

Jan 22, 2012

First impression of Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair (BRAFA)



Conspicuously well-groomed VIPs at the Collectors' Preview of the Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair (BRAFA) queued up to get an early glimpse of works brought by 122 dealers to the fair's 57th annual edition.

Since BRAFA moved to the Tour & Taxis exhibition centre in 2004 it has steadily grown in dealer and visitor numbers; it now routinely attracts 40,000 people over its ten-day duration, although it still struggles to draw dealers from Anglophone regions of the world. In time that may well change, since the fair has a reputation of attracting a scholarly crowd in a country that has had an art collecting habit for the last 400 years.



Chairman of the fair and Belgian dealer Bernard de Leye at his stand with Princess Astrid of Belgium and her daughter Princess Maria Laura of Belgium(R).

BRAFA is a good fair for those new to the art market eager to develop a collection. It offers the safety net of being long established and the strict vetting procedures mean that – in common with all fairs worth their salt –

works sold during the show carry a guarantee of authenticity. It is a manageable size, it represents all categories of fine art and antiques and all price points are covered. Prices start this year at €350 at **Finch & Co**, one of four British exhibitors at the show; and, while there are few works at this price point, there are 'starter-level' choices in the under-€25,000 bracket across all categories. The majority lie in the middle range up to €250,000 and a selection of higher profile works are priced at up to seven figures.

Amongst the highlights are a sublimely beautiful near-life size terracotta Pieta by an unknown French sculptor, c.1675, at new exhibitor **Mullany**, sourced from a private chapel in the Loire valley; there are several works by Blaue Reiter painter Alexej von Jawlensky (1864-1941) at **Galerie Ludorff**; and one of the most arresting displays is a collection of kilims from Mazandaran in Northern Iran, of a type unknown until extensive research over the last decade by expert Werner Weber, on show at **N. Vrouyr**.

Flemish paintings specialist **Florence de Voldère** is exhibiting Jan Breughel the Elder's (1568-1625) Village on the River with Landing Stage, while antiquities dealers **Phoenix Ancient Art** have a 3rd millennium BC white marble female idol from the Cyclades.

As always, tribal art is strong at the fair, a reflection of the status of Brussels – along with Paris and New York – as an artery of the trade. **Didier Claes**, who last year was the talk of the show with a single figure exhibit of an 18th century fetish figure Ngwadi from the Congo, has a more populated stand this year. One of the most important pieces is a wooden figure used by the Poro secret men's society of the Senufo people in the northern Ivory Coast.



Early sales at the private preview included: Suceso, 2007, a large acrylic on canvas work by veteran Spanish painter Juan Genovés (b.1930), priced at €145,000, which consistently drew crowds at the **Mayoral Galeria**; Blue and Orange Sunset, 1922, by Belgian symbolist Leon Spillaert (1881-1946), which sold in the €50,000-€60,000 range at **Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke**; and an Egyptian indurated limestone figure of Remyntyou from the Ramses II or III period (13th – 12th century BC), which had a ticket price of €290,000 at **Phoenix Ancient Art**.

A extensive review of BRAFA will be featured in the [first issue of the Art Investor magazine](#).

[BRAFA: The Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair \(21-29 January 2012\)](#)

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