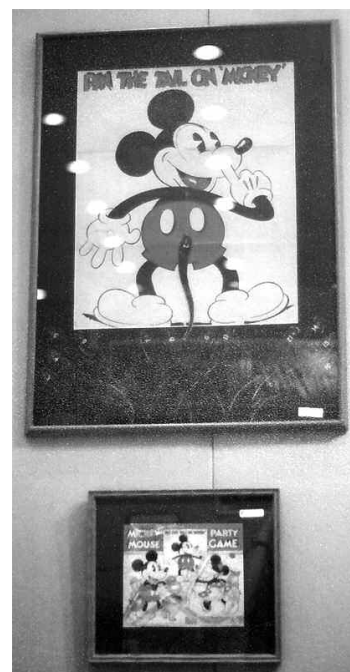
Sandy Butler's selection even included guns. These classic Civil War arms are (top) a Colt Model 1851 Navy revolver, \$2200, and a Model 1860 Army, \$2000.



Anya Robbins had this cane adorned with the ivory-carved head of a winsome young woman. She forgot to put a price on it, and this reporter was so taken with the cane he forgot to ask her.



"This is my last show after thirty-five years," said Baltimore dealer Julia Moed of Lost & Found. "I'm going on the Web and by appointment." As this photo indicates, her specialty is vintage chocolate and ice cream molds. Most date from the 1920's-30's period. Prices range from \$45 for one to \$800 for a pair. She said some of her buyers cook with them and others decorate using molds of specific images, such as fish. "It's been a good show," she said. "I like to go out that way."



Lost & Found had this vintage, framed Pin the Tail on 'Mickey' game, along with its original envelope in a separate frame, shown below it. Julia Moed was asking \$450 for both. (The white spots are ceiling light reflections, not UFOs.)



A French double-dial, moon phase, perpetual calendar clock with jeweled front escapement and malachite inlay on a marble base was priced at \$3850 from Butler & Butler. It dates to about 1880.



Stanislas Kostka paints still lifes that resemble work of 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish masters. He's a native of Poland who studied in various places in Europe. "He is one of the most powerful painters in Eastern Europe," said dealer Anya Robbins of Janart, Inc., Sarasota, Florida, who sold this image of fruit for \$15,000.



This framed calligraphy, marked "Executed by Wm. R. Roy 1871," was \$499 from Antiques & Oddities.

Rob Samuels, with Diament, bought out his father's interest in Provident Jewelers in 1999. In 2000 they opened a second store in Naples, Florida. A third is planned for Jupiter—not the planet, a town in Florida, although it would surprise no one if they promoted the first antiques show in outer space.

In 2001 Samuels and Diament created a new company, the Palm Beach Show Group, with another old acquaintance, Kris Charamonde. At age 46, with 25 years in the jewelry business, he's the elder statesman of the trio. He also graduated from the Gemological Institute of America.

Originally from Boston, Charamonde became familiar with the active Florida estate jewelry market in the mid-1980's when visiting his parents, who had a vacation condo in the state. He started buying vintage jewelry and selling it to dealers he knew. In 1987 he opened a shop in the multi-dealer Boca Raton International Jewelry Exchange. It's still there, called Charamonde, Inc., and run by his father.

When the Palm Beach Show Group formed in 2001, they were show promoters without a show. But they did their homework, traveling, learning, and recruiting quality dealers. With the serendipitous opening in 2003 of the large new venue right in their neighborhood—the Palm Beach County Convention

Center—the trio laid claim to Presidents' Day weekend in February and launched their first event. Heavy promotion and advertising resulted in a strong turnout, especially when piggybacking it days after the Palm Beach International Fine Art & Antique Fair at the same location—a show that runs a remarkable 11 days. Some dealers from that show are in the Palm Beach Group's show that follows.

Attendance figures for their shows have been remarkable. According to Profiles, Inc., a Baltimore PR firm hired by the promoters, "What started essentially, at least on the drawing board, as a small jewelry show mushroomed into a multidisciplinary show with hard walls and a much larger budget. The show [Palm Beach] was an instant success, attracting top-tier exhibitors from around the world and more than fifty thousand visitors in its first year."

With three highly successful Palm Beach shows to their credit, the trio in 2005 learned from Shador's Frank Farbenbloom that, after 25 years, he was ready to sell his Baltimore show. The Palm Beach boys bought it in October of that year and began implementing the same marketing strategy that has worked for them in Florida. Expanding from traditional methods of show promoting, such as ads in trade papers, flyers in antiques malls, cards dealers send out, direct mail, coupons, etc.,



A large Black Forest elk was marked \$29,500 in the booth of Antiques & Oddities, West Palm Beach, Florida.

the Palm Beach boys opted not to handle the PR themselves long distance from Florida but to hire a marketing firm in Baltimore, which knows the town, local media, and has experience promoting other events at the same convention center.

Caitlin McIntyre of Profiles, Inc., explained how the company got the word out. "In an effort to increase awareness and boost show attendance by traditional and new audiences, Profiles coordinated partnerships with local and regional organizations to take advantage of numerous promotional opportunities.



True to the "Oddities" part of its business name, Antiques & Oddities offered a shrunken head, available for \$2400. "It's an old piece, but I don't know if it's real," admitted dealer Christopher English. "Most shrunken heads you see are not real, because people made a lot of money out of gullible tourists in the turn of the century." We can only hope there are no gullible antiques buyers.

"Specifically, partnerships were created with arts and cultural institutions as well as historical societies and organizations such as the Walters Art Museum, Maryland Historical Society, Historic Houses at Johns Hopkins [Medical Center], and the Daughters of the American Revolution, to name a few.

"Partnerships included information dissemination to members and visitors, mentions in e-newsletters, and on-line calendar listings...Profiles coordinated promotional displays that appeared in the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport and the Enoch Pratt Free Library from mid-July through the show. The Baltimore Visitors Center also provided space for display the week of the show.

"Additionally, information



This photo may give the impression that dealer Bruce Phillips is relaxing in his living room. His booth was decorated with warm, dark wood furnishings, which conveyed a sense of comfortable elegance. The chair he's in was made in the Far East in the 1930's, French inspired. The wood is teak and the leather a later replacement. He was asking \$8900 for the chair and matching couch. His business, Fair Trade, Inc., is based in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. A first-timer at the show, he was pleased. "I sold a campaign chest, bell jars, and columns. I'll come back."



Spring in the Birches by Caesare Ricciardi (American, 1892-1973) was available for \$4000 from Framont, Greenwich, Connecticut.



A 16' showcase the new promoters placed in the BWI airport to publicize the show. Several dealers lent items. Photo courtesy of Caitlin McIntyre of Profiles, Inc.

was distributed in early summer to hotels in the Baltimore/Washington area, welcome centers in Maryland, downtown Baltimore office buildings, and local community organizations.

"In addition to marketing efforts, Profiles initiated an aggressive media relations campaign to secure coverage in print and broadcast media locally and regionally. We made every effort to blanket media with calendar listings to promote awareness of the show and worked hard to secure nontraditional coverage of the show, pitching appropriate, compelling stories to major publications and emphasizing our dealers and their collections as the most newsworthy element of the Baltimore show.

"Our efforts resulted in four consecutive days of coverage in major daily newspapers, forty-four other instances of print coverage, four television stories, and post-event coverage of the show."

What kind of advertising budget did they have? "In excess of a half-million dollars," Charamonde revealed. The increased advertising attracted many newcomers. Charamonde said he knew of buyers taking trains down from New York City and others coming from Philadelphia, Delaware, Washington, D.C., and Virginia. "It's a powerhouse show," he said. "We saw the potential in it, and we really believe in the venue."

Charamonde and partners wanted to ramp it up a notch or two. They added an extra day, Thursday. Despite some dealer grumbling, this day proved to be a busy selling time. Some people used it as an earlier early buyer's



Dealer Susan Tillipman helped her collector friend Scott Wenesson of Baltimore unwrap one of his finds at the show, a vase that "everybody thinks is Weller magnolia, but it's actually an unknown piece of McCoy," he said elatedly. He now owns two. Tillipman, whose business is These Old Jugs, Annapolis, Maryland, was very pleased with the show. "I sold to dealers and interior designers from all over the country," she said. One buyer from Japan bought a Hiroshi Yoshida woodblock print to take back to his country. "I made my show the first two days," she said of the four-day event.



Kecia Curpulis of Wilmington, Delaware, waited for her ride outside the Baltimore County Convention Center. She bought a Federal-style table and a pair of Imari chargers. "It's our first Imari," she said. "I bought a book [at the show], and we're going to learn about it."

day. Some visitors told dealers they welcomed the chance to come Thursday because of other plans for the Labor Day weekend. Despite the wet, windy remnants of tropical storm Ernesto blowing through Baltimore on Thursday and Friday, buyers came out.

To upgrade the show's general appearance, the new promoters brought enough 10' high wooden walls to make 150 room settings. They came by rail from Florida. "We own over two thousand hardwood walls," Charamonde said. The remaining 400 dealer spaces were divided by pipes and drapes. To brighten the aisles, they shipped in over 6000' of wide white carpet. Large urns with floral displays dotted the exhibit area. "I spent ten grand on flowers," Charamonde said.

To help pay the cost for the show's improvements and increased advertising, the promoters raised the rent. Dealers paid from 30% to 50% more than last year. About 100 dealers declined to return. Their spaces were quickly filled. "For every dollar we raised in rent, we put back into the show," Charamonde said.

At the end of the show, he said 93% of dealers signed up for next year. A few days after returning to Florida, he was at 100% capacity. Word had gotten out, and new dealers wanted in. Charamonde called the convention center asking if it had any more space. It did. A large hall adjacent to the main one was available. Charamonde grabbed it and began filling it with about 80 more dealers.

Six weeks after the show, he was juggling floor plans to give more space to dealers who want it, switch dealers who want a different location, and find space for new dealers. He said the success of their first Baltimore was beyond their expectations.



This terra-cotta sculpture, *Flore Accroupie (Flora Crouching)* by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (French, 1827-1875), was offered by Manley & Sheppard for \$7200. The Toronto, Ontario, dealers have been coming to Baltimore for six years. It's the only U.S. show they do.



The large silver bowl is German, circa 1910, made by Koch & Bergfeld, but the inscription, "Fort Tilden Officer's Mess, February 27, 1941," is U.S. military. "I would suspect it was expropriated from Germany during the war," said dealer Charles Cohn of Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. He had \$3500 on it.



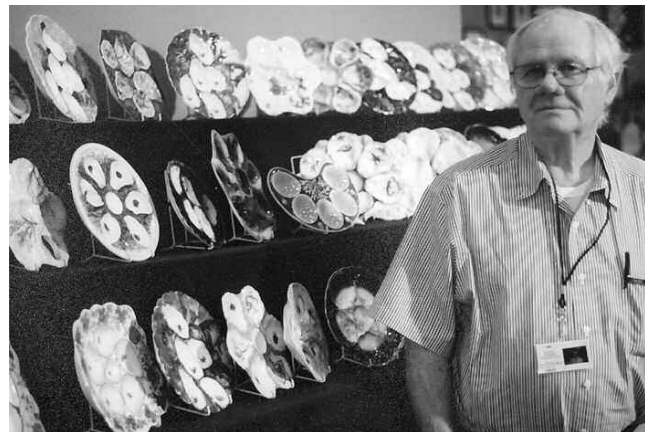
A Colonial British officer's chest, circa 1900, was offered by Fair Trade, Inc. for \$950. Of satinwood with ebony trim and believed made in India, it has numerous compartments, some hidden.



A cranberry and gold Moser wine decanter set bore a \$6800 price tag in the booth of Marita Wornom of Marita's Antiques, Bethany, Oklahoma.



Perhaps the oldest antique at the show was this Chinese ceramic horse from the Tang Dynasty, 618-907. Marc Richards of Los Angeles had it priced at \$22,000. He said there was no interest in it and or any other ancient Asian art he brought.



Henry Powell of Monique's Antiques, Dunkirk, Maryland, has been exhibiting at this show for 27 years, even predating the 25-year period in which Shador ran it. What's he think of the new promoters? "The rent's too goddamned high," he said of the increase, which doubled what he paid last year. Will he return? "It depends if I can get a booth at a price where I can make some money, then I'll come back. If not, I'll call it quits. If you've got to give it all to the promoter, you might as well stay home." He said he had a good show, selling Quimper and oyster plates to regular clients. The oyster plates behind him range from \$150 to \$4500.

The Palm Beach Jewelry and Antique Show will be held February 16-20, 2007. The primary Web site is (www.palmbeachshow.com), and a link to

the Baltimore show may be found on this site. You may also reach them at (561) 822-5440.