

Collecting

Ambition takes root at Frieze in London

Striking booths proliferate; Rybolovlev sues; Tefaf 'recalibrates'



'The Shaman' (2018) by Tatiana Trouvé © Kamel Mennour

Melanie Gerlis 7 HOURS AGO

Feedback

“People gather in large tent,” proclaims British artist David Shrigley in a specially commissioned headline for The Art Newspaper, produced for this year’s [Frieze fairs](#) in London’s Regent’s Park (until Sunday). More of Shrigley’s humour can be found at Stephen Friedman’s solo booth at Frieze London, via a site-specific neon shopfront attracting Instagrammers and buyers on the fair’s first of two VIP days on October 3 (works priced between £1,800 and £50,000).

Other galleries have pushed the boat out, with more striking and solo-artist booths than usual, making for a good-looking contemporary art fair. At Kamel Mennour’s booth, a 1.2-tonne, bronze, uprooted tree breaks through the floor (“The Shaman”, 2018, €650,000) while at Simon Lee, American artist Jim Shaw has created a parlour room, complete with his own wallpaper, to show works that tackle Donald Trump’s presidency (\$35,000-\$80,000). Even White Cube, which normally serves up fairly unadventurous booths, fields an imposing wire-mesh backdrop to works by Chinese artist Liu Wei (paintings up to \$450,000; sculpture up to \$200,000).

“Everyone’s trying to be more curatorial: it’s the mood at the moment and a way of dealing with fair fatigue and contemporary art fatigue,” says David Maupin, co-founder of Lehmann Maupin. It’s also attention-grabbing in a saturated space and seemed to pay off in sales as well as on social media — Maupin’s gallery reported a near sellout of works by the Brazilian graffiti-artist twins known as Osgemeos (\$130,000-\$150,000). Overall, however, the pace of sales seemed slower than usual on the opening day.

Across the park at the Frieze Masters fair for older art, sales seemed swifter than usual (though that’s a low bar) and included vintage photographs by the haunting Japanese artist Ishiuchi Miyako from the 1970s onwards (Michael Hoppen, £8,500-£32,000); a prime Barbara Hepworth bronze from Dickinson gallery’s show-stopping recreation of her garden at Tate St Ives and several works by François Morellet (Lévy Gorvy and Kamel Mennour), including the artist’s first neon work from 1963, which sold for about €1m to a European institution.

While most of the art market convened in London, in New York’s federal court Dmitry Rybolovlev filed suit against Sotheby’s for more than \$380m, the latest step in the Russian’s ongoing legal battle with Yves Bouvier. Rybolovlev has previously accused Bouvier of overcharging by \$1bn on 38 works bought through the Swiss businessman between 2003 and 2015; Bouvier contests the allegations. Now, through his family trusts, Rybolovlev’s October 2 complaint opens that “Sotheby’s — one of the world’s largest and most famous art brokers and auction houses — materially assisted the largest art fraud in history”. Court papers go on to say that Sotheby’s “assisted Bouvier in acquiring artworks at prices the sellers were willing to accept while helping him charge Plaintiffs fraudulently inflated prices (and concealing the actual acquisition prices from Plaintiffs)”.

In a statement, Sotheby’s said: “Mr Rybolovlev’s latest desperate lawsuit is entirely without merit, and we will vigorously defend the company and our employees against these baseless claims.” The auction house says it will move to dismiss the New York action.

Among the trades detailed in the latest complaint is Leonardo da Vinci’s “Salvator Mundi” (c1500), which Bouvier bought for \$83m in 2013 and sold to Rybolovlev for \$127.5m in the same year. Last year, Rybolovlev famously [sold the work for \\$450.3m](#), the top price ever at auction.

While Frieze is a contemporary art fair brand that has embraced older art, so Tefaf turns its Old Masters credentials towards contemporary and Modern art. For its Maastricht flagship (March

16-24, 2019) the fair reveals an exhibitor list that has been “recalibrated” (read: room made for the big boys) with the inclusion of dealers such as Pace Gallery, Max Hetzler and Sprüth Magers. It’s an upgrade of this section, rather than a broader change of direction, but stalwart older-art dealers currently not on the 2019 list include Jean-Luc Baroni and Otto Naumann — the latter shut up shop at the beginning of the year and now works at Sotheby’s. “The art market is an eco-system; as it develops and changes, so too do Tefaf’s fairs,” reads a statement from its organisers.

Sotheby’s has been touring China with a rare oil sketch by Rembrandt that it plans to offer at auction in London on December 5 for about £6m. This small-scale study of the head of a young man dates from around 1650-1655 and may have been a study for a painting of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, according to George Gordon, co-chairman of Sotheby’s Old Masters Paintings. The work has been on loan to the Museum Het Rembrandthuis, the Dutch artist’s former home in Amsterdam, since 2013.

In Hong Kong’s Convention and Exhibition Centre, among 45 other works from the Renaissance to the 19th century, the exhibition clocked up at least 12 sales and more than 7,000 visitors. The number of Asian bidders in this category at Sotheby’s doubled between 2013 and 2017, according to the auction house.

And finally . . . If Frieze Week and the art market’s accompanying jargon sometimes seem baffling, then let London Art Studies come to the rescue. Included in its annual subscription (£88) is a new five-part series, fronted by Financial Times writer Georgina Adam, that gives bite-sized background on some of the market’s potentially mystifying practices. For example, included in a segment on art fairs is an explanation of how galleries “place” works. “Don’t imagine you can walk on to Gagosian’s stand and buy a [Jeff] Koons, you can’t,” Adam says, before going on to outline the risk to a gallery and its artists of buyers “flipping”, that is re-selling a work too quickly. It’s a useful refresher for seasoned art market professionals too.

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