



Maastricht Fair Offers Museum Quality, Encyclopedic Quantity

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Apr 11th, 2006

MAASTRICHT, THE NETHERLANDS

: Taking place for ten days annually in early March, The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF), or Maastricht, bills itself as the "Nirvana for Art Lovers" and "Best of the Best." Maastricht, The Netherlands' oldest city, is an historic medieval town, a stone's throw from Liège in Belgium and Aachen in Germany. Cologne and Brussels are an hour's drive, and Paris and London are three hours away by high-speed train.

The show's central location is key. A veritable stampede of well-heeled, by-invitation-only visitors pressed through the doors on March 9, opening day. "This is my 14th year," said Michel Witmer, a fine art consultant from New York City, "and this year is better than ever. With the supply of classic items increasingly diminishing, top collectors want to arrive early to get the best."

Little red stickers started to appear immediately.

Maastricht's diversity is astounding, the quality incomparable and the education unrivaled. When it debuted in 1975 as a biannual "Pictura Fine Art Fair," a mere 28 exhibitors showed paintings and medieval sculptures. Having built its reputation with Flemish and Dutch Old Masters, the 2006 fair included 218 art and antiques dealers from 15 countries with an encyclopedic inventory of ancient to modern global material culture. Only American furniture, accessories and folk art were in short supply. One work by Alabama outsider artist Bill Traylor, born a slave in 1854, was on view, illustrating how his work has crossed over to contemporary status.

Oceanic art, medieval armor, illuminated manuscripts, classical antiquities, fine prints, jewelry, Chinese Ming furniture, Latin American and Russian objects, even photography were represented. Promoters pushed the envelope with an all-out effort to increase the presence of Modern art. Blockbuster first-timers, Gagosian Gallery and William Weston Gallery, London; Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago; Galerie Hopkins Custot, Paris; Leonard Hutton Galleries, Pace Wildenstein and Achim Moeller Fine Art, New York City, added to the mix.

Housed in the Maastricht Congress and Exhibition Centre with an elegant overall concept designed by Dutch architect Tom Pastma and British exhibition designer David Benthaim, dealers' booths displayed each exhibitor's objects like a well-lit museum installation. Style and good taste set a high standard.

With a vetting process comprising 140 experts in every field of art represented at the fair, experts verify each and every object for quality, authenticity and condition. The Art Loss Register, based in London, New York and Cologne, a database with some 170,000 stolen objects, participates in the screening process as well. This gives buyers total confidence in the vast array of items offered.

With so much to view, a minimum of three to four days is necessary in order to see the fair well. An easy-to-follow, color-coded floor plan with detailed locations of booths on thoroughfares with such namesakes as the Champs Elysées, Fifth Avenue, Via Veneto, Place de la Concorde and Rembrandt Plein was available and absolutely indispensable.

Without question, Maastricht's offerings were in high demand. Second-timer Rupert Wace of London was delighted with the number of visitors to his booth and sold more than 40 works ranging from an Egyptian faience piece priced at about \$1,000 to a significant Roman marble in the seven figures. The latter, "The Lansdowne Altar," a rare marble dating to the



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Albrecht Neuhaus Kunsthandel, Würzburg, Germany, bureau cabinet, German Cologne, second quarter of the Eighteenth Century, probably made for Clemens August, Elector of Cologne.

Augustan period, was purchased by Dr Jasper Gaunt, curator of Greek and Roman Art at the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University, who called it "the most significant Roman marble to have appeared on the market in some years."

Angela Gräfin von Wallwitz from Munich, Germany, whose specialty is Meissen porcelain, showcased the work of Johann Joachim Kaendler (1706-1775). Having worked at Meissen for 44 years, Kaendler left behind some 2,000 models for animals, groups and figures, as well

as porcelain flower molds. His themed table decorations, revolutionary for the period, replaced renaissance bronzes and ivories in the decoration of the stylish, Eighteenth Century salon. "They were not meaningless decoration," she explained, "but are critical testimonies of their time." Von Wallwitz sold 30 theater figures during the first four days. Prices ranged from \$18,500. A rare Meissen salad bowl, from the Swan service designed by Kaendler for Saxony's minister of interior, Count Brühl, was \$71,000.

During the same time, Noortman Master Paintings of Maastricht sold 24 paintings, including "Peasant Family in a Cottage Interior" by Dutch artist Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1685) for \$4.8 million.

Sales of Old Masters seemed strong. Richard Green sold "The Morning Gun" signed and dated 1673 by Willem van de Velde the Younger. John Mitchell Fine Paintings sold a major work by Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1636-1695), "The Feathered Choir." Works by Italian and French artists also sold, including "Portrait of Cardinal Giacomo Sannesi," 1609, by Guido Reni at Galerie Canesso, which specializes in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century northern Italian works. First-time exhibitor Wildenstein & Co. sold Gauguin's "L'oiseau Bleu" and "View on the Louvre," painted in 1903, the year of Camille Pissarro's death.

The Netherlands is celebrating the 400th anniversary of Rembrandt's birth in 2006, and to mark the event Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York City, brought "The Apostle James the Major," 1661, a unique late work, one of the last major paintings by the master in private hands, with the figure of James almost full-length and in profile. The price? Around \$45 million.

Noortman Master Paintings, Maastricht, showed "Portrait of a Bearded Man in a Red Doublet," 1633, with a price tag of \$32.4 million. "It's not every year that a Rembrandt is offered for sale," said Titia Vellenga, Maastricht's spokeswoman. "It's really unique that we have two, and a third on show."

In the entrance hall, throngs gathered around "Portrait of Anna Six-Wymer," 1641, mother of Jan Six, a patron, scholar and lover of fine arts who became burghermeister of Amsterdam in 1691. The portrait has been in the Six collection since it was painted. Unlike all other works of art, this one was not for sale.

Ming furniture specialist Grace Wu Bruce, Hong Kong, returned to the fair after a number of years absence and sold a major Pingtoun table of extinct huanghuali wood, late Sixteenth to early Seventeenth Century

Jewelry was stunning eye-candy. Vitrines for Graff's, London, displayed a pair of earrings dripping with heart-shaped intense canary diamonds. Van Gelder Indian Jewellery, The Netherlands, displayed ornate gold necklaces, their hanging pendants decorated with multicolored enameled images depicting ancient symbols. Véronique Bamps, Brussels, offered Art Deco diamond and Lalique glass drop earrings by Cartier. Crowds of customers seemed appreciative. S.J. Phillips, London, sold more than 70 items of both silver and jewelry. **Époque Fine Jewels**, Kortrijk, Belgium, sold an Art Deco Cartier necklace in platinum, diamond and onyx, 1925, to an American collector.



The Lansdowne Altar, Roman, First Century BC to First Century AD, purchased by the Marguess of Lansdowne in the Eighteenth Century for Shelburne House in England. Sold by Rupert Wace, London, to the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta.

Modernism was hot, judging from Parisian Galerie Downtown's crowded booth. Sold were a free-form French teak table, 1959, and a 1962 example by Charlotte Perriand, while modern design specialist Philippe Denys, Brussels, sold ten chairs in rosewood and black leather and the 1940s T-chair by Danish designer Ole Wanscher.



Christine Thomson of Bernard J. Shapero Rare Books, London, displaying Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Delle navigationi et viaggi...*, the third volume entirely devoted to America. The depiction of the area between New York Harbor and Narragansett Bay is based on the voyage of Giovanni da Verrazzano in 1524.

Bernard J. Shapero Rare Books, London, noted strong interest from Russian collectors and sold two copies of Makhaev's copper-engraved map of St Petersburg, "To the glory and honour of the Russian Empire," as well as a set of St Petersburg views by the same artist. Visitors admired the fine Audubon elephant folio opened to the engraving of the "American Flamingo."

Dealers noted an increase in American visitors. Matt Vaccaro of Armonk, N.Y., visited for the second time. "I was so impressed last year that I returned to see beautiful and important art," he said. Some 110 museum curators attended, with 26 from the United States, not only from Eastern establishments, such as the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard's Busch-Reisinger and Fogg, the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, The

Metropolitan Museum, the Smithsonian and the Frick in New York City, but the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Meadows Museum in Dallas, Duke Museum of Art, Durham, N.C., Phoenix Art Museum and Toledo Museum of Fine Arts, Ohio, also showed up. The Saint Louis Art Museum and Veranda magazine led groups in tow. Netjets, a private airline, reported more than 100 private flights. "It's the Super Bowl of fairs," said David Tunick, a New York City dealer, "with a dedicated, serious, knowledgeable audience. They come to look, and they come to buy."

Knowledge is power when dealing with art and antiques, and the fair's Business Pavilion was as much about education as it was about business. Specialist booksellers sold both new and out-of-print books. Art magazines distributed free issues. The Staatliche Kunst-Sammlungen (Dresden State Art Museums), thanks to Volkswagen, and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam had booths. Several banks were there to talk about the financial aspects of collecting. Representatives from The Art Loss Register discussed the complexities of provenance and due diligence. AXA Art, art insurance specialist, exhibited a veritable "cabinet of curiosities," an idiosyncratic assortment of objects, ranging from lighters, African instruments and violins, to Roman rings, all borrowed from clients in each of the ten countries where AXA has an office.

On March 16, Maastricht welcomed its millionth visitor, Mrs Bresser of Tilburg, The Netherlands, who with her husband has been attending the fair since its inception 19 years ago. According to its promoters, 2006 "proved to be the most successful staging of the event for some years." Judging from the attendance and the sales, the international art market is alive and well, and for ten days each year, lives in Maastricht.

TEFAF Maastricht 2007 will take place March 9-18. For information, www.tefaf.com.

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