

Of gods and princes

The 'revitalised' list of exhibitors at Maastricht looks set to show quality over quantity, with Egyptian fragments, princely silver and a rare van Gogh

THE mood among the exhibitors at TEFAF Maastricht (March 7 to 15) will be interesting. Last year, what was described as 'a revitalised selection procedure' was installed, whereby a number of longstanding participants were 'disinvited' in favour of newcomers. This year, I gather that perhaps 40 more veterans will not be returning and there will be 25 first-timers. This has produced a slightly lower total of 280 stands, which is to be welcomed. There has always been a turnover, of course, but it is to be hoped that the balance of specialities has not been much affected. I have been looking at the 1997 handbook; only one of that year's five antiquities specialists—Mieke Zilverberg, the Amsterdam ancient coin dealer—is among



Fig 1: *Paysanne devant une Chaumière*, July 1885, by van Gogh, sold for £13 million. With Dickinson



Fig 2: Fragments from an Egyptian relief dedicated to Hapi, god of the Nile. With Charles Ede

this year's 13. Probably second in longevity is Charles Ede of London, which first showed in 1998, and I look forward to seeing its two limestone fragments from a relief dedicated to Hapi, god of the Nile (Fig 2).

This Hapi is not baboon-headed Hapi, son of Horus (often transliterated as 'Happy' to differentiate them). The figures on the fragments are both the Nile god, representing his split personality as 'Lord of the Fish and Birds of the Marshes' for Upper Egypt and 'Lord of the River Bringing Vegetation' for Lower Egypt. If unbroken, it would show the figures tying plant stems around a hieroglyph proclaiming the

unity of the country. The relief dates from between 1279bc and 1155bc and comes with a strong provenance; the larger fragment measures 14 1/4 in by 13 3/4 in.

In the 1920s, a Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) Lonquan celadon dish (Fig 3) was on Halma-hera Island in the then Dutch East Indies, where it was photographed with locals and bought by an Italian. From Italy, the dish meandered through Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands and will now be shown by Vandervan of 'S-Hertogenbosch. It is splendid, with a 19 1/2 in diameter. Lonquan refers to green-glazed wares from a kiln complex in what is now the Zhejiang province of South China.

Provenance is the watchword nowadays and there is more with the silver dealers Koopman of London. Anne-Louis-Alexandre de Montmorency, 7th Prince de Robecq

(1724–1812), was fortunate that his servants were not like Mme Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Rather than hunting him to the guillotine, his administrator, M. Pessey, bought one of the family's *châteaux* when the Prince emigrated during the Revolution and handed it back when he returned. In gratitude, the Prince, who had no male heir, left the *château* and its contents to the Pessey family.



Fig 4: Silver-mounted carved coconut by Dutch silversmith Andries Fredriksz. With Koopman

Fig 3: Ming dynasty Lonquan celadon dish. With Vandervan



Fig 5: Etched burgenet, about 1560. With Runjeet Singh

The Montmorencys had a long military history and had been awarded this title by the first Bourbon king of Spain. The 7th Prince commanded Louis XVI's army in Flanders during the Seven Years War.

One of the works of art that remained in the Pessey family until recently will be a highlight of the Koopman stand. It is a carved coconut (Fig 4) in superb mounts by a distinguished member of a dynasty of Dutch silversmiths, Andries Fredriksz. (1566–1627), who was warden of the Amsterdam goldsmiths' guild 13 times between 1599 and 1625. The cup is 13 1/2 in high. Its circular base stands on four turtles with dolphins and shells and the stem is a siren on a dolphin. The coconut itself is carved as a fish and the fantastic Bosch-like silver

mounts make it the sort of Kunstammer object that would have appealed to Emperor Rudolph II. It has an asking price in the region of \$185,000.

Warwickshire-based Runjeet Singh, a dealer in East Asian arms and armour, has been awarded one of the fair's Showcase stands that give newer galleries a one-off chance to participate in the major international event. Many go on to become full exhibitors. Mr Singh has a truly cross-cultural offering—a rare etched burgenet (helmet) (Fig 5), made in Nuremberg in about 1560, but inspired by Ottoman patterns and demonstrating the fascination of European courts with the arms of their foes. It was captured by the Turks during the Austro-Turkish War of 1591 to 1606. Mr Singh says that he 'hopes its appearance on the market will delight all collectors who see it "in the steel"'. It will be priced at €90,000 (about \$75,000).

The London dealer Blairman long ago moved away from classic English 18th- and early-19th-century furniture to specialise in the Arts and Crafts, but has never lost its admiration for earlier heroes, notably William Beckford and George Bullock. Both will feature prominently on this year's stand, which, as usual, will be unlike any other at Maastricht. Beckford was not only a folly builder, scandalous author, Maecenas collector and

patron, but also keenly involved in the design of furniture and works of art that he commissioned. An example is an 18th-century Chinese *famille noire* bowl (Fig 7), for which he conceived the silver-gilt mounts, made by John Robins, a London smith. The mounts carry Beckford's arms surrounded by martlets, one of his heraldic badges. The provenance becomes still more exotic: the bowl went to his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, and, after appearing in the Hamilton Palace sale in 1882, found its way to the Surrealist and patron Edward James, then to Christopher Gibbs, whose taste was impeccable.

Dickinson's £13 million van Gogh, *Paysanne devant une Chaumière* (Fig 1), has received much publicity because of its rediscovery after being sold for \$4 in a 1967 country auction, for \$45 in a North London junk

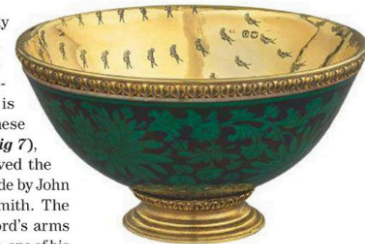


Fig 7: Chinese *famille noire* bowl with Beckford's silver-gilt mounts. With Blairman

shop in 1968 and \$1.7 million in 2001. It may also have been the first van Gogh ever sold, one of only two in his lifetime.

I look forward to other paintings shown by London galleries Richard Green and Mazzoleni (also of Turin). Richard Green has three works by an artist previously unknown to me, Achille Laugé (1861–1944), who was born near Carcassonne into a farming family. He was *bouleversé* by Seurat's *Grande Jatte* and, in still lifes such as *Nature morte au grenades* (Fig 6), he developed his own delicate adaptation of Pointillism. Another offering here will be a pastel by Federico Zandomenighi (1841–1917), *Jeune femme attachant un ruban* (Fig 8), which, to my mind, leaves Renoir nowhere.

Mazzoleni will have a particularly vibrant Futurist canvas by Giacomo Balla *Linee Forze di Mare*—Rosa (Fig 9), dating from about 1919.

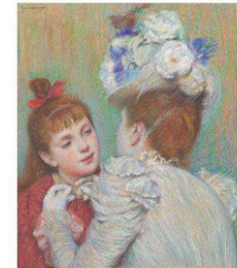


Fig 8: *Jeune femme attachant un Ruban* by Federico Zandomenighi. With Richard Green

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Fig 6: *Nature morte au grenades* by Laugé. With Richard Green



Fig 9: *Linee Forze di Mare—Rosa*, 1919, by Balla. With Mazzoleni

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Fig 8: *Jeune femme attachant un Ruban* by Federico Zandomenighi. With Richard Green

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Fig 9: *Linee Forze di Mare—Rosa*, 1919, by Balla. With Mazzoleni