

ANTIQUES' EASTERN FRONT

Finding the "finds" in Budapest and Prague

BY CAROLYN BÁNFALVI

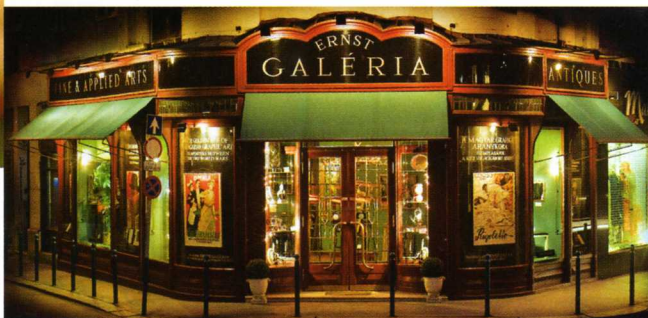
An auction at The Dorotheum

BUDAPEST

The **BELVEDERE SZALON** has one of the city's most polished collections of antiques and holds more than a dozen auctions annually. Belvedere sells a wide range of furniture (like a 13-piece art deco living-room set for \$15,000 and a secretary that belonged to Hapsburg Queen Elisabeth for \$70,000) and decorative pieces, including silver vases and bronze statuettes (V. Szent István tér 12; 1/473-1400).

The **POLGÁR GALÉRIA** specializes in auctioning late-20th-century paintings by Hungarian and international artists; between auctions, the showroom sells paintings, furniture, jewellery, watches, and coins (V. Váci utca 11/B, mezzanine; 1/267-4077). There's a second, smaller store at V. Kossuth Lajos utca 3.

Located near antiques row, the **NAGYHÁZI GALLERY AND AUCTION HOUSE** offers everything from international art and gold jewellery to traditional folk crafts and rustic peasant furniture (V. Balaton utca 8; 1/475-6000).



Belvedere Szalon



In the 1990s, collectors raced to Budapest and Prague for the treasures flooding the auction houses and shops after the end of the Eastern bloc. These cities are no longer bargain basements, but they're still chock-full of antiques shops, some of which double as auction houses. In Budapest, early 20th-century paintings are important, and similar in quality to French paintings of the same period—but they're dramatically cheaper, according to Zoltán Jung at Budapest's Polgár Galéria. Delicate hand-painted porcelain and ceramics by Zsolnay and Herend are easy to find in Budapest, and in both cities there's an abundance of Biedermeier and art deco furniture. In Prague, look for Bohemian crystal, garnet jewellery, old marionettes, and puppet theatres. Many of Budapest's antiques shops are clustered on Falk Miksa utca, the "antiques row" in the fifth district, while in Prague they're scattered around town. Budapest's shops tend to be more polished and carry restored pieces, due to the many local expert restorers and craftsmen, says Jeff Taylor, who runs Taylor Art Advisors in the city. "In Prague it's more about the art of the find," says Karen Feldman, director of Artěl Glass company. "You can filter through things for yourself, while in Budapest that has already been done."

ALL COURTESY THE DEALERS

