

A photograph of an antique shop's interior. The space is defined by tall, white, fluted columns. In the center, a wooden table holds several ornate, multi-tiered candlesticks. A tall palm tree stands behind the table. The floor is made of large, light-colored stone tiles. Large windows on the right side of the image show the exterior of the building. The lighting is bright and even.

SPENCER SWAFFER
Antiques



Previous pages: antique lamps are always in stock. Here, gilded and bleached 18th- and 19th-century carved lamps are displayed on a massive Tuscan gueridon, c1780. Left: the marble urn is French, c1820 displayed against an early 19th-century Italian paper Neoclassical screen. Top: one of the delights of owning an antique shop means you can take stock home for a while to enjoy. This pair of 18th-century English lacquer bookcases is currently *chez* Spencer Swaffer. ... 'But you never know I sell everything in the end. I'm a dealer,' he says. Above: Spencer travels to France every week to buy for his 9,000sq ft premises – and pairs of chairs, bergères and fauteuils are always top of the list. Shown here is a pair of top-quality gilt bergères, c1860.



Left: painted English country furniture is always in demand. Shown here is a Lincolnshire dresser base crusted with 200 years of chalky white paint and two primitive black painted North Country chairs, c1750. Below left: English teak garden benches bleached by the sun of 50 summers; some to a design by Lutyens, some with backs like Chinese Chippendale. Opposite: a pair of tall birdcages, reminiscent of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, that belonged to Maureen, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava. The painted bookcase is Italian, 18th-century, and the iron-and-crystal chandelier was made in the Paris workshops of Bagues, c1900.







Left: brown furniture – despised by many as boring brown – is something really understood at Spencer Swaffor Antiques. This bold William IV mahogany sideboard has the strong lines of English baronial furniture. Top: the stock of primitive furniture has been featured in several books of Folk Art. Here an architect's model of a Cumberland country house sits on a gnarled tree table, with original green paint, c1720. Above: this Regency bookcase, c1850, has a provenance to Lord Smeeth from his Somerset farmhouse, Old House. The collection of walking sticks were the perks of the trade for 19th-century hedge-layers in the Somerset Levels. They would select the straightest, most barked branches from briar bushes and sell them from door to door.

Photography: Simon Upson

Spencer Swaffer has been described as the ultimate dealer's dealer; his cavernous 16th-century building in the West Sussex countryside has been called the best antiques shop in England.

For 50 years Spencer has been always first through the door wherever antiques are bought and sold, viewing all the main auctions throughout England and Europe and visiting the dealers with the sharpest eye.

Comfort and colour, sometimes grand, often simple, sometimes from the country, sometimes from the city: the Swaffer collection does not reflect the quirky ups and downs of antiques fashion. 'I'm still dealing in the same homely, but edgy things I sold 20 years ago. Real things from real homes'. Spencer Swaffer Antiques is the first stop for almost all international buyers – as well as English clients decorating their homes.



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