

tefaf review

The quick-fire coverage for ten

■ In a world of instant media *TEFAF* remains a fair to be judged by the long game



Anna Brady
reports

THIS may well be one of the last reviews published of *TEFAF Maastricht 2015*, the art and antiques fair that ran from March 13-22 in the Dutch city's monolithic MECC.

Among a flurry of tweets, blogs, instagram posts etc, many reviews were online before the preview day was out, and most by the end of the first public day on March 13.

While *ATG* had played its part in some of this frenetic online activity, hopefully there is still a place for a bit of good old-fashioned 'slow' journalism as a counterpoint. Particularly as, unless you are there manning a stand, it's easy to forget that this is a ten-day-long fair. Trade continues throughout – and long afterwards – and issues and opinions take more than a few hours to percolate.

Old Masters have always been central to the event and so eyes instantly look to them for news of sales.

In the hours before opening on preview day, when only journalists and men with vacuum cleaners stalk the empty aisles, dealers pace around their stands, nervously straightening the odd frame. Konrad Bernheimer arrived on the



Left: media loading in the digital age: London Old Master dealer **Derek Johns** keeps up to date on his stand at *TEFAF Maastricht 2015* in a year when the use of technology and social media was at its most manifest and frantic. The ever-increasing speed of information dissemination and demands of 24-hour news are changing the face of even traditional events.

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stand of neighbour Johnny Van Haeften to wish him good luck with a manly hug.

"We are like lions waiting to pounce," says the Munich dealer, only half joking. Both dealers agree that, for their businesses, so much rides on *TEFAF*. It's the biggest 10 days of their year.

Reports of sales filter through slowly. It's a considered and knowledgeable audience of the sort who tend to make cautious decisions over a few days – and sometimes weeks or months.

In short, preview day is certainly no accurate barometer of the whole fair and of course it's impossible to make sweeping statements about sales

patterns across an event of this size.

However, with exceptions, sales of Old Master paintings appear to have been on the slow side this year: it was one of slow-burn sales as Van Haeften observes on page 18. Exhibitors of jewellery, works of art and antiques, however, were reporting strong trade.

There were grumblings about the flow of visitors around the fair.

The cost of stand space is uniform throughout the MECC but this seems rather unjust considering just how uneven footfall is, particularly in upstairs *TEFAF Paper* which undeniably gets far fewer visitors. On preview day this is particularly

obvious as everyone is funnelled through one main entrance onto the 'Place de la Concorde', a bottleneck that leaves stands on the central 'Champs Elysees' aisle swamped with numbers quickly dwindling the further out you go.

While some frustrated exhibitors did not want to be named, one who did reference the issue was Andreas Pampoulides of Coll & Cortés. When asked if he thought there was anything that could be improved about the fair, he said: "This is a very big question that has been greatly discussed by many exhibitors at *TEFAF*. The biggest discussion I hear of involved changing the layout of the fair to allow a better flow of visitors."

There is, I'm told, capacity for more entrances through the areas currently blocked off by the press office and restaurant either side of the main entrance. Could these facilities be moved upstairs, leaving more space on the ground floor for the *TEFAF Paper* exhibitors?

Without full knowledge of the building, it's impossible to make an informed comment on the practicalities of a re-jig to spread flow, but an improvement would appear to be possible, if the organisation would agree to it. However, the current situation probably suits some very well.

Whether anything will change in this respect at *TEFAF Maastricht 2016* (from March 11-20) remains to be seen, but for now here's the post-fair lowdown from a few exhibitors – all garnered with pen and paper away from the MECC's air-conditioned hum.

■ tefaf.com



Left: "Do you mind if I wax my toad while I'm talking to you?" asked London art dealer Rupert Maas just before the opening of the *TEFAF* preview. The toad in question, a massive Meiji wooden okimono of a female toad with her young on her back, was a curious but welcome addition to **Maas Gallery's** stand of predominantly 19th century paintings. Maas bought the outsize carving at a UK regional auction after hitting his shin on it during the view.

Later in the week at *TEFAF* he sold it for €12,000 – the buyer apparently refusing an offer of double that amount as it was loaded into their car (**right**).



days of slower burning

MAKING A DEBUT

Despite its vast size and variety, there are still some holes within the specialisms on offer at *TEFAF*. Until this year there was no dealer devoted to the Russian Avant-Garde.

London dealer **James**

Butterwick had been on the *TEFAF* waiting list for years so jumped at the chance to exhibit in *TEFAF Paper* when finally invited into the club.

This was something of a step into the unknown for James, whose European client base was previously non-existent, having concentrated on Russia for the past 20 years. He exhibited for four years at the *Moscow World Fine Art Fair* (now postponed) and – by way of comparison – describes coming to Maastricht as “like entering the garden of earthly delights. Everything is so brilliantly organised and there are so few timewasters”.

The sanctions and continuing fraught relationship with Russia over the Ukraine crisis, combined with the collapse of the rouble, means that, according to James, “the Russian market is all but dead”.

Having come to the fair with the aim of starting a European address book – he previously had just one non-Russian client – he was delighted by his *TEFAF* debut. “Fantastic – if Arsenal had won the Champions League I couldn’t have been happier,” he said.

This Gooner chose to show 12 works on paper by the Ukrainian



Above: *Portrait of the Artist's Daughter* (1928) by Alexander Bogomazov (1880-1930), 8½ x 9½in (22 x 24cm), sold at *TEFAF* by James Butterwick for a five-figure sum.

Cubo-Futurist Alexander Bogomazov (1880-1930), an artist who, while well-known in the Ukraine and Russia, remains fairly obscure in Europe. It was a gamble that paid off, as James sold seven of the eight drawings on offer, including four to the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, who admitted they had not previously heard of the artist but were struck by his work.

As he expected, James found Russian visitors especially thin on the ground. Those he did see were good

friends showing their support, and he counted only a couple of Russian journalists at the event this year, with some notable names missing.

Two of the Bogomazov drawings went to Dutch couples, including this signed and dated portrait of his daughter, Yaroslava, **above**, a study for a painting in the Ivakin Collection in Kiev.

The pencil on paper from 1928 melds a Cubo-Futurist approach with unusual sensitivity. It sold for a five-figure sum.



A CLASH OF THE TITANS

This year *TEFAF* clashed with the Modern and Contemporary art fair giant *Art Basel Hong Kong* for the first time.

Some exhibitors were exhibiting at both, among them Rossi & Rossi, who deal in Indian, Himalayan and South-East Asian Art from antique to Contemporary and have bases in both London and Hong Kong.

“*TEFAF* is the most important art fair in the world, particularly for classical works of art. *Art Basel HK* is the most important fair in Asia for Contemporary art,” said Fabio Rossi of the decision. “We deal in both areas so we had to exhibit at both fairs and it has proved the right decision as we have met new clients at both venues. One is more ‘old school’, the other is ‘younger’. A few clients were able to come to both.”

He admitted it was a little logistically challenging, but manageable. At *TEFAF* they showed mainly classical works, plus some from two Tibetan Contemporary artists they represent, Tenzing Rigdol and Tsherin Sherpa. In Hong Kong they concentrated on the work of one artist, Leang Seckon from Cambodia, and sold over 15 paintings.

Of *TEFAF*, Fabio said: “I feel we have now established our presence at the fair and are building up relationships with visiting collectors and curators. In our field, sculpture seems to be more appreciated than painting though we had enquires for the latter too.”

Is there anything he thinks could be changed to improve the fair? “Minor tweaks are always needed for every event. I think it would be good to be able to attract a younger audience who might not yet be familiar with *TEFAF* and also increase the number of Asian visitors.”

Their sales included the burnished buff sandstone torso of a Jina, pictured **above**, from Uttar Pradesh in northern India, which was purchased by a new UK-based client who normally buys Modern and Contemporary art. This was their first classical Indian sculpture. Dating from the 11th-12th century, the male nude figure had an asking price of \$300,000.



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TEFAF BY NUMBERS

- Over 75,000 visitors from 65 countries.
- A record 400 private jets landed at Maastricht-Aachen airport.
- 262 museum representatives attended from institutions across the globe – another record.
- 24,000 roses, 58,500 tulips, 22,500 spring flowers and 31,000 branches of blossom were used to decorate the MECC.
- Over 10,000 guests attended the private view on March 12, consuming 13,600 glasses of champagne and more than 150,000 canapés made by 80 chefs and served by 400 waiting staff.
- During set up, the stand builders Stabilo used 38,000 metres of carpet, 148,000 metres of electric cabling, all held together with 920,000 staples and transported into the fair by 150 trucks.
- Together the stand builders walked 30,000km and consumed 40,000 sugar cubes in the process.

tefaf review

THE PRICE IS RIGHT?

"Last year we had a very good start and then it died. This year we had a bad start and then sales picked up. We sold 10 paintings on the stand and have three or four more in serious play at the moment," said London Old Master dealer **Johnny Van Haeften** a few days after his return from **TEFAF**.

"Jewellery, works of art and antiques were very strong this year and things were slower for the picture dealers, but I think everyone did ok by the end."

He added that he thought recent terrorist attacks may have had an impact too: "I think we underestimated the 'Charlie Hebdo effect'. The recent shootings I think scared some people off making the trip, particularly American visitors. I assumed going into the fair that, because of the collapse of the Euro, British and American buyers would be at the fore, but as it happened some of the clients I was expecting from the UK and America didn't appear."

For the first time at a fair, Van Haeften, along with fellow London art dealers **Dickinson** and **Richard Green Gallery** next door, chose to display prices.

Explaining the decision, he said: "I was partly stung by criticism at *Frieze Masters*. One man who came onto my stand said if dealers wanted to be transparent, they needed to put prices on things, like estimates at an auction."

The decision was a gradual one. "I had a group of drawings at the fair for the first time



Above: Old Master sales at **TEFAF** this year included this portrait of Henri IV of France (1553-1610) by Frans Pourbus the Younger, a 15 x 10in (38 x 25cm) oil on panel painted c.1610. It was one of group of Pourbus' portraits shown by **The Weiss Gallery**. The asking price was £250,000.

and I'd pitched them quite low and thought the best way to sell them was to put prices on. Then I thought why not put them on the works in the wunderkammer section of the stand. And then I thought I might as well price everything."

The reaction to his decision was mixed: "All the visitors loved it. It was universally popular. But I had some criticism from other dealers. I think they thought I was letting the side down. I also didn't get into as many conversations as normal as people didn't need to ask the price."

For now, the jury is out as to whether he will do it again.

Haboldt/Pictura was one Old Master dealer who had a stand peppered with red dots by the close of preview day. In among the Old Masters though was a c.1908 work by Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), a charming and spare oil sketch that sold for a six-figure sum.

They were one of a number of dealers choosing to hang Modern and Contemporary art alongside older pieces. Another, who has been mixing things up for some time, is **Robilant + Voena** whose deliciously rich plum-coloured stand featured among other things Andy Warhol's *Knives*, 1981-82, a work that proved one of the headline sales of Modern art at the fair. The work, in synthetic polymer and silkscreen on canvas, is based on an image blown up from a Polaroid taken by the artist. With an asking price of \$3.2m, it sold to a European private collector.



Above: **TEFAF Paper** exhibitors Daniel Crouch and Nick Trimming of **Daniel Crouch Rare Books**, specialising in antique atlases and maps, returned to London from Maastricht with sales in line with expectations, though slightly down on the past couple of years which Daniel described as "bumper". "We sold a fair amount to Americans, but, given the strength of the dollar, this was to be expected," said Daniel, adding that, given the weakness of the Euro, they were pleasantly surprised to sell anything at all to Euro-denominated customers. "The fair seemed to be well attended as always and had, perhaps, even a slightly more international feel to it – we were visited by both Chinese and South Korean institutions and private customers for example." Sales included this 12-volume *Le Grand Atlas* by Johannes Blaeu of Amsterdam, 1663. This lavish production was the largest atlas ever published and editions were often offered as the official gift of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century. It sold for a six-figure sum.

CHIMING WITH THE VISITOR PROFILE

Floris Vanderven of **Vandervan Oriental Art** called this his "second-best **TEFAF** ever", with sales across the board topped by that of an archaic bronze bo or bell (pictured here), dating to the Early Warring States Period (475-221BC). It went to a new collector with an asking price of €1.2m.

In his interview with **ATG** before the fair (see **ATG** No 2180), Vanderven talked of his desire to find the mid 18th century Chinese export porcelain figure of Mr Duff and said he had found a figure of his partner, Mrs Duff, to take to this year's fair.

Afterwards, he contacted me to say he had sold Mrs Duff to a Dutch private client, who has given her on loan to the Princessehof Ceramics Museum in the Northern Dutch city of Leeuwarden: "He wanted to keep the figure in Holland."

"I notice American buyers coming back, not in huge numbers but they were there and buying after being very quiet for the past few years," he said.

"We sold to museums and private buyers but not to Chinese buyers. The Chinese market has definitely slowed since the middle of last year. Although the recent sales in New York were strong, those in Europe have been much stronger. Recently we have focused on expanding an Asian client base by doing fairs in Hong Kong, but we have traditionally had a European and American client base and have not forgotten this, so that helps as demand from China slows."



Left: an archaic bronze bo or bell dating to the Early Warring States Period (475-221BC) sold by **Vandervan Oriental Art**. The asking price was €1.2m.

STAND AND DELIVER

Coll & Cortes, London and Madrid dealers in European paintings and sculptures, had a successful preview day at TEFAF this year. Director Andreas Pampoulides said they made three important sales during the opening, including a large oil of *Thales of Miletus* by the Baroque painter Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652), pictured **right**, sold for a low seven-figure sum. It was one of few headline sales of Old Masters during this year's TEFAF preview.

This Caravagesque painting suited a theatrical stand – all dark, brooding walls and spotlights reverentially trained on the objects and paintings – that was among the most dramatic of the fair. Here, Andreas gives his views on TEFAF and stand design.

AB: What was the reaction to your dramatically lit stand this year, and what was the thinking behind the design?

AP: "We had very polarised opinions. The vast majority of people were utterly mesmerised by the look, while a small number complained about not being able to read the labels or to see the sculptures in their entirety. Despite that, I regularly heard gasps of amazement as people walked in.

"Our idea was to create a mystic atmosphere in which to view the sculptures. The concept was very similar to that of the *Sacred Made Real* exhibition [at the National Gallery in 2009-10], but we took it even further by making a conscious effort to replicate, for example, a beam of natural light shining through a window pane in a church striking a sculpture."

AB: Has stand design become increasingly competitive at fairs? Why do you consider it an important investment?

AP: "For many dealers stand design is merely functional and should not overwhelm or detract from the works on display. However, we are from the other school of thought in that we need to create impact to get people's attention.

"We have such small windows of opportunity in which to inspire or engage with clients (or members of the public) so we need to use whatever tools we have to achieve our goal.

"Taking it one step further, good stand design also gives onlookers a good idea of how to best appreciate works of art and, hopefully, a vision of how they could possibly live with them. We have had several clients



asking us where they could buy our lights or our pedestals."

AB: How did TEFAF go this year?

AP: "We had a wonderful fair, our best yet. We achieved a number of important sales and reservations, despite all the naysayers stating that the Old Master market was dying. Judging by the interest we had from museums, collectors and members of the public alike, we feel we that religious Spanish art – especially sculpture – has the ability to captivate people's imagination."

AB: Did you notice any patterns in sales?

AP: "Not really. What I can say is that while we did encounter some new clients, the main value in our sales came from pre-established clients."

AB: How would you describe the visitor profile?

AP: "Perhaps as a result of the quality of our works of art, or perhaps because of the look of the stand, we had significantly more visitors than we had previously encountered. The vast majority of visitors were members of the public from the Low Countries, but we saw a significant number of important clients from Germany, France, UK, USA, Asia and Brazil."



Above: "We had conversations with representatives from a number of North American museums, including the J Paul Getty Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as meeting those from Europe, the Rijksmuseum being among such leading institutions," said Dino Tomasso, director of **Tomasso Brothers Fine Art**, of TEFAF this year. Drawing admiring looks on their stand was this Roman portrait bust of a young man, dated to the late 2nd century AD, which the gallery unveiled at the fair.

It had been in the Art Institute of Chicago until c.1963 when, unusually, it was given by Margaret Gentles, then curator of Oriental Art at the museum, to Ralph Weil. Such busts are often worked from more than one piece of stone but here the head, bust and socle are skilfully carved from a single piece of white-veined marble. The bust was offered "for a significant seven-figure sum" and, although yet to sell at the time of writing, had "drawn serious interest from a number of international museums".

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Didier, the London gallery specialising in artist-designed jewellery run by husband-and-wife team Didier and Martine Haspeslagh, exhibit in TEFAF Design section.

In an effort to stand out from the 270-odd exhibitors all vying for attention, this year they invested in redesigning their stand, employing 4D Projects who also design the stands of Hancocks the jewellers and art dealer Philip Mould & Company.

"This was our third year and as we are in the Design section of the fair we wished to present a more designed image, while utilising our existing showcases," said Martine.

"The theme of our exhibition this year was *Jewels of the Italian Modern Masters* with over 120 jewels made by Italian artists from 1950-2000. We took as inspiration the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, by whom we have several unique jewels, and then

worked with 4D Projects to create a trompe l'oeil entrance using a manipulated image of the Palazzo della Civiltà in Rome that appears in a number of de Chirico's works, and a large profile photograph of a model wearing a necklace by Lucio del Pezzo."

They had a positive reaction from visitors and will now dedicate a budget for design over and above stand rent: "The reaction was visible on people's faces, and they were doing a double take, intrigued to take a closer look to discover what was contained within the arches, even if they are not usually interested in jewellery per se."

Sales too were good. They sold to new clients and to museums, meeting people from across Europe and the US. "The first four days were the most productive in generating sales, after which they declined, but we still saw a steady stream of people and made contacts for the future."

