

## Dealers, show promoters recruiting 'young guns'

BY ERIC C. RODENBERG

The image of a "Young Gun" is a lanky, raw-boned, slit-eyed gunslinger on a slowly paced "walk down" in the dusty dawn of Dodge City.

Although the Young Gun is confident in his (or her) ability to pull, draw-down and shoot, it is still a lonely job. It takes courage, knowledge and capital to survive.

In 2011, Gail McLeod of Antiques News & Fairs in the United Kingdom borrowed the "Young Gun" analogy and put it to work. The idea was to foster, highlight and celebrate the younger entrants into the antiques and art industry through special recognition and unique opportunities for exposure.

The idea has its roots in McLeod's discovery of an online friendship. "I noticed a group of young dealers on Twitter chatting and exchanging trade views, price advice and general amusing quips to

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each other, about six of them," she said. "One night, I joined their chat and tweeted: 'I am going to call you Antiques Young Guns.' "

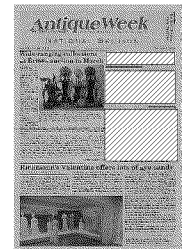
Since then, the United Kingdom organization has accrued around 100 current members, as well as established alumni.

The Young Guns concept for the United States began last March with U.S. Antique Shows accepting the challenge of bringing the concept to America. Coming up to nearly a year in operation, Antiques Young Guns USA (AYGUSA) now has well over 23 members and 10 industry partners. In the last 10 months, Antiques Young Guns has published its own website and merchandise gallery for members, established multiple social media platforms, organized its first networking event and provided multiple opportunities for its members onsite at U.S. Antique Shows' national events.

The Young Guns is available to all antique and art dealers, 39 years or younger.

"Our industry is uniquely focused on the past and the experiences of those who came before us," said Dan Darby, vice president and general manager of U.S. Antique Shows. "We need to foster a new and younger generation of dealers to continue to showcase stunning antique pieces and to impart in-depth knowledge to the public, media and other retailers."

Although Bradbury Ketelhut, owner of Alpen Art & Antiques, went through his first and last year of membership with Young Guns (he turns 40



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this year), he considers the organization an asset to the industry.

“It is a career with decently high barriers to entry,” says Ketelhut, who began hunting antiques at the age of 18. “It takes quite a bit of capital, as antique dealers tend to buy and own their inventory ... I have known some of the biggest ‘old-time’ dealers in the world, and the years of conversations that I have had with them I have taken to heart and listened to the lessons that they have taught me.”

Ketelhut shares his practical wisdom with younger antique dealers. As a result, he was awarded the 2015 Ruby Lane Outstanding Achievement Award and, in all likelihood, will be connected with the group in a mentoring capacity.

“Having grown up in the business, I have witnessed first-hand the changes in it,” Ketelhut said. “The online, brick and mortar, and show communities need to focus on strategic partnerships in order to maximize capturing the attention of and growing the young collector base that will form the future of the business.”

Also recognized as the Antiques Young Gun of the Year by a panel of judges from the art and antiques community was 31-year-old Margaret Schwartz of New Canaan, Conn.

Schwartz began her career working at Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia for four years before opening her shop, The Summer House. “I always knew I wanted to have a mix of antiques in my shop, but I wasn’t quite sure I had the background for it,” she said. “I put aside my doubts and decided to pursue my dream and invest more in antiques at The Summer House. I love the beauty of antiques, but there is much more to appreciate about these treasures than appearance. Each antique has its own unique story, and I love researching the provenance and heritage of these pieces.”

Schwartz received a prize package valued at \$10,000. The prizes, with significant contributions from the Antiques Young Guns’ industry partners, vary from complimentary booth space at U.S. Antique Shows events to free educational opportunities to advance trade knowledge.

This summer, Schwartz is preparing for a European trip. Of course, she will be greeted on the English shore by her colleagues from Antiques Young Guns.

“I’ve met and talked with a great many of the Young Guns in England; that’s what I like about it, the chance to really network throughout the world,” she says. “There’s a strong emotional connection. I’m working a lot of crazy hours, and



Above: Sarah McMillan

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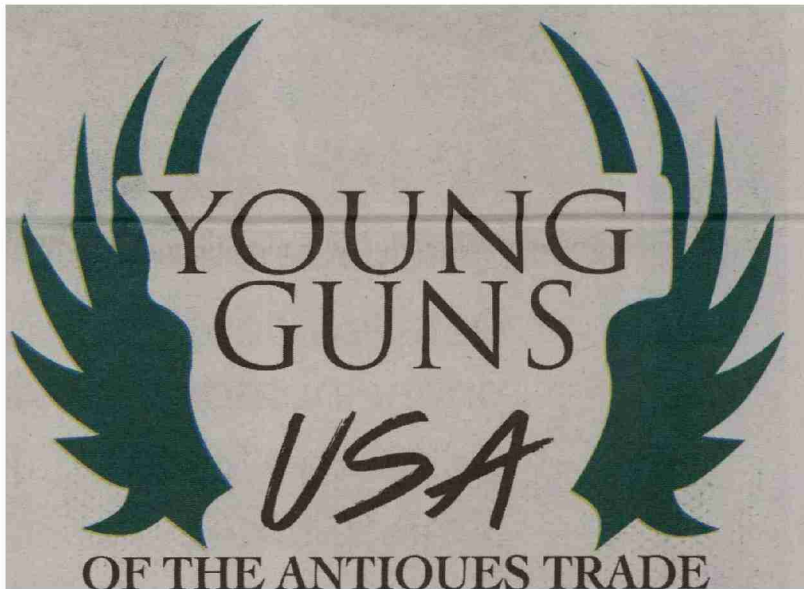
it just enhances my ability to network when I can. I think such networking will be the future of the industry. You're not by yourself out there ... my Young Guns colleagues make for a great sounding board."

Twenty-nine-year-old Sarah McMillan enjoys working with young collectors. As the owner since July 2015 of McMillan Fine Prints in New York City, she shops the city and beyond for the highest quality Old Master, and Modern American and European prints. She loves sharing her collective riches with others.

After earning her Bachelor of Arts from Northwestern University, McMillan interned for the Keno Brothers in New York before ultimately becoming a senior appraisals coordinator of the prints department for the Doyle auction house in the city. She worked at Doyle for a little more than three years before opening McMillan Fine Prints.

"A lot of people my age believe collecting is too expensive, and part of my mission is to show them antiques are not only affordable, but that the quality is better and antiques hold their value better," McMillan said. "I help them become collectors. Antiques go through a value cycle, and when they're down – like some furniture now – it's a good time to buy. The quality is so much higher, the price point is less ... it just makes good sense to buy antiques. A lot of my young friends are finding that out."

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