

BRAFA¹³

58TH BRUSSELS ANTIQUES & FINE ARTS FAIR

PRESS RELEASE

Brafa'13 – an increasingly fine vintage!

In the wake of the success of the 2012 event, there was a certain feeling of curiosity in the air leading up to the 2013 edition of the *Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair* (BRAFA). It more than fulfilled its promises, setting a new visitor record (48,135 admissions) despite unpredictable weather, and recording a high level of transactions throughout the ten opening days.

This event marked the Brafa's tenth year at Tour & Taxis. A decade during which the Fair has continuously evolved and grown, becoming ever more professional, more demanding and with an increasingly strong focus on quality. These long-term efforts are starting to bear fruit, as reflected in international recognition of the event and the increasingly high standard of the exhibits, including a growing number of museum quality pieces.

With their unerring judgement, collectors and professionals have made this Brussels gathering a key and eagerly anticipated date on the calendar. Many of them also attended the traditional opening evenings, with strong sales recorded even at this early stage. This brisk trading pace was maintained throughout the entire Fair.

Here is a brief overview of a few noteworthy sales in various categories:

Primitive Arts

A resounding success for one of the Brafa's key areas and a major attraction, once again presenting a fine selection of exhibits.

- Six of the 18 wonderful Bete masks exhibited by **Serge Schoffel** were purchased at the Fair, some by museums, ahead of further probable sales.
- Some significant masks also changed hands on other stands: 'Kifwebe' (Congo) and a rare 'Kikuyu' shield for **Jacques Germain**; 'Boa' for Didier Claes (one of just four known examples in the world); as well as 'Dan' (Liberia) for **Adrian Schlag**.
- Not forgetting a 'Mangbetu' drum exhibited by **Alain de Monbrison**.

Archaeology

The Brafa's reputation appears to be spreading, with eight new specialist exhibitors in this sector. International curators and major collectors made the trip to Brussels and the many contacts made bode well for further major purchases after the event. Noteworthy sales include, at **Phoenix Ancient Art**, an amazing fragment of an Egyptian fresco and a Corinthian helmet from the 6th century BC; at **Gilgamesh**, a bronze Egyptian cat (26th Dynasty); at **Galerie Chenel**, a 'naophorous' statue (Egypt, New Empire); and 17 sales recorded by **David Ghezelbash**.

Medieval Art

There has been growing interest in medieval art over the last few years, in particular among a younger audience, commented **Luc De Backker**, who sold several important works including a recumbent stone statue from the 16th century. This observation was confirmed by fellow dealer **Mullany**, who was in advanced negotiations for its 'Virgin of the Intercession' at the close of the Fair.

Modern Art

Offering a richer selection each year, the Brafa's modern art area attracted a very wide audience, as reflected in the great variety of sales:

- For **Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke**, the new Chairman of the Brafa: '*Polychrome Composition*' by Serge Poliakoff, as well as around fifteen works by Paul Delvaux.
- Paul Delvaux once again, *Women and children* (1934), at **Galerie des Modernes**.
- The *Orpheus and nymphs* bas-relief by Ossip Zadkine, exhibited by **Galerie Fleury**.
- **Vincent Lécuyer** reported its best ever Brafa with 11 sales over the first three days, and an oil on panel, "*as beautiful as a Cranach*", by Paul-Mathias Padua, *Bavarian woman*, dating from 1931.
- At **Oscar De Vos**: 'Smiling Nel' by Rik Wouters, one of the key exhibits at this Brafa'13, as well as various works from the Laethem School.

Belgian Artists

A clear rise in the popularity of great modern and contemporary Belgian artists was apparent, including interest from foreign art lovers. Many works by Delvaux, Ensor, Rops (the complete 'Pornocrates' series at **Jos Jamar**), Panamarenko, Alechinsky, Fabre, Delvoye and Van Mechelen changed hands, including Paul Van Hoeydonck and Bram Bogart at **Whitford Gallery**. Another success was the Rodolphe De Saegher series exhibited by **Francis Maere**, whose two large original female plaster sculptures by Karel Aubroek were sold to an Italian collector.

Antique Furniture

Interest in fine antique furniture remains strong, as demonstrated by the success of the galleries **Steinitz, Fabre** (outstanding Phoenix console table from the Louis XV era), **Berger** and **Delvaille** (neoclassical high-relief in terracotta, France, 2nd half of the 18th century). **Couvent des Ursulines** sold a long mirror and gilded bronze table centrepiece, made in Paris around 1810, which had come straight from a private collection in Germany.

Sculptures

Some glowing reports from bronze specialists for this edition, in particular **Xavier Eeckhout** (several bronze animal figures by Georges Hilbert, Marcel Lémar, etc.) and **Univers du Bronze (*Elephant in Senegal* by Barye, a Barbedienne cast created during the artist's lifetime; *Oriental woman after the sabre dance*, a large marble piece by Théodore Rivière).**

Asian Arts

Benefiting from a certain cultural closeness, there was also increased interest in Asian Arts, as demonstrated by **Eric Pouillot**, who sold a 'Bo' bell (5th-6th century BC) from the catalogue and **Jacques Barrère**, who sold a wooden seated monk from the Muromachi period (Japan, 15th century). A positive result too for **Christophe Hioco**, who presented a selection of objects tracing two millennia of Buddhist art.

20th Century Design

Another positive year for 20th century and contemporary design. With steady and buoyant sales reported by the galleries **88-Gallery** (several orders for Campana), **Marcilhac** (modernist heads by Kelli Bedrossian), **Dutko**, **Mathivet** (Art Deco furniture and Aboriginal paintings), **Martel-Greiner**

and Marc Heiremans (Lion Cachet tapestry sold to a private collector). In the space of just a few years, this sector has become a key attraction at the Brafa.

Contemporary Art

- **Guy Pieters** sold many works by Jan Fabre, Wim Delvoye, Koen Van Mechelen, Christo and other artists.
- This was also an excellent year for **Kalman Maklary**, quickly selling its key exhibit, a triptych from 1959 by François Fiedler, as well high levels of orders for the young Korean artist Hur Kyung-Ae.

New exhibitors

Like H  l  ne Bailly, most of this year's first-time exhibitors said they were delighted with the interest they had received at the Fair and the quality of the contacts made. Although their sales were still relatively limited, the majority have already decided to return next year. They remain convinced of the Fair's potential and are aware of the time required to establish their reputation with a very knowledgeable audience. **Librairie Signatures** had a successful Fair, selling several autographed documents including a photograph together with a note signed by Sigmund Freud. **Copetti** is in negotiations with a British and a Turkish collector for its remarkable set of drawings and watercolours of Sinan's mosques by the Italian architect Augusto Romano Burelli and for the sculpted head by Giacomo Manz  .

Charity sale to support the Centre d'œuvres de Merode

An auction running throughout the Brafa event, with several galleries participating, raised more than €60,000 to support the *Centre d'Œuvres de Merode* and its many educational and social projects in working class districts of Brussels.

General trend

The overall result is highly satisfactory. While many exhibitors noted a certain hesitation or caution among buyers when it came to purchasing expensive works, this was largely offset by the relatively high volume of sales. Some exhibitors were pleased to report new contacts visiting their stands, including clients never before seen in Brussels, such as a great American interior designer and new collectors from Russia and Asia.

In many cases, exhibitors are hopeful that high levels of interest during the Fair will lead to subsequent sales. Like gallery owner J  rg Schuhmacher, who, after selling works by Marc Chagall and Tom Wesselmann, was in advanced negotiations at the close of the exhibition with a European collector for the *La Belle Lurette* by Magritte, one of the highlights at this edition.

Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke sums up: *"The results for this 2013 edition confirm that the art market is not cut off from reality, quite the reverse, it actually reflects it. On a personal note, I am very happy with the work accomplished by the team and the new Board of Directors. There are, of course, a few points that can still be improved and we are working to make 2014 an even greater success."*

This 2014 event will take place from 25 January to 2 February at Tour & Taxis.

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