

Extract from
COUNTRY LIFE

DEBORAH GAGE

As Deborah Gage deals not only in porcelain - her first love - but also in European paintings and works of art from the 17th to the 20th centuries, one might have thought that she would have had difficulties in finding an unconnected field for her personal collecting. Not so.

Miss Gage was brought up in Kenya, and she has maintained her contacts there, making regular visits even when living in New York or London. Nowadays, she sits on the board of the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, which takes her back twice a year to Kenya, and allows her to travel around the country.

This might have led to an interest in African tribal arts or textiles but, in fact, from an early age, she was drawn to Ethiopian Coptic crosses, and she now has a very fine collection of 18th - and 19th - century crosses, with one 17th-century example. 'I don't precisely know what the British Museum has,' she tells me, 'but my collection is probably superior to most American ones'.

These crosses are either hand-held or mounted on staves to be carried in processions. No two are ever quite alike, which is why they have come to be known as 'snowflake crosses'.

Despite her passion for travelling - I spoke to her in the narrow gap between a visit in the narrow gap between a visit to Burma and a business trip to Los Angeles - and her childhood in Kenya, Miss Gage has not yet been to Ethiopia.

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She plans to put this right next year. In the meantime, as many crosses have slipped out into neighbouring countries over the centuries, she has a network of friends and dealers in Kenya who spot likely pieces for her collection.



(Above) Deborah Gage and her Ethiopian Coptic Crosses.

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