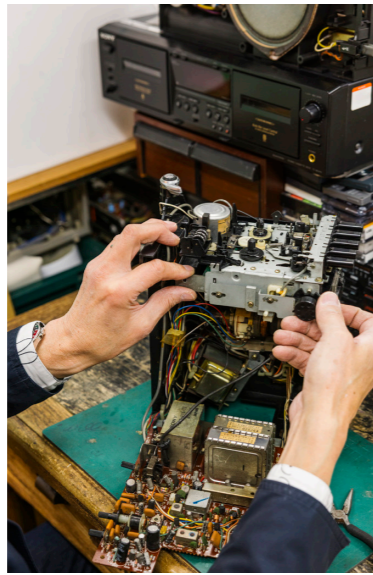




EXPO: SEALING THE DEAL

Discerning traders and collectors work at the fringes of almost every human endeavour. Here, we meet dealers in niche and rare objects, from space rocks to sound systems, who are passionate about the provenance, quality and covetability of their stock.

EDITOR: *Sophie Monaghan-Coombs*



Junichi Matsuzaki, boomboxes Tokyo

Ask anyone in Japan about acquiring a vintage boombox and one name will crop up repeatedly: Junichi Matsuzaki. The Tokyo-based 65-year-old has amassed a collection of 5,000 portable radio-cassette players and vintage electronics. At his shop in Shibuya, the shelves are lined with mono and stereo examples from the 1970s to the 1990s by Japanese companies such as National, Sony, Pioneer and Sharp. There are blank cassettes, Japanese music of yesteryear on tape and merchandise designed by an artist friend, including T-shirts declaring “Boomboxes are beautiful”. Matsuzaki sits at a small desk, repairing a Sony radio with a tiny built-in TV screen to make it fit for contemporary use.

“The number of pieces that I sell every year is limited,” he says. “Each item requires careful maintenance and restoration before it can even be offered for sale.” Parting with favourites can be hard but Matsuzaki is pragmatic. “When I buy a boombox, I look for great design,” he says. “I keep some for my personal collection and sell the others. However, if someone wants something specific from my collection, I’m open to letting it go.”

Matsuzaki used to work as a display designer, adding panache to interior spaces with old Japanese appliances. “That spilled over into my personal life,” he says. “I spent weekends browsing recycling shops, gradually assembling a collection of pieces that caught my eye. What began as a hobby evolved into a professional pursuit.” Design moved into the background as boombox dealing took over.

Matsuzaki acquires most of the pieces in the collection directly from owners who no longer use them. He also works with waste-disposal companies, which set aside radios and cassette players as they arrive. If he’s lucky,

he might pay a few hundred yen but he can pay up to ¥100,000 (€550), depending on the model and condition. Selling prices are similarly varied. A Sony CF1700 might be retailed at ¥11,000 (€60), while the hefty Sharp GF-909 can sell for ¥220,000 (€1,200).

Matsuzaki says that cassette culture is enjoying a revival in Japan, prompted by an increasing number of artists releasing new music on tape, as well as the rise of cassette-specialty shops in Tokyo. His customers vary in age and nationality but the core buyer is likely to be someone in their fifties or sixties who grew up with radio-cassette players. The outsized JVC M90 – an early-1980s hip-hop classic beloved of Run DMC – is highly sought after. And mint condition is key. Matsuzaki’s collection includes used items but also unused deadstock pieces. Original packaging and accompanying manuals are significant too. “Complete sets from the era are prized, as they offer a full glimpse of the appliance as it was originally conceived,” says Matsuzaki.

After 23 years it’s hard to believe that Matsuzaki has gaps in his boombox collection but he hankers after one in particular: the National RX-5350, a large stereo radio-cassette player released in 1983. “While many models of the era leaned towards rugged, bulky designs, this one stands out with its sleek, futuristic design,” he says. “One day I hope to acquire one in excellent condition.” — FW dug-factory.com

Size of collection:
5,000 items.

Favourite brand:
Sony, particularly its small mono CF1700 radio from the 1970s.

Most expensive item:
A JVC M90, which can be worth as much as ¥600,000 (€3,300).



PHOTOGRAPHER: Fumiharu Yoshitani

Art Ancient, meteorites *London*

“Everyone’s fascinated by the idea of holding a piece of the solar system,” says Jethro Sverdlhoff, co-director of London’s Art Ancient. Sverdlhoff deals in “exceptional works” – unusual objects that include Corinthian helmets and Iron Age brooches. His business, however, is increasingly devoted to meteorite fragments. In the world of collecting, they are often called the “ultimate rarity”.

Sverdlhoff shows Monocle a small black meteorite that landed in Costa Rica in 2019. It formed part of a meteorite shower that was captured on CCTV and dashcams. The piece is on sale, together with the kennel that broke its fall, for £500,000 (€577,000). “Until recently, meteorites weren’t considered a collector’s item,” says Sverdlhoff, who selects the rocks for his gallery based on their beauty. “Meteorites bear the scars from their atmospheric entry to Earth, which alters their shape and colour.” The mesmerising sparkle of Fukang meteorite fragments, discovered in China’s Xinjiang province, makes them the trophy piece of any collection. “These translucent, gem-quality crystals were shooting stars and they still look like them,” says Sverdlhoff.

As well as their aesthetic quality, the scientific significance of meteorites makes them precious artefacts. Sverdlhoff describes them as “messengers from the formation of the early solar system, 4.65 billion years ago”. Meteorites are sculpted by events such as cosmic collisions or extreme heat, creating thumb-like depressions or glassy coatings. These signifiers fascinate Sverdlhoff. “I have always been drawn to beautiful, storytelling objects, created by the most improbable of events,” he says. “Even after years of handling them, that sense of wonder never really goes away.”

Some meteorites are far rarer than sapphires or diamonds and the sales figures support this. In 2025 a 24.5kg meteorite sold at Sotheby’s for \$5.3m (€4.6m), becoming a bellwether for a category that, 10 years previously, was barely present at art auctions. Art Ancient was the first specialist to attend Frieze Masters in 2019 when the gallery presented a timeline of 54 objects – from meteorites to elephant-bird eggs – that charted the history of our planet.

“Major art fairs have shown that meteorites have a cross-category appeal,” says Sverdlhoff. Art Ancient’s clients include technology and finance entrepreneurs as well as interior designers looking for statement pieces. “What these clients share is curiosity and a desire for pieces that are genuinely rare, visually beautiful and come with great stories.”

How to show off your otherworldly artefact? “Meteorites should be displayed like any other rare, precious object,” says Sverdlhoff. “When you put them in a vitrine with explanatory labels, they read as specimens. Instead, we give them space and lighting, so they read as sculptures.” — *cj artancient.com*

Rarest meteorites:

Martian and lunar. There are fewer than 400 Martian meteorites and 600 lunar meteorites known worldwide.

Most beautiful objects:

Pallasite meteorites with olivine crystals, derived from asteroid belts.

Easiest place to spot meteorites:

The Sahara desert.





Trovo, chairs Madrid

For many *madrileños*, Sundays kick off with a bit of antiquing and *tapeo* around the city's largest and oldest open-air market, El Rastro. Its stalls, where objects old and new have been sold as far back as the 18th century, have given rise to a clutch of antique shops that remain open beyond the market's hours of operation.

Lola Feijóo, an antiquarian originally from Galicia, opened her shop dedicated exclusively to chairs in 2023. Though only a short walk from the *mercado*, Trovo offers a fresh perspective. "It's true that when I started – and even as recently as last week – colleagues from El Rastro will come by and ask me in shock, 'Only chairs?'" she says, laughing.

After earning an art history degree, Feijóo spent more than 20 years working across the antiques and restoration industries with a specialisation in appraisal and valuation. When she decided to open a space of her own, her instincts led her to make an initial acquisition for an undetermined future business. That purchase was of a set of wood-and-rattan Dutch bobbin chairs from the 1920s, a style known for knobbly, lathe-turned legs and arms. The procurement of this piece set the course for Feijóo's venture. "The chair is an object that has been designed in so many ways," she says. "I was drawn to the fact that I could explore the dimensions of chairs and the materials that they're made from, as well as pieces made by specific architects and designers, though there are many wonderful examples by anonymous designers too."

Focusing on seating was also a practical matter: Feijóo is able to lift and handle the objects herself and collect them without the need for a large storage space. In her

cosy shop, visitors can find chairs that stack, others that fold and some that are upholstered; there are those that are part of sets alongside the solitary and the sculptural.

Nestled along Trovo's smooth white walls are cult classics: for example, a pair of Gaudi armchairs by Vico Magistretti in off-white fibre-reinforced polyester (€650) or a reissued Argyle chair by Charles Rennie Mackintosh in black lacquered ash (€1,200). Feijóo is particularly excited about a recent find – four Peota chairs from the 1970s by Gigi Sabadin, who used plywood to create gorgeous curves. Feijóo sources her chairs globally and makes regular visits to France and Italy.

Feijóo's favourites are those by Italian designers from the 1950s and 60s but she is not a slave to specific styles or periods, instead relying on her instincts. She is also a proponent of mixing chairs as part of developing a personal sense of interior-design style. "I am of the mindset that if a chair's design is beautiful, it is imbued with its own inherent personality," she says. "So it will always pair well with other chairs." — FME
trovo4.es

Furthest location to which Feijóo has shipped chairs:
Trinidad and Tobago (about 6,500km).

The dealer's 'white whale' chair:
The Fenis chair by Carlo Mollino. "With the advent of social media, top-tier design chairs have become more popular and harder to snap up," says Feijóo.

Most expensive item:
Chairs by Luigi Saccardo and the Hoop chair by Palange and Toffoloni (from €1,500 to €3,000).



PHOTOGRAPHER: Ben Roberts



Bernardini, watches Milan

Massimo Bernardini, better known as Max, has lived more lives than most. Within 10 minutes of entering the Milan dealership that bears his name, which focuses on vintage watches and a few select home décor pieces, Monocle has discovered that the globetrotting polyglot speaks English with an American accent and Spanish with an Argentinean one – and can also converse in Serbo-Croat, thanks to his years at an international school in Belgrade.

After travelling the world with his banker father, Franco, Bernardini moved to Naples at the age of 14. He had been introduced to the world of vintage jewellery by Franco – “a compulsive collector” who, in 1982, left the corporate sector to set up the business that we stand in today. Thanks to his multilingualism, Bernardini landed a job as a translator for Naples-based Argentine football superstar Diego Maradona at the age of 16. “I spent the money that I made by translating on watches,” says Bernardini, leaning back on a chair in his office, a hand-rolled cigarette in his hand. “My first client was Diego,” he adds. “I sold him three Rolex Day-Dates.”

Bernardini took over the family business in 2018. It’s an elegant space: there are cigar holders and vintage glasses, as well as lots of watches in cabinets (the serious ones are locked away in a safe or at the bank). In one corner, resident butler Brandon stands behind a small bar, ready to prepare an espresso or, later in the day, an el presidente (martini with white rum). Max specialises in pre-1990s complicated Patek Philippe and complicated Rolex watches made before 1963, while his staff cover other brands and periods. If you’re a regular collector, you’ll be ushered into his office to examine an intricate watch dial under a microscope.

“Might I introduce you to his royal highness the 1518,” says Bernardini, pulling out a 1940s Patek Philippe. “Very

few were sold with a gold bracelet,” he adds, handing the timepiece to Monocle and gently asking us to hold it over his leather-topped desk, so that, if it were to fall, it won’t hit the floor (it later emerges that the watch is worth about €1m). Bernardini says that of the 281 1518s made between 1941 and 1952, he has sold 97 of them.

Though Bernardini now faces competition from the internet, he has built up his client list over three decades, with much of his business coming from the Middle East, Asia and the US. The company includes 10 staff in Milan and a showroom in Hong Kong. He says that he gets “a huge kick” out of rare timepieces and the attention to detail with which they are made. “This watch,” he says, pointing to the €600,000 “Tasti Tondi” Patek Philippe on his own wrist, “doesn’t scream at you. But it’s rare, it’s beautiful and there’s no CNC [computer numerical control]. There was a genius of craftsmanship that has been wiped off the face of this planet.” — EJS bernardinimilano.com

The only blue-chip vintage watch brand:

Patek Philippe – many consider the 1518 to be the most beautiful watch ever manufactured.

Current most-requested watches:

Certain Cartier watches and complicated Patek Philippes (“complications” include chronographs and calendars).

Bernardini’s tips for collectors:

Purchase what you like and never follow trends. And don’t buy the watch – buy the seller.



PHOTOGRAPHER: Luigi Fiano



Only/Once Shop, Braun products Bavaria

In 1958, Czechoslovakia triumphed at the World Expo in Brussels. Its pavilion, with its sleek modernist design and showcase of innovative new gadgets, won the Gold Star, the fair's highest accolade. Though it took place decades before he was born, the event provided an unexpected seed of inspiration years later for collectable-design dealer Filip Triner. He left his native city of Munich in 2011 to study graphic design in Prague and experience life in the Czech Republic, the country that his parents had left during the Cold War. When he began to research the 1958 World Expo, he was captivated by the winning pavilion's sense of style. "Half a century later, I saw so many objects from that period that are now described as Brussels style," he says. "For people like my grandma, they were communist relics. But for me, they were masterpieces."

Triner began a personal collection, initially scouring Czech flea markets for lamps, clocks or small electronics. But after moving back to Germany, he discovered something that inspired him even more: objects created by Dieter Rams for Braun when he was the head of design there from 1961 to 1995. "I love their timeless simplicity," says Triner. He began adding these products to his vastly growing collection.

In 2011, Triner launched an online publication about graphic and web design. Then, with his storage overflowing, he decided to begin selling his product collection to his readers, rather than just writing about them. Thus was born his online shop, Only/Once, in 2013. Through collecting, Triner had learned about product restoration. "I began to love taking an item in bad condition, making it look almost brand new and then passing it on

to someone else," he says. "That process is more satisfying than owning the object."

Now, Triner sells between seven and 10 products a month. Each is a labour of love. He sources them online or through European dealers and collectors, then two local veteran electricians overhaul them. Finally, Triner or his father deep-clean and polish the pieces to museum quality. Braun products make up most of the business but Triner also sells other 20th-century designs, from brands such as Italy's Brionvega and German manufacturer Krups. "Krups doesn't have collectable status but it has beautiful products," says Triner. "I love its egg timers. When they ring, it's such a beautiful sound."

There are currently 100 objects listed on Only/Once and Triner has a further 250 items waiting to be refurbished. For the occasional viewing, he has an appointment-only showroom in the basement of his house in Pfaffenhofen an der Ilm, a town outside Munich. "I do get attached to my pieces," he says. "But it still feels good to let them go and be loved by someone else." — JSC onlyonceshop.com

Most valuable item:

Braun TPI portable record player and radio, which sell for between €7,000 and €9,000.

Oldest piece:

Siemens-Schuckert ventilator, a durable, high-quality fan from 1920.

A personal favourite:

The Braun HLI desktop ventilator. "I am always on the lookout for these," says Triner. "They look great but they are also very useful when the weather is hot."



PHOTOGRAPHER: Constantin Mirbach

Endyma, Helmut Lang clothing Berlin

Whether they're a student or a creative director, anyone who arrives at fashion archive and dealership Endyma is first asked to wash their hands. Visitors are then instructed not to pull on any of the garments on the racks but gently lift them by their hangers – and ideally avoid touching them at all. “Even if it's just a bunch of T-shirts, I treat it as a life-or-death situation,” says founder Michael Kardamakis.

These aren't any old T-shirts, of course. Kardamakis, a Greek-born 33-year-old, has spent 15 years assembling a goldmine of 1980s and 1990s fashion, including the world's largest collection of Helmut Lang garments. The clothes take up a whole Altbau apartment in Berlin's Schöneberg district. The front of house is reserved for the Austrian avant-garde designer, while the back holds designers such as Burberry, Armani and Jurgi Persoons.

Endyma (Greek for “garment”) operates as a shop and reference library for the fashion industry, with pieces rented out for shoots or used as inspiration for collections. Designers study the garments to copy the collar construction of a leather coat or to figure out how Lang adapted a military strap for a silk organza dress. “It activates the imagination,” says Kardamakis of Helmut Lang's design. “It's just the right amount of wrong.” On the racks, hangers with blue cubes mark items that aren't for sale. “Others might be available, depending on my mood,” says Kardamakis. Prices start at €150 but rise to four digits for rarer pieces. A Helmut Lang biker jacket from 1999 will set you back about €2,000. Kardamakis's customers are those in the know. “They're people who already have 20 biker jackets,” he says.

Every Endyma item is treated with museum-level reverence and all acquisitions get a painstaking touch-up. This can mean taking garments apart by the seams to wash the pieces separately. For shopping appointments, staff will prepare a rack of clothes to try on and then de-lint all of the linings afterwards.

Despite having no formal training in fashion – he studied art history at university – Kardamakis has a couturier's knowledge of tailoring. During tours, which are given for a modest fee, he waxes poetic about the differences between officers' greatcoats and sailors' peacoats, or variations in screen printing on denim. The brands that he collects are those that experimented with the construction of clothes, before much of luxury fashion was swallowed up by marketing budgets and logo-mania. “Brands put on a crazy show but what they make money on is €45 perfumes,” he says. “These were just cool clothes for cool people to wear.” Endyma weaves them back into runways, magazine spreads and your wardrobe too. — SRO
endyma.com

Items in the collection:

There are 6,000, of which 3,500 are Helmut Lang.

Kardamakis's key advice:

Avoid dry cleaning. The safest way to wash clothes is by hand at home, laying them flat on a towel to dry.

Resurgent brand:

Giorgio Armani.



PHOTOGRAPHER: Felix Brüggenmann



PHOTOGRAPHER: Stéphanie Fässenich



Galerie Chenel, Roman antiquities
Paris

“It’s about the *coup de coeur*,” says Ollivier Chenel, describing what attracts him to an object. That arresting, ineffable moment when something calls to you is what Chenel has made his business over the past three decades but, really, it has been a life’s work. During Chenel’s early years, his father was an antiquities dealer in Nice. But where Chenel Snr specialised in art deco furniture, his son found himself intrigued by much older objects. “Like most kids, I wanted to do something a bit different,” he says. Alongside his wife, Gladys, he moved to Paris in 1999 to open their first antiques gallery. They were joined by his brother Adrien six years later. “We were generalists at the time because it was about making our mark and meeting our first clients,” says Chenel. Over time, the trio started to specialise in ancient antiquities.

Gladys oversees the curation of Galerie Chenel’s softly lit space that overlooks the Louvre. Among the pieces that she has currently chosen for display is a marble funerary inscription from the end of the first century, made for a former slave who became a calligraphy instructor. It was discovered by archaeologists in the south of France in the 19th century and is now priced at €480,000, given its rarity. “It’s a unique object not only because of the story that it tells but also the remarkable quality and precision of the calligraphy work,” says Chenel.

The detective work needed to trace the origin and journey of these antiques is what Chenel most enjoys about his job. He becomes animated when describing the background of another item, a fragmented statue of Venus, which will be shown at this year’s Tefaf fair in Maastricht. The marble sculpture was made in the first century and has bounced back and forth across the Atlantic in the private homes and museums of several collectors. The sculpture’s missing limbs (it now consists of just a torso, hips and thighs) only make it more special in Chenel’s eyes and well worth its €650,000 price tag. “Rodin once said that fragmented pieces are more interesting than full sculptures and I wholly agree,” he says.

The gallery often sources from private collections and auctions across Europe and the family has developed a shared taste that defines Galerie Chenel. “We have never argued over a piece, as first and foremost we buy something because we love it,” says Chenel. “Every year, our collection has something new but with our identity at the heart of it. That’s what our clients are coming for – the object but also the experience.” — LMT galeriechenel.com

Oldest object in the collection:
An Egyptian bronze cat sculpture dating from 500 BCE, which belonged to a Belgian diplomat in the late 19th century.

The most distant location travelled to find an object:
Australia.

A recent exhibition:
“We have recently wrapped the second chapter of a collaborative exhibition with Simon Porte Jacquemus called *Mythes*, in which ancient statues were styled with contemporary objects and clothes,” says Chenel.



Whether they buy and sell Roman busts, biker jackets or meteorite fragments, everyone featured here knows that what they're really selling is a story – of history, craft or even the very formation of our planet. And it's this that makes their work priceless.