

HOMES & ANTIQUES

EUROPEAN FAIRS SPECIAL
Our guide to the most prestigious art & antiques fairs of 2024

STYLISH & SUSTAINABLE

What's HOT
This year's most covetable antiques according to the experts

TRAVEL
48 HOURS IN VIENNA
+ SIX OF THE BEST CAROL CONCERTS

PLUS

A BUYER'S GUIDE TO DIAMONDS

MARVELLOUS MOQUETTE

LOOK TO THE STARS: PLANISPHERES

MEET THE TREASURE SEEKERS

Happy
NEW YEAR!

All good gifts: brilliant last-minute finds



THE ANTIQUES THAT SHAPED ME

Beatrix Bourdon

The MD of BRAFA, Brussels' annual art fair, shares her antiques story

What first sparked your interest in antiques?

Art has always played a huge role in my life. I was born on the Belgian coast, in a town that has always had many galleries, and I often accompanied my father on 'gallery tours', which I loved. I clearly remember going with my parents to the Delft fair in the Netherlands, which was like a precursor of TEFAF. My father was an amateur collector of ancient art, and also of antique silverware – my ancestors were goldsmiths, specialising in religious silverware and later recognised for their contribution to the Gothic Revival style. After studying History, I worked in auctions before applying for the job of manager of the Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique (now BRAFA). It was over 30 years ago and I was young and full of enthusiasm and determination; to my great delight, my passion for BRAFA has continued to grow.

Tell us about the first antique you bought

I was working for an auction house and there was a rather worn oriental rug that had been largely overlooked. My colleague urged me to bid saying, 'It's

a very beautiful rug, it would look great in your home,' and the auctioneer who was following our exchange sold it to me without hesitation. Another first purchase, when I was still very young, was a totem pole at my first Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique, which then was held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. It was said that if a woman caressed the totem pole's chest, it would bring good luck if she wanted to get pregnant. I really wanted to have children and, beyond the beauty of the object, that's what made me fall in love with it. In any case, that's how I remember it. Today, we have 24-year-old twins!

Can you share your biggest mistake in relation to antiques and what it taught you?

In the 1990s, I bought an object at an art sale, only to discover it was just a nice decorative item. Now I see it as adornment rather than art and I manage to live with it. Having said that, I've never parted with any of my objects because each one has its own story.

Of the antiques you own, do you have a favourite?

Many years ago, I was lucky enough to acquire a magnificent sanguine [red chalk drawing] by Alexandre Yacovleff, without knowing exactly who he was. It was love at first sight. Yacovleff was appointed official painter to the Citroën Centre-Asia expedition – the Croisière Jaune – which crossed Asia from Lebanon to China. This work, dated 1937, depicts a magnificently coiffed woman with very distinctive features and slender hands. It is my favourite work – it makes me dream of other cultures.

If money were no object, what would you buy?

Something by the wonderful Piero della Francesca. I first discovered this incredible artist, whose art touches me deeply, at The Frick Collection in New York and then, later, at The Uffizi in Florence.

What advice do you have for fellow collectors?

Acquiring a work of art must, above all, remain a matter of emotion – a matter of passion. I've always had trouble seeing art as something speculative. You have to feel good when you buy a piece for the first time and, above all, not follow fashion too much: pieces that are considered 'of the moment' and on trend are often overpriced. ■



LEFT Two of Beatrix Bourdon's favourite pieces – the totem pole she bought at BRAFA and her Alexandre Yacovleff red chalk drawing.

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EUROPEAN FAIRS 2024

THE FAIREST FAIRS OF ALL

Looking for a mini-break with a difference? Plan a trip around one of Europe's grandest fairs, says **Caroline Wheater**. From Old Masters to ancient artefacts, exquisite jewellery to fine porcelain, a voyage of discovery awaits...

As we usher in 2024, the prospect of a year's worth of art and antiques fairs stretches before us. Whether you're a collector or more of a browser, Europe's most prestigious fairs deserve a place in your diary for their sheer scale. And you can easily build a weekend away around any of these events, such is the quality and breadth of the items they sell. Start your year of culture on the Continent, with a trip to Belgium for BRAFA (the Brussels Art Fair), which launches the year in elegant style this January. Close on its heels is TEFAP (the annual fair of The European Fine Art

Foundation), held in Maastricht in mid March and now in its 37th year. From June, attention turns to London, where newcomer The Treasure House Fair sets up shop in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. In September and October the spotlight falls on Berkeley Square for two glamorous back-to-back events: LAPADA and PAD London. For art lovers, Frieze Masters is key in October. November provides the perfect excuse to return to the Continent for a final cultural foray of the year – as well as a little Christmas shopping – when the FAB Paris fine arts fair opens its doors at the newly renovated Grand Palais.

BRAFA, BRUSSELS

Brussels Expo, Belgium
28th January to 4th February

Later this month, the streets of Brussels will be decked out with colourful banners and posters declaring the opening of BRAFA, rated one of the top three art and antiques fairs in Europe. As more than 65,000 fair visitors descend on the city for the eight-day event, restaurants, bars and cultural venues gear up to receive them, with fringe events listed in the specially produced *BRAFA City Guide*. Already international in flavour, cosmopolitan and convivial Brussels becomes the capital of the arts – as well as Belgium – for the duration of this vibrant event. 'One of the fair's greatest strengths is its eclecticism,' says Beatrix Bourdon, BRAFA's managing director, who has helped organise the esteemed event for over three decades. Up to 15,000 works of art vie for visitors' attention, from modern paintings and Dutch still lifes, to visceral tribal art, rare porcelain and opulent gold and silver wares. Every item is vetted by international experts during the two days before the fair opens, and checked against the Art Loss Register so authenticity is assured.

'As people potter from one stand to the next, they discover works of art reflecting many different styles and periods. It's also a fair that has kept its human scale and can be visited over just a few hours,' says Beatrix. Belgian stalwarts include Antwerp's textiles and carpets specialist, N Vrouy, which has taken part in every BRAFA fair since 1956. There's also the stand of famed tastemaker Axel Vervoordt of Kanaal, whose family business offers contemporary art, ancient artefacts, oriental art and 20th-century design. History lovers will be drawn to De Wit Fine Tapestries from Tongerlo Abbey in Mechelen; the gallery is a leader in the acquisition and conservation of historic tapestries and counts the likes

1 *Twin Sisters*, by Isaac Israels, *Studio 2000 Art Gallery*. 2 Porcelain specialists Röbbig München. 3 Fabulous frames at Galerie Montanari. 4 Exceptional jewellery on show at BRAFA. **FACING PAGE** The entrance to BRAFA's 2022 edition.

of the V&A and the National Trust among its list of clients.

Some dealers really go to town with their displays, employing interior designers to achieve their opulent vision. The Munich dealer Röbbig München, for example, flamboyantly showcases early Meissen porcelain and decorative objects, while Brussels-based Galerie Bernard De Leye can be relied upon to celebrate European silver from the 16th to 18th centuries in spectacular style. Down another aisle, Parisian art dealer Hélène Bailly transforms her stand into an elegant boudoir to set off the chi-chi selection of Impressionist and modern paintings that are her specialism.

While many of the exhibitors at BRAFA are based on the Continent, a

smattering of UK dealers also attend. Look out for Finch & Co (antiquities, natural history), Whitford Fine Art (20th-century art), Willow Gallery (Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art), and fair newbie Richard Saltoun Gallery (women artists, especially for the fair). The Osborne Samuel Gallery in Mayfair focuses on British painting and sculpture by the likes of Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Lynn Chadwick and Sean Henry, and is a relative newcomer, having attended the fair since 2018. 'BRAFA is extremely elegant, the fields of expertise are broad and the quality is consistently high,' enthuses Tania Sutton, director of the gallery. 'What's also special about the fair is how knowledgeable the collectors are.' ▶



5 Maquette for *Winged Figures II*, 1956, Lynn Chadwick at Osborne Samuel Gallery.

European Fairs Special



ABOVE Last year, visitors to TEFAP were welcomed by a spectacular floral installation by Dutch florist Ten Kate. Fair goers can expect something equally fabulous this year.

There's always a particularly Belgian slant to explore too, as Beatrix explains: 'The Belgian tradition of collecting dates back to 15th-century Flanders, with numerous commissions for portraits and triptychs, then in the 16th and 17th centuries, the craze for cabinets of curiosities. Belgian collectors are still very curious and open to all forms of art.' This January they will be served by young gallery owner Thomas Deprez, who specialises in Belgian Fin de Siècle art and who will be bringing a monumental triptych, c1896, by Émile Fabry.

The fair's guest of honour – chosen to mark the centenary of the birth of Surrealism in 1924 and the Year of

Surrealism that is about to unfold – is the Paul Delvaux Foundation, which represents the work of the Belgian Surrealist artist Paul Delvaux. Works by Delvaux and other Surrealists will be shown by Opera Gallery, Francis Maere Fine Arts, Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke, A&R Fleury and Galerie Oscar De Vos. Plus, Camille Brasseur, director of the Delvaux Foundation, will be giving a talk on Paul Delvaux on 30th January as part of the BRAFA Art Talks, held daily at 4pm on the stand of the King Baudouin Foundation. But if you miss it, don't worry – there are guided art tours on subjects across the board taking place throughout the fair. Tickets from €25. brafa.art

TEFAP, MAASTRICHT

Maastricht Exhibition & Conference Centre (MECC), The Netherlands
9th to 14th March

Lying along the banks of the river Maas, the pretty cobbled streets of Maastricht swell with people and pride when around 70,000 visitors arrive to attend the exciting TEFAP. Among them are high-rolling private collectors, a smattering of European royals, and more than 400 museum curators and their top patrons from 250 institutions around the world headed up by the Met, the Getty, the Rijksmuseum and the British Museum. All are making this annual pilgrimage to see exceptional pieces in an elegant environment, located in this charming city. And, as with all unique things, the opportunity to buy can be narrow – curators have been known to sprint to stands as the doors open to secure a piece ahead of their rivals.

You know you've arrived at TEFAP when you see the spectacular floral installation created by leading Dutch florist Ten Kate. Situated in the entrance hall, the wall of flowers provokes gasps of wonder, and this year there will be moving elements among the all-white blooms. Fair director, Manon van den Beuken, has been with TEFAP for 23 years and likens putting on the event to doing a complex jigsaw, with the final pieces

BRAFA '24 HIGHLIGHTS

RIGHT Bouquet of flowers in a Wan-Li porcelain vase, late 1620s, Jan Brueghel the Younger, Galerie De Jonckheere.



- **Dalton Somaré of Milan** – an early 20th-century statuette of a woman sculpted by Zlan of Belewale in Liberia, a great master and teacher among Dan sculptors.
- **Die Galerie of Frankfurt** – a monumental ensemble of three sculptures by Max Ernst.
- **Francis Janssens Van der Maelen of Brussels** – an Art Nouveau desk designed by Henry van de Velde in 1898.
- **Galerie De Jonckheere of Geneva** – a 1620 painting, *Bouquet of Flowers in a Wan-Li Porcelain Vase*, by Jan Brueghel the Younger.
- **Klaas Muller of Brussels** – a 17th-century portrait of the Virgin and Child by Daniël Seghers and Cornelis Schut.
- **Nicolás Cortés Gallery of Madrid** – a 17th-century still life by Francisco de Zurbarán.
- **Osborne Samuel Gallery of London** – Maquette for *Winged Figures II*, a 1956 sculpture by Lynn Chadwick.