

## The Very Best of Frieze Masters

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**AnOther** spotlights the sensational artworks you need to see at this year's fair



- [TextHarry Seymour](#)

As the good, the bad and the ugly of the art world descend on London for a plethora of fairs, auctions, exhibitions and of course cocktail parties, AnOther is here to guide you through Frieze's grown-up counterpart, Frieze Masters, with a curation of excellent artworks that truly exemplify what the fair is all about.

Frieze Masters represents over 130 galleries worldwide, considered to be the best of the best. The art inside spans 4,000 years and all works are scrutinised by a panel of judges to make sure they fit the "Master" label. The hot gossip each year is who has had what vetted. It takes itself more seriously than Frieze – emphasis is placed on connoisseurship, curatorship and refined taste. It's a microcosm that represents a perfect lesson in exactly what is going on in the high-profile global art

world right now. Fortunes and reputations can be made and broken, and of course, everything is very expensive.

Since Helly Nahmed's booth last year, which recreated the cluttered office of a curator in all its messy glory, with coffee cups and magazine stacks to navigate, galleries have been thinking outside the box to gain the extra mile of attention they want. This year sees the Tomasso Brothers exhibit Bridget Riley's linear drawings alongside bronze and marble statues, the notorious contemporary gallery Hauser and Wirth has teamed up with old master wonder Moretti Fine Art to showcase the best in blending old and new, and Robilant + Voena has hung beautiful old master portraits alongside the best in futuristic art.



Lucio Fontana, Concetto Spaziale, 1960

The last few years have seen an explosion of Italian Modernist artists – Bonalumi, Scheggi, Castellani, and of course, the maestro himself, Lucio Fontana. Famed for tearing a slit down the middle of a white canvas and proclaiming it art, it's the antithesis of "my four year old could have done that". But they didn't, and inevitably, couldn't. Fontana's works sell for millions, and various galleries will be pushing theirs across the fair as the best examples. Who knows when the price will stop climbing for these works – the hot potatoes of Frieze Masters? They perfectly encapsulate the art market climate of today – if you had picked up one of these ten or 20 years ago, you would be laughing.



Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Flight into Egypt (Night)*, 1897

Gérôme was an artist obsessed with North Africa and the Middle-East. His paintings depict men drinking coffee in souks and holy sites. They offer a charming glimpse into the past of the area, and seem extremely poignant in the current climate. Gérôme's work is humble – it's the sort of painting that passionate collectors go wild for, but not in a flashy way. A picture like this, with its lucid colours and dreamy atmosphere, is the pinnacle of discerning taste.

Sir Alfred Gilbert, *Saint George*, 1896

This bronze presented by art world big hitters Fine Art Society (or "FAS" to those in the know) is a real highlight in the sculpture category. The sinews of the modeling are mind blowing – it's a work of a craft genius. The folds in the fabric and the ever-so-delicately shifted poise are both subtle and alluring. When you consider the raw material properties of bronze and how it can be transformed into this elegant masterpiece, the mind simply boggles.

Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto*, 1960

Pistoletto is famed for painting on mirrors – it's an act that draws the viewer immediately into the art work – who is now looking at who? Are you the art? Are you maybe even the artist? He plays clever tricks with ideas of anonymity – and this is a great example. He may not be to everyone's taste, but he makes a good point, as well as for a good discussion and a good amount of money.

Male Ancestor Figure, Ngbandi people, D. R. of the Congo, Ubangi River Area, 19th century

It's always nice to see ethnographic art appreciated for its creativity and craft. It's refreshing in a room of art made by people who consider themselves artists, to see something made by someone who did not. This was a votive used in ritual and worship – it's an important piece of very personal history. What makes this one extra special however, is it belonged to the one and only Pablo Picasso and was in his studio while he worked. Upon knowing this you can instantly see the relationship between his cubist forms of human bodies and this figure. Maybe Cubism started in the Congo 100 years before Picasso claimed it?

Sebastian De Llanos Y Valdes, Head of Saint John the Baptist on a Pewter Plate, 1660

People assume Frieze Masters will be full of old European paintings of biblical allegory, and for some part, it is, and that isn't a bad thing. As for old master subject matter, it doesn't get better than the head of John the Baptist. John was beheaded on the orders of King Herod, as requested by his stepdaughter, the original femme fatale, Salome. This example has an excellent colour palette – the flesh is still warm, but undoubtedly dead. The old master market has taken a real knock in the last decade, but pictures like this show how much power and potential it has.

Qianren Huang, Complete Geographical Map of the Everlasting Unified Qing Empire, 1811

That's right, Frieze Masters has something for the bibliophiles and cartography enthusiasts too. This exquisite map will transfix you for days. The detail and use of colour make it an artwork in its own right. With the economic boom in China, art collectors from the East have been exporting as much as they can carry back to China in recent years and my money is on this being snapped up straight away.

Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Retícula Corpuz XVII, 1956 - 1973

Fiaminghi is a Brazilian artist with a real eye for colour and pattern. His works are stark and arresting – this is the kind of thing that interior designers who visit Frieze Masters will have their eyes out for. The fair is always teeming with decorators keen to fulfil their client's demands and empty their pockets, and the galleries know this. It places the aesthetic at the forefront – some people buy for the history, some for the name, and others just for the look.

Pieter Brueghel the Younger, The Wedding Procession

Brueghel's scenes of peasant life are incredibly whimsical. This scene – depicting a vibrant wedding procession, complete with musical instruments and accompanying animals – could be lifted straight from a fairytale. Pictures like this often surface at auction, smashing their estimate then disappearing for a while before resurfacing at an art fair as the star attraction of a gallery's booth. And it's probably the last chance you'll have to see it before it disappears in to Mayfair mansion or Swiss vault for another 50 years.

*Frieze Masters runs until October 18 in Regent's Park.*