



A Q&A with *Market Warriors* Picker John Bruno

WGBH

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If you could only collect one thing what would it be?

My initial response is “can’t answer that—I collect so many diverse things!” But if I were to really just pick one thing it would be hammered aluminum—the handmade giftware from the 1930s through the 60s. It’s classic Modernism, true Industrial Design, uniquely American, handmade, organic, durable, completely useable, and way cool!

Do you have a favorite antique or flea market find that you've incorporated into your home?

Virtually everything in our home is a flea market, thrift shop, yard sale, or antique show find! My personal favorites include a 1970s subway sign for the N & R trains to Downtown and Brooklyn from Penn Station in New York City, a Brass Persian oil lamp from the 1880s, a plaster table lamp in the shape of a ballerina from the 1940s, and a huge plastic ampersand used as a store display in the 1980s. All have prominent places in our home.

When did you know that you wanted to pursue a career in antiques?

I grew up in a tract development on Long Island and all the kids in my neighborhood collected the classic comics of the late 1950s and early 1960s. We would wait for the weekend when they were delivered to the one stationery store in town and ride our bikes down to buy them. One day I got the idea to approach the storeowner and offered to buy every comic that came in at a nickel above the marked selling price. He agreed and then I would sell them to the neighborhood kids at 10 to 15 cents above the marked price. This worked for quite a while and gave me insight into buying & selling—plus I bankrolled a very tidy profit!

To whom or what do you credit your love of flea markets and antiques?

My Mom was the one who really kicked me into the vintage world...she gave me an odd 1940s chalk statue of a beautiful woman reclining in the surf, waves roiling around her with two seagulls resting on her arms. Very strange, very cool, and I still have it all these years later. This was my very first “antique” or “collectible” and...it’s been downhill ever since!

(Cont.)

Outside of collecting what are your interests?

I love to cook, give dinner parties, and dance—especially ballroom and square dancing. I'm an avid astronomer and science geek, a voracious reader, a lover of music, art galleries & museums, and the beach—we go every chance we get!

If you could give a flea market novice one tip what would it be?

Buy with your heart! Never, ever buy solely for profit, or to impress...buy it because you love it, buy it because you want to learn from it, buy it because you want to preserve it. It's all about the emotion, the history, and the touchstone to another life and time.