



Going Dutch

Whether it's a Quran manuscript dating from about 50 years after the death of the Prophet or Frans Pourbus II's *Henri IV*, one of only two portraits of the French king from life, TEFAF promises treasures untold

THIS morning (for anyone eagerly reading their newly arrived *COUNTRY LIFE*), I should be aboard a Eurostar on my way to TEFAF in Maastricht, so here are a few of the things that I am hoping to see during the next couple of days. The fair will be open to the public for six days (March 9-14).

A few years ago, exhibitor numbers went well above 300, which was definitely too high; this time, there are about 270 from 22 countries. That 'about' may be relevant, as, thanks to a new feature, some dealers will be exhibiting in two places at once. It was not easy to envisage this 'Focus' section from the initial announcement: it is intended 'to coalesce pioneering artists of different mediums and periods under one banner, from Old Masters to Impressionists, to design and contemporary art, thus aligning with



Fig 1 (above) Sandstone figures by an anonymous 16th-century carver. With Blumka.

Fig 2 (left) A Greek vase. With Charles Ede



exceptional furniture, highlighting the ease with which ancient and modern sit together, in the process creating a remarkable dialogue across millennia.' Undoubtedly, this is worthwhile, I am at a loss to understand why anyone should think that ancient and modern cannot live together very happily. The other participants in the Focus section are Geysson & Bénétière (France), Mayoral (Spain), Galerie Mitterrand (France), Bowman Sculpture (UK), Ketabi Bourdet (France), Altomani & Sons (Italy), Galerie Pascal Lansberg (France) and Galerie Pauline Payet (France).

Naturally enough, early Christian manuscripts, illuminated or not, are always to be found among the antiquarian book dealers at TEFAF, but Quranic texts are less frequently offered. However, Shapero Rare Books has a single leaf from one of the very earliest, written in the Hijaz about 50 years after the death of the Prophet. Few such leaves ever come onto the market, most being in museums. They were an important element in the rapid spread of Islam and on this one is written the Surah Al-Araf aimed

TEFAF's overarching collecting philosophy,' and 'to expand the definition of an art fair, where thought-provoking connections between diverse art forms are brilliantly displayed and appreciated'.

Luckily, Charles Ede, one of the participants, gives a clearer picture: 'We will be featuring black- and red-figure Greek vases (**Fig 2**) and sharing the space with the Sean Kelly Gallery from New York, who will be showing paintings by Callum Innes especially created for the exhibition. The stand has been designed by the Mexican contemporary designer Gloria Cortina and will feature her



Fig 3 Hand-coloured etching from *Macaws* by Elizabeth Butterworth. With Shapero

Fig 4 Virgin martyrs SS Lucy and Catherine of Alexandria painted by Bernini. Cassa, 14th century. With Charles Ede. Larger

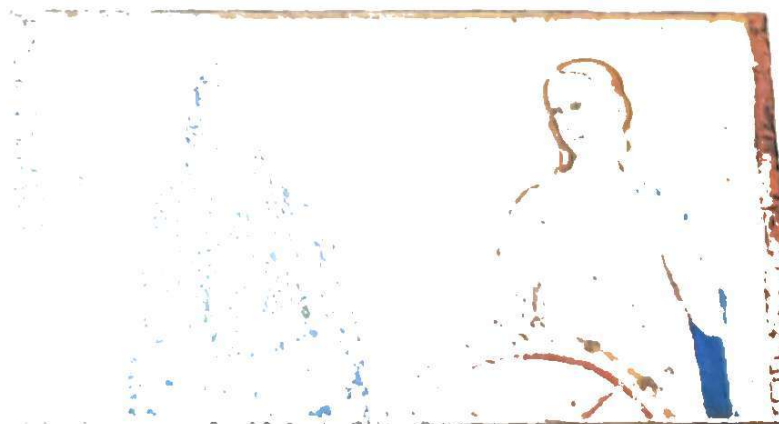




Fig 5 above: A 17th-century floral still life by Balthasar van der Ast. With Bijl-Van Urk

at fence-sitting polytheists, beginning: 'Those idols you invoke besides Allah are created beings like yourselves. So call upon them and see if they will answer you...'

Far from the deserts of 7th-century Arabia, Shapero also offers copies of three of the greatest books on parrots, Edward Lear's *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae*, 1832 (\$135,000), François Levaillant's *Histoire Naturelle des Perroquets*, 1801–05, illustrated by Jacques Barraband (\$125,000), and Elizabeth Butterworth's folio of 12 hand-coloured etchings, *Macaws* (Fig 3), 1993 (\$30,000). I remember interviewing Rodolphe d'Erlanger, the publisher of *Macaws*, as the 50 sets were being printed. Elizabeth Butterworth has been called the greatest painter of macaws since Edward Lear and, although I am a great admirer of Lear, I think that sells her a little short. She has been painting the birds since being given one by a boyfriend when she was at university.

Before learning of a set of standing figures with Blumka, the fourth-generation New York dealer in medieval and Renaissance sculpture, I knew little of sculpture in southern Belgium, other than it made Trappist beers and that Jean Froissart, chronicler of the 100 Years War, was buried there. It also produced an anonymous 16th-century carver talented enough to be known as the Master of Chimay. The five sandstone figures (Fig 1) with Blumka, up to 52½in high, are not mourners or pleurants, such as are found around the box tombs of medieval nobles,

Fig 6 right: Henri IV of France and Navarre by Frans Pourbus II, dated 1610, one of only two portraits of the king from life. With Weiss Gallery of London

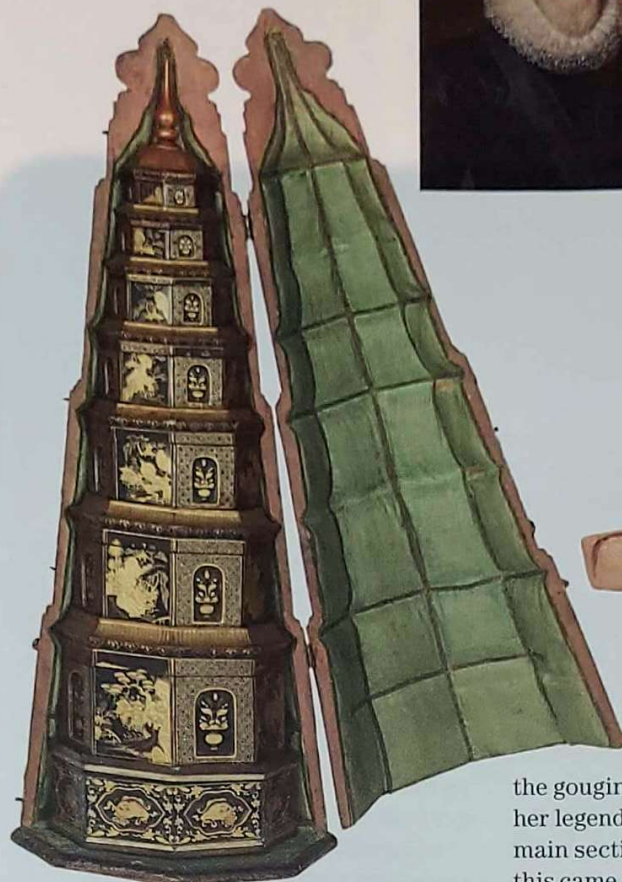


Fig 7 above: A terracotta Mary by Novelli. With Trinity Fine Art.
Fig 8 left: A 26in model pagoda. With Thomas Coulborn & Sons

but the three Marys, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus from an Entombment of Christ. They were in an abbey that preceded the brewery and was largely destroyed by French Revolutionaries, when they were hidden in a local garden until better times returned.

One of the Marys, the Magdalen, is the subject of a superb terracotta (Fig 7) with Trinity Fine Art of London. Dating from the 1640s, it is a maquette by the Florentine Antonio Novelli for a marble sculpture that was once in the collection of Queen Christina of Sweden. In the popular legend, the repentant Magdalen became a desert hermit, until taken up to heaven by a flight of angels. In this terracotta, which is about 16in high, she seems almost to levitate at their approach.

Two other female saints feature in one of the oldest paintings on display (Fig 4), an 8½in by about 15in gold-ground predella panel by Bernado Daddi (about 1280–1348), which is with the Parisian gallery Brimo de Laroussilhe. They are the virgin martyrs SS Lucy and Catherine of Alexandria, Catherine identified by her wheel and Lucy by a lamp, signifying light, rather than carrying her eyes,

the gouging out of which was only added to her legend in or after the 15th century. The main sections of the altarpiece from which this came are in the Courtauld Institute, but the small predella panels originally below them have long been scattered.

Balthasar van der Ast (1593/4–1657) had little need to sign his floral still life (Fig 5) shown by Bijl-Van Urk of Alkmaar, as the prominent lizard is almost signature enough. There are also insects, which were a favourite element in the compositions of his mentor and brother-in-law the elder Ambrosius Bosschaert (*Blooming marvellous*, February 21). The Chinese vase is from the Wan-li Emperor's reign (1573–1620), meaning that it would have been a proud new possession, as the 16in by almost 11in painting is dated 1625.

From late in the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1662–20), comes an impressive 26in-high black lacquer and gilt model pagoda (Fig 8), which breaks down into seven boxes—by tradition, pagodas were built with an uneven number of stories topped by a 'dragon-catching' finial. This also has its original silk-lined leather case. It is priced €125,000 with the Sutton Coldfield furniture dealer Thomas Coulborn & Sons, which is increasingly renowned for fine Chinese export works of art.

When I first saw Patrice Chéreau's film *La Reine Margot* in 1994, as a Huguenot →

Art market

Fig 9 right: Elizabeth Fritsch's *Quantum Pocket IV*, 2010. With Adrian Sassoon.

Fig 10 below: A rare gold, enamel and diamond ladybird brooch by Henrik Wigström for Fabergé. With À La Vieille Russie



Fig 11 right: Gerhard Richter's *Abstraktes Bild (456-2)*. With Von Vertes



I wanted to dive under the seats when the St Bartholomew's Massacre began. It may be with mixed feelings, therefore, that I look at the 23½in by 17½in portrait of Henri IV of Navarre and France (**Fig 6**) by Frans Pourbus II (1569–1622) with the Weiss Gallery of London. Dated 1610, the year of Henri's assassination, it is apparently one of only two portraits of the king from life. On rewatching the film recently, I was struck by the extraordinary facial resemblance

between Henri and Daniel Auteuil, who played him.

Mark Shaffer represents the fifth generation of his family at À La Vieille Russie, the New York jeweller, and is a leading Fabergé specialist. Particularly charming in the company's display is a rare gold, enamel and diamond ladybird brooch (**Fig 10**) by the workmaster Henrik Wigström.

Among other, more modern exhibits that I am looking forward to seeing are Gerhard

Richter's unusually colourful 25½in by 31½in *Abstraktes Bild (456-2)* (**Fig 11**), 1980, with Von Vertes of Zurich; Elizabeth Fritsch's hand-built stoneware *Quantum Pocket IV*, 2010 (**Fig 9**), with Adrian Sassoon of London; and the *Sunburst Tall Glass Chair*, 2021 (**Fig 12**), by Germans Ermičs with Maria Wettergren, the Paris-based Scandinavian specialist. How securely might one sit on that? 🐞

Next week Drawn to Paris

Pick of the week

The Society of British Artists was founded in 1823 as a counter to the Royal Academy's monopoly, but even in its early days there was little that was revolutionary in the art it promoted. By the 1880s, the organisation seemed fusty and revolution came indeed, in the form of James Whistler, who joined in 1884 and was elected president two years later. Despite his winning the accolade of 'Royal' for the society, it was soon rent down the middle and he was ousted by 19 votes to 18 in 1888. He resigned, declaring: 'The artists have come out, and the British remain.' The younger Albert Ludovici (1852–1932), one of the leavers, had Italian ancestry, had been born in Prague and studied in Paris, so qualified in one sense, although much of his art appealed to the British taste for Regency costume scenes. However, he had become an acolyte of Whistler and for a time produced really strong work in the manner of the master. In 1884, he exhibited a *Fantasia in White* and his last contribution in 1888 was a *Harmony in Blue and Green*. A fine Whistlerian Ludovici is *Harmony in Black* (**above right**), on show at TEFAF with the Maas Gallery of London. The 30in by 20¼in self-portrait is dated 1888, but was shown in his own exhibition at the Dowdeswell Gallery, rather than the RBA. In later life, he returned to a more conventional, academic style.

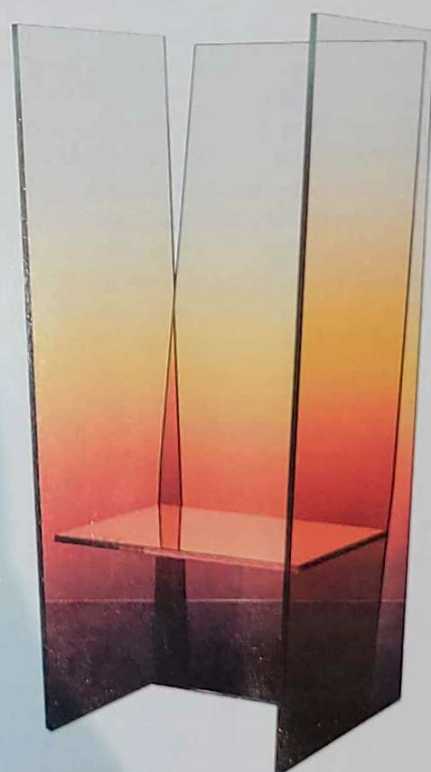


Fig 12: *Sunburst* chair. With Maria Wettergren