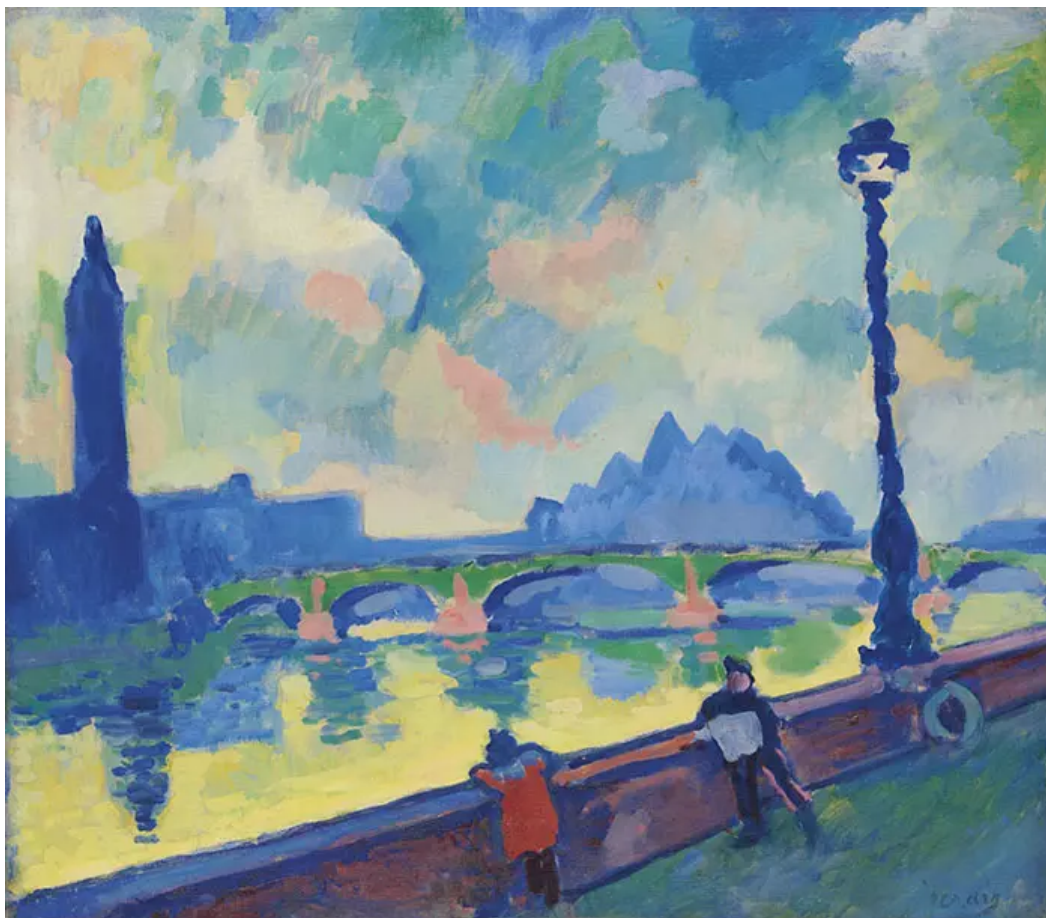


Art fairs up the pace in Belgium

Brussels gets busy; fresh rumours of LA move for Frieze; wool artist in New York; Derain for London sales



'Londres: La Tamise au pont de Westminster' (1906-07) by André Derain, estimated to sell for £6m-£9m at Christie's
Melanie Gerlis 12 HOURS AGO

There's a fine line between a mixed-discipline art fair and a jumble sale — but Brafa, the Brussels event for 134 galleries, falls on the right side of the equation (until Sunday, Tour & Taxis exhibition hall). Its range is huge — an Arizona meteorite (ArtAncient, €70,000); a flash-activated screen-print by Hank Willis Thomas ("Race Riot (Solarized)", 2017, Maruani Mercier, €35,000); an Instagram-friendly Soviet spacesuit (Theatrum Mundi, €130,000); and a strong outing of tribal art from 10 specialists. Quality varies, but newcomers, including Osborne Samuel and Gladstone galleries, point to a continuing improvement.

With its flower displays, niche categories and core of family-owned businesses, the smaller Brafa feels like a warm-up to Tefaf Maastricht in March — this year, 23 exhibitors show at both. While most of these find the proximity of the fairs logistically problematic, Brafa, the oldest fair on the

circuit and established in 1956, wants to keep its place as the first European commercial event of the year, which encourages a full and spendthrift crowd.

Early sales included the spacesuit, and paintings by Hans Hartung, Jean Metzinger and Jean-Paul Riopelle from Geneva's Bailly Gallery (up to €250,000). Among the tribal fare, Brussels expert Didier Claes sold nine Yaka masks (Democratic Republic of Congo, late 19th to early 20th century, between €10,000 and €30,000 each).

Brussels is very much on the mind of Elizabeth Dee, co-founder of New York's alternative Independent art fair, which opened in the Belgian capital in 2016. Living up to the fair's name, Dee has decided to move its third edition away from being a satellite of the Art Brussels contemporary art fair in April and instead let it stand on its own two feet in November.

"Belgium used to be a place that the art crowd visited only once a year, but the pace has changed and its audience is more layered now. We can be more than an addendum," Dee says.

Her decision was accelerated by the recent appointment of Vincent Honoré, senior curator at London's Hayward Gallery, as guest curator of Independent Brussels. They promise a more innovative and experiential fair including dance, poetry and "activations". Honoré says: "Of course it will still be a fair, but I think of it as a short festival, where the market, the museums, the non-profits can co-exist."

Dee will not be drawn on whether the change in dates means that her fair can encourage more of the Art Brussels galleries to show at both — the overlap is currently minimal — though this seems a likely outcome.

Independent remains in Brussels's Vandeborghht building, a quirky former shopping mall (November 8-11).



Yaka mask at Didier Claes, where examples sold for between €10,000 and €30,000

Whispers that Frieze is looking seriously at Los Angeles, its third city after London and New York, have been circulating for years, even before the art-fair franchise teamed up with Hollywood talent agency WME-IMG (now Endeavor) in 2016. As this column went to press, those rumours were getting stronger after dealers convened at last week's Art Los Angeles Contemporary fair and as *In Other Words*, the weekly newsletter and podcast produced by advisory firm Art Agency Partners, reported that the fair was looking to launch its first LA edition in January 2019.

Frieze wouldn't comment on any plans and reiterated its commitment to the New York fair (May 3-6).

Overlooked female artists continue to get their late moment in the sun. In her 70th year, Chile-born multi-disciplinary artist Cecilia Vicuña has been taken on by Lehmann Maupin gallery, which plans its first show of the artist in New York from May 19. A joint project is also planned for the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston this spring and autumn.

Now based in New York, Vicuña came back to art-world attention in last summer's edition of the five-yearly contemporary art show Documenta, particularly for her so-called "quipu" works. These use unspun wool to emulate the pre-Columbian system of communication using knots.

Anna Stothart, director at Lehmann Maupin, says Vicuña's use of materials, as well as a practice featuring poetry and performance, made the artist "an outlier from her contemporaries".

Under-appreciated artists are also getting their due from Ales Ortuzar, a New York art adviser and previously a partner at David Zwirner gallery, who is opening a two-year project space dedicated to the overlooked on February 16. "A lot of my clients were seduced by the top end of the contemporary art market but taste has been maturing and they are now looking for more context," he says.

Ortuzar opens his first show in White Street, Tribeca, dedicated to French artist Michel Parmentier (1938-2000). Parmentier took a break from making art between 1968 and 1983, and painted just over 70 works in his lifetime. Ortuzar's show will have four of these — one from 1966, when Parmentier worked in blue (he varied colours every year), and others from 1967 (grey), 1968 (red) and 1983 (black), priced at \$400,000 each. Four large-scale works on paper also feature (\$150,000 each).

London's notoriously miserable weather proved elusive for Fauve artist André Derain when he visited the capital between 1906 and 1907. Hoping for the fog that permeates Claude Monet's views, Derain instead found that "dismayingly, London has been drenched in sunlight for a fortnight, turning it into another Marseille".

Many of the resulting works are therefore stronger-coloured, sun-drenched delights, including "Londres: la Tamise au pont de Westminster" (1906-07), which Christie's is offering at its Impressionist and Modern auction in London on February 27 (est £6m-£9m, no guarantee). Its sale coincides with Tate Britain's EY Exhibition *Impressionists in London*, in which three Derains feature (to May 7).

Follow [@FTLifeArts](#) on Twitter to find out about our latest stories first. Subscribe to [FT Life](#) on YouTube for the latest FT Weekend videos

Show comments

Read next

The Art Market Collecting

Cryptocurrencies and collecting: ‘if a lot of people get wealthy this way, they are likely to buy more art’

The trade gets the bitcoin bug; new openings in Geneva and Florence; rare chandelier at Sotheby's



Smilde's 'Nimbus Powerstation' (2017)

As [cryptocurrencies](#) create digital fortunes and blockchain becomes the new buzzword, online auctioneer Paddle8 has announced a partnership with a nebulous “integrated digital marketing” group, The Native. The Swiss company, founded by publisher Izabela Depczyk, has taken a 15 per cent stake of Paddle8’s parent company for SFr8.5m, with the option of buying a majority stake for SFr24.5m. Paddle8 has had a rollercoaster ride; last year it demerged from previous partner Auctionata, which filed for insolvency.

Technology-based projects are part of the latest deal, including auctions that accept cryptocurrencies. The businesses are also launching a service that provides blockchain “passports”, aiming to secure an indelible provenance for works of art.

[Read more](#)