

Antiques & Art



The French artist, Marcel Duchamp appears to have been correct when he said: "Art is a habit-forming drug." The recently published Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report 2023 reveals that, despite the economy's volatility, the art market expanded last year. UK sales of art and antiques totalled an impressive £9.6 billion, that is up 5% on 2021.

Are you a devotee of art and antiques? If so, from 30th June to 7th July you *must* be in London. This is when **London Art Week (LAW)** takes place – a moment when real synergy takes place in the capital's art world. LAW was launched in 2013 as a platform to unite three already established events – *Master Drawings London, Master Drawings and Sculpture Week* and *Master Paintings Week*, and with the recent demise of several primary art and antique fairs, the 2023 event has taken on even more significance.

Offering paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture and objects from Antiquity to the 21st century, the event is staged primarily around St. James's, Mayfair, Pimlico, Kensington and Chelsea. It is such an impressive platform of the finest works the market has to offer, that I can do little more than beam the spotlight on a few highlights. Full details can be found at www.londonartweek.co.uk, where you can download a map created by the talented, London-based artist, Adam Dant (b. 1967).

An inspiring and appropriate starting point is **4 Cromwell Place**, South Kensington, SW7 2JE, for this was the former studio and palatial home of the prominent British society painter Sir John Lavery (1856-1941). It was here that Lavery and his second wife, the dazzling American-born, Hazel Martyn (1880-1935), entertained the likes of King George and Queen Mary. Today, behind its elegant façade, are 14 gallery spaces, across five, Grade II listed townhouses, resulting in an exciting art hub where all art devotees can collaborate and flourish. Among those showing here is **Finch & Co**, who normally

trade by appointment at their office in Old Brompton Road, but for LAW they take space at Cromwell Place to showcase items from their latest scholarly catalogue, together with ornithological watercolours by Sarah Stone (1760-1844), who is deemed the first English woman painter of animals to achieve professional recognition.

The ornithological theme continues at **Amir Mohtashemi**, 69 Kensington Church Street, W8 4BG, a leading dealer in Indian and Islamic art. He brings together a stunning collection of fine detailed watercolours of birds commissioned by Europeans in India, China and the Malay Peninsula. Produced during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, these highly decorative works are salient examples of Asian ornithological painting.

Many of the LAW events are, of course, taking place in the heart of prestigious St. James's, an area founded by permission of King Charles II and the home of St. James's Palace, which, dating to the 1530s, is still the 'Senior' royal palace. On Pall Mall, the fashionable portrait painter, Thomas Gainsborough, resided in a wing of Schomberg House from 1774 until his death in 1788 and at number 100 Pall Mall lived John Julius Angerstein (1735-1823), whose legendary collection of paintings later formed the kernel of the National Gallery's collection.

So, let's start with some light refreshment at The Diamond Jubilee Tea Salon, on the Fourth Floor of **Fortum & Mason**, 181 Piccadilly, W1A 1ER. Now we can begin our artistic adventure. Nearby is **The Weiss Gallery**, 59 Jermyn Street, SW1Y 6LX who,



Study of a Peacock; watercolour by Sarah Stone (1760-1844), Finch & Co

in their purpose-built gallery adorn their walls with an unequalled selection of historical portraits, including examples from the brush of Robert Peake (1551-1619), who, in 1607, was appointed court painter to King James I.

Next door is the equally impressive **Sladmore Gallery**, 57 Jermyn Street, SW1Y

6LX, who present *Forged, Carved and Cast – from earth to the artist's eye*. This illuminating display reveals how the material used informs the sculptural form. Although there are contemporary works by the likes of Nic Fiddian-Green (b. 1963), renowned for his beautiful replicas of horse's heads, and Mario Dilitz (b. 1973), celebrated for



Striding Mars; bronze by Giambologna (1529-1608), Stuart Lochhead Sculpture



his phenomenal wood carving of the human form, many will be intrigued by a plaster foundry model of *Portrait of Augustus Rodin* by the Russian Prince Paul Troubetzkoy (1866-1938). Created around 1906, it has always been a mystery as to why the bronze cast, which Troubetzkoy gave to Rodin, wasn't part of the Musée Rodin's collection. Research now reveals Rodin gifted the bronze to Paris-based American art advisor, Sara Tyson Hallowell.

Stuart Lochhead Sculpture, First Floor, 35 Bury Street, SW1Y 6AU, has works from antiquity to the 20th century and only acquires sculptures that possess three essential values: rarity, integrity and beauty. For LAW, Lochhead presents *The Alchemist's Laboratory: Giambologna's Forge in Florence*, featuring five bronze models by Giambologna (1529-1608), who is celebrated for his sophisticated modelling and differentiated surface finish. All are from an important private American collection and include the rare 'Hercules and the Centaur'.

Another sculptor is the focus at **Philip Mould & Company**, 18-19 Pall Mall, SW1Y 5LU. Despite having work in the National Portrait Gallery and the Tate Gallery, I sus-

pect very few have heard of the Hon. Stephen Tomlin (1901-1937), and yet he was the Bloomsbury's group's primary sculptor. With his disarming good looks and inexhaustible magnetism, the promiscuous Tomlin captivated his contemporaries and as a sculptor he immortalised the faces of Bloomsbury's best-known characters, including Duncan Grant, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey, whose niece, Julia, Tomlin married in 1927. Although he exhibited at the 1931 National Society Exhibition, the London Artists' Association in 1934 and the London Group in 1924, 1926 and 1935, his work was never shown at the RA. However, he received a number of impressive commissions, including designing a wall bracket for flowers for the state cabins of the Queen Mary and a

9-foot female nude, cast in lead, made for the Hon. Bryan Guinness' garden at Biddesden House, Hampshire.

The French painter, Edgar Degas, said "No woman painter knows what style is." Wow, how erroneous is that! One of the greatest artistic injustices is that women artists have always been deemed inferior to their male counterparts. The evidence is overwhelming. For example, *The Story of Art* by E. H. Gombrich, published in 1950 is widely regarded as a seminal work but not a single female artist is mentioned and even in the 16th edition published in 2022, Gombrich only mentions one! However, recently there has been a significant focus on recontextualizing the work of female artists and bringing their contribution to the forefront. A dealership embracing this philosophy is **Stephen Ongpin Fine Art**, 82 Park Street, W1K 6NH, who from 30th June to 28th July presents *Beauty in Individualism: A Selection of Works by Women Artists of the 20th and 21st Centuries*. The eclectic display features drawings and watercolours by pioneering artists such as Gluck (1895-1978), who, as a gender-nonconformer, rejected any forename or prefix such as "Miss" or "Mr",



A Trid of Strength, oil on canvas, by Harold Harvey (1874-1941), David Messum Fine Art

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Gillian Ayres, RA (1930-2018), Scottish illustrator Jessie Marion King (1875-1949), American abstract expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) and Gwen John (1876-1939), who is, until 8th October, the focus of an exhibition at the Pallant House Gallery, Chichester. Complementing these are compositions by lesser-known figures and emerging contemporaries such as Anne Connell (b. 1959) and Úrsula Romero, who, based in Spain, is best-known for her stunning botanical studies.

Set in an 18th century townhouse the gallery of **Patrick Bourne & Co**, 6 St. James's Place, SW1A 1NP celebrate the talent of another female – Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981). Born Rosa Winifred Roberts, she married the artist Ben Nicholson in 1920, and each had some influence on each other's work, in fact, Ben even admitted he learnt a great deal about colour from his wife. The works offered by the gallery come from a private collection.

A short distance away it is festivity time at **David Messum Fine Art**, 12 Bury Street, SW1Y 6AB. This year the firm's founder and Chairman, David Messum, celebrates his sixtieth year in business and mounts an impressive Summer Exhibition. On view until 28th July, it epitomises Messum's passion for and promotion of figurative art, with an emphasis on the artists of the Cornish colonies of Newlyn, St. Ives and Lamorna. Prices range from £385 for *Emma and her Baby*, *Chelsea Embankment*, an endearing etching by Theodore Casimir Roussel (1847-1926) to £350,000 for Frank Bramley's (1857-1915) stunning and important oil painting *Weaving a Chain of Grief*. Among my favourites are the vigorously painted study for *Against Regatta Day* (£65,000) by Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947) and Walter Langley's beautifully painted *Jilted: The Fraud of Men was Ever So, Since Summer First was Leafy...* (£38,500). An excellent catalogue illustrating over 100 works is available at £20.

Finally, although not part of the Official London Art Week, there are two other worthy happenings to mention. Founded in 1886 by a group of former Academicians as

a reaction against the restrictive and parochial attitude of the Royal Academy, the **New English Art Club**, present their annual exhibition at the **Mall Galleries**, The Mall, SW1. Taking place between 23rd June to 1st July, this is one of my favourite events and I have the daunting undertaking of selecting one work from nearly 400 to receive *The Anthony J. Lester Art Critic Award*. Prices range from £195 to £30,000.

For those who admire high detail, the annual exhibition of the **Royal Miniature Society (RMS)**, is always an endearing occasion. Taking place from 28th June to 8th July at the **Bankside Gallery** (next to Tate Modern), Thames Riverside, 48 Hopton Street, SE1 9JH, it is the world's foremost showcase for contemporary miniature art. With a maximum size of 6 x 4 inches (15.24

Marcel Duchamp

x 10.16 cm), the painting of miniatures demands self-discipline, for where large pictures give some latitude in composition, miniatures are unforgiving of the least mistake; a tolerance of even a millimetre is hardly permitted. Apart from their quality and beauty, they have much appeal because of their size and, with stunning works available from a few hundred pounds, affordability is an enticement too.

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Untitled, watercolour by Lynne Mapp Drexler (1928-1999), Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Male Figure, ceramic, conceived by Stephen Tomlin, Phyllis Keyes and Duncan Grant, Philip Mould & Co