

international events

Brussels' bellwether fair

■ Europe's first major fair of the year sets an early test for the international market



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reports

BRUSSELS will provide an early test of the market as the setting for Europe's first major fair of the New Year. **BRAFA (The Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair)** stages its **56th** showing this month, from **January 21-30**.

BRAFA has a long history there, holding a fair in Brussels since 1955. At first open only to Belgian dealers as the *Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique*, it grew to take in foreign dealers in 1995, but has grown considerably since it moved from the Palais des Beaux Arts in the city centre to the Tour & Taxis, a former railway station yard on the outskirts.

If that makes it sound less than glamorous, think again; it's actually a large and flexible space that can be easily transformed which is what a fair needs. The venue is fitted out by an interior designer team (**Volume Architecture**) to accommodate a restaurant, champagne bars and space for 132 exhibitors with ample car parking.

This year 20 new names have joined, while some others have left, but the overall number is slightly up on last year's with "a waiting list that means we can choose and if necessary repeat the range of specialities offered", affirms *BRAFA* President **Bernard de Leye**. Old Masters and modern art, antiques, jewellery,



Oriental and Occidental ceramics and works of art, furniture, tribal art, books and numismatics all feature.

Given its history, it is hardly surprising that Belgian exhibitors make up the biggest showing (albeit slightly fewer than last year) with over 50 exhibitors, closely followed by dealers from France. Together these account for around 70 per cent of the exhibitor numbers. But *BRAFA*'s organisers have also been on a longstanding campaign to make the event more international, and exhibitors from other countries are gradually broadening the international tag. Dealers from a dozen other countries are participating, notably Spain and Germany, with six apiece, and London with four.

Anyway, Belgium and France count many big hitters on the international dealer front. *BRAFA* regulars include plenty of well-known names, such as **Bernard de Leye**; **Axel Vervoordt**; **Berko Fine Paintings**; **De Jonckheere**; **Mermoz**; **Galerie Bérès** and **Jean-Jacques Dutko**.

Many of the new additions to the exhibitor list have come from Paris, including **François Hayem** with furniture



and **Galleries Mathivet** and **Marcilhac** with 20th century decorative arts. Parisian dealers returning to *BRAFA* after some years absence are **Steinitz**; Asian art specialist **Christian Deydier** and Art Deco specialist **Alain Marcelpoil**. New from London are **Whitford Fine Art** with modern paintings. Tribal art, a field for which Brussels is well known, will be boosted to eight participants by the

Above left: *Queen Antinea of Atlantide*, 1920-1921 by Manuel Orazi, a 2ft 2in x 3ft 9in (65.5cm x 1.15m) gouache on paper priced at €32,000, which Parisian dealer **Vincent Lecuyer** will be taking to *BRAFA* this month.

Above: *Whitford Fine Art*, one of the 20 new exhibitors to this year's *BRAFA*, will be taking this 9½ x 5½in (24 x 14cm) pencil and ink study for a portrait of Jeanne de Bauer, 1890, by Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff, priced at €22,000.

Left: **Galerie Slomka** from Paris will be taking this 6½ x 4¾in (17 x 12cm) Tintin artwork from 1960 to *BRAFA* featuring Tintin, Snowy and Captain Haddock, signed and dedicated by Hergé priced at €60,000.

arrival of **Schoffel-Valluet** from Paris, **Nassar & Co** from New York and **Adrian Schlag** from Brussels.

BRAFA also continues its tradition of a link with a Belgian museum. This year they have allocated 200m² to Antwerp's Musée Mayer van den Bergh, which is sending a loan display of 20 works from its collection.

BRAFA 2011 at Tour & Taxis, Avenue de Port 86C Boite 2A, B-1000 Brussels. Further information on admission times and tickets see www.brafa.be