

## international events

## Belgium's fairs – all levels, all year round

LIKE most countries, Belgium offers trading and buying opportunities at all levels of the antiques market, as our reports on this and the facing page show.

ATG goes brocante hunting at the Waterloo Fleamarket in December, surveys results of *The Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair* in January and previews next month's *Brussels Eurantica* fair.

■ Trolleys, toys, treats and terrific prices at Waterloo

Lucy Naughton reports

AS we drove through the deserted main street of Waterloo, I felt that niggling pre-brocante anxiety about whether I had got my 'Google translated' dates and facts right. I had visions of arriving at our destination and, instead of a bustling market, finding a barren, trolley-peppered tarmac.

Waves of relief soon washed over me as we turned one final corner to behold a horizon of van roofs and the pleasing, clattering sounds of goods being unloaded.

At this time of year, boot fair and brocante lovers can suffer severe withdrawal symptoms at the dearth of events. If, like me, you can't wait until spring and are prepared to face the 2½-hour drive from Calais, then Waterloo



provides several hours of good hunting.

Every Sunday throughout the year (except the two weeks flanking Christmas) the Carrefour car park on Chaussée de Charleroi, Mont St Jean, 1410 (minutes from the famous battlefield) hosts a hardy and well-established flea market.

On one of the coldest weekends in December it was a more compact affair than previous visits, but despite the frosty conditions, dealers were out in force.

Buyers utilise the resident shopping trolleys as a means of lugging around their purchases. Ambling down the orderly aisles, they lean languidly over their trolleys, eyeing the produce either side, as if on the weekly grocery shop – a charming idiosyncrasy.

Ideally located between the Netherlands, Germany, France and the UK, goods come from all over Europe.

Steve Dejonghe, based in Ostend, is a regular seller here and at many major French markets throughout the year. Two days later I bumped into him at Kempton,

where yet again all of his unique decorative bobbin pieces had sold out.

If you are a collector of Jesuses, Jesi, (what is the plural for Jesus?) and Virgin Marys, then you will find supplies at Waterloo plentiful. Vintage toys, games and comics, too, seemed to be abundant, and I saw numerous fantastic oil paintings and pastels. However, prices do vary considerably; one pitch would seem exorbitant, whilst the neighbouring stall was like Pound Stretcher by comparison. This can lead to euphoric buying of things that you don't actually want because hearing 'vingt' instead of 'quatre-vingt' is such a thrill.

Treasures are here for those with any budget. In fact this was the site of my most triumphant find in 2008 – a spectacular male profile in pastel on a piece of tatty old board for a trifling €5.

So if the shed is looking bare of stock and you would rather be filling your shopping trolley with antiques instead of bread and milk, then dig out those long johns and book yourself a mid-winter's jaunt to Belgium.

**WHERE:** Carrefour's car park – Chaussée de Charleroi, Mont St Jean, 1410 – just outside Waterloo. On every Sunday year round, apart from the Sundays either side of Christmas. Hard standing for plenty of stalls and on site parking (and trolleys) for buyers. Compared to lugging purchases around half of Lille, this is heaven.

**EUROTUNNEL:** €100 return (book further in advance and it will be cheaper.)

**TRAVEL TIME:** About two and a half hours' drive from Calais, half an hour from the centre of Brussels.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Martin's Grand Hotel, a ten-minute drive away from the market, has rooms from €70 a night, or if you fancy visiting Brussels too, why not stay there on Saturday night – it's then just a half hour drive to Waterloo in the morning.



At the Waterloo flea market, clockwise from top left:

- 17th Century cherubs – €900 each.
- Buyers and sellers gather in large numbers.
- Steve Dejonghe with his bobbin boxes, €40 each, and bobbins in beehive trays €25 each.
- 1920's gargoyle lamps – €180.
- The Carrefour supermarket trolleys are de rigueur for brocante buyers.
- Fish as folk art – €200.



■ BRAFA to Eurantica – Brussels boasts a busy first quarter for fairs

Anne Crane reports

BRAFA, the *Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair*, closed its doors on January 30 after a 12-day staging that saw 40,000 visitors and a report from the organisers of an increase in sales over last year.

A high-status European fair is a good plan in the quiet opening month of the year when there is little other action on the Continent. It's a good alternative to crossing the Atlantic to sell in New York or Florida and an easy drive from Paris to Brussels for the many galleries from the French capital that stand at this fair.

An exhibitors' preview dinner and an opening vernissage generated the requisite atmosphere to help get sales off to a good start, with a healthy sprinkling of red dots on the first day.

There were some good sales all round, with a number of exhibitors finding buyers for some of their most important pieces. Among them were tribal specialist **Jacques Germain** from Montreal, whose sales included his *Okouyi* secret society mask from Gabon. Paris dealer **Vincent Lécuyer** sold one of three large gouache designs by Manuel Orazi produced as designs for posters for the Jacques Feyder film *Atlantide*, and **Finch & Co**, one of four UK exhibitors, sold their two American Indian headaddresses.

Brussels' **Klaas Muller** had his most important exhibit, an early 14th century statuette of St John made for the collegiate Church of St Martin in Colmar, reserved by a French museum, while sales at **De Backker Medieval Art** from Hoogstraten, who were sporting a rash of post-vernissage red dots for wood and stone sculpture, included a 13th century Italian polychrome wood Angel of the Annunciation.

Such early works of art form a popular stalwart at the fair alongside Old Masters, but the selection is leavened with less traditional material that is strong in the home market.

Tribal art, animalier sculpture and Art Deco (a striking display of inter-War Venetian Soffiati glass from Brussels' **Marc Heiremans**) are all represented, as is comic strip art, a growing Franco-Belgian speciality, which had increased its presence to four stands.



Above: Brussels, Sablon, dealer Jan Muller will take this painting of Edward VI by Tudor court painter William Scrots to the *Eurantica* Fair next month.

WHILE BRAFA occupies the earliest slot in the Brussels' fairs calendar, spring brings *Eurantica*.

This large gathering of exhibitors has its 30th staging next month. It offers a wide and eclectic range that takes in most categories of antiques and collectables. This includes furniture, paintings, metalware, glass, ceramics, coins and objets d'art, tribal art, textiles, jewellery and design from Art Nouveau and Deco to post-War.

Belgian galleries make up the lion's share of the 120-odd exhibitors, all of whom are vetted by the *Eurantica* selection committee, with a group of around 25 dealers from Antwerp and 50 from Brussels standing. But *Eurantica* is popular with other European countries, too, especially France and Holland, who are fielding around 15 to 20 and ten to 15 dealers respectively.

*Eurantica* runs at Hall 5, Brussels Expo from March 25-April 3, with an invitation-only preview on March 24. [www.eurantica.be](http://www.eurantica.be)

Plenty of exhibitors reported an international mix of visitors. After all, Brussels, as EU capital, has a large international population, but it seems that visitors also come from other parts of Northern Europe, with Paris, Germany and Holland cited especially. More than one exhibitor also noted that BRAFA's clientele is not impulsive, with customers preferring to mull things over before they decide to purchase.

BRAFA looks stylish in its Tour & Taxis venue and is accessible and not too daunting in size.

As a quality, well-attended event with its own successful formula, it has surely carved out its own place in the international fairs calendar.

Left: alongside the traditional at BRAFA was the newer Franco-Belgian collectable of bandes dessinées, or cartoon strips. The fair had upped its contingent of specialists to four stands this time and Paris/Brussels **Galerie Slomka's** stand, shown here, duly acknowledged Tintin's status as Belgian hero with their large statue of the boy reporter fronting their display.