

Christ Church, c. 1773, is an Old Town Alexandria landmark.

Old Town Elegance

Stroll Alexandria, Virginia's art and antiques miracle mile.

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The word is getting out. If you haven't traversed the cobblestone streets of Alexandria, Virginia's historic district recently, it's time for another visit. Long a bastion for top-quality American and English antiques, Alexandria's Old Town has become a premier destination for fine art as well. The surge of fine art galleries over the past five years in such a blue-blood antiques town is the crowning achievement of a tight band of gallery owners dedicated to placing Alexandria on the art world's map. Anchored by the Torpedo Factory, which just celebrated its 25th anniversary and is considered to be the largest

and most successful visual arts center in the nation, Alexandria has stepped out of Washington, D.C.'s shadow as a cultural force.

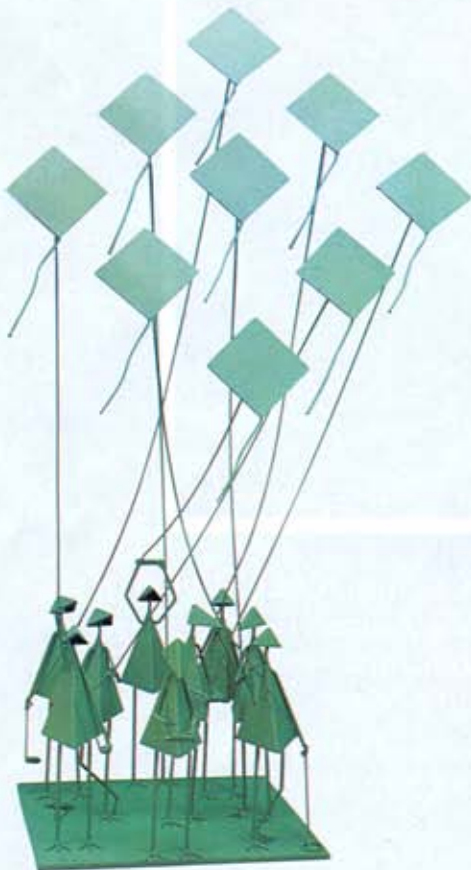
Fittingly, to find the art and antiques jewels of Old Town, you need look no further than the King—King Street, that is—a stretch of a little more than a mile from the King Street Metro station to the Potomac. This walk down King takes you straight through Old Town's heart and reveals her charm.

When you arrive at the Metro station (it is advisable to take the Metro since parking is scarce), walk about three blocks to **The Studio** at 1314 King. Lovers of the classical and academic traditions will delight in this treasure trove of the finest talents of today. Founded by sculptor Michael Curtis three years ago, The Studio is a secret that few outside of the D.C. community know about—yet. But just step into this gallery and you'll be amazed at the stable of artists represented by Curtis and their works for sale (in parentheses): Ray Kaskey, World War II memorial sculptor ("World War II Eagle," gilded bronze, \$16,000); fresco painter Mark Balma, who has painted the official portraits of Presidents Reagan and Bush, and whose work is in the Vatican (study for "Christ Figure," \$1,500); Jay Hall Carpenter, the first sculptor-in-residence at Washington's

TRAVELING COLLECTOR



"Flight of Freedom," (above), by Edward J. Bierly, oil on canvas, at Broadway Gallery. "Pyramid" (right), 1998, by Lorraine Oerth, ceramic sculpture, \$450 at Gallery West. "Flying Kites" (below), by Larry Morris, 5' x 10' x 10', painted steel, \$1,200 at the Torpedo Factory, Studio 4.



National Cathedral where he designed more than 500 statues ("Angel Head," gilded bronze, \$2,400); Priscilla Treacy, whose small, oil-on-board drawings are attracting serious attention ("Study of Vicki," \$600); Robert Librace, a painter and sculptor unknown outside of D.C., whose masterful and highly expressive figurative studies on toned paper sell before they are even created (starting at \$700); and Michael Aviano, who founded the New York Academy of Art ("Mars and Venus," oil on canvas, \$36,000).

Broadway Gallery, across the street at 1219 King, hosts themed exhibits of oil paintings, watercolors, pastels and graphite works. The gallery spotlights one artist each month. Australian Ken Strong had a successful show last fall with oil-on-board works such as "High Summer-Belbrook-Macleary River NSW" (\$3,300) and "Barge Moorings-Amsterdam" (\$4,400).

Just three blocks down King is **Century Gallery**, the most recent addition to Alexandria's fine arts scene. Although Century opened its doors at No. 919 only two years ago, there is a definite buzz around town about this gallery, which features contemporary realist painters entrenched in the academic tradition. Director Bruce Allen's discriminating taste makes Century's space a feast for the eyes. Standouts include John Morra's oil on canvas "The Beginning and End" (\$9,000), Anne Stahl's oil and wax on panel "The Marina Project-#3 Gorda" (\$4,000), Raoul Middleman's oil on canvas "End of Summer" (\$12,500), Colin Poole's acrylic on paper "Foothills-Boots in Desert" (\$21,000) and John Beck's oil on canvas "Still Life



with Brush" (\$10,500).

In addition to Morra, Century represents three other members of The Paint Group: Richard Piloco, David Mahler and William Rodgers, who just had a successful one-man show at Century.

Washington Street, both South and North, two blocks down King, is the main thoroughfare for antiques. Walk five blocks to 601

South Washington to

Sumpter Priddy's eponymous antiques shop. Priddy, a scholar of American decorative arts, offers both high-style and country 18th- to early 19th-century pieces from Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas. Although his focus is antiques, Priddy is increasing the shop's volume of fine art.

Priddy—whose impressive institutional clients include the White House, Colonial Williamsburg and the Philadelphia Museum of Art—moved from Richmond, Virginia, five years ago to capitalize upon Washington, D.C.'s museum traffic. This is typical of most Alexandria gallery and antiques shop owners, who are established high-end dealers who relocated for the town's charm and to have a D.C. locale without D.C. traffic. Consequently, the savvy clientele who followed have raised Alexandria's fine merchandise bar. To cater to such discriminating buyers, Priddy offers comprehensive archives to provide original research on each piece. His staffed library, devoted to different artisans and furniture styles, ensures that each piece is fully documented. Prices range from \$5,000

TRAVELING COLLECTOR



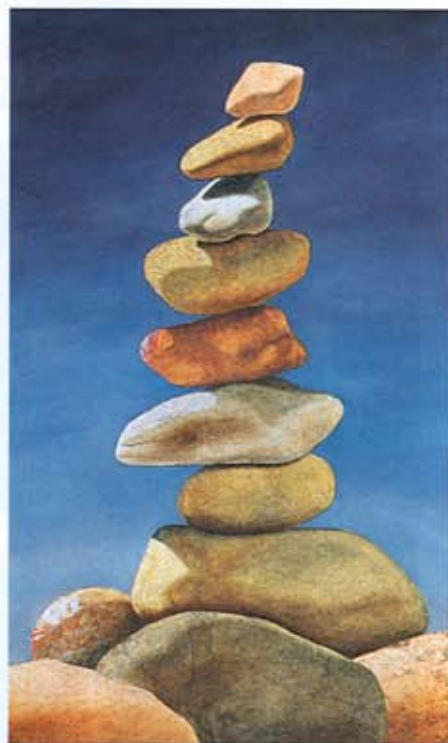
Interior of Wayne Fisher's American Design (above). "Cairn #3" (right), by Susan Makara, 40" x 24", oil and gold leaf on canvas, \$2,200 at the Torpedo Factory's Target Gallery. Drop-front desk (below), 1790-1810, walnut and pine construction and from Pennsylvania, at Sumpter Priddy.

to \$40,000 and include important pieces such as a circa 1785-1800 desk and bookcase in cherry and yellow pine from Shepherdstown (in what is now West Virginia) and a 27-inch high by 48-inch long walnut dining table, circa 1720-80, from Virginia.

Also on South Washington are **Brockett's Row Antiques and Fine Art** at No. 277 and **James Wilhoit Antiques** at No. 277-B. Brockett's Row is a dining table lover's dream. Owner Elizabeth Haynie Wainstein specializes in American and English period dining tables (\$5,000-150,000) and chairs as well as regional furniture, parcel gilt mirrors, Chinese export porcelain, fine art and other fine Federal and Regency pieces. Here, you'll find pieces previously owned by diplomats and embassies. One outstanding example is a 28 1/2-inch high, 48-inch wide and 161-inch long American Baltimore Classical mahogany three-pedestal dining table, circa 1815-25 (\$78,000).

Celebrating 10 years in Alexandria, James Wilhoit next door specializes in 18th- and early 19th-century American furniture and accessories, such as a Seymour Federal mahogany secretary bookcase in four parts, circa 1805 (\$43,500), a transitional Hepplewhite-Sheraton inlaid mahogany and mahogany veneer bowfront sideboard, circa 1810 (\$13,500) and a pair of English silver-plated entree dishes, circa 1870 (\$985).

More antiques await across King on North Washington in a turn-of-the-century building that



houses a cornerstone of Alexandria's collectibles scene. Since 1982, **Studio Antiques and Fine Art**, at No. 524, has offered a remarkable collection of 19th- and 20th-century European and American paintings, and 18th- and early 19th-century English and American furniture. Vintage accessories include lamps and chandeliers, walking sticks and Oriental porcelain, but the real treat is the collection of antique boxes and tea caddies. There always are 40 to 50 tea caddies from the 18th and 19th centuries on display, such as a circa 1800-20 Regency blond tortoiseshell example with silverplate, ball finial and radiating pewter stringing and velvet-lined interior (\$6,250).

Owners Lois Boyles and Richard Totoiu elegantly display their inventory in three floors of room settings. Even more impressive, though, is their attention to detail: Each of the 250 paintings typically on view has an extensive tag that lists its price and gives information on its age, origin and condition. Such background on the works makes Studio Antiques a popular destination for art lovers who want to be educated. The paintings, mostly oil on canvas and priced from \$1,000 to more than \$10,000, are the main focus here, and notable works include: J.C. Frisch's



TRAVELING COLLECTOR



"Town Scene with Canal," 19th-century (\$3,650) and George McCord's "Sunset on the Hudson River: The Columbian Caravels," 19th-century (\$14,500).

Heading back toward King, turn left onto Cameron Street to visit the exquisite **Boxwood Antiques and Fine Art** at No. 303. Situated in an 18th-century townhouse, Boxwood offers Colonial, Regency and Federal furniture as well as an extensive selection of 19th- to mid-20th-century American, English and Scandinavian Impressionist and traditional oil paintings (\$500–20,000). While here, don't miss the selection of Cape Ann School works, like Emile Albert Gruppé's oil-on-canvas "Five pound Island, Gloucester."

Leaving Boxwood, turn right and take Royal Street across King to 114 South Royal, where you'll delight in the American primitive antiques offered by **Wayne Fisher's American Design**. Fisher's shop may be small, but it packs a visual punch with three centuries' worth of Americana: antique weather-vanes, quilts, baskets, folk art, early painted furniture and paintings.

Now return to King for a fine art and photography must-see. For eight years, **Principle Gallery** at No. 208 has showcased stellar works of



"Luncheonette" (top), by Jon deMartin, oil on canvas, at *The Studio*. "The Journey of Women" (above), by Janet McKenzie, at *Principle Gallery*. Dower chest (below), 1825, painted yellow pine from North Carolina, at *Sumpter Priddy*. Interior of *James Wilboit Antiques* (above, right).



American regional, figurative, still life and Russian art by living artists. In the rear of this cheerful, bi-level gallery, Janet McKenzie's oil-on-canvas "The Journey of Women," 2000, dominates at 54 inches by 42 inches (\$6,500). McKenzie, who recently found fame with her "Jesus of the People" that won the "Jesus 2000" contest, is known for her arresting figures and large canvases. Other artists and works include: Gary Myers' mixed-media-on-gesso "Hero's Walk" (\$695) and pieces by *New Yorker* artist Tom Baechner (average \$2,000).

You can't miss the **Torpedo Factory** one block away at 105 North Union, a virtual mecca of emerging artists' studios. The name comes from the fact that it's housed in a 1918 building that originally manufactured torpedo shell casings and 9920 MK-14 torpedoes. Today, 165 artists work in 84 studios overlooking the Potomac. They pay \$8 a square foot annually and keep 100 percent of their profits. As you tour the facility, visit Matthew Harwood, Studio 305, who creates architecture-inspired watercolor assemblages, such as "Ft. St. André, Provence" (\$15,000, including studies). Also, peek into Studio 4 at the whimsical world of Larry Morris, whose sculpture ranges from \$250 to \$13,000.

The **Torpedo Factory** and **Gallery West**, 205 South Union, are the old souls of Alexandria's fine arts scene.



TRAVELING COLLECTOR

Founded in 1979, this cooperative gallery of emerging artists who share the work and expenses to keep prices low (\$65–2,000) is a fantastic stop for the beginning collector as well as those in search of new talent. A visit with Director Sharon Mason, who has championed Old Town's art scene for the past decade, is a fitting finale to your walking tour. In this gallery, which has been so integral to Old Town's cultural past, you can see glimpses of what makes Alexandria's future as a fine collectibles powerhouse so bright. □



Brockett's Row Antiques and Fine Art specializes in American and English dining tables.

Old Town Alexandria Checklist:

Area code 703



Galleries and Antiques Shops

- **Arts Afire Glass Gallery**, 102 N. Fayette St. 838-9785. Glass and metal art. www.artsafire.com.
- **Auburn Fine Arts Gallery**, 110 S. Columbus St. 548-1932. Traditional oil paintings by living American and European masters.
- **Boxwood Antiques and Fine Art**, 303 Cameron St. 518-4444. www.boxwoodantiques.com.
- **Broadway Gallery**, 1219 King St. 549-1162.
- **Brockett's Row Antiques and Fine Art**, 277 S. Washington St. 684-0464.
- **Century Gallery**, 919 King St. Toll free: (887) 854-2230. www.centurygallery.com.
- **Gallerie Michele**, 113 King St. 683-1521. Antiquities, sculpture, pottery, drawings, lacquered boxes, photographs from around the world.
- **Gallery West**, 205 S. Union St. 549-7359. www.gallery-west.com.
- **James Wilhoit Antiques**, 277-B S. Washington St. 683-6595.
- **Lenore & Daughters Antiques**, 130 S. Royal St. 836-3356. 18th- and 19th-century American, British and Continental silver, plates and porcelain.
- **Lloyd's Row**, 119 S. Henry St. 684-1711. 18th-century fine American and English period furniture and accessories. Appointment only.
- **Oceans of Wildlife**, 201 King St., Second Floor. 739-3202. Works by Wyland and other wildlife artists.
- **Old Colony Shop**, 222 S. Washington St. #B. 548-8008. 16th- through 19th-century paintings, prints, maps and Revolutionary War/Civil War manuscripts and artifacts.
- **Old Town Antiques**, 210 N. Lee St. 519-0009. 19th- and early 20th-century furniture, art, silver, glass, porcelain and books.
- **Principle Gallery**, 208 King St. 739-9326. www.principlegallery.com.
- **Showcase Portfolio**, 299-0100. American documents and maps. Appointment only.
- **Spurgen-Lewis Antiques**, 112 N. Columbus St. 548-4917. 18th- and 19th-century Continental furniture, porcelain and chandeliers, landscape paintings, drawings and reproduction lighting cast from antiques.
- **Studio Antiques and Fine Art**, 524 N. Washington St. 548-5188. www.StudioAntiquesandFineArt.com.
- **Sumpter Priddy**, 601 S. Washington St. 299-0800. www.sumpterpriddy.com.
- **The Prince Royal Gallery**, 204 S. Royal St. 548-5151. Paintings and sculpture.
- **The Studio**, 1314 King St. 836-7736. www.classicalgallery.com.
- **The Torpedo Factory**, 105 N. Union St. 838-4565. www.torpedofactory.org. Galleries: **Art League Gallery**, Studio 21. 683-1780. www.theartleague.org. **Enamelists Gallery**, Studio 28. 836.1561. **Factory Photoworks Gallery**, Studio 344. 683-2205. **Potomac Craftsmen Fiber Gallery**, Studio 18. 548-0935. **Scope Gallery** (ceramics), Studio 19. 548-6288. **Target Gallery** (various exhibitions), Studio 2. 549-6877.
- **Washington Square Antiques**, 689 S. Washington St. 836-3214. American and English 18th- and 19th-century formal and country furniture, decorative accessories, prints, oil paintings and porcelain.
- **Wayne Fisher's American Design**, 114 S. Royal St. 836-6043.

Art Event

Art Night is held the second Thursday of every month from 6 to 9 p.m. 549-1162.