

**ART & DESIGN**

# A European Show for Shaker Furniture

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Inside Art

By **CAROL VOGEL**

Philippe Ségalot, the French-born, New York-based contemporary-art dealer, has never been good at standing still. Nor has he ever been predictable.

While he continues to deal with the art of our time, he has had a secret obsession: Shaker furniture. Now he plans to capitalize on the synergy between the design and art. It all started eight years ago, after a visit to the Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, Mass. “It blew my mind,” Mr. Ségalot said. “I fell in love with the minimal aesthetic.” He started studying everything he could about the Shaker communities and their furniture, quietly amassing the best examples he could find of Shaker design. Now, Mr. Ségalot plans to show (and sell) some of these works at the 10-day European Fine Art Fair in Maastricht, the Netherlands, which opens March 13.

He is joining forces with François Laffanour, the French furniture dealer and longtime Maastricht exhibitor, and the two men will create a Shaker environment at the fair filled with furniture and objects. Some are pieces Mr. Ségalot has collected; others will be loans from the Shaker Museum Mount Lebanon in Columbia County, N.Y. The works on view will include a 21-foot-long trestle table made in 1841, a rare double rocking settee and a classic meetinghouse bench. Prices will range from \$15,000 for a rocking chair to upward of \$300,000 for a pristine pine cupboard with white porcelain knobs.

While this project may surprise many who think of Mr. Ségalot only as a contemporary-art expert, it seems tame compared with some of the stunts he has pulled in the past. There were the years when he hired a Hollywood makeup artist to fly to Basel, Switzerland, and transform him into a balding nerd with Coke-bottle glasses. Then, using a fake exhibitor’s pass with his new face on it, he sneaked past the security guards and into the fair days before it opened,

reserving the best artworks for his clients. Or nine years after leaving Christie's, where he ran its contemporary-art department, when he unexpectedly dipped back into the auction world and organized a special evening sale at Phillips.

But to Mr. Ségalot, his latest foray into the furniture business makes sense, he said, because these pieces — with their perfect proportions and pure lines — go hand in hand with contemporary art.

“I was the first to include furniture in contemporary art sales I put together at Christie's,” Mr. Ségalot said. But rather than choose to exhibit his Shaker environment at contemporary fairs like Art Basel or Art Basel Miami Beach, he decided to make a splash at the European Fine Art Fair, because “it's a more global fair, and I wanted to bring Shaker furniture back to Europe since it originated there in the first place.”

He was alluding to the charismatic group the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, known as the Shakers, who followed their leader Mother Ann Lee from England to the United States in 1774.

#### **TABLE BY NOGUCHI**

Mr. Ségalot and Mr. Laffanour are not the only ones capitalizing on the collector market for contemporary design and art. Phillips is holding an auction in New York on Dec. 16, called “The Collector Icons of Design.” It will consist of 30 works, including a sculptural glass-top-and-rosewood table that the sculptor Isamu Noguchi made for A. Conger Goodyear, the first president of the Museum of Modern Art, for the living room of his house in Old Westbury, N.Y., which was designed by the architect Edward Durell Stone. “Even the first table I made for Conger Goodyear was not exactly utilitarian,” Noguchi once said. “I thought of it as sculpture that was a table.” Phillips estimates it will sell for \$2 million to \$3 million.

The auction also includes Eileen Gray's “The Maharaja of Indore's ‘Transat Chair From Manik Bagh Palace, 1930,” which is expected to fetch \$800,000 to \$1.2 million. Gray designed the chair — of lacquered wood, metal and leather — for her French villa on the Côte d'Azur.

“More and more, these pieces are appealing to collectors of contemporary art,” said Alexander Payne, senior director and worldwide head of design at Phillips. “We've been watching this trend grow for about the past five years now.” No one at Phillips is talking about where the works are from, but furniture dealers say they belong to Ronald S. Lauder, the cosmetics heir and a founder of the Neue Galerie in New York, who is a passionate collector with a particularly well-honed eye. He declined to comment when asked if the furniture and objects

were his.

## **FOUNTAINS IN THE SPRING**

Nearly a dozen outdoor fountains by the 73-year-old post-Minimalist sculptor Lynda Benglis — monumental sculptures in bronze and cast polyurethane — will dot the landscape of the Storm King Art Center in New Windsor, N.Y., come spring. At the same time, its indoor galleries will feature smaller works in bronze and stone that Ms. Benglis made in the early 1990s and play off the landscape and, in particular, rock formations. Together, the sculptures make up a show called “Lynda Benglis: Water Sources,” which is to be on view from May 16 through November.

“This is a nice continuation of our curatorial program of doing annual exhibitions with artists in our collection,” said John P. Stern, president of Storm King. “There hasn’t been a big show of Lynda’s outdoor works.”

At the same time, “Outlooks: Luke Stettner” will be on view, with a site-specific work by Mr. Stettner, 35, who lives and works in Columbus, Ohio. It is being organized by Nora Lawrence, associate curator at Storm King. “Luke’s very sensitive to surroundings and materials, and we thought it made sense to present someone from a younger generation,” Ms. Lawrence said.

## **OFF TO BOSTON**

Eva Respini, a curator in the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, who organized the Cindy Sherman retrospective there two years ago, has been named chief curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. “MoMA has been a great launching pad,” Ms. Respini said. “But this is an opportunity to shape and lead a program that I felt was too good to pass up.”

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