

**SALES.** The best indicator of the market seems to be gasoline prices. Sales surged when gasoline fell below \$2.00 a gallon. But, when prices bumped back up to \$3.00 a gallon our sales flattened. In Lafayette Sales for March were down 12% from last year.

**SECURITY.** Two marble handled hatchets were reported missing.

**VACANT DEALER SPACES.** As many of you have observed our mall has a vacancy problem. Some of our long term dealers have retired, moved south or simply left the business. In the past vacant spaces were easily filled. However, over the past year or so we have found it increasingly difficult to attract qualified dealers.

Our plan is to step back and take a long look at our current business model. The owner, John Regan plans to spend two to three days a week working in the mall this month. He'll be in on Fridays and off on other days. So if you're coming to the mall and would like to meet, I'm sure he would welcome your input.

## **Buying "Out of Fashion" in a Cyclical Market**      John Regan

The art market, like the antique market is bemoaning soft demand for pre-World War II works. In the case of art "postwar and contemporary art sales have ballooned from \$260 million in 1995 to \$7.8 billion last year" while earlier works have languished. In the case of antiques, anyone who has been to an auction lately might note that values for Chippendale furniture have collapsed; while 60s plywood modern is hot.

What we should be telling our customers is that the antique market is cyclical, "Buy what you like." And if they are interested in investment, a recent article in the March 23rd Bloomberg Businessweek suggests that they "Hunt for the overlooked and underappreciated." The article makes three recommendations: "Buy out of style, buy obscure but important and buy outside the narrative."

In today's market with so many areas of decorating and collecting out of fashion and priced accordingly, customers have a real opportunity. If they are willing to buck current fads, they can build their estates at bargain prices not seen in many years.