

The Art Market**Frieze buzzes with buyers for serious art**

Plus, robot turns heads in Hong Kong; 20th-century collections in Paris; work by 1m spiders in London



Visitors in front of German artist Olaf Nicolai's 'MARX' on the first day of Frieze London in Regent's Park © AFP via Getty Images

Melanie Gerlis 2 HOURS AGO

Exhibitors and visitors alike buzzed at the return of Frieze London and Frieze Masters in Regent's Park at the fairs' VIP openings on Wednesday. Much was the same as in pre-pandemic times — exhibitor numbers were similar, early sales were reported and the usual chic, international crowd was in force, some even adhering to the mandatory face mask stipulation.

However, the art has a more conservative, even gloomy, feel this year. "You need to weigh up the anxieties. No one ever thought that seeing art could change your health in a negative way but now there are concerns," says Mary Sabbatino, partner at Galerie Lelong. Her booth includes Samuel Levi Jones's "Doom" (2021), a canvas of stitched, deconstructed books (sold for \$36,000).

At Eigen+Art, Martin Gross has painted the stand with the capitalised words “But not as we know it” and his new oil pastel works reflect more serious times (€3,200-€9,800). Gagosian gallery proves an exception to the rule, with bright works by Los Angeles artist Jennifer Guidi. “We wanted to bring a bit of California into the tent,” said director Stefan Ratibor. Their plan hit the spot — all nine works have sold for \$350,000 each.

Works at Frieze Masters are a reminder of riskier times. An installation of 1,514 empty beer bottles in wooden crates (first made in 1962, €200,000) by the Dutch conceptual artist Jan Henderikse (b1937) is a showstopper in a solo booth shared by BorzoGallery and The Mayor Gallery. Other highlights include a 6.4cm, gilt bronze, zither string weight from 3rd to 2nd century BC China (Gisèle Croës gallery) and a solo booth of works (Luxembourg + Dayan, €20,000-€150,000) by the Italian Pop artist Giosetta Fioroni (b1932).



'Femme Accroupie' by Pablo Picasso (1954) © Sotheby's Hong Kong

Sotheby's two-day modern and contemporary art auctions in Hong Kong last weekend didn't quite generate the fireworks of recent sales, but still generated healthy totals, particularly for western art — and a robot.

The evening auction of modern art made HK\$485.4m (US\$62.3m, HK\$580.2m with fees), below presale estimates, while contemporary art made a similar amount, just within expectations, of HK\$490.4m (US\$63m, HK\$586.9m with fees). The top price of the series was paid for Picasso's "Femme Accroupie" (1954), which sold within estimate for HK\$165m, a record for the artist in Asia (\$21m, HK\$191.7m with fees, third-party guarantee). Contemporary artist record breakers included Jadé Fadojutimi, whose "Under the Weather" (2017) soared above its HK\$1.3m to HK\$1.9m estimate to sell for HK\$5m (US\$642,000, HK\$6.2m with fees). Recent works by the in-demand London painter are also offered this week at Sotheby's and Phillips's evening sales in London (October 14 and 15).



'Sophia Facing the Singularities' (2021), an artificial intelligence robot created by Hanson Robotics

Also among the Sotheby's fare in Hong Kong was "Sophia Facing the Singularities" (2021), an evolving artificial intelligence robot devised by Hanson Robotics, which sold for HK\$4m in the day sale on October 10 (US\$514,000, HK\$5m with fees). The glamorous android tells us in a Sotheby's video that "I dream of a world where AI is not feared", which for me at least had the opposite effect.



'Concetto spaziale, attese' by Lucio Fontana (1960)

After Hong Kong and London, attention turns next to Paris, where the Fiac fair hosts its 47th in-person edition (October 21-24). During the same week, Christie's has two collections of Modern and contemporary art on offer — from the Paris arts publisher Alain Bouret, who died in 2011, and the Dutch businessman Gerard Valkier, who died last year (auctions on October 20 and 21). Bouret was friends with many of the region's artists in his lifetime and his collection is "very French", says Christie's senior specialist Paul Nyzam. The top-estimated work from his collection is Nicolas de Staël's "Paysage" (1952), a gift from the artist's wife to Bouret (est €250,000-€350,000).

Valkier was more of a “European”, Nyzam says, collecting across categories, though predominantly in contemporary art in the past 20 years of his life. His sale at Christie’s includes prime postwar Italian art — notably Lucio Fontana’s chartreuse-green “Concetto spaziale, attese” (1960, est €500,000-€700,000). Works from simultaneous movements across Germany and northern Europe also feature, as do later, figurative works, including a small painting by Tracey Emin and a sculpture by Antony Gormley. Christie’s specialists admit such an offering would have been hosted in London just a few years ago — before the impact of Brexit. “We are targeting European buyers, who think in euros and want work that’s in free circulation,” Nyzam says.



Amy Cappellazzo and Yuki Terase, who will lead an art advisory business headquartered in New York and Hong Kong

Rumours that Sotheby’s former rainmaker, Amy Cappellazzo, had joined forces with Yuki Terase, previously head of contemporary art in Asia for the same auction house, turn out to be true. The pair will lead an art advisory business headquartered equally in New York and Hong Kong and with a focus on art as an asset class in a rapidly changing market. Called Art Intelligence Global — or AIG, but not to be confused with the insurance company — they are joined by another former Sotheby’s senior staffer, Adam Chinn. He came to the auction house with Cappellazzo in 2016 and helped to develop its more elaborate financial instruments, such as third-party guarantees. Chinn remains co-chairman of the recently launched machine-learning platform, LiveArt, a separate business to AIG.

And finally . . . it's the last chance to see three of only four existing textiles spun from the naturally golden silk of millions of orb-weaver spiders, at Oliver Hoare Limited in London's Cromwell Place until October 22. Designed by the textile artist Simon Peers and produced with the fashion designer Nicholas Godley, the largest lamba cloth on show is made from the silk of more than a million spiders, mostly collected from Madagascar (and released back to the wild).

The brocaded lamba last went on show in London's V&A museum in 2012, at which time the natural historian David Attenborough said: "It must surely be counted as one of the rarest and most glamorous of fabrics. Thank goodness the world still holds marvels." Prices start at £250,000.

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