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LAFFANOUR GALERIE DOWNTOWN/PARIS



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Collecting

Paris has designs on buyers

Fiac focus in Paris; Pompidou takes saucy sculpture; Armory makes fairs more fair; Schumacher's Ferrari at Sotheby's

'Ozon Opus I', €950,000
OCTOBER 20, 2017 Melanie Gerlis



After a brief break from London's Frieze fairs, most of the art trade now finds itself at [Fiac art fair](#) in Paris (Grand Palais, until Sunday).

New this year is a section dedicated to design — though it isn't a complete departure for Fiac, which first launched a design segment in 2004 that ran until space constraints proved an issue in 2010. Fair director Jennifer Flay had considered a separate venue, the Palais d'Iéna, for up to 12 exhibitors but instead carved out a decent space for five design booths at the back of the Grand Palais this year. Exhibitors prefer this solution as it encourages flow between fields. "Buyers of modern and contemporary art also collect design," says Eric Philippe, whose booth includes a rare 1954 floor lamp by Italian designer Angelo Lelli (€35,000).

Furniture from the 20th century, by the likes of French masters Jean Prouvé and Charlotte Perriand, dominates, with some choice contemporary pieces such as limited-edition aluminium lights by brothers Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec at Galerie Kreo (€33,000). Certain pieces on offer, such as Le Corbusier's 1957 tapestry (€180,000) and 1947 wooden sculpture, "Ozon Opus I" (€950,000), at Galerie Downtown, show how the lines can blur between fine art, design and architecture — and with prices akin to their fine art counterparts.

The aesthetic flows both ways. Architectural and design motifs run through the contemporary art on show at Fiac, including Pae White's modular glass bricks, "Unclude" (2017), at Neugerriemschneider, Christian Hidaka's Renaissance-inspired oils at Michel Rein (2017, up to €29,000) and Tadashi Kawamata's "Favela Hut No 3" (2016) at Kamel Mennour (€50,000). "Design is part of the country's art de vivre," Flay says.

Early sales reported from the main fair included paintings by Per Kirkeby from Michael Werner (€150,000-€400,000) and works by George Condo (\$300,000) and Sterling Ruby (€125,000) at Sprüth Magers.

A talking point at Fiac is outside the fair. "Domestikator", a 40ft modular building by Dutch studio Atelier Van Lieshout, recreates a sexual act and was due for display in Paris's

Tuileries Garden, as part of Fiac's outdoor project programme. The nearby Louvre museum, from where the work could be seen, decided that its content was too rude for its liking, and withdrew it. Centre Pompidou dared to go where the Louvre did not and "Domestikator" is now on view on its piazza for the duration of the fair.

Joep van Lieshout says the relocation of his studio's work "opens up a broader discussion about the current challenges and complexities in the relationships between artists, institutions, public and press — and their subsequent impact on artistic freedom."

"Collectors advise us on what galleries they want to see here," says Alexandra Fain, director of Fiac satellite fair Asia Now (9 Avenue Hoche, until Sunday). She cites long-time Asian art buyers such as Uli Sigg, Dominique and Sylvain Lévy and Myriam and Guy Ullens as being behind some of the choices for the 30 or so galleries at the third edition of the niche fair.

This year's focus on art from Korea ably demonstrates a range of media from the country. Traditional and favoured Dansaekhwa (monochrome) painters such as Lee Ufan and Park Seo-Bo set the scene at the Columns Gallery (booth range €20,000-€230,000) and fertile earthenware by Shoi at Maria Lund sold swiftly (helped by starting prices under €1,000), while new media including video by Ayoung Kim at Choi & Lager, performances dotted around the fair and even a virtual reality piece by Hayoun Kwon at Galerie Sator ("489 Years", 2015, €15,000) show the political preoccupations of today's Korean artists. "It's still slower to get enthusiasm for the younger artists but fairs such as this are helping that to develop," says Sunhee Choi, director of Choi & Lager.

Benjamin Genocchio, director of New York's Armory Show, is adapting the composition of the fair to help mid-size galleries compete with their heavier-weight peers. "The traditional economics of art fairs are not helping small and mid-level galleries," he says.

Last year he reduced prices for younger exhibitors and for the Armory's 24th edition in March 2018 Genocchio is expanding the Focus section for solo presentations of lesser-known contemporary artists from 16 to 30 exhibitors. The majority of these are mid-tier galleries, which pay about 30 per cent less per sq ft than those in the main section (the entry-level cost of Focus is about \$21,000). At the same time, Genocchio is increasing the average size of booths for galleries at the higher end of the scale, which pay a premium price of about \$95 per sq ft, helping to subsidise Focus.

He is also offering a package to cap practical costs such as lighting and wall painting, for which fairs generally charge extra and which can mount up.

“It’s not a huge difference, but I’m trying to encourage participation at all parts of the spectrum. Art fairs remain the most powerful platforms for sales, they just don’t serve galleries equally,” Genocchio says.

Christie’s made a half-decent attempt to justify including Leonardo da Vinci’s c1500 “Salvator Mundi” in its postwar and contemporary art evening auction on November 15 (“a testament to the enduring relevance of this picture”, according to postwar and contemporary chairman Loïc Gouzer). Now it seems Sotheby’s is stretching definitions further. At its equivalent sale on November 16, the auction house is offering a 2001 Ferrari, chassis no 211 – the Formula 1 race car that Michael Schumacher drove to victory at the Monaco Grand Prix (est \$4m-\$5.5m). Grégoire Billault, head of Sotheby’s contemporary art in New York, says: “To call it a work of art is maybe pushing it and it isn’t to everyone’s liking, but it is contemporary and beautiful and chimes with our generation.” A report by car specialist Top Gear describes it as a “wonderful bit of machinery, too”.