

# ANTIQUE COLLECTING

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CERAMICS AND GLASS ISSUE

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# MUM'S THE WORD

Dealing in antiques has always been a family affair. To celebrate this month's Mother's Day we asked three mothers and daughters to reveal the highs and lows of working together

Karen Rymer and her daughter Chloe are the duo behind decorative antiques specialists Molly and Maud's Place – named after two pet lambs who lived in the field where they built a showroom in York in 2013.



Mother Karen Rymer (right) and daughter Chloe

## When did you first become aware of antiques?

**Karen:** In my early twenties when I became part of a family who had a large house full of beautiful and interesting items of furniture, art and artefacts. It was an inspiring and exciting place to be.

**Chloe:** From a very young age mum filled the house with exciting and unusual items, I was taken to auctions and fairs from early on (sometimes unwillingly!). It was in my early twenties that I decided to pursue antiques as a career.

How do you work together day to day? Who does what? Does the parent assume the 'senior' role? Are there ever any disagreements?

**Chloe:** Day to day tasks are pretty much split between us. Karen

enjoys selling much more than I do, whereas I'm more competent with technology. Neither of us assumes a senior role and we both frequently use the phrase 'ask the boss!' We get on extremely well working. It would be unusual if there weren't any disagreements however we do feel that our disagreements are what keeps the business moving forward.

*“From a very young age mum filled the house with exciting and unusual items, I was taken to auctions and fairs from early on (sometimes unwillingly!)”*

## Do you both share a love of the same eras/styles/antiques?

**Karen:** We share a love of many periods and styles, for example we both love very unusual and rare objects and seriously good early oak items usually has both of us in raptures. Chloe appreciates mid century design classics much more than I do. I appreciate Indian and Tibetan artefacts more than Chloe does, and she is keener on architectural items. Our tastes differ most of all when it comes to art. But our differences seem to drive us forward and help the business.

## What has been your best discovery/sale and worst mistake?

**Chloe:** I don't know if it was our best sale or discovery but my favourite item we've had to date was a fabulous 1920's Swedish stove, we sold it to a hotel in Devon, which planned to use it as was originally intended. I love the fact it was going to a setting where many people could enjoy it. We've made countless mistakes, thankfully nothing too drastic so far...

**Karen:** My best discovery and favourite item was a pen and ink drawing called the *Onlookers* by Pearl Binder. My biggest mistake was selling it, I adored it and still regret not keeping it.

Sylvie has been dealing at Grays in London since 1982 and established her jewellery business Spectrum in 1991, which she runs with her daughter Nicola.



Sylvie (left) and daughter Nicola run the jewellers Spectrum

## When did you first become aware of antiques? Who or what were your greatest influences?

**Nicola:** Going to an antiques fair was part of our family weekend activity, so I was aware of antiques from 10 years of age.

**Sylvie:** I accidentally started working part-time while the children were young, as a secretary for an antique shop owner on Kensington Church Street, who was a specialist in French antique clocks. At that stage I had no special interest in antiques and definitely nothing to do with antique jewellery.

## Did you feel pressure to go into the family business?

**Nicola:** I felt no pressure. Jewellery is a passion and a pleasure.

**Sylvie:** I always encouraged my three children to come to and support me at antique fairs from a very early age, and that gave them an early start.

## Did you try any other careers before settling on antiques?

**Nicola:** Yes, I had a shop of my own selling contemporary British



Lesley Ferguson owns and runs the Tetbury-based dealership Lorfords – which recently opened a London branch – with her business partner Toby Lorford. Her daughter Jo is the company manager



Lesley (left) and daughter Jo are part of the team behind Lorfords

#### **When did you first become aware of antiques?**

**Jo:** I grew up around antiques – my mum has an exceptional eye for beautiful things so our homes were always filled with wonderful antique pieces. Many other members of my family were antique dealers, so antiques were part of everyday life. When I was younger my granny was living and dealing in France, and I remember loving hunting through the brocantes when we went to visit. I have also been lucky enough to learn from the 48 dealers we have at The Hangars, in Gloucestershire.

**Lesley:** Antiques are in my blood! I grew up attending auctions with my parents, and my mother, sister and brother-in-law have all run successful antique businesses in Tetbury. Over the years I have watched, admired and learned from my talented mother as she has renovated properties in both France and the UK..

#### **Do you both share a love of the same eras/ styles/ antiques?**

**Jo:** Not at all! Mum has such beautiful taste, but maybe because I grew up around painted Swedish / French furniture, my own taste is all clean lines and minimalism. I deal in and love 20th-century design

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designed and made home accessories and ran an interior design business within that shop.

#### **How do you work together day to day?**

**Nicola:** I only work part time in the shop as I also do the admin with our overseas clients. And as for disagreements I'd call them more differences in opinion!

**Sylvie:** We only work together two days a week but I completely involve my daughter in the buying and selling and general running of the business. I would say we agree on 90 percent of the decisions and don't argue.

#### **Do you both share a love of the same eras/styles/antiques?**

**Nicola:** No we definitely have very different styles which is very beneficial for the business as we cover all styles and eras.

#### **The press often claims the younger generation is not interested in antiques. What do you make of this?**

– though I recently bought an 18th-century cottage in Tetbury, so I think I am going to have to enlist mum's help in the interior designs.

**Lesley:** My passion is for simple original painted 18th-century pieces, be they English, Swedish or French. As time goes by I am learning about and appreciating 20th century design much more. Mixing styles can create very inspiring spaces. I also have a great weakness/love for pottery and textiles.

*“Mum has such beautiful taste, but maybe because I grew up around painted Swedish French furniture, my own taste is all clean lines and minimalism ”*

#### **The press often claims the younger generation is not interested in antiques. What do you make of this?**

**Jo:** The majority of our team are in their late 20's or early 30's. I think a lot of young people are interested in the world of design – and antiques are a huge part of that. The audience is definitely there, many of our clients are in their 30s. It's just about taking the world of antiques forward so younger generations can engage with the beautiful pieces. It is really important for us always to be thinking about this audience as we plan the next five to 10 years: mixing antiques with contemporary / bespoke, technology, apps, ease of purchase...

#### **What has been your best discovery or worst mistake?**

**Jo:** I bought an original Louis Poulsen PH artichoke pendant lamp at auction in Belgium recently, which I am totally in love with. It is a Nordic design classic, and it gives off the most beautiful light.

**Lesley:** A couple of years ago I bought a wonderful hand-painted Italian tapestry which was lying on the ground at the Le Mans trade fair and had people walking over it. After a little cleaning up and framing, we sold it at the Decorative Antiques Fair in Battersea with a great profit.

#### **The best lesson your mum taught you with antiques?**

**Jo:** “That having a successful career in something creative and fun can be a reality! And that learning about antiques isn't something you can do overnight, you just have to immerse yourself and learn as you go.

**Nicola:** I think the younger generation will only start to appreciate the quality of antique jewellery when they have the money and they get tired of the modern jewellery they buy falling to pieces.

#### **What was the most valuable lesson your parent taught you when it comes to antiques?**

**Nicola:** To appreciate the craftsmanship and quality of jewellery from the past.

#### **Would you encourage your child into the business?**

**Nicola:** I haven't needed to encourage my son into the business, it came naturally. He loves working with his grandmother and has done since he was 12, coming to antique fairs and working in the shop with us.

#### **Has the 'dual generation' approach helped your business?**

**Nicola:** Yes, it has helped the the business grow by being able to teach and understand other generations and how they go about finding and buying antiques.