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STREAMLINE

## It's a Fair World, After All

Art fairs are proliferating worldwide, so we consider a few of the most intriguing ones this season.

By PETER TRIPPI



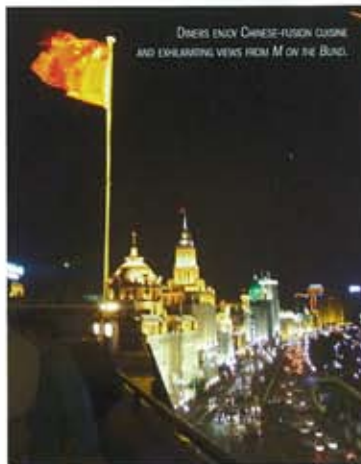
### Shanghai

With a population of 1.3 billion — almost twice that of the U.S. and European Union combined — the People's Republic of China beckons entrepreneurs of all stripes, and that certainly includes art dealers and auctioneers. Many believe China will become, within the next decade, the fourth largest market for art after New York, London, and Paris, but which of its cities will serve as the center of that activity?

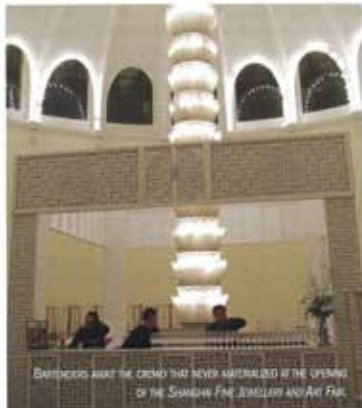
Although Hong Kong's fading British veneer reassures Westerners, and although Beijing has always positioned itself as China's capital of both government and culture, the Shanghaiese have historically been the West's most enthusiastic trading partners. Centrally positioned along China's eastern coast, Shanghai is a three-hour flight from Seoul and Tokyo, and two hours from Beijing and Hong Kong. In 1985, the city had one skyscraper, and now has more than 300; its enormous new airport features an extra unopened terminal awaiting the hoped-for onslaught of visitors to World Expo 2010.

Sotheby's and Christie's have done business in Shanghai since 1994, and New York's Phillips de Pury and Paris's Artcurial have just opened their own salerooms. In early September, Switzerland's Pierre Huber and Lorenzo Rudolf launched their *ShContemporary* fair in the elegant Shanghai Exhibition Center. (Built by the Soviets in 1955 as a gesture of communist solidarity, this Stalinist-Deco palace now finds itself surrounded by blatantly capitalist hotels and boutiques.) Between 25,000 and 35,000 visitors poured into *ShContemporary* over three days to see 130 galleries, roughly half from the East and half from the West. Although reliable statistics are always scarce with fairs (especially new ones), it appears that both Chinese and foreign art sold briskly here to dealers and collectors from all over. *ShContemporary* 2008 will probably be even busier as it coincides with the next edition of the Shanghai Biennial, which also displays new art from both China and abroad.

Still more contemporary art was traded in mid-November at the *Shanghai Art Fair*, which brought 150 galleries from around the world to ShanghaiMART, a sterile tradeshow hall. Buyers there were heartened by Phillips de Pury's successful London auction on October 13 of Chinese contemporary art collected since 1986 by New Yorkers Howard and Patricia Farber; works first bought by the couple for tens of thousands of dollars sold into the millions, and the prestige of these artists grew further in October when



DINERS ENJOY CHINESE-FUSION DINING AND ENLARGING VIEWS FROM M ON THE BUND.



BARTENDERS WAIT FOR THE CROWD THAT NEVER MATERIALIZED AT THE OPENING OF THE SHANGHAI FINE JEWELLERY AND ART FAIR.



ZHANG JIANFANG'S SCULPTURE 'VILLAGE LEADER' AT SHANGHAI MART GALLERY ON MOGANSHAN ROAD, WHICH OPENED IN 1996.



ANDRÉ BRASLER (FRENCH, 1929-2004)

FLOWERS AND WOMAN

N.O., OIL ON CANVAS, 45 1/2" x 32 1/2"

RAVENSCOURT GALLERIES, MOSCOW/LONDON, AT SHANGHAI FINE JEWELLERY AND ART FAIR

Approximately 6,000 visitors made their way over eight days to the Stalinist palace to see the 25 art galleries and eight jewelers there, down from the total of 58 originally announced. The fair was conceived by Maximin Berko, 29, whose parents run a successful paintings gallery in Brussels, and who has observed the emergence of China's rich since 2001, when he arrived in Shanghai to study. His promising concept was taken up by the Italian entrepreneur Nicolò Mori, 35, who has worked in China for several years.

Like their counterparts coordinating the Sinopec Formula One Grand Prix and the Changsha Business Jet Rendez-Vous, Berko and Mori scheduled their fair during October, when Shanghai's weather is optimal, and established marketing partnerships with a range of businesses also targeting wealthy Chinese — including *Luxury Properties Magazine*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *artnet.com*, Sofitel's new Pudi Boutique Hotel, and Nine Dragons Hill Polo Club. Berko and Mori also put into place the usual procedures for international fairs, such as having unnamed experts vet the displays' authenticity and preparing a handsome catalogue. Yet they apparently could not prevent their exhibitors from bringing artworks that were, with some exceptions, of second-tier quality.

Not surprisingly, the largest contingent of dealers came from Belgium and Paris (half a dozen each), with smaller turnouts from Shanghai, Amsterdam, Milan, Munich, Salzburg, Stockholm, Tokyo, Moscow, Beverly Hills, and Monte Carlo. The finest stand was Brussels's Gisèle Croës, whose historical Chinese masterworks sold well to a local audience that knew how to assess them. There seemed to be little action among the Old Master dealers, who had downplayed the Christian imagery common in that field in favor of the secular. The Amsterdam dealer Salomon Lilian, for example, offered a superb pair of 17th-century Flemish panel paintings showing mischievous monkeys, which are favorable omens in China. Similarly targeted was a series of early 19th-century poet scenes, made by a Chinese painter in the English manner and sourced by China-based consultant William Hanbury-Tenison for Anderson Galleries (Beverly Hills).

The Belgian collectors Guy and Myriam Ullens opened a Beijing museum featuring their collection of Chinese and foreign contemporary works. Shanghai's most visible centers of cool are the Museum of Contemporary Art, founded by the Hong Kong collector Samuel Kung, and the string of former factories along Moganshan Road that house high-rent galleries and artists' studios, both of mixed quality.

Notable at all of these sites is the high proportion of foreign dealers and buyers, especially Europeans looking for the next big thing. Armed with valuable euros and pounds sterling, these visitors — along with thousands of expatriates settling in Shanghai to work in its gleaming corporate towers — are well served by Shanghai's new hotels, restaurants, and boutiques, and charmed by hundreds of grand buildings designed by the British and French authorities who governed much of the city from 1849 until 1946.

In sharp contrast, buzz was noticeably absent at mid-October's *Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair* (SFJAF), billed as China's first fair emphasizing Western antiques and fine art from different historical periods.

DAVID TENORS THE YOUNGER (FLEMISH, 1610-1690)

MONKEYS PLAYING CARDS AND DRINKING

C. 1655-65, OIL ON PANEL, 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" IN.

SALOMON LILIAN, AMSTERDAM, AT SHANGHAI FINE JEWELLERY AND ART FAIR



THE MAJANA JUMEIRAH RESORT, WHERE DUBAI'S LEADING ART FAIR OCCURS



Sales of European paintings and decorative arts seemed sluggish, and nothing was sold by a Parisian dealer of African art — a field almost unknown in China. Even this ostensibly historical show was infiltrated by a few galleries offering Chinese contemporary art, which did reasonably well. Several exhibitors requesting anonymity complained that Exhibition Center staff did not prepare their stands until the last minute, that Chinese clients insisted on negotiating even when prices had been set, and that the standard rate of value-added tax mysteriously changed during the run of the fair.

Yet there were encouraging signs that may well bring dealers back for another try next fall. Business picked up toward the end of the fair as collectors arrived to inspect and buy artworks that had been quietly identified by their representatives earlier in the week. Chinese visitors were seen to be looking carefully at each stand, fascinated by artworks generally unfamiliar to them. Unlike Japan, China has no museum of Western art and no university curriculum of world art contextualizing Rococo furniture or West African sculptures. It is encouraging that the Shanghai Museum, admired worldwide for its ancient Chinese holdings, is now welcoming capacity crowds of Shanghaiese for its temporary exhibitions of Western art. On view this autumn, for example, was a large survey of outstanding masterworks from Madrid's Museo del Prado, sent by the Spanish government as a gesture of goodwill, and also to entice the burgeoning middle class of China to explore Spain.

Although Westerners may never fly to Shanghai to buy historical Western artworks, and although Western expatriates living in Shanghai probably won't collect them either, the potential audience of Chinese people who might buy is — by Western standards — enormous. As with everything in China, patience is a virtue, and the SFIAF is now, at least, positioned to engage this future clientele as it evolves.

## Dubai

Rivaling Shanghai for mushrooming towers and luxury amenities is the tiny emirate of Dubai, perched between the Arabian Desert and the Persian Gulf. Although nearby Abu Dhabi is actually the capital of the seven United Arab Emirates, Dubai grabs more headlines with its superlatives: The world's tallest building (160 stories) will be completed there in 2009, and the Mall of the Emirates (55 acres, 450 shops) is the world's first "shopping resort," complete with an indoor ski slope.

Because they have less oil than their neighbors, Dubai's ruling family have prioritized easy cargo transit via sea and air, as well as international tourism, second homes for wealthy foreigners, and a thriving community of professional expatriates. Visits to Dubai by Western celebrities are noted widely, but the real story is the growing number of wealthy Arabs, Indians, Russians, and Chinese letting their hair down quietly in this safe, Las Vegas-like resort where almost anything goes.

The art trade has taken note, of course, which is why Christie's and Bonhams both have salerooms in Dubai, with Sotheby's still weighing its options. Local galleries handle primarily decorative works, but art fairs are on the uptick. In April 2006, a local exhibition organizer ran an unsuccessful *International Art & Antique Expo* featuring works of

varying dates, but in March 2007 the London dealer John Martin achieved a better result with the contemporary-oriented *Gulf Art Fair*, co-organized with the state-sponsored Dubai International Financial Centre. Approximately 9,000 visitors came to see 40 exhibitors at the Arena inside the Madinat Jumeirah, a resort designed to resemble an ancient Arabian citadel built around a lagoon. Martin's fair has been rebranded as *Art Dubai* for its March 2008 edition, which has already attracted 67 dealers from around the world — a 70 percent increase that reflects the desire of Dubai residents for art as new as their high-rise homes.

This magazine had already gone to press in mid-December as Abu Dhabi-based Turret Middle East Ltd unveiled its *Dubai International Fine Art & Antiques Fair* at an upscale convention center. Advance materials indicated that Turret would welcome 33 wide-ranging dealers, including 12 from Italy, five each from Dubai and the U.K., and one or two each from Austria, France, India, Jerusalem, Lebanon, Russia, Thailand, and the U.S. (Some, but not all, of these galleries had exhibited at Turret's new Abu Dhabi fair, which was dubbed a mixed success by attendees during its three-day run in late November.)

Turret's performance will surely inform the launch on February 21 of *Art and Antiques Dubai*, the latest project of London's Haughton family, who run four top fairs in New York and one in their home city. Also set in the Madinat Arena, this new event has 33 dealers committed — 13 from Britain, nine from the U.S., plus one or two each from Australia, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Monaco, and Syria. Among the Haughtons' diverse exhibitors will be Koopman of London with 18th-century English silver by Paul Storr and Paul de Lameric; London's Mathaf Gallery, which has sold Orientalist paintings to Middle Easterners since the 1980s; the Ayyam Gallery of Damascus, offering works by modern and contemporary Syrians; New York's Bernard Goldberg, who carries superb American art dated 1900-1950; London's Samina and her exquisite Indian jewelry; and Brian Haughton himself, who handles fine European ceramics.

By most accounts, it is easy for dealers to get artworks in and out of Dubai, though they must prepare their checklists well in advance. All exhibitors must submit images to the government for prior approval, and some Muslim visitors will not enter stands containing images of human beings, especially nudes or Jews. An ever-broadening array of consumers pass through Dubai, however, and there seems to be a consensus among dealers that even those who do not turn a profit on their first visit should definitely try again next year.

WINNER FRIEDMAN (b. 1935)

ACROSS THE ROCKY INLET

2006, ACRYLIC ON IRREGULARLY SHAPED CANVAS, 54 x 46 IN.

SCOTT RICHMOND CONTEMPORARY ART, SAN FRANCISCO, AT LAST YEAR'S LA ART SHOW

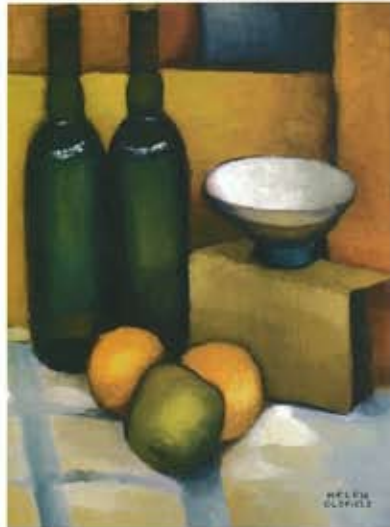


HELEN CLARK OLDFIELD (1902-1981)

TWO BOTTLES

1943, OIL ON CANVAS BOARD, 18 x 14 IN.

SPENCER JON HELEN FINE ARTS, BEVERLY HILLS, AT LAST YEAR'S LA ART SHOW



## Palm Beach

Despite the apotheosis of Miami Beach as the world's contemporary art capital every December, the Florida community of Palm Beach still draws more traditional art lovers from around the world in February. This year's edition of *Palm Beach / America's International Fine Art & Antique Fair* is set to run February 1-10. A total of 76 exhibitors are committed to showing first-rate paintings, graphics, sculpture, decorative arts, textiles, jewelry, watches, clocks, Asian art, antiques, and design.

Five days later, the *Palm Beach Jewelry, Art & Antique Show* takes over the same convention center for Presidents' Day Weekend (February 15-19). At press time, this show had not announced its normally impressive exhibitor list, which has, over five years, shifted slowly away from its original emphasis on jewelry.

PETER TRIPPI is editor of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

THE STAND OF DUBOIS (NEW YORK/LONDON) AT LAST YEAR'S PALM BEACH / AMERICA'S INTERNATIONAL FINE ART & ANTIQUE FAIR

## Los Angeles

The emergence of America's second largest city as a place where one can count on seeing good art — in museums, galleries, homes, and studios — is a welcome development. An extra buzz pervades the air during the *Los Angeles Art Show*, now in its 13th year of production by the national Fine Art Dealers Association. This year's edition is set to run January 24-27, after an opening gala on the 23rd

that will benefit the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). One hundred remarkably strong dealers will be showing in the Barker Hangar at Santa Monica Airport, where, for the first time, the *IFPDA Fine Print Fair's* 28 dealers will join them (after many years ensconced at LACMA). Also running January 25-27 at the nearby Santa Monica Civic Auditorium is *Art LA*, which will feature 30 dealers from southern California and 30 more from elsewhere.

