



BRAFA'11 – The 56th edition declared a total success !

Een notitie schrijven

door BRAFA Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair op woensdag 9 februari 2011 om 14:00

Mission accomplished! With just over 40,000 visitors, the Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair (BRAFA) closed on a very positive note for most of its exhibitors. The overall volume of sales was higher than in 2010 and, for the first time, the most important works also found buyers. While this success may be evidence of a real recovery in the market, many observers put it down to the increased quality of the Fair, and emphasise its enormous potential. The BRAFA has an excellent prognosis, and can look confidently to the future.

Did *Ngwadi*, the outstanding nailed fetish figure presented by Galerie Claes (Brussels), cast a spell on this BRAFA'11, where it was one of the undisputed attractions? Sold to a major Belgian collector before the Fair even opened, it set the tone for a 56th edition with greatly increased sales, including the most important – and, needless to say, most expensive – pieces of many dealers. Two trends seem to have been confirmed: the continuing interest in outstanding pieces of very high quality, and the new-found pleasure in acquiring fine works of art for their own sake and as safe investments.

After the gala dinner and the *Collectors' Preview*, which drew a large crowd, buying fever spread through the wide aisles of the fair, with its particularly sophisticated *Land Art* décor. Major works were sold right from the start, such as the remarkable bronze by Ossip Zadkine, *Torso of the Destroyed City*, presented by **Ooidonk Fine Arts** (Deinze), a painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat and an oil on canvas by Pierre Soulages from **Pascal Lansberg** (Paris), the René Lalique Art Nouveau pendant *Wood Anemones*, from **Epoque Fine Jewels** (Courtrai), the *Portrait of Jean-Louis Barrault* by André Derain from **Aktis Gallery** (London), and a *Virgin of the Annunciation* sculpted in oak in the 1st half of the 15th century from **Francis Carrette** (Brussels).

This good start fulfilled its promise in the following days with purchases of major works from many exhibitors. After selling two spectacular Amerindian headdresses soon after the opening, **Finch & Co** (London) kept up the pace by moving many collectors' items as the Fair progressed. **Philippe Heim** (Paris) sold a pastel by Georges Lucien Guyot entitled *Black Panther on a Tree Branch*, emulated by **Xavier Eeckhout** (Paris) with the plaster *Giraffe* by Marcel Lemar. In the field of sculpture, **Univers du Bronze** (Paris) sold *Indian Tiger and Elephants* (1910) by Georges Gardet and *The Minotaur waiting for Theseus* by Antoine-Louis Barye.

Led by the Galerie Claes and its famous 'Nkonde', most primal arts specialists were wearing large smiles, like **Jacques Germain** (Montreal), whose most important pieces, from an *Okouyi* secret society mask (Gabon, late 19th century) to a *Jonyeleni* female figure (Mali, 19th to 20th century) via an *Uhunmwun-ekhue* ornamental mask from Nigeria (17th century), found buyers. **Bernard Dulon** (Paris) disposed of a Dogon statuette and a 19th century *Ngbandi* hunting charm.

A revival in interest in old masters meant good sales at **De Jonckheere** (Paris), **Xavier Goyet** (Paris, works by David Teniers), **Jacques Leegenhoek** (Paris), and the **Galerie Barrez** (Paris), a newcomer to the Fair. The **Galerie Mendès** (Paris) in particular sold a self-portrait by Gabriel Guérin (1810) and *Young Man in English Style* by L. M. Van Loo (1667).

In the field of modern painting, in addition to the excellent sales made by **Patrice Trigano** and **Annisabelle Bérés** (Paris), worthy of note were the sales of several landmark works such as Marc Chagall's *Offering* at the **Galerie Tamenaga** (Paris), the much remarked-on *Shoe* (1957) by Andy Warhol (purchased by a museum), and some fifteen assemblages by Marcel Mariën at the **Galerie Seghers** (Ostend), not to mention a 1958 Karel Appel at **Samuel Vanhoegaerden** (Knokke), where four **Fred Eerdekens** were sold, with a waiting list of more than 60 people wanting to buy new works! **Vincent Lécuycy** (Paris) found a buyer for one of the three works in gouache on paper by Manuel Orazi, produced for the poster for the Jacques Feyder film *Atlantida* (1921), and a touching *Slave for Sale*, a plaster by Emmanuel Villanis (around 1890), displayed under the stern eye of the *Portrait of the Actor Louis van Gasteren Senior* by Eppo Doeve (1944), which also found a buyer. A great success also for **Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke**, whose *Nel resting* by Rik Wouters (1915) won over a Belgian collector, as did *Duel of Masks*, by James Ensor (1892).

Among the Belgian artists of repute being sold by various galleries, there was keen interest in **Pierre Alechinsky** (at Ronny Van de Velde and Jos Jamar of Antwerp), **Léon Spilliaert** (OFFA, Knokke-Zoute; Jos Jamar, Antwerp), **Jan Fabre** (Guy Pieters, Knokke; Jos Jamar, Antwerp), **Wim Delvoye** (*Cement Miser* and *Tattooed Pigs* at Guy Pieters, Knokke), and **Paul Van Hoeydonck** (Ronny Van de Velde, Antwerp; Whitford Fine Art, London; Guy Pieters, Knokke). **Jos Boon** (Brussels) also sold *Dawn* by Juliette Wytsman (1906), while sales by **Patrick Lancz** (Brussels) included plasters by Ferdinand Schirren, a watercolour by Spilliaert and a drawing by Floris Jespers, and the *Portrait of Jeanne Toussaint* (known as *The Panther*) by Paul César Helleu, purchased by Maison Cartier, where she was director of *haute joaillerie* in the 1930s.

In the realm of archaeology, **Phoenix Ancient Art** (Geneva / New York), sold several

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flagship pieces, including a rare bronze and silver pitcher (ancient Greece, c. 300–350 BC), a bronze 5th century BC *Niké with Spread Wings*, and a 1st century AD Roman marble *Head of a Young Man* (Hermes?).

With a reinforced contingent of four exhibitors, original cartoon strips confirmed their great success of 2010; the many fans of this speciality bought Hergés, Franquins, Moebiuses, Julliards and François Schuitens.

In **carpets and tapestries**, Maison N. Vrouyr (Antwerp) had put together a unique collection of around twenty Art Deco carpets made in the Saedeleer workshops; five of these found buyers, as did an Horta. Their colleague, **Zada** (Brussels), sold several Persian rugs, while **Manufacture De Wit** (Malines) confirmed a major sale of *Hercules and the Lion of Nemea*, a wool and silk tapestry attributed to Jan van Tieghem or Cornelis Tons (Brussels, c. 1550–1575).

Also with better sales than in 2010, **Klaas Muller** (Brussels) had his most important piece, a wooden statuette of St. John, originating from the Collegiate Church of St. Martin in Colmar and dating from 1330, reserved by a very important French museum. This success in medieval art was also reflected in the sale by **De Backker Medieval Art** (Hoogstraten) of an *Angel of the Annunciation* (12th century polychrome on wood, Italy) a piece for which there were actually several potential buyers!

With better sales than in 2010, like **Sanderus Antiquariaat** (Ghent), **Victor Werner** (Antwerp), and **Axel Vervoordt** (s-Gravenwezel), **Berko Fine Paintings** (Knokke) was also delighted by the resurgence of visitors' confidence in classical art and 19th century art in particular.

While there were also very important sales by **Berger** (furniture, Paris), **Guy Pieters** (Knokke), the **Ursuline Convent** (Liège), and **Helena Markus** (Milan), the latter recording its best ever BRAFA, Santo Micali (**Galerie Mermoz**, Paris) will probably never forget Wednesday 26th January, when a collector turned up to buy everything on the stand, including the plinths!

Finally, it was an exhausted but happy President of the BRAFA, **Bernard De Leye** (Brussels) who sold a silver, vermeil and agate 'Murrina' cross (Venice, c. 1350), two Renaissance gold plates (Rome, 1st century AD) and a gilded silver chalice (Brussels, c. 1480–1500).

Many testimonies, from both press and visitors, made it clear that this edition of the BRAFA was probably the best ever. The return of some galleries with international reputations and the constant work on both the quality of the exhibitors and the works presented found their due reward here, as well as encouragement to continue along the same lines.

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