

BRAFA¹²

57TH BRUSSELS ANTIQUES & FINE ARTS FAIR

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PRESS RELEASE

Record attendance, a noticeable increase in quality, steady sales: the BRAFA confirms its growing stature

At the opening of this 57th edition, the exhibition President, Bernard De Leye, stated his aim of 'moving the BRAFA up a notch each year'. An objective that has clearly been achieved. With an increase in quality noted by press and visitors, a high level of sales and record attendance figures (46,096), the BRAFA has reached a new milestone in its development and is continuing to confirm its position among the major gatherings of the art market.

The BRAFA is the first event of the year in the art world calendar and many observers were curious to see how buyers would behave. The positive signs apparent from the opening evenings set the scene for the relaxed and friendly atmosphere that prevailed throughout the entire event.

Some significant results were recorded on the opening evenings. Including an almost complete sell-out for a few exhibitors, such as **Didier Claes** (Brussels) and **Ronny Van De Velde** (Antwerp). Didier Claes sold an imposing Ekoi monolith from Nigeria, while Ronny Van De Velde's preview of the project *'Museum on the scale of 1:7'* proved a great talking point. **Marc Heiremans** and **Harold't Kint de Roodenbeke** (Brussels) also recorded some major successes, including, for **Harold't Kint de Roodenbeke**, the sale of a gouache by Calder, various works by Paul Delvaux and a *'Blue and orange sunset'* (1922) by the Symbolist Léon Spilliaert. **Galerie Mayoral** (Barcelona) sold a *Suceso* by the Spanish painter Juan Genovès, while **Tradart** (Brussels/Geneva) parted with its key exhibit, a rare Sicilian coin dating from 450 B.C. **Samuel Van Hoegaerden** (Knokke) found buyers for several works by Fred Eerdeken, Panamarenko and Tom Wesselman (*'Study for bedroom blonde'*, 1985). **Bernard De Leye** (Brussels) quickly sold an outstanding silver bowl that had once belonged to David Teniers IV (1672-1731), while **Jos Jamar** (Antwerp) sold a large painting by Pierre Alechinsky entitled *'The Oviparous'* (1960). Finally, on the first evening, **Galerie Taménaga** (Paris) negotiated the sale of a painting by Marc Chagall.

Boosted by this excellent start, sales continued at a steady pace over the following days, with significant results recorded in all categories, starting with 20th century decorative arts, where the high number of exhibitors this year (galleries **Dutko**, **Monplaisir – Victor Gastou**, **Oscar Graf**, **Futur Antérieur**, **Mathivet**, **Marcilhac**, **Cento Anni**, and more) was much appreciated by visitors.

Here is a brief summary for the different specialities:

Sculpture

Univers du Bronze (Paris) sold three pieces from its Becquerel collection, several works by Carpeaux and Bari, as well as a *'Kneeling female faun'* (1884) by Rodin.

Modern paintings

Aktis Gallery (London) found a buyer for a large *'Composition'* (1955-60) by Geer Van Velde. **Whitford Fine Art** (London) sold several works by Paul Van Hoeydonck (*'Mondrian Composition'*, 1956 – *'Composition'* – 1957), Calder (*'The sea'*, 1946), David Spiller (b. 1942) (*'Say hello wave goodbye'* – 2010). Glowing reports too from the galleries **Fleury, Bérès, David Levy** and **Patrice Trigano**.

Tapestries

Several of the outstanding exhibits presented by **Manufacture Royale De Wit** (Malines) changed hands, including a *'Country scene with animals including two unicorns'* (Oudenaerde, mid-16th century).

Medieval art/ancient art

A general feeling of satisfaction was also apparent among specialists in medieval and ancient art, a category that has been enjoying increasing popularity in recent years. At **De Backker Medieval Art** (Hoogstraten), an oil on panel inspired by a lost work by Hugo van der Goes (circa 1500) was purchased, as was an alabaster *Madonna in multi-coloured wood*.

Ceramics and porcelain

In the ceramics category, **Jean Lemaire** (Brussels) reported buoyant sales of smaller items, while **Marc Michot** (Bruges) sold 80% of his stand to customers split evenly between *Europe and China*, including the sale of a Qianlong vase.

Contemporary art

At the close of the Fair, **Guy Pieters Gallery** (Knokke) sold nine works by Jan Fabre from the series *'Tribute to Belgian Congo'*, made from iridescent green wing cases of scarab beetles.

Archaeology

A satisfactory conclusion for **Phoenix Ancient Art** (Geneva – New York) too, which sold several items, including a fragment of a Roman fresco featuring an erotic design (1st century AD), as well as an Egyptian figurine from the period of Ramses II or III (13th-12th century BC).

Furniture

In the furniture category, **Galerie Delvaile** (Paris) reported an excellent start to the Fair with around ten sales during the first two days, including a Louis XVI tric-trac table purchased by a British client. At **Galerie Steinitz** (Paris), whose reconstruction of the *home of a collector from the Grand Tour to the Empire* greeted visitors on arrival, several pieces of furniture changed hands and the gallery also received enquiries for its Louis XV woodwork.

New exhibitors

Among the newcomers to the exhibition, **Brenske Gallery** (Munich) was delighted with the results, significantly exceeding its expectations with the sale of several icons, including a *'Virgin mother'*, from Russia, dating from the 18th century. **Charly Bailly** (Geneva) found buyers for a handful of works and is still in negotiations with a European museum it met at the Fair for its *'Fair or kermis with theatre performance on St George's day'* by Pieter Balten. Finally, **Galerie Chenel** (Paris) sold various items, including a Roman bust from the 1st-2nd century AD to a new Belgian client, and **Jean-Baptiste Fabre** (Geneva) which sold its key exhibit, a large commode stamped Mathieu Criaerd in 1738.

Ongoing negotiations

By the close of the event, many exhibitors had recorded a level of sales close to or even higher than the 2011 edition, which had marked the start of a real upturn in business following a difficult period. In many cases, negotiations for major works will continue further to enquiries received at the Fair. In particular in the case of, **Klaas Müller** (Brussels) for its very rare drawing by Rubens (*Pentecost*), and **Galerie Ludorff** (Düsseldorf) for works by Max Ernst and Alexej von Jawlensky.

In general, the attention paid to the decoration of the venue and stands was appreciated by all, as was the very carefully planned design for the exhibition by the King Baudouin Foundation, guest of honour at this 57th edition.

All exhibitors noted an increase in quality and the more international character of the exhibition, as well as the quality of visitors, who were described as very well-informed.

The results seem to confirm a current trend in the art market: very high quality works will always find buyers. However, above a certain price level, decisions take longer, reflecting greater consideration for planned investments. Without doubt, the relationship of trust between seller and buyer is more than ever a key factor in the success of a transaction. And, in this respect, antiques dealers have just as many points in their favour as players in other markets!

The 2013 edition of the BRAFA will take place from 19 to 27 January 2013.

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