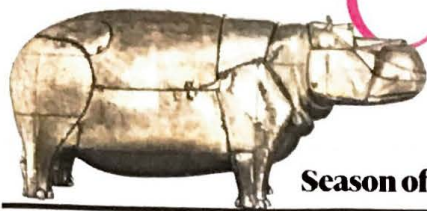


# Collecting

FT Weekend



**Season of mellow fruitfulness** Autumn in the auction houses — PAGE 4



## Open doors in the capital

London Art Week | This year's event sees 35

specialist dealers showcasing everything from

Old Masters to applied arts. By Susan Moore

London Art Week Winter is a timely reminder of the value of art dealers. As the focus of the powerful auction-houses narrows and their offer becomes ever more homogenous, it is increasingly left to private galleries to flourish the unexpected and overlooked. For the business of the best kind of dealer depends on a good eye and a lifetime's experience to filter a morass of material to find quality and interest in the unfamiliar or unfashionable, as well as to source — if finances allow — the obvious blue chip. They are offering their verve and taste as well as their expertise. Without them, the art market would be a far duller place.

For this year's event in Mayfair and St James's, 35 specialist dealers combine forces with Sotheby's, Christie's and Bonhams auction houses. What is interesting is not so much the something-for

**The best kind of dealer depends on a good eye and experience to find quality in the unfashionable**

everyone diversity of the material presented — there is anything from antiquities and medieval art to Old and Modern Masters, plus fine and applied arts — but the revelatory nature of the shows themselves.

S. Frances Ltd, for instance, impressive and scholarly dealers of tapestries and carpets, casts light on how the discoveries of the New World transformed the European aesthetic. The age of exploration and discovery introduced spectacular exotic fauna and flora into 16th-century Europe — not only the famous rhinoceros immortalised by

Dürer, and the likes of parrots and turkeys — but giant-leaf plants such as gunnera, banana and rhubarb, recorded and engraved in a flurry of botanical books. Suddenly the gentle fields of flowers found in medieval tapestries, the millefleurs with their prancing unicorns, gave way to evocations of the vast primeval forests and jungles of Asia and the Americas.

Their turbulent mass of monumental leaves set against black backgrounds conveyed the wildness and beauty of this environment, and hinted at its danger as well as the natural resources from which pioneers and their royal or noble sponsors could hope to benefit. Although no complete sets survive, these "forest work" or verdure tapestries are known to have lined entire rooms, creating an environment that would now be described as immersive. There is no narrative or symbolism, just

the sensation of being surrounded by leaves, birds and butterflies set in motion by flickering candlelight and the viewer's eye as it is compelled across the pictorial plane.

"It is a very modern concept and aesthetic," explains Simon Franses.

Some seven museum-worthy rarities of 1500-1560, mostly woven in the Southern Netherlands, are on display, including a wainscot tapestry with a border of pomegranates that may have belonged to Elizabeth I, and a unique piece featuring stag and hounds. Prices £20,000 for a small fragment, to £450,000.

A niche that has been relatively unexplored in the English-speaking world but which has begun to gain increasing market attention is the art of late

Continued on page 2

## 'All part of one great continuum'

Crossover collecting The trend for juxtaposing art of different genres and centuries continues in New York this weekend. By Anna O'Sullivan

The trend for cross-collecting — breaking the standard genre boundaries that divide Modern from contemporary, Old Master from ancient — is in full swing. A number of fairs across the world, among them Tefaf in Maastricht, Frieze Masters and Masterpiece in London, include crossover collaborations — an example is Hauser & Wirth's now regular partnering with Moretti Fine Art at Frieze Masters, bringing the contemporary nose-to-nose with more historic pieces.

Now Tefaf New York Fall — whose fourth edition is currently running at New York's Armory — is making a feature of "dynamic pairing", jointly curated booths that showcase collaborations across the art historical range.

Historic works have traditionally been Tefaf's heartland. For this edition, the 90 galleries range over antiques, design, rare books and manuscripts, jewellery, armour, the decorative arts as well as fine art from across the centuries. And, as CEO Patrick van Maris puts it, the quest for "thought provoking experiences" at the fair has led, this time, to these special collaborations.

Rob Smeets Old Master Paintings, based in Geneva, teams up with New

York's Van der Weghe gallery, which specialises in Modern, postwar and contemporary work. Another New York contemporary gallery, Sean Kelly, pairs up with British antiquities expert Charles Ede, whose director Martin Clift explains their aim to show how significant works from different eras are "all part of one great continuum". One of his examples is a pairing of heads: a 1st-2nd century BC Greek marble head is placed with Marina Abramovic's photographic "Portrait with Golden Mask" (2009),

Pairings: from left, a Hellenic head at Charles Ede and Jose Davila's 'Untitled (Nude with Bust)' (2015) at Sean Kelly; 'Portrait of Giulia Massimo as Cleopatra' (1639) by Giovanni Battista Gaulli at Rob Smeets and Picasso's 'Mousquetaire' (1967) at Van der Weghe Fine Arts

showing the artist crowned, goddess-like, in golden leaves.

Other, still more experimental, partnerships include Anne-Sophie Duval, go-to gallery for French Art Deco, with contemporary work from Almine Rech. Basel's Cahn gallery, specialists in ancient Greek and Roman art, creates a crossover vision with the 20th-century work from Barcelona's Galeria Mayoral. Colnaghi's classical sculptures and Cycladic vessels stand in happy contrast to works by Lucio Fontana and Antoni

Tapias shown by Ben Brown Fine Arts.

Such partnerships are, of course, intended for mutual benefit. Even the most established galleries constantly need to renew and increase their range of clients and collectors; sharing a booth

**Devotees of the traditional can be tempted by more recent art if it is placed in context by careful curation**

with a gallery from a different genre or period puts each in touch with an entirely new interest group.

Normally, it's reckoned to be the more numerous and deep-pocketed contemporary collectors who can be lured into the rarefied sphere of Old Masters and antiquities. Yet devotees of the traditional can be tempted by more recent art if it is placed in context by careful curation, and so made to seem less alien.

Above all, what these juxtapositions reflect is how the majority of people actually live with art: few collectors only have pieces from a single style or period on their walls. Daily life throws different styles together, even if it's only a comfortable chair in an otherwise strictly minimalist interior. And the "eye" that can place an African tribal mask on an Art Deco table, a Hellenic vase beneath a 20th-century drawing, enhancing both styles, is what's on offer in these collaborative booths.

That might sound a little too close to interior decor for the super-rich. However, collaborations across the art of ages can provide eye-opening delight and surprising discovery for buyers and viewers alike.

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## Collecting

# Roots of a family tree

Collector | Georgina Adam talks to Francesca

Thyssen-Bornemisza, a collector looking for innovative ways to use the heritage of her family

Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza is a little late for our appointment at the Madrid museum that bears her family name. Apologetic, she exclaims: "I am not a disciplined person, and that's on the record!"

Long gone is the wild party girl who became tabloid fodder in the 1980s. Since those days she married, and has recently divorced amicably from Karl von Habsburg, the grandson of the last Austrian Emperor, Charles I, and father of their three children.

She has transformed herself into a respected art world patron and generous philanthropist, creating an art foundation in Vienna as well as funding a host of avant-garde art projects. These include sending a barge up the Danube with the Turkish artist Kutlug Ataman, establishing an impermanent pavilion by Olafur Eliasson and David Adjaye on the Croatian island of Lopud and commissioning a huge Joan Jonas exhibition in a Venetian church.

When we meet she is in Madrid for the launch of the exhibition *More-than-humans* at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, in the 18th-century Villahermosa palace that houses the renowned collection of her prodigiously rich father, Baron Heinrich – "Heini" – Thyssen-Bornemisza, who died in 2002.

The exhibition, by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Tomás Saraceno, is the third in a four-year collaboration between the museum and TBA21 (Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary), the foundation Thyssen set up in 2002. Its aim is to attract new audiences and, notably, to support the Spanish contemporary art scene. "To move the museum into the 21st century," she says.

Housed in the basement of the palace, the exhibition pairs videos of Gonzalez-Foerster lip-syncing opera, while display cases contain Saraceno spider webs. The two are connected by the examination of intelligences beyond human understanding, according to curator Stefanie Hessler.

Many of today's collectors are self-starters, particularly in the contemporary sector. But Thyssen, now 61, grew up among the riches of Europe's second-

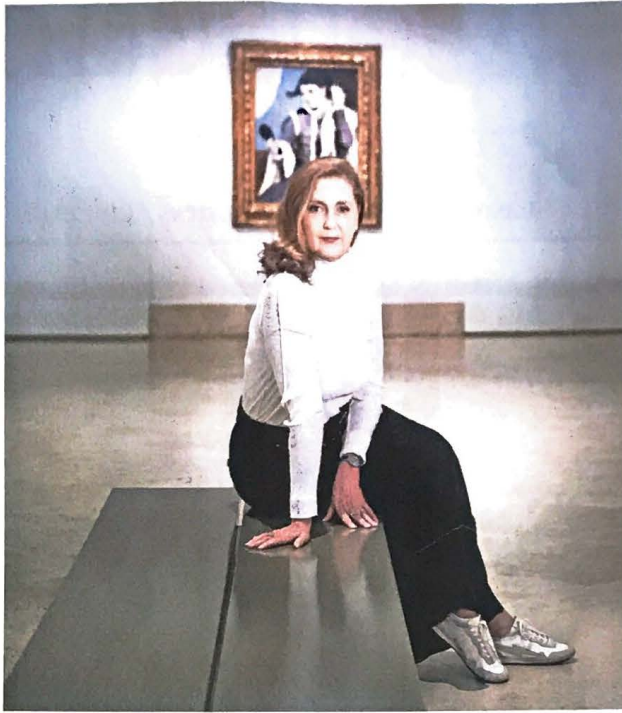


largest private art collection (after Queen Elizabeth II's). Today much of that collection belongs to the Spanish government, after a deal was brokered in 1993 at the insistence of Carmen "Tita" Thyssen, the Baron's fifth and last wife, a firecracker former Miss Spain.

"My mother [the fashion model Fiona Campbell-Walter, her father's third wife] used to help me count all the animals depicted in Carpaccio's *Young Knight in a Landscape*," says Thyssen. It was just one of the hundreds of masterpieces she lived with as a child and young woman. Even so, growing up in such an environment wasn't perfect. "You wonder why your parents are paying more attention to art than to you. It caused massive resentment, I felt that my parents were otherwise engaged."

At the same time, she says, "In my formative years I enjoyed being in conversations about art, meeting curators, museum directors, collectors – J Carter Brown, Grey Gori, Simon de Pury and others – a cast of extraordinary figures."

A significant moment came in 1982, when she took a trip to the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, to organise an exchange for loans from the Russian palace. "I'll never forget going through the totally disorganised, under-cellar



passages with just torches, looking for masterpieces.

"This was strongest impression of my lifetime; having this intimate relationship with such great collections, what they mean and what you can do with them. My father thought he could contribute to world peace by doing these exhibitions," she says, adding, "It was not intended as a super arrogant idea."

It is clear she adored her father, and as we talk, my glance turns to a portrait

Clockwise from main: Francesca Thyssen inside the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, photographed for the FT by Gianfranco Tripodi; Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza in 1983; Joan Jonas performing in TBA21, 2017; Claudia Comte's underwater sculpture, in TBA21-Academy Artist Residency, 2019

glowering down at us at the end of the dark boardroom. It shows the Baron, affected by a stroke and with his left arm held in a colourful sling. It is by the Spanish court artist Ricardo Macaron, who also made a hilariously over-the-top portrait of Carmen Thyssen, now hanging in the entrance of the museum.

Thyssen says she is inspired by her father to use art to contribute to a cause. In her case, it is the environment. "It used to sound preposterous to talk about saving the environment, but now it's urgent and everyone must engage," she says. "Yes, my father had a huge amount of fun, five wives; he indulged himself – and so do I – but he also had a huge conscience. What he did with exhibitions, I do with my commissioning process through the foundation."

One of the projects she founded is TBA21 Academy, now led by Markus Reymann. She explains that "with a circle of co-producers, we are fostering deeper understanding of the ocean through interdisciplinary research."

We are talking the day after Greta Thunberg berated world leaders at the UN, and Thyssen wells up talking about it. "It brought tears to my eyes," she says, reaching for a tissue. "When I was her age, it was the exact opposite, I was in an environment of hope and opening

up the world to more fairness and justice. Now it is the opposite situation."

But, she says, "artists can be advocates for change," pointing out that for the *More-than-humans* launch, both Saraceno and Gonzalez-Foerster arrived by train. She admits she flew in to her embarrassment, but that nevertheless the exhibition is carbon neutral.

As well as the world-class collection built up by her father, grandfather and great grandfather in the Thyssen-Bornemisza museum, a separate section shows the collection of her stepmother Carmen, placed there on loan. It is no secret that relations between them are difficult in this famously fractious family. "Yes, she kept us away from my father; it was painful to all of us, sad and unpleasant, especially towards the end."

But then she taps the boardroom table in front of her. "Nevertheless, she fought for this museum, and we put our differences aside to maintain the legacy of my father," Thyssen continues. "She has for some time sold paintings out of her collection to cover her debts. Most of the important works in her collection were inherited when my father died. The



Ministry of Culture of Spain is eager to come to another long-term arrangement with her over her collection as it is an integral part of the original group, before she sells any more key works. It was unthinkable to us that she sold Constable's *The Lock*."

To widespread consternation, that painting went on the block at Christie's in 2012, making \$22m. Among the other treasures in the Baroness's collection is Paul Gauguin's *Mata Mita* (1892), and there are rumours it too might be sold. "This would be devastating to the museum," says Thyssen.

So will Thyssen donate her own art to the museum one day? "I would love to, and the museum has requested it. It could be extended into the future with my children and become not just a four-generation collection, but a five- or six-generation one... that would make it really unique," she says. "I don't need a museum with my name on it – I already have one."

For now her focus is on Madrid, and a year-long series of celebrations in the museum in 2021, the 100th anniversary of her father's birth. "I will contribute some works, along with a special exhibition... I plan to donate to the museum from my collection, to commemorate my father's vision for world peace."

## Open doors in the capital

Continued from page 1

medieval and early renaissance Spain. Sam Fogg, the pre-eminent specialist in European medieval art, joins forces with leading Madrid Old Master dealer Galeria Caylus to present *Retablos: Spanish Paintings from the 14th to 16th centuries*.

By the late Middle Ages, the altarpieces of the Hispanic kingdoms had evolved to take a unique form with vast and elaborate frames containing painted panels and sculpture covering the entire east wall of the church. Unlike their Netherlandish and Italian counterparts, Spanish artists remained true to the Gothic tradition, with panels painted as if they were large-scale illuminated manuscripts. Perspective was of little interest; spectacular colour and lavish use of variously worked gold were paramount. Of the 20 panels here, many are previously unpublished or little known.

"This material is very rare but it is still possible to find museum-quality – and often huge – Spanish works in wonderful condition on the international market, and for reasonable sums of money," explains Matthew Reeves of Sam Fogg. The exhibition, with a catalogue by Dr Alberto Velasco Gonzalez incorporating new archival research, travels to Madrid in the spring. Prices £25,000-£50,000.

Scholarship tends to sideline artists who fall between two national schools of art. Ben Elwes features the Anglo-Americans. Alongside a Benjamin West portrait of a demure Queen Charlotte (1776-77), one of the few outside the

royal collection (\$850,000), hangs a rather more transgressive portrait recently identified as Mary Robinson, the first mistress of her son, the future George IV. Catalogued in the past as French or English School, it now appears to be a portrait by the Boston artist John Singleton Copley of Robinson, a remarkable actress, writer, feminist and early "It girl", dressed up as a nun. The frisson comes from the combination of Catholic habit and comely look, and the precise placing of her crucifix on her lap.

Also on offer is a Thomas Moran watercolour of a sublime Utah canyon that originally belonged to John Ruskin (\$500,000).

More unfamiliar material is offered by Laocoon Gallery, a new Italian arrival on the London scene. "XX: The Female Gender in Twentieth-Century Italian Art" examines women in any number of guises – and in a wide variety of media, including bronze, terracotta and ceramic – during this period of unprecedented, if sometimes slow, social change. It is salutary to note the date – 1940 – of Pietro Gaudenzi's monumental, near-monochrome pastel of the silent, slow-moving and imperturbable peasant women of Anticoli Corrado near Rome in their long black dresses and shawls bearing enormous trays of bread on their heads in age-old custom.

Back in 1903, we find the bold and independent self-taught artist Adriana Bial Fabrizi looking defiant in a 15th-century artist's cap – a man's cap, of course – her features a shimmering

evanescent yellow emerging from the pink ground as if in silverpoint. Prices £5,000-£90,000.

Raccanello Lepreune unveils "Ornamentale Fiorentino". This small show sets the orientalist production of the 19th-century Florentine ceramics factory of Ulisse Cantagalli in context, and in light of his friendship with the English potter William De Morgan. There is

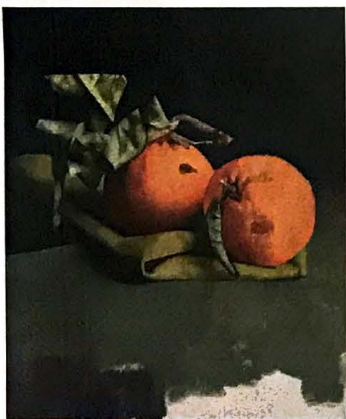
more work from the Cantagalli factory on show at Callisto Fine Arts, too, while in a different genre *L'Empreinte*, Olivier Malingue's thematic exhibition, considers how the act and imagery of the imprint has impacted on modern and contemporary art.

The prize for the most unlikely discovery must go to Bagshaw Fine Art for unearthing in Italy a Pre-Raphaelite painting by the obscure and tragically short-lived Adolphus Mador (c1833-1861). His wonderfully observed Shakespearean scene of "Slender's Wooing of Ann Page" from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1857 where it was acquired by the future prime minister Lord Gladstone (£55,000).

Most peculiar is the work of the first speaker of the Newfound House of Assembly, John Ringley Garland, on show at Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker. His collages of carefully selected prints and handwritten passages of scripture are covered with cascading droplets of bright red blood – a strange outpouring of Victorian visionary art.

Finally, for those who might be in search of a truly blue-chip work, The Weiss Gallery exhibits painting by the obscure and tragically short-lived Adolphus Mador (c1833-1861). His wonderfully observed Shakespearean scene of "Slender's Wooing of Ann Page" from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1857 where it was acquired by the future prime minister Lord Gladstone (£55,000).

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On page 1: three marble angels (1886-87) at Trinity Fine Art  
This page, from left: lustre vase with Kufic script (c1800) at Callisto Fine Art; detail of Giant Leaf Tapestry (16th c) at Frances Gallery