

LA GAZETTE DROUOT

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BRAFA: More Appealing Than Ever

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For its 67th edition, BRAFA is leaving Tour & Taxis for Brussels Expo, while maintaining its highly successful eclectic, cross-the-board approach.



Pieter Bruegel the Younger (1564-1636), *Kermesse of Saint George with the Dance Around the Maypole*, 54.6 x 75.7 cm/21.5 x 29.8 in (detail). De Jonckheere Gallery.

In June 2022, Brussels is the place to be, especially at BRAFA! The reputation of the fair created in 1956 has grown so impressively in the last decade that it is now a must. One telling indication, beyond the unanimously rosy opinions of professionals, is that although BRAFA's dates overlap with those of [TEFAF](#) in Maastricht (June 25 to 30), 30-odd dealers are participating in both events. Of course, there is a strong need to meet up with art lovers in person, but the Belgian fair has successfully established itself in terms of both the quality and diversity of its exhibitors and the level of collectors it attracts. "Though we wanted to, we have not always been able to attend BRAFA, whose dates are very close to Maastricht, a flagship exhibition for Old Masters," says Georges de Jonckheere. "As I'm Belgian and was one of the first to participate 45 years ago, it's obvious that I support this exhibition, where we meet up with local and international collectors

and top dealers." As a worthy Old Master representative, he has reserved a *Kermesse of Saint George with the Dance Around the Maypole* by Bruegel the Younger (around €4 M). Dated 1627, it is teeming with detail and emanates a powerfully communicative energy with people dancing around a beribboned pole in the foreground: a true celebration of the return of summer.

Corinne Kevorkian, making her first appearance among the 115 exhibitors in this edition (including 18 new ones), and introducing her specialty as a gallery focused on Asian and Islamic arts, has been observing the fair for some time and notes "a steady rise in terms of quality and organization alike." She finds a Belgian clientele "with a sharp eye and an interest in Luristan bronzes," whom she has already met at TEFAF. For this occasion, she has earmarked a group of pieces mostly from a single French collection, including an elegant standard featuring two winged ibexes facing each other, typical of the animal art of western Iran's nomadic peoples during the first millennium BCE. "This art produced original forms of great modernity that are difficult to identify, as the creatures represented are not necessarily realistic—leaving much room for the imagination."



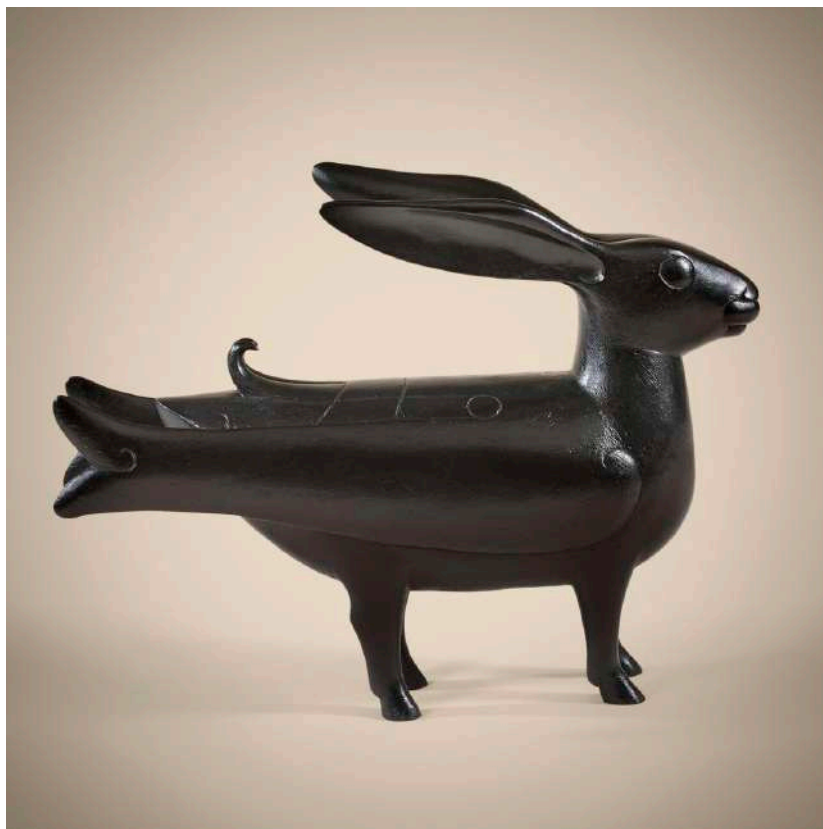
Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665), *David with the Head of Goliath*, oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm/51.18 x 38.18 in. Giammarco Cappuzzo Fine Art.

A Balance Between Specialties

What at first seems a handicap—the simultaneous staging of both fairs, with TEFAF as the heavyweight—turns out to be an asset and a factor of emulation. The 30 galleries that have split into two are certainly betting on this. It is true that Maastricht and Brussels are only 62 miles apart, but the dynamic also comes from the Belgian capital's position in the art market, with the arrival of international galleries like Almine Rech, Gladstone and Templon. This is also what prompted Alex Reding from Luxembourg to move there last October and attend BRAFA for the first time, while he has been participating in Art Brussels since 2003. His Nauman Reding Gallery is looking to position itself more internationally while strengthening links with "collectors with similar mentalities and purchasing power, who move in economic circles that constantly cross paths." He will present gouaches and inks by August Clüsserath (around €2,000), paintings by the young Luxembourg artist Jonathan Fletcher (€12,000/15,000) and works by Barthélémy Toguou and Stephan Balkenhol (over €60,000). On the contemporary

art side, it is worth mentioning a new arrival: the gallery of Marie-Hélène de La Forest Divonne, who opened a branch in Brussels six years ago with her son. She is presenting a joyous stand with Surrealist sculptures by Catherine François (between €5,000 and €20,000), and colorful landscapes by Vincent Bioulès (€4,000 to €50,000) and Guy de Malherbe (€1,500 to €35,000).

The balance between specialties is an important aspect of this non-specialist fair, which mingles archaeology (Antonia Eberwein, Axel Vervoordt), 18th-century furniture (Kraemer Gallery associated with Ars Belga), Old Masters and silverware (Brun Fine Art, with a christening set sporting the arms of King Victor-Emmanuel III of Italy and Princess Elena of Montenegro, made for the baptism of their first child, Princess Yolanda), comic strips (Huberty & Breyne), non-European arts (Didier Claes, Serge Schoffel), antique books (with the return of the Jean-Claude Vrain Bookstore) and jewelry. For its first BRAFA, the Collector Gallery unveils a collection of sculpture-jewelry pieces from the 1960s-1980s, mainly on their first outing, by Fernand Demaret and Claude Wesel, two Belgian goldsmiths.



François Xavier Lalanne (1927-2008), *Lapin polymorphe* (*Polymorphous Rabbit*), 1968/1988, bronze, 26.5 x 34 cm x 9.5 cm/10.4 x 13.4 x 3.7 in. Mathivet Gallery.

Belgian Art in the Spotlight

Highlights of the exhibition include the Caravaggesque *David with Goliath's Head*, by the Italian painter Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665), offered by Giammarco Cappuzzo Fine Art, a London gallery that has specialized in Old Master paintings for three generations and is now making its debut at BRAFA.

Belgian art will of course be central to the event, starting with the guest of honor, Arne Quinze. A choice explained by Beatrix Bourdon, the fair's general manager: "After Christo, Gilbert & George and Julio Le Parc, we wanted to return to our roots and remind ourselves that we have good artists." His colorful art—inspired by his garden, a genuine "temperate jungle"—is illustrated by the carpet he designed (on display at this edition) and a monumental installation featuring sculptures, drawings and paintings. "Through his many projects and installations in a wide range of cities like Paris, Shanghai, Beirut, Washington D.C., Mumbai, Sao Paulo, Dubai and Cairo, Arne Quinze seeks to reintroduce nature into urban spaces," says BRAFA president Harold t'Kint de Roodenbeke. "He encourages us to question our environment and our place in it; to marvel; to reconnect with our roots. His expressive, colorful creations should certainly instill a joyful, positive atmosphere at BRAFA: one particularly appropriate for an edition representing renewal."



Egypt, Middle Kingdom, 12th dynasty, reign of Senusert I, 1971-1926 B.C. Fragment of the head of Pharaoh Senusert I, black granite, 16 x 10 x 13 cm/6.3 x 3.9 x 5.1 in. Axel Vervoordt.

Belgian art continues: fin de siècle for Thomas Deprez Fine Arts, focusing on the Impressionist and Symbolist movements, the must-see works of the fair. It will be a pleasant stroll through the stands of Rueb Modern and Contemporary to see the small *Coast in the Balearic Islands* by William Degouve de Nuncques (1867-1935), Oscar de Vos to admire the luminous *Sunset on the Thames (Waterloo Bridge)* painted by Emile Claus (1849-1924) in 1918, and Harold T'Kint de Roodenbeke for a delightful view of the sea at *Knokke-Heist, August 28, 1891* captured by Georges Lemmen (1865-1916). The perfect way to go with the flow, moving from discovery to discovery: the watchword of the Brussels fair.

Did you Know?

BRAFA is a non-profit association, which means that it is organized by dealers for dealers. The goal is not to make a profit but to achieve the best result possible with a defined budget. Stands range from 25 to 100 m² (269 to 1076 sq ft, with an average of 60 m²/645.8 sq ft) with prices averaging between €20,000 and €30,000.

BRAFA Art Fair, Brussels Expo, Brussels.
From June 19 to 26, 2022.