



A fair growing in size and in confidence

Exhibitor numbers at *Masterpiece* rise to 160 as trade prepares for summer showcase

by Frances Allitt

Size isn't everything, but as *Masterpiece London* returns bigger than ever this month, its growth seems to reflect both current good standing and promise for the future.

The fair, which takes place at The Royal Hospital Chelsea from June 28-July 4, falls in the midst of the two-and-half-week stretch of auctions and exhibitions that represent the height of London's busy summer season.

Since its debut in 2010, *Masterpiece* has retained the good opinion of many dealers, despite being one of the more expensive events on the circuit. Reports of last year's event were generally positive with news of first-time buyers and sales across the board. Several dealers reflected that, eight years in, it had struck the right balance between luxury event and traditional trade fair.

Following that staging, MCH Group, owner of *Art Basel*, has become *Masterpiece's* majority shareholder. Lucie Kitchener, installed as the fair's managing director, has promised further international editions of the event.

Subtle changes

Meanwhile – prior to any details about where the brand may be heading overseas – there will be some subtle changes to the London event. A new floorplan is intended to improve the flow of visitors and has allowed exhibitor numbers to swell to 160 (up from roughly 153 last year) for the ninth edition.

Growth (and some fallout) has made space for around 24 first-time participants. Among those joining this year are Old Master painting and sculpture specialist Lullo Pampoulides, Sarah Myerscough Gallery with contemporary art, The Redfern Gallery bringing modern British and Contemporary art and Landau Fine Art, dealing in European masters from the 20th century to the present.

Of course, the exhibitor base is



Left: Rolleston brings this pair of George III grandoles from c.1765, priced in the region of £100,000

Above: An ormolu-mounted satinwood, paddock amaranth, tulipwood and marquetry serpentine commode, c.1770-72, supplied by Thomas Chippendale to Edwin Lascelles, 1st Baron Harewood, for Harewood House, Yorkshire. Priced in excess of £500,000, it forms part of Ronald Phillips' Chippendale exhibition that will run concurrently at both *Masterpiece London* and the firm's gallery in Bruton Street, Mayfair



Above: a Charles II chinoiserie cup and saucer by WS London, 1663 is offered by Koopman Rare Art, priced in excess of £100,000

Above right: this painting of Prince Harry, aged 15, is by John Wonnacott who completed *The Royal Family: A Centenary Portrait* in 2000 for the National Portrait Gallery. It is available on Christopher Kingzett's stand for £75,000



Numbers are important, but what really matters is who comes

only part of the equation. MCH is focusing its efforts on a wider audience and a younger demographic in particular.

"Our footfall last year was up 20% on previous years," *Masterpiece* chairman Philip Hewat-Jaboor tells ATG. "Numbers are important, but what really matters is who comes. We are really focused on museums and attracting new collectors as well as a younger group."

Perhaps the most notable strategy for bringing in the next generation, at least from a trade perspective, is the fair's vetting school. Started last year, this is designed to give younger specialists experience and training in vetting works of art. The aim



is to "raise the next generation of connoisseurs", Hewat-Jaboor adds.

New this year is a symposium on June 30, the Saturday of the fair, during which academics, curators and various 'emerging stars' of the trade will have a platform to present papers and learn from experts in their fields. The Little Grand Tour will take children around the fair, introducing them to art and antiques, and there is also a family day on Sunday, July 1.

Returning exhibitors at this year's event include Richard Green,

Robilant + Voena, Dickinson, Apter-Fredericks and H Blairman & Sons.

As in past years, some will share stands to save on cost and encourage



Above: Robert Young Antiques brings a pair of Scandinavian red-breasted Merganser drake decoys with sculptural details and original painted decoration. Made with painted wood, horse hair and verdigris copper wire, c.1880-1900, the pair is offered for £5500



Above: Philip Mould brings this portrait miniature, possibly of Oliver Cromwell's son-in-law Robert Rich, by Samuel Cooper. The 17th century miniature, around 3in (8cm) high in a later silver frame, is priced at £26,000

Below: John Mitchell Fine Paintings includes *The Shadow of Mont Blanc at Sunset* by Gabriel Loppé painted from the summit in August 1873 on its stand. The painting, completed in oil on card laid on board, measures 12 x 16in (30 x 40cm) and is dated 1873. It is priced at £65,000



Above: Wartski will offer this jewelled and enamelled gold photograph frame by Peter Carl Fabergé for a price between £50,000 and £100,000



the idea of cross-collecting. Les Enluminures and Daniel Crouch, for example, will stage an in-exhibition show titled *A Brief History of Time: From Mains to Mars*, bringing together celestial maps, instruments and illuminated manuscripts to demonstrating the breadth of the galleries' offerings.

Chippendale 300

The Chippendale tercentenary will be a feature of this year's fair. Among those taking pieces by England's best-known furniture maker, designer and entrepreneur will be Apter-Fredericks, offering several pieces of Chippendale design furniture, including a writing table

reputedly supplied by Chippendale to Raynham Hall, Norfolk. Ronald Phillips has assembled 35 pieces for a selling exhibition that will run concurrently at the fair and the firm's gallery in Bruton Street, Mayfair. The Phillips show includes items from a number of key Chippendale commissions including the Chippendale family's work for Edwin Lascelles at Harewood House.

An ormolu-mounted marquetry commode, c.1770-72 will appear alongside a neoclassical giltwood mirror made c.1785 for the White Drawing Room at Harewood that was rediscovered in North America in 2016.

In addition to ancient artworks

on offer from dealers such as Rupert Wace, Kallos Gallery and ArtAncient (bringing a 4.6bn year-old meteorite), there is also a supply of contemporary art. Blain Southern, for example, brings a specially commissioned work by the Japanese artist Chibaru Shiota.

For the second year Serbian artist Marina Abramović (b.1946) has created a series of alabaster portraits for *Masterpiece Presents*, which greets visitors on arrival. The combination of a traditional material and a contemporary statement is well chosen: a fitting tribute to an event that seeks to combine the fabulous from every era. ■

masterpiecefair.com

5 Questions

Paul (left) and Alex Peacock started trading four years ago and opened a showroom in Pimlico earlier this month. They are exhibiting at *The Art & Antiques Fair Olympia* from June 20-27. Below, Paul discusses the pair's transformation from collectors to dealers.



► peacocksfineart.com

1. How did you get your start?

We were furnishing our apartment in a Grade II-listed house in Hampstead. We kept buying antique furniture of different periods and quality until we ran out of space and had to start selling. Dealing was never an intention – collecting was.

As the volume of buying and selling increased, our hobby demanded considerable time and effort be spent on research, knowledge acquisition and taste development. At some point we had to get realistic – this was no longer a hobby but a full-time job. We thought of the branding and started trading as Peacock's Finest.

2. The first sale you remember making?

A collection of stamps as a child. In retrospect it was probably worth much more but, hey, I got an ice cream.

3. How has the trade changed?

We have seen prices going up slowly but steadily since we began trading almost four years ago. Also, people are tired of empty spaces and there is definitely a trend towards interiors rich in fine furniture, detail, pattern, texture and colour.

That means real wood and abundance of textiles. Plastic and MDF are out. Grey is dead. Over time our offerings have changed significantly as we have listened to our clients and observed the market.

4. An exhibition you would love to stage?

There are no concrete plans yet but we would love to do 'After Antiquity', an exhibition of fine English furniture.

5. Real ale or espresso martini? Gyokuro tea!

If you would like to be featured in 5 Questions, please contact frances.allitt@antiquetrade gazette.com